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The Role of IKPM Cairo Branch in Increasing The Education Sector For PMDG Santri (Case Study: Al-Azhar Scholarship)

Dini Septyana Rahayu[1*],Syifa Muhammad Mihan[2], Rudi Candra[3]

[1] *Universitas Darussalam Gontor, Ponorogo*
[2] *Universitas Darussalam Gontor, Ponorogo*
[3] *Universitas Darussalam Gontor, Ponorogo*

Corresponding Email: [*]dinirahayu@unida.gontor.ac.id

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the role of the Indonesian diaspora (IKPM Cairo Branch) in brain circulation, which is to help develop the educational sector of Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor through the Al-Azhar scholarship program. Diaspora is now one of the country's assets in increasing the country's soft power in its human resources. Likewise with the Republic of Indonesia which has a large number of diasporas in various countries. In this paper, the author takes a case study of the Al-Azhar scholarship program aimed at Gontor alumni. This study used the library research method using primary data from the literature and interviews with certain figures relevant to this study. The theoretical basis used to analyze the object of research is diaspora and educational diplomacy from the concept of multi-track diplomacy. Based on data analysis, it was concluded that the role of the Indonesian diaspora (IKPM Cairo Branch) in the process of rotating ideas can be seen through several impacts, such as the development of the KMI Pondok Modern Gontor curriculum and also the increasing interest of students in religious studies, Arabic literature, and Islamic civilization.

INTRODUCTION

This study describes the role of IKPM Cairo in developing Darussalam Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School education, through the Cairo Al-Azhar scholarship program. This is assumed to be a circulation of knowledge formed due to the role of the diaspora, or what is known as brain circulation. Indonesia has a number of residents who do not live in their country of origin, but live in other countries, but live in other countries which are also referred to as the Indonesian diaspora. The Indonesian Diaspora is a group of people who live and reside permanently or temporarily outside Indonesia who have blood relations with Indonesian citizens.

One of the Indonesian Diaspora is the IKPM (Ikatan Keluarga *Pondok* Modern), which is a community of students and alumni from *Pondok* Modern Darussalam Gontor (PMDG). IKPM is an institution for PMDG to establish communication (*ukhuwah*) with PMDG students and alumni who are located in all regions in Indonesia, as well as those in abroad. This institution was formed on December 17, 1949, in Yogyakarta and inaugurated in 1951 as the official institution of the PMDG family (Pimpinan Pusat Ikatan Keluarga Pondok Modern , 2014). In the traditions and customs of PMDG, students or alumni who have received further education after leaving the Islamic boarding school and taking part in the outside world, have a desire to return to serve their Islamic boarding school. They call it devotion to *Pondok*.

The process involves students or academics studying abroad and returning to serve, imparting knowledge, shaping young people to become like themselves. An infinite cycle of knowledge occurs, this is known as the Brain Circulation phenomenon. The development of a country is not only based on rapid economic growth and infrastructure development, but also developments in education, research, learning innovations, and so on. In other words, knowledge has a big role in the development of the country. In the concept of brain circulation, knowledge becomes part of the elements that can be transferred regardless of the position of the knowledge source. Brain circulation is defined as a result of brain drain and brain gain in the context of diaspora. It forms a pattern of idea rotation and circle of knowledge. This phenomenon occurs when groups of people who migrate to other countries and improve their quality there, return to their home countries to do the same thing to the next generation.

This kind of phenomenon can also be seen from how PMDG alumni or families contribute to the *pesantren* and their students in the form of education. This research focuses on the Al-Azhar scholarship program, Cairo, which is given exclusively to all alumni. IKPM Cairo branch is a branch of IKPM from *Pondok* Gontor which is a forum for alumni of Al-Azhar scholarship recipients from the PMDG route. The PMDG Alumni carry the vision and mission of *Pondok* which later they will pass on ideas and knowledge to generations after them, both individually and as cadres from educational foundations in their country of origin. Therefore, this research aims to describe the role of IKPM Cairo branch recipients of Al-Azhar scholarships in improving the education sector for PMDG students.

METHODOLOGY

Regarding the role of the Indonesian diaspora represented by the IKPM Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor (PMDG), this study uses a qualitative descriptive research design to describe the phenomenon of PMDG alumni receiving Al-Azhar scholarships who then returned to Indonesia and Islamic boarding schools to serve in the world of education. Qualitative research is research whose function is to discover new things in the form of descriptions, is exploratory in nature, and views objects as a whole and cannot be separated as a social system (Sugiyono, 2020). To collect the required data, this study uses library research.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Diaspora is a concept from social science related to capitalist globalization which refers to the increased integration of process functions that are cross-border. Diaspora is a community that has the same ethnic background who left their place of origin but for generations still maintains group culture and maintains ties to their place of origin (Ashari, 2020). In the study of international politics, the concept of diaspora actually surfaced after the dialectics of identity and culture became relevant. Humans are considered to be the most important part in the formation of global dynamics and changes in the international political constellation. The concept of diaspora by Waltraud Kokot is associated with the movement of people or migration, but still does not leave its historical and spatial elements (Kokot, Tölölyan, & Alfonso, 2004). The point is, the feeling of settling down (sense of sedentary) in a place because it is bound by historical values or factors, does not disappear from those who migrate. Tölölyan explained that the logic remains in individuals who have transnational experiences. Each diaspora is a space that connects reality with the imaginary, namely between the diaspora community and those in the homeland (Kokot, Tölölyan, & Alfonso, 2004).

The spread of diaspora due to an increase in international migration activities, raises implications in the form of a loss of human resources accompanied by a reduction and loss of their various forms of expertise. The country of origin is like losing assets for development and this is referred to as brain drain or brain gain. Over time, these two terms developed into brain circulation as an explanation that the loss of human resources from a country, is not necessarily followed by a loss of expertise that can contribute to the country of origin. Brain Circulation creates a situation where a diaspora who has a high skilled background will maintain the circulation of ideas. That way this phenomenon will be maintained and will indirectly help the development of the country in various aspects. Rosalie L. Tung explains how brain circulation can occur, including the factor of globalization, easier immigration and emigration due to fading national borders, the phenomenon of dual citizenship in several developed countries, and the emergence of the concept of a boundaryless career (Tung, 2008). Tung also explained in her research, refer to what occurred in Chinese diaspora and China, most of diaspora

community has strong affinity to their homeland, and it triggers them to connected with their nations. It includes the dynamic of homeland's development. Brain circulation enables those people to contribute to the development of their nations.

AnnaLee Saxenian explained that brain circulation enables countries to improve the quality of their economy or development, since brain circulation provides space for the diaspora to contribute and transferring their capacities (Saxenian, 2005). By studying India and China, Saxenian argued that individuals or diaspora who migrated from their home countries for searching better life transformed the brain drain into brain circulation, as they return home to establish business or company while maintaining their social relations with the host countries.

Brain Circulation highlights the existence of good circulation of knowledge, skills, and forms of sources of enrichment in the national development process by the diaspora. In this paper, by adapting the thinking of Saxenian and other diaspora academics, the author assumes that PMDG through the program sending students to study at Al-Azhar Cairo, is an effort to transfer knowledge for the empowerment and development of Islamic education in Indonesia. PMDG has an academic tradition known as "devotion", where students and alumni have the space and opportunity to channel what they have learned to the *Pondok*. This service is PMDG's effort in maintaining the continuity of education and teaching that is modern and competitive without losing the traditions and values of Islam and Islamic boarding schools. The author further describes this as a form of knowledge circulation which not only has implications for the sustainability of PMDG education and teaching, but also has positive implications for the development of national human resources.

This article describes how Indonesian diaspora, represented by IKPM in Cairo, Egypt, who transfer their capabilities and skill to Indonesia's development, represented by education in PMDG. IKPM Cairo who had been awarded by Al-Azhar scholarship, are classified as Indonesia's diaspora. They went to Egypt to pursue their degree through scholarship, and they settled in Cairo for long term. The character of PMDG education manifest in sense of belonging and affinity. Through brain circulation, this article describes how IKPM Cairo transfer their knowledge and skill to increase educational sector, especially in PMDG. The author assumed that the alumni who granted scholarship from Al-Azhar, Cairo return to PMDG to teach or transfer their knowledge and improve the education in PMDG. Scholarship awarded by Al-Azhar, Cairo, is the manifestation of good relationship between PMDG and Al-Azhar. Therefore, this article also argues that as part of educational diplomacy, the scholarship contributes well in enhancing PMDG's students' capability and capacity.

The study, conducted by the Saxenians, demonstrates the beneficial strengths of the Chinese and Indian diaspora. This strength arises because basically the diaspora of the two countries still have a sense of cultural and ideological bond and closeness with their country of origin. Diaspora networks have a big role in mutual assistance activities to provide access to capital in the diaspora pilot market (Saxenian, 2005). Through this

case example, the author assumes that PMDG students who are identified as Indonesian diaspora, are mobilized to return to contribute to *Pondok* and Indonesia through the PMDG academic tradition, which is referred to as dedication.

If diaspora is part of transnationalism, then diplomacy is the instrument which strongly related to how nations strengthen and maintain their relations. Diplomacy has multitrack as mentioned by Louise Diamond and John McDonald in *Multi-Track Diplomacy: A Systems Approach to Peace*. Educational diplomacy is included in the fifth track multi-track diplomacy (Diamond & McDonald, 1996). Based on the elaboration of multi-track diplomacy, diplomacy through education further builds peace through scholarship programs, higher education, research collaborations between researchers, expertise training in certain fields. Knowing this world broadly and precisely, observing social phenomena, creating the latest breakthroughs, exploring the universe, and everything related to the wealth of knowledge that exists in this world as long as it is still in a positive aspect and does not damage the Almighty's creation, peace through education will still be possible. So the relationship between *Pondok* Modern Darussalam Gontor and Al-Azhar University is a diplomatic relationship which then results in a scholarship program from Al-Azhar to be given exclusively to alumni of Gontor alumni who wish to continue their studies at Al-Azhar University, in Cairo, Egypt.

Through the IKPM diaspora who are studying at Al-Azhar University, Cairo and receiving scholarships from the PMDG pathway, a knowledge cycle will occur, also known as the Brain Circulation phenomenon. This case is the impact of transnationalism which is a social phenomenon across national borders. The role of the Diaspora itself has become a non-state actor in the study of International Relations in its implementation. It is clear that IKPM as a diaspora from Indonesia makes connections between individuals who are geographically different, and this becomes easier because information and communication technology can be reached only through the palms of hands. The scholarship program is also an instrument of diplomacy between institutions (education) that work together to achieve the same goal.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Indonesia's Diaspora

In the context of human movement, the diaspora is better known as a population living in another country due to various factors, such as fleeing armed conflict or seeking a better life. Therefore, the diaspora has become a new force in this era of globalization. While they were once labeled immigrants, they are now better known as the diaspora. To define the Indonesian diaspora, this article refers to the following categories:

1. Indonesian citizens (WNI) legally residing abroad (holding Indonesian passports).
2. Indonesian citizens who have become foreign citizens through the naturalization process and no longer hold Indonesian passports.
3. Foreign citizens who have parents or ancestors from Indonesia.

4. Foreign citizens who have no ancestral ties to Indonesia at all, but who have a deep love for Indonesia. (Jazuli, 2017).

The first category of the Indonesian diaspora includes Indonesian students studying abroad, professional and migrant workers, government representatives, and others. According to 2020 UN DESA data on international migrants, the Indonesian diaspora population was 4,601,369 (DESA, 2023). This amount had increased more than 50% from 2013, with 2,9 million people around the world (Jazuli, 2017).

In 2017, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, Retno Marsudi, stated that the Indonesian diaspora has made significant contributions to the nation, making it no exaggeration to call it an asset for Indonesia's future. That same year, to accommodate the spread of the diaspora, optimize its role in national development, and bridge relations with the Indonesian government, the Indonesian Diaspora Card was launched (Indonesia, 2017). Based on this explanation, it can be concluded that the Indonesian diaspora is anyone of Indonesian blood who lives and works abroad, including Indonesian students who are studying abroad.

IKPM Cairo and the relation of PMDG with Al-Azhar

The Modern Islamic Boarding School Family Association (IKPM) is one of the educational institutions of the Darussalam Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School (PMDG), which houses alumni from various regions, nationally, and internationally. (PPIKPM, 2014). IKPM was established based on the contributions of the Islamic Boarding School alumni to facilitate and maintain communication among Gontor alumni, ensuring that they are always recognized for their inherent *sibghoh* (student bond) (Arini, 2017). Gontor alumni possess diverse experiences, education, and a sense of belonging, which are values and identities that distinguish Gontor from other educational institutions in Indonesia. The significant differences in educational background between PMDG and other public schools allow alumni to categorize themselves

By promoting the santri profile within the organization, this means that the identity of a santri is carried not only to Islamic boarding schools or Indonesian Muslim communities, but also to the IKPM Cairo branch, which clearly provides a secure connection for the diaspora to form a group. IKPM Cairo was formed to uphold the good name of PMDG, maintain relations with Al-Azhar University, and serve as a bridge connecting PMDG leaders (Purwaningtyas & Syauqillah, 2020). The collaborative relationship between Al-Azhar and PMDG dates back to the 1950s, initially aimed at emulating the waqf system implemented at Al-Azhar. Gradually, this relationship developed into a relationship aimed at strengthening the Islamic-based learning system, which resulted in various scholarships (Nugroho, 2016).

Al-Azhar's Scholarship as The Instrument of Educational Diplomacy

Al-Azhar University has provided scholarships to Indonesia for many years, particularly for Islamic-based educational institutions like PMDG. In 2018, during a visit to the PMDG Women's Campus, the Sheikh decided to provide an additional quota for PMDG, specifically for female students. (KOMINFO, 2018). Education plays a role as

an instrument of diplomacy, both for countries of origin and partner or destination countries. Through collaboration with Al-Azhar, PMDG carries out educational diplomacy to improve the quality of science in Indonesia. The Al-Azhar scholarship program, organized by Al-Azhar University through the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, is one pathway that can produce a generation of ulama from Indonesia. PMDG, which has a special relationship with Al-Azhar, exclusively receives scholarships to be distributed to students studying at the Islamic boarding school. Since 2016, PMDG has sent students and alumni to study at Al-Azhar through special scholarships awarded to PMDG. Each year's class has interesting names as their identity (Albab, 2022).

Table 1: name of the batch of Al-Azhar scholarship grantees from PMDG

Name	Generation	Departure
Assabiqunal Awwalun	1st	2016
Anshorullah	2nd	2018
Waratsatul Anbiya'	3rd	2019
Shofwatul Mulhimin	4th	2021
Ulul Albab	5th	2022

Through Al-Azhar scholarships, PMDG not only strengthens the bilateral relationship between Egypt and Indonesia in terms of education, but also strengthens the identity of Islamic education that is developing in Indonesia. The presence of students studying at Al-Azhar serves as an instrument for maintaining the circulation of knowledge from Al-Azhar to PMDG and Indonesia, and vice versa. In the context of trans-nationalization, the process of awarding and receiving such scholarships further strengthens the relationship between the two institutions and has major implications for the interrelationship and intellectual circulation of Indonesia and Egypt. For PMDG, the presence of students at Al-Azhar makes it easier for PMDG to continue developing its Islamic education. Aida Arini in her article explains that with students studying at Al-Azhar, PMDG has a significant opportunity to develop its learning curriculum periodically. (Arini, 2017). Thus, it is clear that the scholarships provided by Al-Azhar specifically for PMDG play a significant role as an instrument of educational diplomacy. Furthermore, this instrument aligns with how students studying at Al-Azhar, known as the Indonesian diaspora, maintain intellectual circulation from Indonesia, through PMDG, to Al-Azhar, and return to PMDG for Indonesia.

Brain Circulation of PMDG *santri*

The presence of Indonesian students in Cairo, Egypt, to study at Al-Azhar is inseparable from the phenomenon of the modernization of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), or Islamic education in Indonesia in general, which has been growing

stronger since the 1970s. The Darussalam Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School (PMDG) has been part of this broader agenda since its founding in 1926. This Islamic boarding school has a curriculum and educational traditions synonymous with modernity. By synthesizing the educational traditions of Al-Azhar and other Islamic educational institutions abroad, PMDG has succeeded in building a *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) with character and a strong identity in Indonesia. (Amalia, 2019). Through the value of *Panca Jiwa* and *Panca Jangka*, they have clear vision on strengthening Islamic education in Indonesia as part of Indonesia's national wealth. As human resources are the substantial part of national development, IKPM Cairo as PMDG's agent, also has significant role in enhancing national development through brain circulation.

Members of the IKPM Cairo, who studied and graduated from Al-Azhar, Cairo, Egypt, contribute through various sectors. This article finds that the influence of IKPM Cairo in the development of the PMDG curriculum is a clear evidence of brain circulation. IKPM Cairo participated in the development of the *Kulliyatu-l-Mu'allimin Al Islamiyyah* (KMI) Curriculum. KMI is an educational system that aims to produce Islamic teachers by prioritizing the formation of personality, attitudes, and mentality as well as the instillation of knowledge based on Islamic values. This system is strongly influenced by the qualifications and leadership model of a *Kiai*, as a leader figure and educator for his students (Budi & Apud, 2019).

IKPM Cairo returned to teach at PMDG because they wanted to help Islamic boarding schools with the knowledge they gained from studying at Al-Azhar in Cairo. They graduated from Al-Azhar after completing four years of study (eight semesters) from 2017 to 2021, including one year for language learning, for a total of five years at Al-Azhar (Hafidzi, 2022). Most of Cairo's IKPM study at Al-Azhar and complete their studies at the faculty of *Lughah Arabiyah*, *Ushuluddin, Syari'ah Islamiyyah*, faculty of *Dirasat Islamiyyah Wal Arabiyah, Lughah Arabiyah, Ushuluddin, Syari'ah Islamiyah*, and faculty of *Ilm an-Nafs* (Albab, 2022). After returning to Indonesia, they made significant contributions to the development of Islamic boarding school curricula that balance religious and general knowledge, the development of Arabic language, and the development of curricula that hone the students' abilities and skills. Most of the students' abilities are honed through *fathu al-polar* and *fathu al-mu'jam al-mufarrash* activities, where they are trained and educated to solve problems by integrating Islamic knowledge, combined with Arabic language skills (Arini, 2017).

Through the Al-Azhar scholarship program, PMDG alumni can act as agents of ideas transmission to their students. This circulation occurs when Al-Azhar alumni return to Indonesia to teach their students. During their studies, Al-Azhar graduates will apply the knowledge they have acquired. All of their knowledge will be shared with students as new knowledge and learning materials. Furthermore, some of the students they have taught will be inspired by lecturers from renowned Egyptian universities. These students/*santri* are the ones who will continue or receive an 'idea' from their teacher to go abroad as students. This intellectual circulation and exchange would not

have occurred if IKPM Cairo had chosen to remain in Cairo without contributing to Islamic boarding schools, or if it had returned to Indonesia without also serving in Islamic boarding schools. With the PMDG tradition of service, IKPM Cairo students and alumni have a clear path to channel and disseminate their knowledge to strengthen Islamic religious studies, not only in Gontor but also in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

The role of the Indonesian Diaspora (IKPM Cairo) who received Al-Azhar scholarships in advancing the education sector for students at the Darusslam Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School demonstrates how intellectual circulation, knowledge transfer, or what is later referred to as brain circulation occurs. Brain circulation from the Indonesian diaspora, especially students, has not occurred much and has not been studied further, this is due to the lack of systems and mechanisms that facilitate it. In fact, with all the conditions and support, both from the government and human resources, brain circulation is no longer impossible to achieve. However, at the Darussalam Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School which sent several of its cadres to study in Egypt, brain circulation is well coordinated through the existence of the IKPM organization and a system of community service carried out by alumni. At the Islamic Boarding School Through a scholarship program that is the result of a collaboration between Gontor and Al-Azhar University, young Indonesians become foreign students in Cairo. By going to Egypt (IKPM Cairo) to study at the tertiary level (Al-Azhar University) and then returning with a wealth of Islamic religious knowledge and teaching it to students in Indonesia. This phenomenon will continue and revolve around the teacher-student relationship, which will produce Islamic intellectuals who are not merely religious intellectuals. The mechanisms implemented by PMDG, IKPM, and Al-Azhar contribute to the development of human resources in Indonesia through education. Thus, the large diaspora abroad can make a direct and significant contribution to national development.

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