

## The Paradigm of Progressive Education in Theory and Practice of Muhammadiyah Organizational History

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### Abstrak

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah mengeksplor bagaimana paradigma pendidikan berkemajuan dalam teori dan praktis pada organisasi Muhammadiyah dengan menggunakan metode historis dengan langkah-langkah antara lain heuristik, kritik sumber: intern dan ekstern, interpretasi, dan historiografi. Berdasarkan hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa sosok pendiri organisasi Muhammadiyah yaitu K.H. Ahmad Dahlan menjadi peran penting dalam hal ini. Pemikirannya tentang islam, kehidupan, dan pendidikan menjadi fondasi tentang suatu pendidikan yang berkemajuan. Namun, tetap berpegang teguh pada dasar Al-Quran dan Al-Sunnah. Organisasi Muhammadiyah menekankan usahanya kepada perbaikan hidup beragama dengan amalan-amalan seperti dalam bidang pendidikan. K.H. Ahmad Dahlan juga mampu menawarkan model pendidikan baru sebagai pembaharuan dari pendidikan konvensional sekolah Belanda dan Pesantren. Sehingga, pendidikan Muhammadiyah mampu melahirkan generasi baru yang lebih “kaffah”.

**Kata kunci:** paradigma, pendidikan berkemajuan, muhammadiyah.

### Abstract

*The purpose of this research is to explore how the paradigm of progressive education in theory and practice in the Muhammadiyah organization using historical methods with steps including heuristics, source criticism: internal and external, interpretation, and historiography. Based on the results of the study, it shows that the founder of the Muhammadiyah organization, K.H. Ahmad Dahlan, played an important role in this matter. His thoughts on Islam, life, and education became the foundation of a progressive education. However, it still strongly stays based on the Al-Quran and Al-Sunnah. The Muhammadiyah organization emphasizes its efforts to improve religious life with practices such as in the field of education. K.H. Ahmad Dahlan is also able to offer a new education model as a renewal of conventional education from Dutch schools and pesantren. Thus, Muhammadiyah's education can give birth to a new generation that is more “kaffah”.*

**Keywords:** paradigm, progressive education, muhammadiyah.

### INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country with a diverse educational history. This is because many organizations also include education as a means of movement and commitment. Among many organizations, Muhammadiyah is one of the largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia, which now still shows its existence, even developing very rapidly along with the times. The meaning of the word

Muhammadiyah itself is followers of Muhammad, or known as people who are followers of the Prophet Muhammad. The founder of this organization is K.H. Ahmad Dahlan, who has a good background and goals that are useful for the progress of the nation, especially in the field of education today.

When traced from the long history of the struggle of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan in building and advancing Muslims from

backwardness, it is very pronounced his persistence in fighting for his great ideals. According to him, the struggle will succeed when it is supported by two main components that underlie it, namely education and da'wah. From here it appears that K.H. Ahmad Dahlan was so eager to make a breakthrough in reform through these two elements. Because educational institutions are still considered the most strategic media in conveying the ideals of change.

Thus, the beginning of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan founded Muhammadiyah not as a political organization but as a social and religious organization engaged in education and da'wah. This is evident from his efforts in educating prospective *pamogpraja* (civil servants) - prospective officials, who studied at OSVIA Magelang and prospective teachers who studied at *Leweekschool Jetis* Yogyakarta (Sucipto, 2010).

Therefore, to understand holistically and deeply the pattern of Muhammadiyah and Education, this paper presents the following discussion formulation: How is the Paradigm of Progressive Education in Theory and Practice in the Muhammadiyah Organization?

## **METHODS**

The historical method was used in this study to reveal events that occurred in the past systematically. According to

Kuntowijoyo (2018) formulated five steps for historical research, namely: (1) selecting a topic, (2) collecting sources, (3) verifying the validity of the sources, (4) interpreting (analysis and synthesis), and (5) writing. Hence, the researchers looked for and collected data from many sources, including textual materials like books, journals, and magazine.

The researchers completed the heuristic steps, namely, seeking and accumulating sources. The following stage was source criticism, which involves validating or verifying the data using both internal and external criticism (Hamid and Madjid, 2012). In this case, the next stage of interpretation was conducting an analysis or interpretation of the information that was gathered. The interpretation had to employ the writer's creativity to its full potential so that the final stage, Historiography (history writing), could bring an object's organization to life. Historiography, at the very least, may link the story to the reality of the occurrences that transpired to provide a good and accurate interpretation/interpretation to its readers (Daliman, 2012).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

On December 1, 1911 AD. K.H. Ahmad Dahlan established an elementary school within the Yogyakarta Palace. In this school, general lessons were given by several native teachers based on the

government education system. This school was probably the first private Islamic school to qualify for government subsidies.

As a person who was active in social activities and had brilliant ideas, K.H. Ahmad Dahlan could also be easily accepted and respected in the community, so he also quickly gained a place in many organizations such as *Jam'iyatul Khair*, *Budi Utomo*, *Syarikat Islam*, and *Comite Pembela Kanjeng Nabi Muhammad SAW*.

In 1912 with his friends from Kauman, such as Haji Sujak, Haji Fachruddin, Haji Tamim, Haji Hisyam, Haji Syarkawi, and Haji Abdul Gani, K.H. Ahmad Dahlan also founded the Muhammadiyah organization to carry out the ideals of Islamic renewal in the Indonesian archipelago. K.H. Ahmad Dahlan wanted to make a reform in the way of thinking and doing according to the guidance of Islam. He wanted to invite Indonesian Muslims to return to living according to the guidance of the Qur'an and Hadith. This association was established on November 18, 1912. From the beginning, Dahlan had determined that Muhammadiyah was not a political organization but was social and engaged in education.

According to K.H. Ahmad Dahlan, the main problems faced at the beginning of the birth of this organization included the condition of the nation being under the grip of Dutch colonial occupation,

then living in poverty squalor, and ignorance (Nuha & Gustama, 2024).

The idea of establishing Muhammadiyah by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan also received resistance, both from his family and from the surrounding community. He was accused of wanting to establish a new religion that violated the rules of Islam. Some even accused him of being a false cleric, because he had imitated the Christian Dutch, and other kinds of accusations. There were even people who wanted to kill him. However, he faced these obstacles patiently. Thanks to his determination to continue the ideals and struggle for Islamic renewal in his homeland, he was able to overcome all these obstacles.

In the field of education, in the hands of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan, there was a fairly rapid development. This can be proven in 1922 Muhammadiyah already had 9 schools with 73 teachers and 1019 students. They are *Opleiding School* in Magelang, *Kweek School* (Magelang), *Kweek School* (Purworejo), Normal School (Blitar), NBS (Bandung), *Algemeene Midelbare School* (Surabaya), *Hoogers Kweek School* (Purworejo). In addition, Muhammadiyah has published a magazine, namely *Suara Muhammadiyah* (SM) since 1914, and K.H. Ahmad Dahlan sat on the editorial staff. Then Muhammadiyah also established a library in 1922, for members and Muslims in general (Sucipto, 2010).

Talking about the Muhammadiyah organization, it will not be separated from the figure of its founder, K.H. Ahmad Dahlan. In understanding religion, he always adheres to the principles: First, understanding the teachings of Islam is the source of only the Al-Quran and Al-Sunnah; Second, to be able to understand it properly, one must use a healthy mind by the spirit of Islam.

K.H. Ahmad Dahlan was not only known to be active in rolling out his ideas about the Muhammadiyah da'wah movement, but he also did not forget his duties as a person who had responsibilities to his family. In addition, he was also known as an entrepreneur who was quite successful with his *batik* merchandise, which at that time was a common profession in the society, Kauman in particular (Darmayanti, et.al, 2024).

While doing this *batik* trading activity, K.H. Ahmad Dahlan also always took the time to preach. When he traded in East Java cities, such as Ponorogo, Blitar, Sumberpucung, Kepanjen, Pasuruan, Jember, and Banyuwangi. The *da'wah* launched by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan was well received, not even a little interested in the figure of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan, both in trading and with the *tabligh* that he held.

From the above activities, K.H. Ahmad Dahlan then began to pioneer the establishment of Muhammadiyah in these places. For example, the Subbranch Board

of Muhammadiyah, Sumberpucung, was established by the Mataram family (a term for Yogyakarta people who reside in Sumberpucung). Also in Kepanjen, Ponorogo, Blitar and so on. In other places, they moved to establish Muhammadiyah because they were attracted by the ideals of Muhammadiyah, which is known as an Islamic renewal movement, which uses a more rational mindset or approach in solving religious problems as long as it is justified by Islamic guidelines (Sucipto, 2010).

According to Ali's book (2017), entitled *Paradigma Pendidikan Berkemajuan-Teori dan Praksis Pendidikan Progresif Religius K.H. Ahmad Dahlan*, it is noted that in outline the fundamental problems suffered by the natives: the majority of those who embrace Islam can be sorted into two, namely: internal and external problems. There are three internal problems suffered by Muslims: (1) the silence of Muslims in religion; (2) the existence of Islamic education, which suffers from acute decline; and (3) the backwardness of Muslim life. Meanwhile, the problems of Christianization (sending and missions) and Westernization (Dutch colonialism) are factors that come from outside (external). Both internal and external problems are the background and context that underlie and characterize K.H. Ahmad Dahlan in thinking or strategy to develop education in Muhammadiyah.

However, because K.H. Ahmad Dahlan's struggle was mostly directed at fixing and improving the internal situation of the natives, the focus of his attention was directed on internal improvement efforts related to efforts to advance religion, education, and the social life of the natives.

K.H. Ahmad Dahlan's educational strategy is based on three main aspects: intelligence, experience, and progress. These three aspects of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan's education are really interesting. It was his educational thinking that rested on these three aspects that made him not awkward when dealing with the intellectuals of *Budi Utomo*, he confidently taught the children of aristocrats in Dutch schools, and with limitations, he began to pioneer and establish *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Diniyah Islamiyah* in 1911.

The experiment of establishing *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Diniyah Islamiyah* opened other doors of progress and accelerated the process of realizing the idea. A year later, motivated to protect the newly established educational institution, the Muhammadiyah organization was established. The establishment of Muhammadiyah gave birth to new ideas to advance society, such as the pioneering of *Tabligh* and *Khotbah Jumat* using Javanese. By using Javanese (being the daily language of the people) automatically, religious messages

can be more easily understood by the congregation and the wider community. With a broader and more precise understanding of religion, it can automatically encourage and facilitate them to practice Islam religion in life. Through the *Tabligh* movement and the substitution of *Khutbah Jumat* topics into Javanese (language) on its own, the teaching of Islam could be carried out and understood by a wider public. This expansion of education, in turn, encouraged many people, not just *kiai*, to participate in developing the teachings of Islam. The entire description above, which relates to K.H. Ahmad Dahlan's renewal thoughts on religion, life, and education, can be summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1. KH. Ahmad Dahlan's thoughts on religion, life, and education as a whole

Type of Thought	Social Realities of Muslims	Thoughts of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan
Islam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Religion is synonymous with Kiai</li> <li>Faith tainted with <i>Takhayul-Bid'ah Churafat</i> (TBC).</li> <li>Mythicism: Prioritizing spirituality over social life.</li> <li>Fostering individual piety.</li> <li>Kiai as the person in</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Religion is human nature.</li> <li>Purification of faith by eradicating TBC.</li> <li>Activism: religious experience leads to social action/experience and progress of religious life.</li> </ul>

	charge of <i>da'wah</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fostering individual-social piety at the same time.</li> <li>• Every believer in Islam is a preacher.</li> </ul>
Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Life is fixed/static.</li> <li>• Based on tradition</li> <li>• Past-oriented.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Life is moving forward</li> <li>• Based on reason and experience, knowledge and practice.</li> <li>• Future-oriented</li> </ul>
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Langgar</i>/mosque (<i>masjid</i>).</li> <li>• Traditional boarding school.</li> <li>• <i>Khutbah Jumat</i> is an Arabic religious ritual.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All dimensions of life</li> <li>• Modern boarding schools, <i>madrasah</i> &amp; schools</li> <li>• <i>Khutbah Jumat</i> as a means of educating the people, in local language</li> <li>• <i>Tabligh</i>: broadcasting Islam</li> </ul>

Source: Ali (2017) processed from various sources

Table 1 above illustrates the posture of KH. Ahmad Dahlan's thoughts on religion, life, and education as a whole. Although presented separately between

the pillars of religion, life, and education, the three pillars are essentially connected and organically integrated into a unified and complete thought.

More than that, K.H. Ahmad Dahlan introduced new elements or ways to educate and introduce Islam so that it could be easily understood by the community, namely *tabligh* and *Khutbah Jumat* in Javanese (Steenbrink, 1994). *Tabligh* is a meeting or gathering where one or more speeches are given to explain religious matters. The *Khutbah Jumat* at that time was more of a ritual than a teaching and was conducted in Arabic so that it could not be understood by the Muslim Friday Prayer. By using the Javanese (local) language, the *khatib*'s messages are more easily digested by the Muslim Friday Prayer. If they can understand the content of the sermon, it is expected that they can practice it in their daily lives.

The style of education that K.H. Ahmad Dahlan wanted was progressive education. This is in line with the opinion of Mrs. Umniyah, a student of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan when interviewed by Wijosukarto (1968). K.H. Ahmad Dahlan always advised and counseled his students with the wiseword in local language: "*Dadiyo kiai sing berkemajuan, lan aja kesel-kesel anggonmu nyambut gawe kanggo Muhammadiyah*". In English, it roughly means to be a progressive *kiai*, and never get tired/stop working for

Muhammadiyah. The meaning of a progressive *kiai* is a *kiai* who always follows and understands the signs of the times. Meanwhile, the meaning of working for Muhammadiyah is working for the good and progress of society. Because Muhammadiyah was established to improve and advance people's lives.

At a macro level, the beginning of the 20th century was noted as the starting point of a new chapter in the education of the Indonesian people. The event was marked by the emergence and development of new educational ideas and the presence of various modern educational practices. K.H. Ahmad Dahlan was one of the pioneers and locomotives that drove modern education. Previously, until the latter half of the 19th century, Indonesian education only recognized the recitation of the *Qur'an* as a basic education model, and the recitation of the *Book or Pondok Pesantren* as an advanced education model. The characteristics of teaching in *pesantren* are solely religious, high respect for teachers, teachers are not paid, and students or *santri* go begging for living expenses in *pesantren* (Poerbakawatja, 1970).

The understanding of modern education in the context of the early 20th century is the school system that was intensively introduced by the Dutch colonial government as a manifestation of Ethical Politics. Some of the prominent features of modern education at that time

were the programmed curriculum and learning time, the application of a level or classical system, the use of learning equipment such as tables, chairs, and blackboards, salaried teachers, and others. *Kiai* Dahlan intelligently adopted and adapted the characteristics of modern education when he pioneered the first modern religious school in Kauman; Yogyakarta at the end of 1911. The establishment of this Islamic school became the embryo and pathway for the establishment of the Muhammadiyah organization one year later.

Although the pioneering and establishment of modern schools in the lives of the indigenous population in the early 20th century was a big and bold social breakthrough, when examined, K.H. Ahmad Dahlan's renewal efforts or *ijtihad* did not stop here. To develop religion and progressive education, K.H. Ahmad Dahlan did not stop at developing the new school model that had been pioneered in his residence, Kauman, but developed social life services such as health (Hospitals), compensation for orphans (Orphanages), empowering women by pioneering a women's organization (*'Aisyiyah*). The series of social actions that accompanied the establishment of the school seem to confirm that for *Kiai* Ahmad Dahlan, religion and education were built into life, interacted with life, and aimed to improve and advance life.

After tracing the origin of the term, and putting forward various considerations why the term progressive education is used, the next step is to try to analyze the content or dimensions contained in these concepts. As mentioned earlier, hypothetically three key concepts are the content or content of progressive education, namely: the dimension of reason, the dimension of action/righteous deeds, and the dimension of progress.

An article in *Suara Muhammadiyah* (No.18/September 2014), the official publishing organ and magazine of Muhammadiyah, attempts to examine the dimensions of progressive education, with the title "Examining K.H. Ahmad Dahlan's Education Theory". In the article, there is the possibility of examining K.H. Ahmad Dahlan's theory of progressive education from the perspective of John Dewey's educational progressivism. John Dewey's educational progressivism is used as a mirror to see the face of progressive education more clearly. Because, without using a mirror to look in the mirror, it is impossible to know his true face as a whole (Suparmun, 2019).

The most representative and later comprehensive formulation of John Dewey's educational progressivism is contained in his book, *Experience and Education*. This book accurately explains the attitude and position of John Dewey's thought amid two prominent currents of

educational thought and practice in the United States in the first half of the 20th century. It identifies the distinctive features of progressivism in the face of traditional education and romantic education. After examining Dewey's ideas in the book, at least three key terms stand out. The three key terms are the concepts of "*experience*", "*intelligence*", and "*progress*".

In line with Dewey, K.H. Ahmad Dahlan also views that practice (good deeds) is very important in the educational process. This can be heard from the following messages and words of wisdom that were repeatedly conveyed to his students: "*Talk little, but work a lot*"; "*Whoever plants, will reap*"; "*Live Muhammadiyah, don't look for a living in Muhammadiyah*". Such messages emphasize that Kiai Dahlan views good deeds as very important. By doing good deeds, a person will gain new experiences, these experiences will be used to improve the quality of the next deeds/experiences so that they become more realistic.

The education system that K.H. Ahmad Dahlan wanted to build was education oriented towards modern education, namely by using the classical system. What he did was something that was still quite rare in Islamic educational institutions at that time. Here, he combined the Dutch education system

with the traditional education system integrally (Abdullah, 2024).

The foundation of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan in adopting forms of education from outside, much inspired by the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad SAW; "*Should learn the language of your enemy so as not to be tricked by your enemy.*" As well as the words of the Prophet; "*Seek knowledge even if you have to go as far as China.*" This is what motivated K.H. Ahmad Dahlan to establish a school that used the Dutch language.

When the Christians established *HIS met de Bijbel*, Ahmad Dahlan established *HIS met de Quran*. When the *Suryowirawan* organization established the *Padvinders* movement, he also formed the *Hizbul Wathan*. Likewise, in developing schools and hospitals, he often learned a lot from the pastor in Yogyakarta.

The vision of education initiated by Muhammadiyah is reflected in the basic ideas that are the ideals of organizing education, as desired by its founder, namely "*Creating intellectual kiai, and intellectuals who are kiai or intellectual ulama, and intellectuals who are ulama.*" Therefore, the education system built by Muhammadiyah seeks to integrate the pesantren and secular education systems in the form of school institutions. In fact, according to Deliar Noer, Muhammadiyah's modernism in the field of education far exceeded Al-Azhar Cairo, which at the same time still implemented a traditional

Islamic education system. Such is the form of renewal efforts made by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan in the field of education (Sucipto, 2010).

Then, Nuryana (2022) added that Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyah (AIK) Education is the spirit of Muhammadiyah education, so it needs to be capitalized on its function. Al-Islam education is directed at the introduction, understanding appreciation, and practice of Islamic teachings, which emphasize the balance, harmony, and harmony of human relations with Allah SWT, human relations with fellow humans, human relations with themselves, and human relations with the surrounding nature by the Al-Qur'an and Al-Sunnah. Muhammadiyah education is directed at understanding the basics of the Muhammadiyah movement and ideology, such as *tafsir* of the *Muqaddimah Anggaran Dasar, Matan Keyakinan dan Cita-cita Hidup (MKCH), Khittah Perjuangan, Muhammadiyah Personality and Guidelines for Islamic Life of Muhammadiyah Citizens (PHIWM)*, as well as the introduction, understanding, appreciation and active participation of students in various Muhammadiyah movements and activities (*KTSP Dikdasmen PWM DIY: 4*). In higher education, it is also necessary to provide an understanding of Interdisciplinary Islam within the framework of Muhammadiyah education, which is taught to students. Interdisciplinary Islam builds an Islamic

paradigm framework in each department. So that all departments in Higher Education have broad insights in viewing Islam (Tentiasih, et al,2023).

In this case, Amien (2015) supports theoretically, there are three reasons why AIK education needs to be taught:

1. Studying AIK is basically to become an Indonesian nation that is Muslim and has a modern / *tajdid* / dynamic mind.
2. Introducing the mind of *tajdid*, and it is hoped that students can be touched and at the same time practice it.
3. The need for ethics/morals of students who study at Muhammadiyah educational institutions.

Then, there is the Muhammadiyah Social Enterprise which was established to fight for the aims and objectives of the organization by always encouraging and encouraging all its members to love or like all activities aimed at upholding the teachings of Islam. If not supported by its members, of course, the ideals or goals and objectives of Muhammadiyah will not be achieved. The presence and establishment of the Branch Board of Muhammadiyah, of course, following the Bylaws of Muhammadiyah. In particular, Muhammadiyah Social Enterprise in the Education Sector, according to Purba and Ponirin (2013), has a range of activities: starting from Kindergarten "*Bustanul*

*Athfal*", Islamic Boarding School, Public School, Vocational, Madrasah to Higher Education.

One of the reasons Muhammadiyah was founded was because educational institutions in Indonesia no longer meet the needs and demands of the times. Not only are the content and teaching methods inappropriate, but even the education system must be fundamentally overhauled. So with the establishment of schools that no longer separate between lessons that are considered religious and education that is classified as general science, in essence, it is a very important and great effort. With this system, the Indonesian people were educated to become a nation with a whole personality, not divided into individuals with general knowledge or religious knowledge only. The reality, which is still being felt today, is that schools are neutral towards religion, and as a result, many of their students only have expertise in the general field and no expertise in religion. With this reality, many people are easily shaken and shaken in their lives in the face of various trials.

Because it is not possible to completely abolish the public school system and the pesantren system, an effort is made to combine the two, as mentioned in Subarkah's research (2017), namely:

1. Establishing public schools by incorporating religious sciences.

2. Establishing *Madrasah-Madrasah* that also provide education in general sciences.
3. Establishing colleges or universities by including the spirit of the Al-Islam and Muhammadiyah movements in non-religious majors.

With this combined effort, there is no longer any distinction between religious and general knowledge. Kuncoro, a professor at UNY who has recently taken an interest in Ahmad Dahlan's educational ideas, does not specifically mention the style of education introduced by the founder of the Muhammadiyah organization. Although he does not specifically mention or cite it, he tries to capture the characteristics of the school and education system he introduced. K.H. Ahmad Dahlan's educational foundational thinking, according to Kuntoro's interpretation, can be briefly formulated as follows.

1. Building education based on religion, because religion cannot be separated from life.
2. Education in schools teaches religion and general science together.
3. Respect for intellectual intelligence as a means of developing a dynamic life and renewing religious practices and thoughts that hinder progress.
4. Religion is understood dynamically, not just ritual activities but practiced to improve people's lives.

5. The purpose of education is to build noble morals that are committed to improving and advancing social life (Kuntoro & Astuti, 2012).

## CONCLUSION

Muhammadiyah has a very important role in educational reform in Indonesia. The education implemented by Muhammadiyah is modern-theocentric. This means that in educational reform, Muhammadiyah accommodates Western education that is positive while still placing it based on the Al-Quran and Al-Sunnah. K.H. Ahmad Dahlan, as a strict *ulama*, wanted to improve Indonesian society based on Islamic ideals. His efforts were aimed at religious life. He believes that to build the nation's society, the spirit of the nation and religion must first be built. Muhammadiyah emphasizes its efforts to improve religious life with practices such as in the field of education. K.H. Ahmad Dahlan was also able to offer a new education model as a renewal of conventional education from Dutch schools and pesantren. Thus, Muhammadiyah's education can give birth to a new generation that is more "kaffah".

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