



# **KH Ahmad Dahlan's thought: bridging the gap between Islamic religious knowledge and general education in formal institutions**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Insulation or separation between general knowledge and Islamic religious education curricula in formal educational institutions and the injustice of students getting the opportunity to study in schools under Dutch colonialism oriented towards a general knowledge curriculum became a deep concern by the KH. Ahmad Dahlan at that time. The implementation of his thoughts will be traced to current educational institutions, both in Indonesia and other parts of the world, such as Europe. Therefore, this research aims to elaborate on the character of the Scholar's thought, which combines general education with worldly insights in public schools and Islamic boarding schools based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, which are oriented towards the afterlife. The first step "Sang Ulama" took was to approach and collaborate with the management of Budi Utomo in Yogyakarta, which is close to government-owned schools. Furthermore, on the advice of Bung Tomo, KH. Ahmad Dahlan founded his school with Islamic nuances and broad insight, named Volks School Muhammadiyah Kauman in 1916 as the first native-owned public school in Indonesia. Currently, the implementation of this thought has developed in the curriculum of government-owned public educational institutions and Islamic religious education institutions without eliminating the existence of Islamic boarding schools. The thought of this curriculum character gets a special portion at all levels of education, be it elementary, middle school, or even higher education in Indonesia and globally, without any obstacles from the National curriculum.

**Keywords:** Curriculum; Volks school Muhammadiyah Kauman; native and public schools

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Education is the demand of the times in building human civilization. A nation's high level of education determines the quality of its human resources. Since the beginning of this nation's founding, the Republic of Indonesia has been included in the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution.

Which reads ".....to educate the nation's life...." as a mandate from national leaders at the beginning of the Republic of Indonesia's Independence in 1945. However, long before independence in the Dutch colonial era, an education fighter known as the Enlightenment was named KH. Ahmad Dahlan has echoed the importance of education for indigenous people. The word native here refers to the identity of ordinary people not affiliated with the nobility or the nobility created by the colonialists at that time. In other words, ordinary or primordial people were only allowed to obtain non-formal knowledge in Muslim prayer rooms or Islamic boarding schools on the basics of Islamic religious knowledge known as the yellow book, while among the colonizers and their families and people of royal blood entitled to gain general knowledge in the offices of the Dutch East Indies (Najamuddin, 2005). The dichotomy of the right to acquire knowledge between general and Islamic religious knowledge concerns KH. Ahmad Dahlan wanted to combine the two fields of knowledge in one official school to give all students the same educational opportunities. The Scholars, who received religious knowledge from his father, who was a "khatib" at the Great Mosque in Yogyakarta at that time, was allowed to perform the pilgrimage twice in Mecca for the first time in 1890, as well as gain Islamic knowledge about the Qur'an and hadiths. He also studied world scholars such as Ibn Taimiyah and Ibn Qayyim Al-Januziah.

Initially KH. Ahmad Dahlan founded the Muhammadiyah Association in 1912, which aims to revive the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah and their application in individual and community life (Hadikusuma, 2014). He felt moved by Allah's call in the Qur'an Surah Ali Imran ayah 104:

وَلْتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

The meaning:

*"Let there arise out of a group of people inviting to all that is good (Islam), enjoining al-Ma'ruf and forbidding Al-Munkar. Moreover, it is they who are successful."* (QS: Ali Imran: 104).

Furthermore, to realize the idea of merging the education system in 1909, KH. Ahmad Dahlan joined Budi Utomo Yogyakarta. This is because the administrators of Budi Utomo have a role in government-owned schools, and he even became one of the leaders of Budi Utomo in Yogyakarta. This was intended so he could give the school Islamic religious lessons. The results were positive, even the administrators of Budi Utomo gave advice and helped the Kiai to set up his own school. Schools are characterized by schools that have been managed with neat management and are supported by a permanent organization to avoid the habit of other institutions. The school will also be closed if the scholar or teacher dies (Darban, 2020).

Meanwhile, the first school was pioneered by the Scholar KH. Ahmad Dahlan was at his house in Kauman, and in 1916, it was legalized and equated with Volks school with the name Volks school Muhammadiyah Kauman, which intelligent students characterize have morals as capital in navigating global life while maintaining the noble values of the nation and religion as a defense against influences coming from outside, let alone things that could threaten the integrity of the nation and state.

The breakthrough of the scholars' smart thinking, integrating general knowledge education and Islamic religious knowledge based on the Qur'an and the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad SAW in one educational institution, has become a bottleneck in the curriculum system in Indonesia, especially among the Muhammadiyah. In other words, KH. Ahmad Dahlan is a figure and scholar of reform in education who is included in 20 groups of charismatic scholars in Indonesia (Al Manar, 2014).

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the existence of educational institutions in Indonesia and globally, both at the elementary, junior, and senior high school levels, that implement a curriculum based on KH's breakthrough thinking. KH. Ahmad Dahlan brought together general knowledge and Islamic religious teachings. How important this education is for humans so that the process starts from infancy in the mother's womb, and parents must understand (Nurany et al., 2023).

## **2. METHODS**

The research method used is review papers (Sultan dkk., 2023). The search for textbooks and article journals uses the Research Gate search engine, which actively displays references to the latest research results. Topic coverage displays the existence of the curriculum of KH Ahmad Dahlan in educational institutions, starting at the elementary, junior, and senior high school and even at the higher education level, both locally and globally. Some combine general and religious knowledge; some separate the religious curriculum and general knowledge.

Moreover, some unify Muhammadiyah's character education in general subjects. Besides that, it will describe additional recommendations for curriculum models to adapt to the needs of modern society.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Education character thinking KH. Ahmad Dahlan aims to form Muslim people who are virtuous, broad-minded, understand the problems of secular science, and are willing to fight for the advancement of society. In general, the implementation of the character of KH. Ahmad Dahlan is depicted in Indonesia's current national education curriculum. There are 2 main models of this curriculum, namely the separation of national curriculum subjects and the character of Islamic religious teachings and the national curriculum and Islamic religious teachings integrated into general subjects or applied to the moral values of education stakeholders.

(Yusri et al., 2019) His research on STIKIP PGRI West Sumatra explained that this institution combines national and religious curricula, where religious values emphasize morals in discipline, cooperation, and responsibility. Meanwhile, at the elementary education level at SD Muhammadiyah Kalisoka Kulon Progo Yogyakarta, religious, nationalist, independent, mutual cooperation, and integrity values are emphasized in the Islamic curriculum. This maintains Muhammadiyah's identity (Tantowi & Widodo, 2019). In line with this, (Riyadi et al., 2023) write that the Muhammadiyah Darul Arqam Senior High School, Karang Anyer, develops a character-based Islamic religious curriculum in which all elements of the school (students, teachers, and staff) are involved in implementing Siamese broadcast such as tadarus Al-Qur" every Friday at School activities begin with the Dhuha prayer at 07.00 in the morning. Meanwhile, (Suryadi et al., 2019), in their investigations at the elementary, junior, and senior high school or SMK levels, both public and private, in Jakarta, implemented the 2013 curriculum, which was full of controversy at the time. The results of this study were similar to those found (Mala\* et al., 2020) at the college level of vocational programs. However, Islamic religious character education was included in the national curriculum. Unfortunately, the 2013 curriculum is hampered by graduate competency standards, competency in the availability of textbooks, and teacher competency. These obstacles require time and good infrastructure, so their implementation is often unsuccessful, as happened at MTs Surabaya.

(Lumajang, 2017). That is why this curriculum has not been revised again. What is interesting about KH's thinking? Ahmad Dahlan was adopted at the Raudhatul Ulum Islamic Boarding School, Jember, which implements a balanced portion of the national curriculum between general knowledge and religion (Alid et al., 2022). The curriculum implemented by the Raudhatul Ulum Islamic Boarding School is also implemented at

the Madrasah Aliyah Mizanul Kubra (MAMK) level in Binjai, South Sumatra, as summarized in Manshuruddin's study (Rangkuti, 2023). The educational model at MAMK is similar to Islamic boarding schools, where students also study. The basic thing distinguishing between the curriculum in Madrasas and Islamic Boarding Schools in Indonesia is the different percentages of general knowledge and the core lessons of Islam. In Madrasas, it covers 30% Islamic religious education material and 70% general subjects. On the other hand, the difference between Islamic and general religious knowledge is 70% and 30% in Islamic boarding schools.

KH. Ahmad Dahlan, the Reformer in education, which integrates Islamic religious values and general knowledge, is also implemented in school institutions at SD Muhammadiyah Tegal. Students have holistic cognitive and spiritual abilities (Akhmad, 2020) (Wasliman et al., 2023). That is, the learning process emphasizes student-centered learning activities—recent developments in the initial thoughts of KH. Ahmad Dahlan is contained in the curriculum applied to class VIII, which can be seen in independent study in the social sciences subject, where religious values are broken down in his textbooks. The material includes tolerance, morals, and manners in activities (Sultan et al., 2023). Implementing the independent learning curriculum is also at SMP Muhammadiyah Al-Mujahidin Gunung Kidul, which is nationally superior. Not only at the national level but also at the global level, which combines religious and general knowledge (Antoro et al., 2022).

An interesting thing was done at the Darul Arqam Islamic Boarding School, Patean Kendal, where the boarding school developed a curriculum pattern combining the Ministry of Religion and Ministry of National Education curricula in a package system for each education unit. Learning activities last from morning to night. When the semester evaluation stage took place, what was unique was not only the students who were evaluated; the teachers/scholars were also tested (Kirno, 2023). This aims to maintain the quality of education in this boarding school.

Besides the unification of the national curriculum of general knowledge and religion in one educational unit, it turns out that there are still junior high school level schools in Surabaya that only develop a national curriculum containing general knowledge. Just added to the subject area of Philosophy besides Biology, Chemistry, and Physics (Setiawan & Suwandi, 2022). On the contrary, what happened at the Al Mukhtariyah Islamic Boarding School, The Two Portibi River, North Padang Lawas, at the junior and senior high school levels in its early days, as studied by (Siregar, 2022), which only focused on the traditional religious curriculum, which was sufficient to study the yellow book. However, along the way, it has adopted the Ministry of Religion curriculum, which integrates general knowledge and religious education.

Apart from schools or educational institutions at the national level, KH. Ahmad Dahlan was also applied in world educational institutions such as European countries, and his study reported that there was a reform of the national curriculum in Norway, which initially did not include religious values, to include religious elements at the elementary to high school levels in this country. This picture also occurs in Greece and Sweden (Schreiner, 2004). They reasoned that religious education is essential to equip students as a whole as a means of exploration to maintain self-cohesion, not only in European countries where the majority of the population is non-Muslim, Turkey, which is part of European countries with a Muslim majority, has developed education in higher education institutions that combines religion and science, including computer science, electronics and engineering. What is unique about this institution is that in the early stages of the semester, general courses are taught for 4 to 6 years. In the final stage, students are provided with spiritual-related material, which they call entering the 'madras' stage (Oktar, 2022).

From the results of the description above, it can be concluded that the movement for renewal of the charismatic cleric KH. Ahmad Dahlan has grown at the national and global levels. This proves that the incorporation of general knowledge and the teachings of Islam in elementary, middle, high school, and even tertiary education is appropriate. Even though there are still educational institutions that only teach general education without incorporating religious values or only studying the traditional yellow book, the thought of "Sang Pencerah" Ahmad Dahlan has proven to be more widely adopted. Therefore, in the future, education curriculum reform must be supplemented and adapted to the development of the millennial era, which teaches not only general knowledge but also requires digital-based technology subjects that are controlled by religious values so that they do not lose their benefits for the benefit of the follower of the Prophet in a humane way. It takes the involvement of all education stakeholders (Tolulope Victoria et al., 2018) with the same vision and mission as well as large capital to make it happen quickly and precisely so that we become a developed country. This educational concept will lead humanity to achieve happiness in this world and hereafter, such as the prayer we often say to sweep the universe.

وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَقُولُ رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي آخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

The meaning:

*"Some say, "Oh Allah, give in this world that which is good and in the Hereafter that which is good, and save us from the torment of the Fire." (QS. al-Baqarah: 201).*

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