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## MUHAMMADIYAH AND ISLAMIC EDUCATION REFORM

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Abstract: Muhammadiyah is an Islamic organization founded by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan in 1912 in Yogyakarta and has become one of the largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia that has an important role in Islamic education reform. Muhammadiyah integrates Islamic values with modern science to create a generation that is intellectually and morally competent. To date, Muhammadiyah has managed more than 10,000 educational institutions, ranging from early childhood education to universities spread throughout Indonesia. Talking about Muhammadiyah education is certainly inseparable from the discussion of Muhammadiyah's educational philosophy which emphasizes the integration between religious and general knowledge, rejecting the dichotomy of "world science" and "hereafter". This approach is based on the values of the Our'an and As-Sunnah, as well as the principle of tajdid which aims to educate the life of the nation. The dynamics of Muhammadiyah's education involve adapting to various socio-political challenges from the Dutch colonial period, Japan, to the modern era, including the development of a progressiveprophetic educational model. This study uses the literature study method to examine the concept, history, and implementation of Muhammadiyah educational reform. The results of the study show that Muhammadiyah has made a significant contribution to building Islamic education based on the integration of religious and scientific values, making it a pioneer in the modernization of education in Indonesia.

Keywords: muhammadiyah, reform, islamic education, modernization, prophetic.

#### INTRODUCTION

Muhammadiyah one of the largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia, has an important role in the development of national education. This organization was founded in Yogyakarta on November 18, 1912, coinciding with 8 Zulhijjah 1330 H. by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan [1]. Born in social and political changes, this movement not only focuses on da'wah but also prioritizes the development of education oriented towards the advancement of science and the strengthening of morals. Thus, it can also be called a pioneer in efforts to modernize and reform Islamic education [2], [3].

Muhammadiyah has now managed thousands of educational institutions, ranging from early childhood education (PAUD) to higher education [4]. It is recorded that Muhammadiyah has established many educational institutions almost throughout Indonesia totaling a total of 5,346 schools and 4,623 kindergartens/PAUD institutions with details of the number of elementary schools / MI 2,453, junior high schools 1,599, high schools / MA / vocational schools totaling 1,294 schools (Muhammadiyah Editorial Team, 2024), and universities totaling 172 consisting of 83 universities, 28 institutes, 54 high schools, 6 polytechnics, and 1 Academy [5], [6].

Muhammadiyah not only established educational institutions, but was also very concerned about the fate of Islamic education at that time which only taught materials about religious science until Muslims were cornered in the decline of civilization [7]. Religious and general science that should go hand in hand are separated by the inappropriate understanding of Islam by Indonesian scholars. Such a phenomenon then aroused Ahmad Dahlan's awareness to carry out reforms or reforms in education [8].

The reform of Islamic education carried out by Muhammadiyah emphasized the importance of integration between religious science and general science. This can be seen in various educational institutions that are managed from the PAUD to university levels, integrating a religion-based curriculum with general subjects [9]. Muhammadiyah rejects the dichotomy between "world knowledge" and "the science of the hereafter," in the hope of producing a generation that has intellectual competence as well as noble morals. K.H. Ahmad Dahlan the founder of Muhammadaiyah hopes that the reforms brought can educate the life of the nation and provide mental enlightenment to this nation [10], [11].

Muhammadiyah's educational reform seeks to present a learning model that is adaptive, innovative, and relevant to the times, without overriding the basic values of Islamic teachings [12]. This paper will discuss in depth how Muhammadiyah plays a role in Islamic education reform in Indonesia. Starting from the discussion of the philosophy of Muhammadiyah education to the dynamics of the Muhammadiyah education movement.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

### Muhammadiyah and Islamic Education Reform

Muhammadiyah, established in 1912 by Ahmad Dahlan in Yogyakarta, has played a pivotal role in the reform of Islamic education in Indonesia. As a modernist Islamic movement, Muhammadiyah sought to harmonize religious teachings with modern sciences, challenging traditionalist views that often resisted change. The organization introduced a dual system that integrated religious and secular subjects in its educational institutions, aiming to produce intellectually and spiritually balanced individuals. Studies have shown that Muhammadiyah's educational model significantly influenced Islamic schooling by promoting rationalism, critical thinking, and social responsibility. According to Alfian (1989), Muhammadiyah schools were among the first to adopt a structured curriculum inspired by Western pedagogical models while remaining rooted in Islamic values. Meanwhile, Azra (2015) emphasizes the movement's commitment to progressive Islamic thought and educational modernization as key to its sustained impact [13].

Moreover, Muhammadiyah has continuously developed teacher training programs, Islamic higher education institutions, and international collaborations to expand its educational mission. The incorporation of civic values, gender equality, and inclusive education in its curriculum further reflects its adaptive approach in responding to contemporary challenges. Recent research highlights Muhammadiyah's active role in promoting character education and countering radicalism, positioning it as a reformist force within Indonesia's Islamic educational landscape. Its contributions remain significant in shaping a moderate, dynamic, and reform-oriented Islamic education system in the modern era [13].

### **METHOD**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature study method. This approach was chosen because the research focuses on the analysis of the concept, history, and implementation of Islamic education reform carried out by Muhammadiyah by searching, analyzing, and interpreting, then concluding the results of the research conducted. In this study, the researcher uses data collection techniques sourced from various written sources

such as books, journal articles, and previous research reports relevant to this theme [13], [14].

#### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

## **Muhammadiyah Educational Philosophy**

Philosophy comes from the Greek language, consisting of two words, namely "Philos" which means pleasure, love, or fondness, while "Sophia" refers to wisdom or truth, wisdom. Philosophy of education is a science that is essentially the answer to views in the field of education and is an application of philosophical analysis to the field of education. The philosophy of Islamic education according to Toto Suharto is a deep, systematic, radical, and universal thought to find the truth, essence, or essence of Islamic education [15]. The philosophy of Muhammadiyah education can be interpreted as a foundation of theory and learning developed by Muhammadiyah which is based on the teachings of Islam, namely the Qur'an and As-Sunnah [16].

Talking about the philosophy of education of Muhammadiyah cannot be separated from the philosophy of education and the philosophy of Islam. In the philosophy of education, Kant states that the fundamental purpose of the essence of education is to enable human beings and humanity to develop and improve their quality. In line with Kant, Plato stated that the essence of education is to make man morally good, and to be morally good, man must acquire correct knowledge and act wisely [17].

Islamic philosophy cannot be separated from the philosophy of Muhammadiyah education because the philosophy of Muhammadiyah education is essentially a philosophy about Islamic views. To develop this philosophy of Muhammadiyah education, it is necessary to study a lot of the ijtihad of Muslim philosophers. Almost all models of Islamic philosophy found in the history of Islamic thought are the ijtihad of Muslim philosophers who try to provide a philosophical framework of Islamic views to answer real problems that live in the time that encompasses philosophers [18].

According to Munir Mulkhan, the educational philosophy carried out by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan is the starting point of efforts to develop intellect through the educational process which ultimately leads to the growth of creativity and provides implications for Muhammadiyah citizens to have the spirit of tajdid. With this spirit of tajdid, Muhammadiyah education not only aims to produce an intellectually intelligent generation but also to be able to contribute to society through innovative thinking that is relevant to the development of the times [19].

The construction of the philosophy of Islamic education according to Muhammadiyah includes the areas of ontology, epistemology, and axiology of Islamic education [20]:

1. The ontological area of Muhammadiyah Islamic education includes the concept of God, the universe, and humans.

Kyai Dahlan's concept of Godliness focuses more on the function of theology in the sociocultural-humanitarian realm which has an impact on the renewal and empowerment of society. However, the concept of Godliness of Muhammadiyah can be described with indicators, Form, Substance, Nature, Asma', and Af'al of God. Furthermore, the concept of the universe is new, manifest or real, balanced, and perish or extinct. Its functions include worshipping God, a sign of God's greatness, and meeting human needs. Then the last component is the human being himself who is a descendant of the Prophet Adam (as) and not the result of the evolution of an ape. With the elements that make up the human self, including the body or body, and the spirit [21].

2. The epistemological area of Islamic education according to Muhammadiyah contains the essence of science, curriculum, educators, students, methods, and tools of Islamic education.

Science, technology, and art commonly abbreviated as science and technology can be said to be the result of rational thinking holistically and comprehensively on the reality of the universe, revelation, and sunnah which is an integral unit through continuous research and development activities for the welfare of human life. Then the concept of the Muhammadiyah curriculum is designed to combine religious science with general science, reflecting the belief that the two complement each other [22].

Furthermore, regarding the concept of educators, namely education personnel who are given the main task as supervisors, educators, teachers, trainers, and supervisors as well as role models for students to shape the character of students and the development of Muhammadiyah schools. Meanwhile, the concept of students starts from the concept of fitrah which expressly rejects the concept of inherited sin. Students are individuals who are in the process of developing their potential, both intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, and socially.

The Muhammadiyah educational method had been built by Kyai Dahlan himself when he established the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Diniyah Islamiyah school on December 1, 1911 AD in the village of Kauman Yogyakarta, namely the dialogue between Kyai Dahlan and Syudja' about the letter Al-Ma'un. This method provides a clue that the andragogy approach is already underway. Finally, the concept of educational tools consists of educational tools in the form of objects or materials, namely educational facilities and infrastructure. Meanwhile, educational tools in the form of non-material or non-material are in the form of the concept of applicability of Al-Islam and Muhammadiyah values in the frame of tajdid [23].

3. The axiological area of Islamic education of Muhammadiyah includes the essence of values, goals, direction, and evaluation of education.

The essence of Muhammadiyah's educational values is to maintain Islamic values such as referring to the educational values of the Qur'an and Al-Hadith, sincerity, the principles of renewal and innovation, siding with the poor, and the principle of balance between common sense and purity of heart. Then the goal of Muhammadiyah education is the realization of a just and prosperous society that is forgiven and pleased by Allah SWT. Meanwhile, the direction of Muhammadiyah education is an effort to develop the individual, social, and natural environment by their respective advantages [24].

From the various explanations above, it can be said that the product of the educational concept developed by Muhammadiyah is progressive-prophetic. It is a combination of progressive general education and Islamic education that inherits prophetic values from the Prophet Muhammad SAW.

### **Dynamics Of the Muhammadiyah Education Movement**

Muhammadiyah education has been more than 100 years old since its inception in 1912 and was the initial carriage of the establishment of a large Islamic organization, namely the Muhammadiyah organization. If we look at the beginning of the establishment of Muhammadiyah education in Indonesia, what was done by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan was a fundamental and significant reform movement in the world of education. The idea initiated by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan can be called a holistic and transformative educational concept [25].

Muhammadiyah education began in 1911 before Muhammadiyah was officially established in 1912. K.H. Ahmad Dahlan took the initiative to establish Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Diniyah Islamiyah which became the forerunner of the modern education system of Muhammadiyah by integrating Islamic education and Western education systems. The development of this madrasah still exists today, namely Madrasah Mu'allimin Muallimaat Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta [26].

The development of Muhammadiyah education since the Dutch colonial period until now can be seen in the following chart:



Figure 1. Development of Muhammadiyah Education

### 1. The beginning of Muhammadiyah education (Dutch colonial period in 1911-1942)

Muhammadiyah education during the Dutch colonial period began with the idea of KH. Ahmad Dahlan realizes the underdevelopment of Muslims, especially in education, in the dominance of the Dutch colonial education system which is secular and limited only to the indigenous elite. So, KH. Ahmad Dahlan was moved to establish the Muhammadiyah People's School or Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Diniah Islamiyah and HIS met the Qur'an, which was born by Muhammadiyah as a "public school plus", became a model not only for Muhammadiyah educational institutions but also used by other Muslim groups who made education as an area of concern [27]. The school combines Islamic religious education with general sciences such as mathematics, history, and language, offers a modern approach with a structured classical system, and is different from the traditional educational model of Islamic boarding schools that use the halaqah system [28].

There are two forms of educational modernization launched by Muhammadiyah. First, Muhammadiyah adopted the Dutch secular education system by adding Islamic lessons such as the Qur'an, fiqh, morals, and teachings that were in line with the spirit of Islamic reform. Second, Muhammadiyah modernized the Islamic education system through the institutional development of madrasas such as Madrasah Mu'allimin and Mu'allimat in Yogyakarta which reflected the modernization of madrasas by Muhammadiyah. In addition to building public schools equipped with Islamic values, Muhammadiyah maintains traditional Islamic educational institutions, such as Madrasah Mu'allimin and Islamic boarding schools, albeit in limited numbers. With the rapid growth in the number of Muhammadiyah schools, this organization has become one of the important forces in the national education system [29].

Muhammadiyah education at this time was not immune to challenges from some traditionalists who opposed the renewal of KH. Ahmad Dahlan, because he was considered to deviate from the tradition of the Islamic boarding school. In addition, there was strict supervision from the Dutch colonial government who were worried about the emergence of anti-colonial movements. However, Muhammadiyah succeeded in giving birth to an educated Muslim generation who played an important role in the national movement and nation-building, besides that Muhammadiyah became a symbol of the modernization of Islamic education in Indonesia and gave birth to influential national leaders [30].

### 2. Muhammadiyah Education in the Japanese Period and the Revolution (1942-1949)

Muhammadiyah education at this time faced pressure due to Japanese policies that restricted the activities of Islamic organizations and education. Muhammadiyah schools adapt by integrating Islamic values in a hidden way, using informal places such as mosques, and collaborating with Islamic boarding schools. In addition, one of the policies that

ISSN (*Print*): 1979-5351; ISSN (*Online*): 2723-1879 Copyright (c) 2025 Authors triggered the objections of Muslims was the practice of seikirei, which is bowing towards the sunrise as a form of respect for the Emperor of Japan [31]. Ki Bagus Hadikusuma, who at that time served as the Chairman of Muhammadiyah, strongly rejected this policy because it was considered to resemble an act of worship to the Emperor. As a result of the firm protest from Ki Bagus Hadikusuma, the Japanese government finally no longer required the implementation of seikirei in Muhammadiyah schools.

During the independence revolution, Muhammadiyah education not only became a formal institution but also transformed into the center of the national struggle. In a stressful war situation, Muhammadiyah schools continued to operate even with limited facilities. Many schools have been damaged by conflict or temporarily closed, so the teaching and learning process is often carried out in alternative places such as mosques, prayer rooms, people's houses, or open areas.

Muhammadiyah education at this time combined religious teaching, general science, and nationalist values. Teachers and students are encouraged to understand the importance of independence, maintain unity, and contribute to the nation's struggle. The curriculum is adapted to the needs of the times, including practical lessons such as survival skills, basic military knowledge, and map reading strategies. Apart from being an educational institution, Muhammadiyah schools are also a place for the consolidation of fighters, a center for the dissemination of information, and a means of instilling patriotic spirit [32].

### 3. Muhammadiyah Education in the Old Order Era (1950-1965)

Muhammadiyah education in this era faced complex socio-political dynamics in the transition to stability after independence. Muhammadiyah expands access to education for people in various regions, especially in rural areas as a form of contribution to the development of the nation [33]. By establishing new schools such as madrassas and public schools, to accommodate the needs of the community for modern Islamic-based education. The curriculum continues to develop during this period, which integrates Islamic values and general science. To produce students who are religious and competent in the academic field.

The major challenges faced by Muhammadiyah in this era included limited resources, lack of qualified educators, and pressure from the government which at that time tended to be oriented towards certain political ideologies such as the influence of socialism and communism [34]. This makes Muhammadiyah adjust its curriculum or educational policy to be by the direction of national politics, but still build a humanist education based on Islamic values and support the formation of the nation's morals.

Muhammadiyah also began to organize the educational administration system to be more professional, including the development of quality standards for Muhammadiyah schools throughout Indonesia. At the end of the old order government, namely in 1965, awareness of the issue of Islamic Education emerged, so the Ministry of Religion launched a new policy, namely by implementing the type of Islamic education and teaching in the form of Classical Indonesian Islamic Boarding School, Diniyah Madrasah, Private Madrasah, State Ibtidaiyah Madrasah and State Islamic Institute (IAIN). Furthermore, the development of the quality of madrassas was carried out by the government of the New Order era as outlined in the Joint Decree (SKB) of the 3 Ministers on March 24, 1974. This policy is followed by small schools (in press) so that they can revive madrasas. Coupled with the subsidies from the government in rehabilitating buildings, Islamic boarding schools have also begun to establish their madrasah [35].

### 4. Muhammadiyah Education in the New Order Era (1966-1998)

Muhammadiyah education in the New Order era experienced significant development in line with the government's policy of being more open to Islamic education. Muhammadiyah took advantage of this momentum to expand its educational network, establishing various educational institutions ranging from elementary to higher education in various regions. The Muhammadiyah educational curriculum at this time has been adjusted by integrating the national curriculum so that madrassas and Muhammadiyah schools are equivalent to public schools in terms of educational standards. This step allows Muhammadiyah graduates to continue their education to a higher level without administrative obstacles [36].

Muhammadiyah also focuses on the modernization of education which is motivated by the religious attitude of the people who are still not rational, mixed with shirk, khurafat, bid'ah, and taqlid due to the great influence of animist beliefs and the process of Islamization that reeks of mysticism. Muhammadiyah carried out the renewal of religious education by modernizing the education system, exchanging the Islamic boarding school system with a modern education system that is by the times. In addition, teaching religion in an easy-tounderstand, didactic, and pedagogical way has always been a thought in Muhammadiyah <u>[37]</u>.

The challenges faced by Muhammadiyah in the New Order were related to the government's policies that tended to be centralistic and strict control over community organizations, so they had to be careful in maintaining relations with the government to ensure the sustainability and development of their educational institutions. That way, Muhammadiyah can expand and strengthen its education system.

#### 5. Muhammadiyah Education in the Reform Era to the Present (1998-Present)

Muhammadiyah education in the Reform era until now has shown significant quality, both in terms of quantity and quality, and has succeeded in expanding its formal education network. Starting from the elementary level to universities spread throughout Indonesia, including remote areas. To date, Muhammadiyah has established thousands of educational institutions spread throughout Indonesia with a total of 5,346 schools and 4,623 kindergartens/PAUD, with details of the number of elementary schools / MI of 2,453, junior high schools 1,599, high schools / MA / vocational schools totaling 1,294 schools (Muhammadiyah Editorial Team, 2024), and universities totaling 172 consisting of 83 universities, 28 institutes, 54 high schools, 6 Polytechnics, and 1 Academy [38].

Muhammadiyah also established international-based educational institutions, such as Muhammadiyah Boarding School (MBS), to prepare the young generation to be able to compete at the global level, while still instilling religious and national values. At the university level, Muhammadiyah Higher Education (PTM) is the center of innovation and scientific development. Several PTMs such as the University of Muhammadiyah Malang (UMM), the University of Muhammadiyah Surakarta (UMS), and Ahmad Dahlan University (UAD), are known to have excellent programs that support research and community empowerment [39]. PTM is also active in establishing international cooperation to improve the quality of education and research.

Despite being faced with challenges such as quality disparities between institutions and the need for infrastructure modernization, Muhammadiyah continues to innovate to improve the quality of education. These efforts include improving teacher training, implementing digital technology, and providing scholarships for underprivileged students. As a progressive organization, Muhammadiyah integrates information technology into the learning process, such as the implementation of e-learning platforms and digitization of teaching materials, to increase the effectiveness of teaching [40]. Muhammadiyah has taught that technological and scientific progress can go hand in hand with the development of morals and morals. Thus, Muhammadiyah not only maintains the relevance of Islamic education in the modern era but also contributes to national and global development.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Muhammadiyah as one of the largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia has played a significant role in the reform and modernization of Islamic education since its establishment in 1912 by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan. This organization integrates religious and general education, rejects the dichotomy between secular and spiritual sciences, and applies the principles of education based on Islamic values that are progressive and relevant to the development of the times. Muhammadiyah's educational philosophy is based on the Qur'an and As-Sunnah, with a focus on the development of the whole human being through three main aspects, namely ontology, epistemology, and axiology of Islamic education. This includes an understanding of theology that supports social empowerment, the integration of religious and public curriculums, as well as innovative educational methods such as the discussion and application of tajdid values. The history of Muhammadiyah education shows a dynamic adaptation to various social, political, and economic challenges, from the Dutch colonial period to the reform era. This organization succeeded in creating modern educational institutions that not only produce intellectual individuals but also noble characters, able to contribute to the development of society. Muhammadiyah has become an important pillar in the national education system because it can manage thousands of education ranging from early childhood education to universities spread throughout Indonesia. Muhammadiyah's continuous educational reform efforts reflect the organization's vision to educate the nation and combine intellectual progress with noble morals within the framework of Islamic values.

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### **Author's Contribution**

All authors contributed equally to the publication of this paper, all authors read and approved this paper, and all authors declare no conflict of interest.

#### **Conflict Of Interest**

All authors state that there is no conflict of interest.

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