

# Indonesian Higher Education: The Chronicle, Recent Development and The New Legal Entity Universities

Mohamad Fahmi

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## Abstract

This paper reviews and presents the concise history of higher education Indonesia from pra-colonial period to the latest era when the Government of Republic Indonesia proposed the Educational Legal Entity Bill and the Law on National Education System.

**Keyword:** higher education; Indonesia; history, legal entity.

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## 1 The Concise Chronicle

The chronicle of Indonesian higher education initiated by pesantren that provided Islamic education before the colonial period (Wahid, 2001 in Buchori and Malik, 2004). Considerable evidence suggests that some of the graduates from advanced level in pesantren were accepted at the post-graduate level al-Azhar university in Cairo. However, (Buchori and Malik, 2004) admitted that the non formal and less structured Islamic higher education system in that era is incompatible to distinguish to the standards in the rest of the world.

Pesantren learning and teaching system was delivering by the kiyai or ulama<sup>1</sup>. Despite the system has a different structured with the secular system but it has a certain stage of learning. In the initial stage, students were taught to read the whole chapter of Qur'an. Subsequently, the students have to study the Arabic language as the language is the key to all books in Indonesia as they were written in Arabic. At this stage, the students were also introduced to syariah (rules and regulation), theology and other principal knowledge.

The colonial period of Indonesian higher education is commenced when the Netherlands East Indies<sup>1</sup> establish a medical school to educate prospective native doctors in 1851 (Buchori and Malik,

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<sup>1</sup>It refers to the educated class of Muslim legal scholars engaged in the several fields of Islamic studies (Zaman (2002) in <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ulema>).