

Islamic Education at the Nizhamiyah Madrasah during the Abbasid Era: Models of Financing, Curriculum Design, and Pedagogical Priorities

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Abstract: This article discusses the relationship between financing patterns and educational curriculum in the Nizhamiyah Madrasah during the heyday of the Abbasid Daulah in Baghdad. The problem studied is how the funding system through government waqf influenced the structure and orientation of the curriculum in the madrasa. The purpose of this study is to reveal the impact of the financing system on the focus of the applied educational curriculum. This research uses descriptive-analytical method with primary and secondary data collection through literature study of Islamic education history. The results show that the funding pattern sourced from waqf influenced the establishment of a curriculum dominated by religious sciences, especially fiqh, as part of the effort to strengthen Sunni theology. Teaching focused on the Shafi'i school of thought and was staffed by prominent scholars of the time. In addition, efficient financial management by the government contributed to the availability of adequate educational facilities. Thus, it can be concluded that the financing system played a significant role in shaping the curriculum of the Nizhamiyah Madrasah, which was directed at producing a cadre of leaders who excelled in the fields of religion and government.

Keywords: Financing, Curriculum, Madrasah Nizhamiyah

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Abstrak: Artikel ini membahas hubungan antara pola pembiayaan dan kurikulum pendidikan di Madrasah Nizhamiyah pada masa kejayaan Daulah Abbasiyah di Baghdad. Permasalahan yang dikaji adalah bagaimana sistem pendanaan melalui wakaf pemerintah memengaruhi struktur dan orientasi kurikulum di madrasah tersebut. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengungkap dampak sistem pembiayaan terhadap fokus kurikulum pendidikan yang diterapkan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif-analitis dengan pengumpulan data primer dan sekunder melalui studi literatur sejarah pendidikan Islam. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa pola pendanaan yang bersumber dari wakaf memengaruhi penetapan kurikulum yang didominasi oleh ilmu-ilmu keagamaan, khususnya yafiqih, sebagai bagian dari upaya penguatan teologi Sunni. Pengajaran difokuskan pada mazhab Syafi'i dan dikelola oleh ulama-ulama terkemuka pada masanya. Selain itu, manajemen keuangan yang efisien oleh pemerintah turut menunjang tersedianya fasilitas pendidikan yang memadai. Dengan demikian, dapat disimpulkan bahwa sistem pembiayaan berperan signifikan dalam membentuk kurikulum Madrasah Nizhamiyah, yang diarahkan untuk mencetak kader pemimpin yang unggul dalam bidang keagamaan dan pemerintahan.

Kata kunci: Pembiayaan, Kurikulum, Madrasah Nizhamiyah

Introduction

Cost is one of the crucial factors in the sustainability of educational institutions. Education funding is the main pillar that supports various programs to run optimally. On the other hand, many people still complain about the high cost of education, while educational institutions are required to provide quality services for students. The gap between the need for quality education and affordability is a classic problem that has not been fully resolved until now.

In the context of the history of Islamic civilization, especially during the golden age of the Abbasid Daulah in Baghdad (750-1258 AD), Islamic education experienced rapid development marked by the birth of various formal educational institutions such as madrasah. One of the most influential madrasahs at that time was the Nizhamiyah Madrasah founded by Nizam al-Mulk, the vizier of the Saljuk Dynasty.¹ This madrasah was designed as a means to produce cadres who not only mastered religious knowledge, but were also prepared to occupy important positions in government. In this role, the Nizhamiyah Madrasah became an important instrument of the state's political policy to strengthen Sunniism and maintain government stability.²

¹ Nurul Kawakib, "Politik Pendidikan Islam Pada Masa Kejayaan Dinasti Abbasiyah: Politik Ketenagaan," *JPAI: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 1, no. 1 (2014), 3

² Ali Murtopo, "Politik Pendidikan Pada Masa Daulah Abbasiyah (Kasus Madrasah Nizhamiyah Di Baghdad)," *Ta'dib: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 19, no. 02 (2014), 134.

As an educational institution that was part of the state strategy, the Nizhamiyah Madrasah received direct financial support from the government, mainly through the waqf system. This pattern of funding gave the government considerable control over the direction and policies of education, including the establishment of the curriculum.³

On the other hand, this relationship also shows a symbiotic mutualism between the madrasa and the ruler: the madrasa gained financial support and legitimacy, while the government gained human resources that were in line with the ideological and administrative interests of the state.⁴

Although there have been many studies that discuss the history of the Nizhamiyah Madrasah, most of them still focus on institutional aspects, teaching scholars, or their contribution to the development of science. However, studies that specifically explore the relationship between educational financing patterns and the structure of the madrasa curriculum are still very limited. This research seeks to fill this gap by examining in depth how the financing system applied in the Nizhamiyah Madrasah influenced the determination of the curriculum and the prioritization of teaching materials.

The novelty of this research lies in its holistic and analytical approach in looking at classical Islamic education not only from the ideological and scientific side, but also from the dimensions of fiscal policy and education management. Thus, this research is expected to provide new insights into how financing policies in classical Islamic education affect learning orientation and curriculum development.

Based on this background, the purpose of this study is to describe the main materials taught at the Nizhamiyah Madrasah and analyze the relationship between the selection of learning materials and the financing pattern run by the institution. It also aims to uncover how funding through government waqf strategically influences the orientation of the madrasa's curriculum.

Therefore, this research will examine the funding pattern of the Nizhamiyah Madrasah during the Abbasid era, the relationship between the funding pattern and the curriculum and learning priorities, and the influence of the financing system on the sustainability of education in the Nizhamiyah madrasa.

This research uses a descriptive-analytical approach to analyze the

³ Reni Dwi Anggraini, "Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Pada Pembelajaran Fiqih Di Madrasah: Studi Kasus Di MTsN 4 Malang," *E-Thesis UIN Malang* (Malang, 2024)

⁴ Rahmawaty Rahim, "Pola Pembiayaan Pendidikan Islam Pada Masa Klasik," *Ta'dib: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 17, no. 1 (2012), 75.

funding pattern of the Nizhamiyah Madrasah so that it can be found related to the implementation of the curriculum applied at the Nizhamiyah Madrasah. This approach was chosen to obtain an in-depth understanding of the topic of the problem under study. The data used in this research are primary data and secondary data, primary data needed in this research are obtained through literature studies from Islamic education history books that specifically discuss the Nizhamiyah madrasa. Secondary data is obtained through journals that are relevant to this research. After obtaining primary and secondary data, the next step is to process and analyze the data and adjust it to the research topic. Especially on the implementation of the curriculum which depends on the management of the Nizhamiyah Madrasah related to financing.

Background to the Establishment of the Nizhamiyah Madrasah

The Nizhamiyah Madrasah was one of the leading institutions of Islamic higher education during the Abbasid period. It was established in the city of Baghdad, which at the time was the center of Islamic government and civilization. It was located near the banks of the Dirjah River, in the middle of the Selasah market, a strategic area in the heart of Baghdad. Construction of the madrasa began in 457 A.H. 1065 A.D. and took two years to complete in 459 A.H. The initiator was the prime minister of the Saljuk dynasty, Ghawan al-Din Abu Ali Hasan Ibn Ishaq Khauja, better known as Nizam al-Mulk (1018-1092 A.D.), an important figure who had great influence in the political and educational fields of his time.⁵

Functionally, the Nizhamiyah Madrasah was equivalent to a college or university in the context of that time. This is because the Islamic education system in medieval times did not recognize a formal level of primary or secondary education. Those who wanted to pursue higher education usually first studied through informal classes held by teachers in mosques. In this context, the Nizhamiyah Madrasah was present as a structured formal educational institution and became the main reference for students who wanted to study religious science and government.⁶

The background to the establishment of the Nizhamiyah madrasah is closely related to the political victory of the Sunni Saljuqs. Therefore, the madrasa not only functioned as an educational institution, but also as an ideological stronghold to defend and spread Sunni theology. In fact, the role of

⁵ Nur Lila Kamsi, "Nizamul Mulk Dan Madrasah Nizamiyah Relasi Lembaga Pendidikan Dan Penguasa (Madrasah Dan Otodoksi Pendidikan)," *Ej* 5, no. 1 (2022), 14

⁶ Murtopo, "Politik Pendidikan Pada Masa Daulah Abbasiyah (Kasus Madrasah Nizhamiyah Di Baghdad)," 320.

the Nizhamiyah Madrasah developed as a center of religious and political propaganda used to strengthen power. This institution was established with the aim of preparing a generation of pious leaders who were loyal to power, as well as capable of understanding the interests of the people and the ideology of the state.

In particular, the main purpose of the Nizhamiyah Madrasah was to teach Islamic law based on the Shafi'i school of thought, with a strong emphasis on teaching fiqh and Ash'ari theology. Nizam al-Mulk himself was a scholar and hadith expert, so he was very concerned about the educational aspects of society. The establishment of this madrasa was therefore part of his vision to provide formal educational facilities that supported the strengthening of religious sciences.⁷ In addition to scholarly motives, the establishment of the Nizhamiyah Madrasah was also motivated by conflicts between religious groups that had occurred previously.⁸ One of the important figures before Nizam al-Mulk, al-Kunduri, was a Hanafi prime minister who supported the Mu'tazilah school. He had implemented repressive policies against the Ash'ariyah, including the expulsion and persecution of its adherents. When Nizam al-Mulk rose to power, he responded to this conflict by establishing the Nizhamiyah Madrasah as a form of protection and strengthening the position of the Shafi'iyah and Ash'ariyah groups.

Furthermore, it also serves as an educational institution for prospective government employees. The curriculum is designed to produce graduates who are ready to take on administrative and governmental tasks. Thus, the graduates had no difficulty in continuing their career paths, because from the beginning they had been prepared for the needs of the state bureaucracy. Politically, the establishment of the Nizhamiyah Madrasah was also Nizam al-Mulk's strategy to strengthen his position as prime minister by building good relations between himself and the people and the rulers. With this madrasa, Nizam al-Mulk succeeded in establishing an educational system that was integrated with power, and ensured that the institution remained under his influence and control throughout his lifetime.⁹

⁷ Novianti Muspiroh, "Madrasah Nizhamiyah: Sebuah Momentum Dalam Sejarah Pendidikan Islam," *Jurnal Tamaddun : Jurnal Sejarah Dan Kebudayaan Islam* 5, no. 1 (2017), 158.

⁸ Reni Dwi Anggraini et al., "The Axiological Implementation of Islamic Education in Character Development : A Case Study at Al-Maahira IIBS Malang," *Abdurrauf Social Science* 2, no. 1 (2025), 34-48.

⁹ Moh Isbir, "Studi Tentang Madrasah Nizhamiyah," *Tasyri': Jurnal Tarbiyah- Syari'Ah Islamiyah* 24, no. 01 (2017), 51

Although it was not the first madrasa to be established at that time, the Nizhamiyah Madrasah gained an outstanding reputation and became one of the most famous madrasas, recognized even by non-Muslims. Its specialty lies in the fact that it was the first madrasa to be officially established by the state and managed within the framework of Sunni ideology. The government has a direct role in the management of the madrasa, including in setting educational goals, selecting faculty and staff, determining the curriculum, and ensuring the availability of funds. This organized management system made the Nizhamiyah Madrasah a model of classical Islamic education that not only excelled in scientific aspects, but also became a tool of political and social policy in its time.

Financing the Education of the Madrasah Nizhamiyah

The establishment of the Nizhamiyah madrasa, which coincided with the background of political and religious interests under the prime minister Nizham al-Mulk, influenced the management system of the madrasa. One of the highlights in this study is the funding pattern of the Nizhamiyah madrasa which came from government waqf. This is evidenced by several waqf documents of the Nizhamiyah madrasa as follows:

1. The Nizhamiyah Madrasah and the property it contained came from a waqf that was dedicated to the interests of the Shafi'i school of fiqh and ushul fiqh.
2. The principal officer in charge of the Nizhamiyah Madrasah had to be a Shafi'i madhhabist in Fiqh and Ushul Fiqh.
3. Nizhamiyah madrasahs were required to have educators in the field of Qur'anic studies.
4. Nizhamiyah Madrasahs were required to have educators in the field of Arabic.
5. Each working staff was entitled to receive a certain share of the income earned from the waqf property managed by the Nizhamiyah Madrasah.

Although the management system of the Nizhamiyah madrasa itself has government intervention, it cannot be denied that the management carried out is very good. This can be seen in terms of funding, good buildings and a large number of them, teachers who are paid a fixed salary during their tenure, complete library facilities, dormitories and meals provided for students, the curriculum that is run, even to the tuition fees that are free for students studying in this madrasa.¹⁰

¹⁰ Ramsah Ali, "Pengaruh Madrasah Nizhamiyah Terhadap Perkembangan Pendidikan Islam," *Ta'dib* 11, no. 1 (2022), 61.

Looking at the history of the establishment of the Nizhamiyah Madrasah itself, which is based on political and religious influences, the progress and decline of education in this madrasah will also affect this basis. Actually, the source of funding of an Islamic educational institution itself can come from several directions, such as government assistance, assistance from parents or guardians of students, community assistance (waqf, zakat, alms, grants).¹¹ However, in this case, the Nizhamiyah madrasah does not collect funding from students or their parents, but all funding is purely subsidized by the government because there is a hidden purpose in it.

According to some historians, the educational budget disbursed by Nizham al-Mulk for the Nizhamiyah madrasa each year amounted to 600,000 dinars.¹² In fact, he also established a library with a complete volume of books along with a catalog of approximately 6,000 volumes of books. Nizham al-Mulk never calculated to provide the material needs of students in the madrasa, it was done to realize his mission as well as possible. Therefore he never hesitated to allocate a high budget of funds and give privileges to all staff in the form of extensive waqf, even for his own students he budgeted to give them a ration of 4 pounds of bread every day.¹³

Madrasah Mizhamiyah Education Curriculum

What is interesting to study from a madrasa or certain educational institutions is the curriculum. The curriculum plays a big role in realizing the goals of the educational institution. The curriculum will change along with the development of the surrounding environment and the prevailing culture.¹⁴ Likewise, the curriculum in the Nizhamiyah Madrasah also experienced developments that were influenced by the surrounding religious, political and social situation.

In general, the curriculum applied at the Nizhamiyah madrasa itself focuses on Islamic law which is in accordance with the mission of the establishment of this madrasa. According to Mahmud Yunus, the curriculum of the Nizhamiyah

¹¹ Raja Muhammad Kadri, "Konsep Dan Sumber Pendanaan Lembaga Pendidikan Islam," *Educational Journal of Islamic Management* 1, no. 1 (2021), 16.

¹² Arfiansyah Harahap, "Madrasah: From Early Time to Nizhamiyah (Sejarah Sosial Dan Kelembagaan Pendidikan Islam)," *PROGRESS: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 6, no. 1 (2018): 39

¹³ Ahmad Arifai Abdhillah Shafrianto, Moh. Aman, "Upaya Nizham Al-Mulk Dalam Merealisasikan Madrasah Nizhamiyah," *Raudhah: Jurnal Tarbiyah Islamiyah* 7(2) (2022), 84

¹⁴ Rasmuin Rasmuin et al., "Persepsi Guru Madrasah Terhadap Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Pada Mata Pelajaran Fiqih: Studi Di MTsN 4 Malang, MAN 2 Malang," *Jurnal Diversita* 10, no. 1 (2024): 28-37

madrasa at that time was dominated by religious sciences and shari'ah, this is evidenced by: a) There are no historians who say that the subject matter taught at the Nizhamiyah madrasa consisted of medical, pharaohic or other sciences, but they only say that among the materials taught were nahwu, kalan and fiqh; b). The teachers who taught at the Nizhamiyah madrasa were scholars who came from the scholars of shari'ah; c) The founder of the Nizhamiyah madrasa himself was not a philosopher and was not a group that defended philosophy in his time. And the founding of the Nizhamiyah madrasa was a time when philosophy was suppressed at that time.¹⁵

The discussion about the curriculum applied at the Nizhamiyah madrasa will begin with the classification of science and its branches, especially the sciences that developed during the Saljuk dynasty, because as history says that the founder of the Nizhamiyah madrasa was a figure who served during the reign of the Saljuk Bani. As stated by Ahmad Kamal al-Dien Helmi:

1. Religious Sciences, where the sciences classified in this science are called al-ulum al-naqliyyat and ulum al-diniyyat, which include:
 - a. 'ilmu al-qiraat (Knowledge of Reading)
 - b. 'ilmu al-tafsir (Science of Interpretation)
 - c. 'ilmu Fiqh (Fiqh Science)
 - d. 'ilm kalam (Theology)
 - e. Al'ulum ala-aqliyyat (the science of akliyah)
2. Language Science (ulum al-lughat)

The curriculum of the Nizhamiyah madrasa is actually very much imbued with the curriculum of the previous Sunni madrasa, the thing that distinguishes it is the teaching of madzhab. If the previous Sunni madrassas only taught one madhhab, but for this Nizhamiyah madrasa it did not only teach one madhhab, because this madrasa was established as a state institution, the madhhab taught was the madhhab of Shafi'i and Hanafi.¹⁶

From the description above, it can be understood that although the Nizhamiyah madrasa is dominated by religious materials (Shari'ah science), it does not rule out the possibility that in this madrasa some other general materials are also taught. Which is in line with the

¹⁵ Mahfud Ifendi, "Madrasah Nizamiyah: Telaah Historis Sebagai Lembaga Pendidikan Dan Perang Politik-Ideologi," *Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Islam* 8, no. 2 (2021): 143

¹⁶ Muhammad Sholeh, "Madrasah Nidzamiyah (Latar Belakang, Profil, Kurikulum Dan Metode Pendidikannya)," *INSANIA : Jurnal Pemikiran Alternatif Kependidikan* 22, no. 1 (2018): 32

purpose of the establishment of this madrasa, which is in addition to political and religious elements, but the purpose of the establishment of this madrasa is also to develop Islamic education at that time. From there, of course, general materials are also needed to realize the goal of developing Islamic education.

The methods used in the learning process at the Nizhamiyah madrasa are using the lecture and question and answer methods as appropriate, which is an example of a direct learning model. But for other methods used are diksudi, and scientific rihlah, which are models of indirect learning. And this method is part of the problem-based and contextual learning model.

Regarding the curriculum applied at the Nizhaiyah madrasa, students and the surrounding community did not reject the establishment and establishment of the Nizhamiyah madrasa itself, even everyone accepted this madrasa with joy.¹⁷ This is because this madrasa focuses on religious matters, the Nizhamiyah madrasa itself is also very well managed, which is characterized by smooth funding, procurement of good buildings for student facilities or students who study there. So although the purpose or background of the establishment of this madrasa is related to religion and government politics, students and the community do not object to it. Because it is felt that it also provides a beneficial nature for them.

Prioritization of Learning Materials in Nizhamiyah Madrasah

The learning materials used in the Nizhamiyah madrasa are focused on studying religious science, general science is less or not even studied in this madrasa. This is based on the background and interests of the establishment of the Nizhamiyah madrasa, namely to eradicate the influence of mu'tazilah and shi'ah which was strong in the community at that time. Based on this fact, the priority of the subjects taught was related to the science of fiqh, and at that time the mahdzab that was quite prominent in the science of fiqh was the fiqh of Imam Shafi'i, so the science of fiqh taught at the Nizhamiyah madrasa was based on the Shafi'i mahdzab accompanied by the science of theology from Ash'ary. Although it focuses on the Shafi'i mahdzab, it does not rule out the possibility that other mahdzabs are also studied.¹⁸

¹⁷ Salamuddin Salamuddin et al., "Kontribusi Cendekiawan Muslim Untuk Sains Manajemen," *Jurnal Dirosah Islamiyah* 4, no. 2 (2022): 300

¹⁸ Syahid, "Pertumbuhan Madrasah (Periode Awal Hingga Madrasah Nizhamiyah)," *Qathrunâ*, 5, no. 1 (2018): 67,

Why the Nizhamiyah madrasa is a madrasa that focuses on the school of the sunnah experts, this is because the belief of the sunnah experts is a belief that is considered the most correct based on its religious lessons that prioritize the Qur'an and as-Sunnah compared to something that is ra'yi. And from this, students or students are interested in their attention, and with a loyal attitude in defending their mahdzab, namely ahlu sunnah, it will help weaken the influence of the Shi'ah position at that time. Which is where the attention of ahlu sunnah students is focused on the science of fiqh.¹⁹

With subjects that focus on the science of shari'ah, which especially the field of fiqh is a top priority. Discussions about fiqh concerning social issues are important to learn as a provision for prospective government leaders at that time. And there is one supporting material that needs to be pursued in addition to the field of fiqh, namely Arabic language knowledge. Where the teaching of fiqh material relies on understanding sourced from Arabic books, so that mastery of Arabic becomes one of the supporting sciences that are highly emphasized in the madrasa Nizhamiyah.²⁰

Conclusion

The construction of the Nizhamiyah madrasa was not only due to the need to improve education for the community at that time, there were other goals and objectives such as religious and political interests which became the basis or background of the establishment of the Nizhamiyah madrasa. From the background of the establishment of the Nizhamiyah madrasa, it can be seen that the education management system in this madrasa is certainly under the supervision of several related parties, especially by Nizham al-Mulk who became the center of the development of the Nizhamiyah madrasa. One of the interests of this madrasa is for political purposes aimed at preparing successor cadres of government employees, so students who study at the Nizhamiyah madrasa are indeed prepared to become successor government employees.

In terms of learning facilities and equipment, all are covered by the government, students do not spend a penny to study in this madrasa. The pattern of financing in this madrasa is certainly sourced from the government, therefore government intervention is very strong in the madrasa management

¹⁹ Makmur Haji Harun, "Pendidikan Islam: Analisis Dari Perspektif Sejarah," *Qalam : Jurnal Ilmu Kependidikan* 7, no. 2 (2019): 83, <https://doi.org/10.33506/jq.v7i2.370>.

²⁰ Raja Lottung Siregar, "Madrasah Nizhamiah: Eksistensi Dan Pengaruhnya Terhadap Perkembangan Pendidikan Islam Dan Aktivitas Ortodoksi Sunni," *HIKMAH: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 4, no. 1 (2015): 90,

system. Likewise, from the religious background which is the purpose of the establishment of the Nizhamiyah madrasa, which is related to the Sunni ideology originating from the Saljuk Dynasty. Where in this madrasa prioritizes the understanding of the flow of Mahdzab Shafi'i and Asy'ariyah, this is based on the purpose of this madrasa which is to fight the mu'tazilah and Shi'a schools which were quite rampant at that time.

From the religious goals that were echoed to fight the mu'tazilah and shia, in terms of curriculum and teaching materials, the Nizhamiyah madrasa was determined in such a way. This is the basis that the Nizhamiyah madrasa does not teach general sciences, but focuses on teaching knowledge in the field of religion, especially in the field of shari'ah. And in terms of the science of shari'ah that they adhere to is related to the field of fiqh which is based on Shafi'i fiqh, so in this madrasa the Shafi'i mahdzab is highly emphasized. However, although the Nizhamiyah madrasa is classified as a madrasa that was established for a particular purpose, it is undeniable that the management and education system that runs is also quite good to achieve the planned goals. This can be seen from the surrounding community who did not reject the establishment of this madrasa, but instead supported the establishment of this Nizhamiyah madrasa.

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