

## Islamic Educational Institutions According to KH. Ahmad Dahlan

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**Keywords:** Ahmad Dahlan, Educational Institutions, Islamic Education.

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**Abstract:** In today's world, education is a never-ending topic. Islamic education is a discipline that plays a crucial role in the Muslim community. Within Islamic education, the scope is influenced by various perspectives of educational figures, thus becoming theories that serve as the foundation for Islamic education. K.H. Ahmad Dahlan was one such figure who placed a significant emphasis on Islamic educational institutions. Therefore, the focus of this paper is the concept of Islamic Educational Institutions according to K.H. Ahmad Dahlan. The purpose of this study is to understand the concept of Islamic Educational Institutions according to K.H. Ahmad Dahlan. This study uses qualitative data and library research. The results of the data analysis indicate that Islamic Educational Institutions are educational institutions aimed at developing a holistic Muslim personality. According to K.H. Ahmad Dahlan, the purpose of Islamic Educational Institutions is to shape a person's personality into a superior human being. In addition, his educational thought emphasizes the integration of religious and general sciences in the learning process.

**Abstrak:** Di dunia saat ini, pendidikan merupakan topik yang tidak pernah berhenti untuk dibahas. Pendidikan Islam adalah suatu disiplin ilmu yang memainkan peran penting dalam komunitas Muslim. Dalam pendidikan Islam, ruang lingkupnya dipengaruhi oleh berbagai perspektif tokoh pendidikan sehingga berkembang menjadi teori-teori yang menjadi landasan pendidikan Islam. K.H. Ahmad Dahlan merupakan salah satu tokoh yang memberikan perhatian besar terhadap lembaga pendidikan Islam. Oleh karena itu, fokus tulisan ini adalah konsep lembaga pendidikan Islam menurut K.H. Ahmad Dahlan. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk memahami konsep lembaga pendidikan Islam menurut K.H. Ahmad Dahlan. Penelitian ini menggunakan data kualitatif dan metode studi kepustakaan. Hasil analisis data menunjukkan bahwa lembaga pendidikan Islam merupakan lembaga pendidikan yang bertujuan mengembangkan kepribadian Muslim secara holistik. Menurut K.H. Ahmad Dahlan, tujuan lembaga pendidikan Islam adalah membentuk kepribadian seseorang menjadi manusia yang unggul. Selain itu, pemikiran pendidikannya menekankan integrasi ilmu agama dan ilmu umum dalam proses pembelajaran.



## **INTRODUCTION**

Islamic education is education that aims to form a complete Muslim. According to KH Ahmad Dahlan, the concept of education is the formation of personality and the development of a superior man. An educator for KH Ahmad Dahlan must be able to give an example to participant learners. Participants must have knowledge that can be applied in daily life, as well as the ability to apply it. Curriculum KH. Ahmad Dahlan's education was based on the Quran and Hadith. Islamic Education materials include teaching the Quran and Hadith, reading, writing, counting, and knowledge of the earth. Al-Quran material and Hadith on worship, equality, faith, and morals. Educational methods such as method sorogan, bandongan, and wetonan are part of the madrasah form, or a school that applies a classical study method. KH Ahmad Dahlan make it clear in the evaluation that it will be based on material obtained through everyday practice. And the environment of KH Ahmad Dahlan is, of course, family-oriented, as well as the place itself, which is very religious.

A sharp dichotomy marked the world of Indonesian education at the beginning of the 20th century: on the one hand, traditional Islamic boarding schools focused on religious knowledge; on the other hand, schools in the Dutch colonial secular model emphasized general knowledge. This creates a need for a capable synthesis to bridge the second poles, said. In the middle reality, this is the figure of KH. Ahmad Dahlan, the founder of the Muhammadiyah organization, emerged with revolutionary educational reform ideas.

Ahmad Dahlan, regarding Islamic education institutions, does not just adopt the Western model or unthinkingly maintain tradition. On the contrary, he offers a draft of a holistic, modern Islamic education. The goal is clear: giving birth to a man who is not only intelligent in a way intellectual in knowledge of the world and the hereafter, but also has spiritual depth and a strong commitment to charitable social work.

This article will elaborate on the vision and principles put forward by KH. Ahmad Dahlan built Islamic educational institutions. The main focus of the discussion is the integration of the religious and general curricula, the implementation of the modern classical system, and an emphasis on moral aspects and the contextualization of Islamic teachings in real life. Through his ideas, we can understand the relevance of education and the progress he made, which remain the main pillars of the system of Muhammadiyah education to this day.

This study is about KH's thoughts. Ahmad Dahlan, in the field of Islamic education, has been the subject of academic study. For example, research conducted by Hamsah and Nurchamidah shows that thinking KH. Ahmad Dahlan's education is oriented toward renewal (tajdid), integrating religious knowledge and science to address the challenges of modernity (Hamsah & Nurchamidah, 2021). This study emphasizes that Ahmad Dahlan's education was not only normative but also contextual and applicable in social life.

In addition, research by Karimuddin discloses that modernizing Islamic education according to KH. Ahmad Dahlan sought to adopt a systematic Western

education while preserving Islamic values (Karimuddin, 2019). This is seen from the implementation system, the classical curriculum, as well as the more professional management in the institution of Muhammadiyah education.

Another study conducted by Lenggono confirms the idea that Ahmad Dahlan's education is a response to the dichotomy between the traditional Islamic boarding school system and the colonial educational system (W. Lenggono, 2018). In his research, it is stated that Ahmad Dahlan tried a second system through the integration of curriculum and the formation of a character participant in holistic education.

Hermawanti and Nisrokha state in their research that draft Islamic education should be based on KH. Ahmad Dahlan emphasizes the balance between spiritual, intellectual, and social aspects. (Hermawati & Nisrokha, 2020) Education is not only oriented towards the transfer of knowledge, but also towards the formation of morals and the development of social awareness among participants.

As for the research, the latest by Okastina et al. shows that KH. Ahmad Dahlan's thoughts are still very relevant in the face of challenges in education in the modern era, especially in matters of innovation, institutions, and adaptation to current development. (AH Okastina et al, 2025). It confirms that the educational model developed by Ahmad Dahlan is flexible and progressive.

Based on previous studies, some big studies on KH. Ahmad Dahlan's thoughts on Islamic education tend to focus on aspects of modernization, the integration of religious and general knowledge, and their relevance in the context of modern education. However, research is generally still descriptive-conceptual and not yet in a specific study draft of institutional Islamic education as a complete and structured system.

As for the novelty of the study, it lies in several aspects. First, this research not only discusses KH's thinking. Ahmad Dahlan's education in general, but with a special focus on the concept of Islamic education as an instrument of social change. Second, research. This study examines Islamic education from a more systemic perspective, including aspects such as objectives, curriculum, methods, and integrated institutional management. Third, research also highlights the dimensions of practice and relevance of institutional Islamic education in answering contemporary challenges, so that it is not only normative but also applicable.

Thus, research contributes to new treasury studies on Islamic education, particularly by strengthening the understanding of the draft institutional Islamic education according to KH. Ahmad Dahlan is a holistic, adaptive, and transformative educational model.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative approach with library research. The qualitative approach was chosen because it sought to understand KH. Ahmad Dahlan's concepts and thoughts on Islamic educational institutions in depth and context. Library research was conducted by reviewing various relevant literature, including KH. Ahmad Dahlan's

own writings, books, scientific journals, and other secondary sources that discuss the ideas and practices of Muhammadiyah Islamic education (Lexy J. Moleong, 2019).

The primary data sources in this study are works that directly reflect KH. Ahmad Dahlan's thoughts, as reflected in his writings in Muhammadiyah documents or in his students' notes. Secondary data sources include biographies, previous research, and literature discussing the history of Islamic education in Indonesia (Sugiyono, 2018).

Data collection was conducted through documentation, namely by identifying, reading, and reviewing documents relevant to the research focus (Suharsimi Arikunto, 2013). The data obtained were then analyzed using the content analysis method, namely by interpreting the text to determine the meaning and concept of Islamic education according to KH. Ahmad Dahlan (Krippendorff, 2018). The analysis was carried out descriptively-analytically, with steps including data reduction, data presentation, and concluding (Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, 2014).

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Result**

#### **Biography**

KH. Ahmad Dahlan's intellectual blood flowed strongly in his veins. This article will outline his family history. KH. Ahmad Dahlan was born in Kauman, Yogyakarta, on August 1, 1868, with the nickname Muhammad Darwis. He was the fourth of seven children. His mother was Siti Aminah, daughter of KH. Ibrahim, a great village head of Yogyakarta. While his father's genealogy continues to the figure of Walisongo, Maulana Malik Ibrahim in the 12th order, namely KH. Ahmad Dahlan bin KH. Abu Bakar bin KH. Muhammad Sulaiman bin K. Murtadha bin K. Ilyas bin Demang Djurung Djuru Kapindo bin Demang Djurung Djuru Sapisan bin Maulana Sulaiman Ageng Gribing (Djatinom) bin Maulana Muhammad Fadlullah (Sunan Prapen) bin Maulana Ainul Yaqin (Sunan Giri) bin Maulana Ishaq bin Maulana Malik Ibrahim (Hamsah & Nurchamidah, 2021).

KH. Ahmad Dahlan's Educational History: As a child, he began his education by studying the Qur'an with his father. After graduating, he continued his education by studying various scientific concentrations with several kyai both at home and abroad. In Indonesia, he studied fiqh with KH. Muhammad Shaleh studied grammar with KH. Muhsin studied Hadith with K. Mahfudh Termas and Shaykh Khayat, learned Qiraah from Shaykh Amien and Sayyid Bakri Syatha, and learned falaq from KH. Dahlan Semarang, and learned the science of animal poison from Shaykh Hasan.

Meanwhile, he also gained experience during his Hajj pilgrimage in 1889 and 1903. During his Hajj, he studied fiqh with Sheikh Salaf Bafadal, Sheikh Sa'id Yamani, and Sheikh Sa'id Babusyiel. He studied Hadith with Mufti Shafi'i, and qira'at with Sheikh Ali Misri of Mecca. From this explanation, it is clear that he had no experience with Western education, yet he still left room for the gates of rationality in Islamic teachings. This spirit of rationality cannot be separated from the influence of the renewal movement, understood as ideas, schools of thought, movements, and efforts to "change" the teachings of religion to adapt to the new context created by advances in science and technology (Hidayat, 2015).

Then, in 1903, Ahmad Dahlan returned to Mecca and stayed there for two years. Upon his second return to Mecca, Ahmad Dahlan had the opportunity to study with Sheikh Ahmad Khatib, who was also the teacher of the founder of Nahdlatul Ulama, KH Hasyim Asyari. Then, in 1912, Ahmad Dahlan founded Muhammadiyah in Kauman, Yogyakarta. After returning from Mecca, KH. Ahmad Dahlan married Siti Walidah, his own cousin and the daughter of H. Fadhil, a Penghulu, his daughter, who was married to KH. Ahmad Dahlan was named Siti Walidah, also known as Nyai Ahmad Dahlan, a national hero and founder of Aisyiyah. From his marriage to Siti Walidah, Ahmad Dahlan had six children: Djohanah, Siradj Dahlan, Siti Busyro, Irfan Dahlan, Siti Aisyah, and Siti Zaharah. Ahmad Dahlan also married Nya Abdullah, the widow of H. Abdullah. He is also known to have married Nyai Rum, the sister of Kiai Munawwir Krapayak, and married Nyai Aisyah Cianjur, the sister of Adjengan Penghulu. From his marriage to Nyai Aisyah, Ahmad Dahlan had a child named Dandanah.

In 1912, KH. Ahmad Dahlan founded an organization called Muhammadiyah to realize his ideals: to create Islamic renewal in the archipelago. KH. Ahmad Dahlan sought to renew society's way of thinking and acting, while remaining in accordance with Islamic teachings. He wanted to encourage Muslims in Indonesia to return to living according to the guidance contained in the Quran and the Hadith. Therefore, from its inception, Ahmad Dahlan emphasized that Muhammadiyah was not a political organization but a social organization engaged in education.

Ahmad Dahlan's idea to establish Muhammadiyah received strong support from his family and those around him. However, this support apparently couldn't prevent the emergence of slander, accusations, and even incitement directed at Ahmad Dahlan. He was accused of establishing a new religion and violating Islamic teachings. Some also accused Ahmad Dahlan of being a false leader, of imitating the Christian Dutch, of teaching in Dutch schools, and of associating with Budi Utomo figures, most of whom were aristocrats at the time. At that time, KH. Ahmad Dahlan taught Islamic studies at the OSVIA school in Magelang, a school specifically for the Dutch and children of the aristocracy. Some even tried to assassinate Ahmad Dahlan. Despite facing various slanders, incitement, and threats, Ahmad Dahlan remained steadfast and continued his ideals and struggle for Islamic renewal in Indonesia.

KH. Ahmad Dahlan continued his struggle to establish Muhammadiyah by submitting an application for legal status to the Dutch East Indies government on December 20, 1912. The application was only granted by the government in 1914. This permit was also valid only for the Yogyakarta area, and Muhammadiyah was allowed to operate only within the licensed area, namely Yogyakarta. KH Ahmad Dahlan turned 54 in 1923 and was buried at the Karangajen cemetery in Yogyakarta. He is one of the national heroes who has meritorious services. One of them is that he has raised awareness among the Indonesian people through his ideas on Islamic renewal and education.

In addition, the government considers Ahmad Dahlan to have rendered other meritorious services to the progress of the Indonesian nation. Here are some of his meritorious services: First, KH. Ahmad Dahlan has pioneered the awakening of Muslims

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in Indonesia to recognize their fate as a colonized nation and to recognize that they still have much to learn and much to do in Islamic renewal in the Indonesian nation. Second, through the Muhammadiyah organization he founded, KH. Ahmad Dahlan imparted many pure Islamic teachings to the Indonesian people.

Furthermore, the teachings brought by KH. Ahmad Dahlan fostered progress, intelligence, and charitable work for the Indonesian nation and its people, without forgetting the foundations of faith and Islam. Third, through the Muhammadiyah organization that he founded, KH. Ahmad Dahlan has pioneered social and educational charities that are essential to the nation's revival and progress, grounded in the spirit and teachings of Islam. Fourth, through its organization, Muhammadiyah for women, or Aisyiyah, has pioneered the awakening of Indonesian women, enabling them to gain an education and function socially on a par with men.

These are some of KH. Ahmad Dahlan's contributions to advancing the Indonesian nation. These four points were enshrined in Presidential Decree No. 657 of 1961, which declared KH. Ahmad Dahlan is a national hero.

## **Islamic Educational Institutions According to KH Ahmad Dahlan**

Islamic educational institutions, in KH. Ahmad Dahlan's view is that these are strategic tools for reforming the Muslim community. Education is not only understood as the transmission of religious knowledge, but also as a medium for developing character, morals, and social intelligence. According to him, Islamic educational institutions must build awareness among the people to escape the backwardness experienced during the colonial period (Sari et al., 2023). At that time, the traditional Islamic education system was more oriented towards textual religious teachings and had not yet reached social and community aspects. Meanwhile, the colonial government's education tended to instill secular values separate from Islamic teachings (Krippendorff, 2018).

From these conditions, KH. Ahmad Dahlan assessed that the renewal of Islamic educational institutions was essential to address the challenges of the times. His idea of renewal was realized through the establishment of Muhammadiyah, which became a forum for a modern Islamic education system. In his view, Islamic educational institutions must integrate religious and general knowledge so that students maintain a balance between faith, knowledge, and good deeds (Lenggono, 2018). According to Ahmad Dahlan, Islam does not reject modern science but instead encourages its followers to master knowledge as a means of prospering in life and of upholding Islamic teachings rationally and practically (Darwis et al., 2024).

According to KH Ahmad Dahlan, the concept of Islamic educational institutions emphasizes the integration of knowledge, modern management, and social spirit. First, in terms of scientific integration, he wanted Islamic educational institutions to teach not only religious knowledge, such as fiqh, tauhid, and tafsir, but also general knowledge, such as mathematics, geography, and foreign languages. Thus, students would not only be spiritually pious but also competent in worldly affairs (Karimuddin, 2019). Second, in terms of institutional aspects, he introduced a classical system that uses a space-classroom structure, time allocation, a structured curriculum, and evaluation of learning

outcomes. This system is adapted from Western educational models but adapted to Islamic values (Okastina et al., 2025).

Not only that, KH. Ahmad Dahlan also emphasized the importance of professionalism in managing and developing Islamic educational institutions. For him, Islamic educational institutions cannot simply be run by charismatic religious figures; they must be managed systematically through effective administration, competent teaching staff, and focused leadership. In this regard, Islamic educational institutions serve as a forum for cultivating a generation of young Muslims who are knowledgeable, faithful, and imbued with a spirit of da'wah, and who will continue the baton of Islamic religious knowledge and improve society. KH. Ahmad Dahlan viewed education as a process of empowerment, not just teaching. Therefore, Islamic educational institutions must be central to the formation of active, creative, innovative, and responsible individuals for their social environment.

KH. Ahmad Dahlan also emphasized that Islamic educational institutions cannot be separated from community life. Education must be rooted in social reality and serve to empower the community. It is reflected in the principle he consistently emphasized: that real deeds must be the fruit of the knowledge learned. Therefore, according to Ahmad Dahlan, the ideal Islamic educational institution instills values of faith and morality while simultaneously training social skills so that students can become agents of change in society (Karimuddin, 2019).

Thus, according to KH Ahmad Dahlan, the concept of Islamic educational institutions is holistic, encompassing spiritual, intellectual, and social aspects. Islamic educational institutions should not be exclusive, but should be open to developments in science and technology.

Modernizing Islamic educational institutions, he argued, does not mean abandoning Islamic values, but rather adapting educational methods to the needs of the times without losing their Islamic spirit. This idea has enabled Muhammadiyah educational institutions to develop rapidly and contribute significantly to the formation of an advanced, knowledgeable, and morally upright Islamic society.

## **Discussion**

### **Relevance of Islamic Educational Institutions**

KH. Ahmad Dahlan's thoughts on Islamic educational institutions have significant strategic relevance for the renewal of religious education in Indonesia. First, he emphasized that Islamic educational institutions should not stand apart from social realities and the needs of the times, but must be institutions capable of integrating religious knowledge with general knowledge, so that students are not only "pious" in a religious sense but also possess worldly insights and abilities (Lenggono, 2018). This is evident in his view that Islamic education must be holistic, encompassing intellectual, spiritual, moral, and social aspects, which are then translated into changes in the curriculum and teaching methods within the institutions he leads (Hermawanti & Nisrokha, 2020). Second, the relevance of educational institutions, according to Ahmad Dahlan, can also be seen in their inclusive orientation: he opened access to education for

previously underserved groups, including women and communities that may not have traditionally received adequate formal education services (Tarik et al., 2024).

In this framework, according to him, Islamic educational institutions are not only a mechanism for transmitting religious teachings, but also as agents of social transformation that prepare individuals to contribute to national life, not just religious life. Third, in the modern era and globalization like today, Ahmad Dahlan's thoughts remain relevant because the institutions he encouraged that require systems, curricula, and management that are adaptive to the development of the times become a model for Islamic educational institutions that want to maintain their credibility and effectiveness (Qurrota et al., 2024). Thus, research on educational institutions according to Ahmad Dahlan can underscore that their relevance lies in three main dimensions: the integration of religious and general curricula, the inclusiveness of educational access, and institutional adaptation to changing times.

### **Contribution of Ahmad Dahlan's Educational Thought**

KH. Ahmad Dahlan's educational thought has made a significant contribution to the development of Islamic education in Indonesia, particularly through the modernization and reform of Islamic educational institutions. One of his major contributions was integrating religious sciences and general sciences into the educational curriculum. At a time when Islamic boarding schools focused mainly on religious instruction and colonial schools emphasized secular knowledge, Ahmad Dahlan introduced an educational model that harmoniously combined both. This integration aimed to produce Muslim individuals who possessed spiritual depth, intellectual capability, and social responsibility simultaneously.

Another important contribution of Ahmad Dahlan's educational thought was his effort to modernize the educational system and institutional management. He introduced the classical classroom system, structured curriculum, scheduled learning activities, and evaluation methods inspired by modern Western education while maintaining Islamic values as the foundation of education. Through Muhammadiyah schools, Ahmad Dahlan demonstrated that Islamic educational institutions could adapt to modern developments without losing their religious identity. This modernization became one of the foundations for the emergence of progressive Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia.

Furthermore, Ahmad Dahlan emphasized that education should function as an instrument of social transformation. According to him, Islamic educational institutions should not merely transfer knowledge but also cultivate social awareness, moral values, and community empowerment. This idea was reflected in Muhammadiyah's educational movement, which focused not only on formal education but also on social services, health care, women's empowerment, and charitable activities. Therefore, Ahmad Dahlan's educational thought contributed greatly to shaping Islamic education as a transformative and socially engaged system.

In the contemporary era, Ahmad Dahlan's educational ideas remain highly relevant, especially in responding to the challenges of globalization, technological advancement, and moral crises in modern society. His concept of holistic education, which

balances intellectual, spiritual, and social dimensions, continues to inspire many Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia today. Through his reformist vision, KH. Ahmad Dahlan laid the foundation for a modern, adaptive, and inclusive Islamic educational system.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that KH. Ahmad Dahlan's thoughts on Islamic educational institutions are rooted in the spirit of renewal (*tajdid*), which aims to shape the whole Muslim human being, namely individuals with strong faith, broad knowledge, and real deeds for the benefit of the community. According to him, Islamic educational institutions should not be limited to the textual transfer of religious knowledge. Still, they must become a means of social and moral transformation that frees the community from ignorance, backwardness, and colonial dependency. Education, in Ahmad Dahlan's view, is a process of empowerment that fosters critical thinking awareness, social sensitivity, and moral responsibility towards the environment and society.

KH initiated the concept of Islamic educational institutions. Ahmad Dahlan emphasized integrating religious and general knowledge, so that students would not only be spiritually intelligent but also competent in the intellectual and social realms. With this integration, Islamic education could produce a generation of pious and progressive Muslims. In terms of institutions, he introduced a modern classical education system encompassing a structured curriculum, time allocation for learning, evaluation methods, and professional governance. Educational institutions, he believed, must be managed systematically, with effective leadership and competent teaching staff, to compete with modern institutions without losing their Islamic values.

Furthermore, KH. Ahmad Dahlan emphasized that Islamic educational institutions must be actively involved in social life, not stand apart from it. The knowledge taught must produce tangible, beneficial actions for society. The principle of "knowledge for action" became the philosophical foundation of the education he founded at Muhammadiyah. It demonstrates that Islamic educational institutions serve as centers for developing character, morals, and social awareness within the community.

In the current context, the thoughts of KH. Ahmad Dahlan remains highly relevant. Three main aspects of his thinking are still very important to implement: First, curriculum integration between religious and general knowledge. Second, educational inclusivity that opens opportunities for all groups, including women. Third, institutional adaptation to developments in the times and technology. Thus, the idea of Islamic educational institutions, according to KH. Ahmad Dahlan constitutes a model of Islamic education. A modern, holistic, adaptive, and transformative system that continues to inspire the development of the Islamic education system in Indonesia and the Islamic world at large.

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