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The Dialectic of the Two Poles of Ahmad Dahlan-Hasyim Asy'ari's Thought: Responding to the Challenges of Contemporary Islamic Education

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Abstract

This study addresses the complex challenges confronting contemporary Islamic education in Indonesia, including a values crisis, social polarization, and rapid technological change, which collectively underscore the need to reconstruct its educational paradigm on robust philosophical foundations. The study aims to explore the educational philosophies of Ahmad Dahlan and Hasyim Asy'ari, analyze the dialectic between modernity and traditionalism embedded in their epistemological frameworks, and evaluate the relevance of this dialectic for advancing contemporary Islamic education. Employing a library research methodology, the study conducts a comparative–reflective analysis of primary sources, such as Ahmad Dahlan's speeches and treatises and Hasyim Asy'ari's *Adab al-'Alim wa al-Muta'allim*—together with pertinent secondary literature. The findings reveal that Ahmad Dahlan's thought prioritizes the integration of scientific knowledge, rational inquiry, and curriculum reform, whereas Hasyim Asy'ari emphasizes ethics, spirituality, and the preservation of tradition grounded in the principle of *al-muhafadzah*. Despite these differing emphases, their philosophies converge on the goal of cultivating individuals who are faithful,

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knowledgeable, and practically engaged in social transformation. The study concludes that the dialectic between their views constitutes not a binary opposition but a productive epistemological synthesis that fosters an integrative, moderate, and transformative model of Islamic education. This synthesis provides a philosophical foundation for reconstructing an educational paradigm that balances ethical–spiritual depth with the critical and creative competencies required to navigate the digital and pluralistic challenges of the twenty-first century.

Keywords: Ahmad Dahlan; Hasyim Asy'ari; Islamic Educational Philosophy; Epistemological Dialectics; Islamic Education Reform

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary Islamic education in Indonesia is facing various challenges. These include a values crisis, technological disruption, and growing social polarization. Viral cases of intolerance in the educational world and debates over curriculum and religious moderation demonstrate the need for in-depth reflection on the philosophical foundations of Islamic education. This thinking must be able to respond to changing times without ignoring its traditional roots. In this context, a study of the thoughts of two important figures, Ahmad Dahlan and Hasyim Asy'ari, is highly relevant. Both reflect the two poles of modernity and traditionalism, renewal and preservation, and rationality and spirituality (Jasminto & Rofi'ah, 2025; Mokmin, 2025).

Ahmad Dahlan, the founder of Muhammadiyah, is remembered as a figure who paved the way for the renewal of Islamic education in Indonesia. He saw that religious knowledge and general knowledge should not be separated, but rather combined to meet the needs of the times. Therefore, he pushed for a curriculum reform that was more relevant, more open, and more in tune with the dynamics of modern life, without losing the spirit of the Islamic values that underpin it. His progressive ideas positioned education as the primary tool for developing a generation of faithful, knowledgeable, and globally competitive Muslims, while maintaining a focus on Islamic values (Marlini et al., 2024).

On the other hand, Hasyim Asy'ari—the founder of Nahdlatul Ulama—emphasized the importance of preserving the traditions of Islamic boarding schools while simultaneously developing character through education based on manners, sincerity, and ethical relationships between teachers and students. He viewed spiritual values as the core of the

learning process. The principle of *al-muhafadzah 'ala al-qadim al-shalih wa al-akhdzu bil jadid al-ashlah* serves as a foundation that good traditions must be maintained, while remaining open to renewal that brings benefit (I. N. Aini et al., 2025).

The urgency of studying the thoughts of these two figures lies in their importance in formulating an Islamic educational paradigm that is contextually appropriate, integrative, and responsive to global challenges. Although they adopted different approaches, Ahmad Dahlan and Hasyim Asy'ari agreed that Islamic education must instill the values of faith, knowledge, and good deeds as the foundation for developing a holistic individual with character and empowerment (Q. Aini, 2023). The dialectic between modernity and traditionalism that they offer can serve as a conceptual model for addressing educational dualism. It can also address the crisis of values and identity in the era of globalization (Mokmin, 2025).

The philosophy of Islamic education is based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, with the primary goal of developing a complete human being (*insan kamil*), meaning a person with strong faith, extensive knowledge, and noble morals. In this view, education is not merely the transfer of knowledge from teacher to student. It is also a process of character formation, deepened spirituality, and the development of the whole of human potential (Suripto, 2023). Humans are understood simultaneously as Abdullah, servants of God, and *Khalifatullah*, leaders on earth. Therefore, education is directed towards enabling humans to maintain a vertical relationship with God, as well as horizontal relationships with others and with nature (Marlini et al., 2024). From the perspective of Islamic educational philosophy, the concept of the perfect human being is not only considered a moral ideal. It also offers an anthropological vision of humans as multidimensional beings with intellectual, spiritual, social, and ethical potential. Therefore, education must be characterized by *tazkiyah* (purification of the soul) and *ta'dib* (cultivation of good manners). These two concepts emphasize that human self-improvement is a harmonious process between strengthening the mind and refining the heart.

Philosophers such as Al-Farabi, Al-Ghazali, and Ibn Khaldun emphasized that education must be oriented toward ethical and moral goals, rather than merely the transmission of knowledge. Without this orientation, knowledge can become disoriented and potentially destructive. Therefore, Islamic education requires integrating epistemology (how to acquire knowledge), axiology (the benefits of knowledge), and ontology (the nature of humans as subjects of learning). According to these thinkers, ideal education shapes human

beings who are morally, intellectually, and spiritually complete (Rusdiyanto & Werdiningsih, 2024). The concept of humans as caliphs also underscores the need for education to prepare students to address humanitarian and social problems responsibly. It means that a perfect human being is not only a religious figure ritually, but also an individual capable of conducting ijtihad in practical life, making moral decisions in complex social contexts, and contributing to the common good. It is the relevance of Islamic education in the current era: developing individuals who can combine spirituality with 21st-century competencies such as critical thinking, digital literacy, and global ethics.

Islamic education begins with critical reflection on the relationship between revelation, reason, and social reality. In the Indonesian context, it operates within the creative tension between modernity and traditionalism (Mokmin, 2025). Modernity, which emphasizes rationality and scientific progress, often interacts with traditionalism, which upholds the authority of the ulama and the continuity of pesantren values (Nurtawab & Wahyudi, 2022).

In the study of Islamic educational philosophy, the interaction between revelation and reason is central to debate, giving rise to various educational approaches (Arifin & Ichsan, 2024). On the one hand, revelation is seen as a source of absolute truth that provides ethical and normative direction in the educational process. On the other hand, reason serves as a crucial instrument for interpreting revelation and linking it to social change. The creative tension between the two becomes the epistemological strength of Islamic education. Revelation safeguards values, while reason encourages dynamism, innovation, and adaptation. It keeps Islamic education relevant in social transformations, including issues such as democracy, pluralism, technology, and social justice.

In Indonesia, the intersection of modernity and tradition has led to diverse educational practices. Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) maintain the bandongan and sorogan methods, as well as the internalization of adab (traditional values). Meanwhile, modern educational institutions introduce science-based curricula, critical pedagogy, and collaborative learning. This tension, when viewed philosophically, need not be in conflict but can be reconciled to create an educational model that combines classical values with the demands of the times. It arises when the need to develop an inclusive, reflective, and transformative model of Islamic education becomes evident. This model remains rooted in tradition but is open to discoveries in contemporary science and education.

By managing this tension, Islamic education can bridge the gap between religious values and the dynamics of modern society. It requires educational ijtihad, a philosophical and pedagogical effort to formulate educational methods, curricula, and objectives that are not only in accordance with Islamic law but also relevant to social issues such as poverty, injustice, climate change, digital transformation, and ethical challenges in public life. With this approach, Islamic education does not merely respond to the tide of change but instead emerges as a force that helps determine the direction and future of civilization.

Ahmad Dahlan emphasized the need to integrate religious knowledge with general knowledge, while simultaneously building an education system that is sensitive and adaptable to the times. He saw education as a means of liberation and enlightenment, emphasizing rationality, critical thinking, and concrete action (*rahmatan lil 'alamin*) (Mokmin, 2025). On the other hand, Hasyim Asy'ari prioritized manners, spirituality, and character building in Islamic boarding school education while remaining open to beneficial innovations (the principle *of al-muhafadzah*) (I. N. Aini et al., 2025). Both agreed that Islamic education must instill the values of faith, knowledge, and good deeds as the foundation for producing a superior generation (Mokmin et al., 2025). In this dialectic, Ahmad Dahlan emerged as a representative of the modernist paradigm, with his ideas on integrating religious and general knowledge, curriculum reform, and dialogical and rational learning methods. Meanwhile, Hasyim Asy'ari emphasized the importance of Islamic boarding school traditions, spirituality, and character formation, while remaining open to beneficial innovations (Mun'im & Yanto, 2025).

The theoretical framework of knowledge integration serves as a crucial link that rejects the dichotomy of knowledge and affirms that the goal of Islamic education is to form a complete human being capable of facing the challenges of the times without losing their Islamic identity (Fitri et al., 2022; Marlini et al., 2024). In this view, the principle of *al-muhafadzah* serves as the basis for integrating modernity and tradition (I. N. Aini et al., 2025; Maldani, 2025).

Ahmad Dahlan, through Muhammadiyah, integrated religious and general curricula, implemented modern learning methods, and emphasized the importance of character and openness to global knowledge (Mokmin, 2025). Main sources for reference include Ahmad Dahlan's speeches, letters, and works, as well as Muhammadiyah documents (Suripto, 2023). K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari, through his book "Adab al-'Alim wa al-Muta'allim," emphasized that

adab is the main foundation of education. He divided knowledge into three categories: praiseworthy knowledge, blameworthy knowledge, and neutral knowledge, and stressed the importance of intention, sincerity, and the practice of knowledge in everyday life. The main sources for reference are the book "Adab al-'Alim wa al-Muta'allim" and his works on Islamic boarding school education (I. N. Aini et al., 2025; Mislawaty & Febriyanti, 2025).

Several secondary sources are also very useful in researching the educational philosophy of Ahmad Dahlan and Hasyim Asy'ari. These secondary sources include books, research papers, journal articles, and other works that examine the thoughts of both figures. These include historical, philosophical, and implementation aspects of education in Indonesia. These sources not only provide an overview of the development of their thought but also compare, analyze, and relate their relevance to contemporary Islamic education (I. N. Aini et al., 2025; Khoir et al., 2025; Mokmin, 2025).

One example of a secondary source is an article discussing Islamic education reform in Indonesia. This article highlights Ahmad Dahlan's contribution to integrating religious and general education, as well as innovations in learning methods. It also highlights Hasyim Asy'ari's role in preserving the pesantren tradition and his emphasis on morality and spirituality (Mokmin, 2025; Mun'im & Yanto, 2025). Furthermore, there is research specifically discussing the principle of *al-muhafadzah 'ala al-qadim al-shalih wa al-akhdzu bil jadid al-ashlah* in Hasyim Asy'ari's thought. This study highlights the importance of maintaining relevant traditions while simultaneously opening up space for renewal and innovation in education (I. N. Aini et al., 2025; Sugari, 2024).

Secondary sources also include comparative research comparing the concepts of Islamic education between Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama. It includes curriculum, methods, and educational objectives. This research uses a literature review approach, collecting data from various sources and analyzing it using systematic content analysis to obtain robust, accountable conclusions (Musliadi, 2022). The literature also emphasizes the relevance of the thoughts of both figures in facing current educational challenges. It includes concerns about the crisis of values, the need for religious moderation, and the demand to adapt to the digital era. The intellectual legacy of these two figures provides a valuable foundation for developing a more contextual, integrated, and holistic model of Islamic education that emphasizes character building and social responsibility (Mokmin, 2025).

However, in previous research, many studies have analyzed the educational thoughts of Ahmad Dahlan and Hasyim Asy'ari separately. Studies that explicitly position both as subjects in a philosophical dialectic that can be synthesized to address the problems of modern Islamic education are still few. Some studies focus on the historical roles of these two figures (Mokmin, 2025), others discuss curriculum aspects (Mun'im & Yanto, 2025), and others explore the principles of etiquette (I. N. Aini et al., 2025). However, few have combined these two epistemological streams within a dialogical and reflective philosophical framework.

It is where this research lies and contributes. This research offers a dialectical reading that goes beyond comparison and moves toward a synthesis of thought that can serve as a basis for reconstructing Islamic education in a moderate, integrative, and transformative manner. This article positions the encounter between Ahmad Dahlan and Hasyim Asy'ari not as a conflict, but as an opportunity to address the fragmentation of Islamic education, which currently seems trapped in a debate between modernity and tradition. The objectives of this research are, among others: 1) To describe the Islamic educational thought of Ahmad Dahlan and Hasyim Asy'ari from a conceptual and historical perspective; 2) To describe the encounter between modernity and traditionalism in the educational thought of Ahmad Dahlan and Hasyim Asy'ari; 3) To analyze the relevance of Ahmad Dahlan and Hasyim Asy'ari's thought to reconstructing the paradigm of contemporary Islamic education.

Theoretically, this research makes an important contribution to the development of Islamic educational philosophy studies. This contribution is realized through an in-depth comparative analysis of the ontological, epistemological, and axiological dimensions in the thought of Ahmad Dahlan and Hasyim Asy'ari. Through this approach, the research enriches academic discourse by presenting a conceptual synthesis that bridges the dichotomy between traditionalism and modernism, while simultaneously opening the way to formulating a more integrative, comprehensive, and relevant model of Islamic education to meet the needs of the times. Practically, this research offers a framework that educators, policymakers, and Islamic educational institutions can directly apply. This framework can be used to design curricula and learning strategies that integrate ethical-spiritual values with critical and transformative thinking skills. The results of this research can also serve as a reference in creating educational programs that are more responsive to the challenges of the digital era, increasingly pluralistic social realities, and the demands of community empowerment.

METHODS

The researchers used a library research approach (Nasution, 2023) to collect and review literature on the Islamic educational philosophies of Ahmad Dahlan and Hasyim Asy'ari. Data sources include relevant primary and secondary works, including books, scientific articles, historical documents, and critical studies that examine the ideas of these two figures and the context of contemporary Islamic education (Creswell, 2013).

The analytical method used is comparative and reflective, systematically comparing various perspectives and interpretations of the thoughts of Ahmad Dahlan and Hasyim Asy'ari. This approach allows researchers to identify similarities, differences, and the potential dialectic between modernity and traditionalism in the context of Islamic education. Furthermore, the analysis was conducted dialogically, namely by establishing critical communication between various literatures to find points of synthesis that can serve as a conceptual basis for reconstructing a holistic Islamic education paradigm. This dialogical approach emphasizes the dynamic interaction among ideas, yielding a comprehensive and contextual understanding of the challenges of contemporary Islamic education.

To ensure the validity and depth of the analysis, this study also applies the principle of data triangulation through various sources and interpretive approaches (Satori & Komariah, 2017). It helps strengthen the argument, minimize bias, and support a reliable understanding of the material studied. Thus, the research findings are expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions to the development of Islamic education that is relevant to the needs of the times.

RESULTS

Historical and Conceptual Analysis of the Educational Philosophy of Ahmad Dahlan and Hasyim Asy'ari

1. Short Biography of Ahmad Dahlan

Ahmad Dahlan was born Muhammad Darwis on August 1, 1868, in Kauman, Yogyakarta, into a family of prominent Islamic scholars whose lineage goes back to the Walisongo, particularly Maulana Malik Ibrahim. From childhood, he demonstrated intelligence, discipline, and perseverance in religious studies. By the age of eight, Ahmad

Dahlan had completed the Qur'an and studied various disciplines, including fiqh, nahwu, hadith, qira'at, and astronomy (Azzahra & Bakar, 2023; Hardiansyah et al., 2022).

At the age of fifteen, he performed the Hajj pilgrimage and lived in Mecca for five years, interacting with reformist thinkers such as Muhammad Abduh and Rasyid Ridha. He returned to Mecca in 1903 to study with Sheikh Ahmad Khatib, a teacher who also taught Hasyim Asy'ari (Akhyar & Kosim, 2024; Kurnia et al., 2024). After his return, he married Siti Walidah. He founded Muhammadiyah in 1912 as an Islamic reform movement that emphasized integrating religious and general knowledge, strengthening the community's social character, and modernizing learning methods (Hasanah et al., 2024; Maraulang, 2025). Amidst the currents of modernization and the dualism of the colonial education system, Ahmad Dahlan emerged as a visionary figure, a champion of Islamic modernity, and the founder of modern Islamic education in Indonesia until his death on February 23, 1923 (Syahrul, 2024). Ahmad Dahlan is remembered as an Indonesian National Hero.

2. Short Biography of Hasyim Asy'ari

K.H. Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari was born on February 14, 1871, in Gedang Village, Jombang, into a strong Islamic boarding school environment and into a family of ulama connected to Sunan Giri and Javanese kings, including Jaka Tingkir and Prabu Brawijaya VI (Q. Aini, 2023; Al-Hadi & Idawati, 2024). His childhood was marked by intensive education at prominent Islamic boarding schools, including Wonokoyo Probolinggo, Langitan Tuban, and Demangan Bangkalan, Madura.

He continued his studies in Mecca for seven years to deepen his Islamic knowledge and interact with world scholars (Fadli & Hidayat, 2018; Khasanah & Waskito, 2019). Upon his return to Indonesia, he founded the *Pondok Pesantren* (Islamic Boarding School) Tebuireng in 1899 as a center for hadith education and a pioneer in reforming the *pesantren* system by introducing the madrasah system and class deliberations. Hasyim Asy'ari was a prolific writer, among his most famous works being "Adab al-Alim wa al-Muta'allim" (Bakar, 2023; Fakturmen & Arif, 2020).

In 1926, Hasyim Asy'ari, along with other Islamic scholars, founded Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) in response to colonialism and the need to preserve the traditions of Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah. It demonstrated his role as a religious scholar who maintained Islamic orthodoxy while adapting to social change (Fadli & Hidayat, 2018; Sholehuddin, 2021). He passed away on July 25, 1947. He is remembered as an Indonesian national hero and a pioneer of Islamic

boarding school education that prioritized manners, character, and a national vision (Al-Hadi & Idawati, 2024; Fakturmen & Arif, 2020).

3. Socio-Political Background

The socio-political context of the early 20th century saw the rise of nationalism, the penetration of Western education, and Muslim concerns about the decline of knowledge and morals. In this context, the intellectual journeys and experiences of these two figures, from their Islamic boarding school education to their studies in Mecca and encounters with the discourse of modernity, shaped different but complementary perspectives. Ahmad Dahlan emerged as a reformer inspired by the Islamic modernist movement and modern education. Meanwhile, Hasyim Asy'ari emphasized the urgency of preserving the traditions of Islamic boarding schools, the authority of classical scholarship, and adab as the foundation of education (Mun'im & Yanto, 2025). Both figures expressed distinctive responses to the challenges of their time, forming an important dialogue in the history of Islamic education in Indonesia.

Basic Concepts of Islamic Education

Ahmad Dahlan rejected the separation of religious knowledge from general knowledge. He emphasized integrating both into the curriculum. He used active, dialogical, and rational learning methods and stressed the importance of adapting to changing times (Hasanah et al., 2024). According to Ahmad Dahlan, the primary goal of education is to create individuals with character, knowledge, and social responsibility. Education must eliminate ignorance, foster critical thinking, and prepare a generation capable of contributing to modern society (Kurnia et al., 2024; Mun'im & Yanto, 2025).

Ahmad Dahlan also emphasized the urgency of modern educational management, institutional innovation, and responsiveness to the challenges of globalization. Muhammadiyah plays a key role in modernizing Islamic education through a school model that combines religious and general knowledge, emphasizing character and soft skills (Kug, 2022). Hasyim Asy'ari promoted the preservation of Islamic boarding school traditions and the yellow books as the foundation of Islamic education. He prioritized etiquette, spirituality, and sincerity as the foundation of education. Education is not merely about transferring knowledge, but also about developing a holistic Muslim character (Aura et al., 2022). However, Hasyim Asy'ari did not close himself off from general knowledge. He encouraged

pesantren to choose relevant general subjects, provided they did not conflict with Islamic values. The principle of "al-muhafadzah 'ala al-qadim al-shalih wa al-akhdzu bil jadid al-ashlah" serves as the basis for openness to innovation (Musliadi, 2022). Nahdlatul Ulama serves as a guardian of tradition while remaining responsive to social change.

A conceptual comparison of the educational philosophical thought of Ahmad Dahlan and Hasyim Asy'ari is presented in the table below.

Table 1. A Conceptual Comparison of the Educational Philosophical Thoughts of Ahmad Dahlan and Hasyim Asy'ari

No.	Aspects	Ahmad Dahlan	Hasyim Asy'ari
1	Ontology (Human Nature and Reality)	Humans as agents of social change; education is directed at real problems	Humans are ennobled through manners; education preserves the harmony of sharia and tradition
2	Epistemology (Sources of Knowledge)	Practical ijtihad, critical reasoning, social interpretation of the Quran, and modern science	Sanad of knowledge, manners, talaqqi, and internalization of values
3	Axiology (Highest Values and Goals)	Empowerment of people, social transformation	Formation of individual morals and piety, preservation of (social) traditions, and leadership of the community (nationality)
4	Methods and Learning	Modern curriculum, social practice, integration of general science–religion (active, dialogical, rational, innovative)	Exemplary behavior, spiritual discipline, habituation, primary and general selective religion (traditional, deliberative, ethical, spiritual).
5	Change Orientation	Reformist-progressive, adaptive, responsive	Evolutionary–conservative, Selective, limited adaptive
6	Institutional	Modern school, innovative management	Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), preserving traditions

The table above illustrates that Ahmad Dahlan and Hasyim Asy'ari had different yet complementary emphases. This comparison demonstrates two distinct yet mutually reinforcing epistemological approaches in responding to the needs of Islamic education. However, despite these two great figures' differing approaches to Islamic teaching, several fundamental similarities in their thinking serve as a significant basis for the development of Islamic education.

The conceptual similarities between the two can be explained as follows:

1. The Goal of Education is Human Beings

Both agreed that the primary goal of Islamic education is to develop a complete human being (insan kamil) who is devout, knowledgeable, and has noble morals. Education is aimed at creating a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also spiritually and morally strong (Q. Aini, 2023; Mokmin, 2025; Mun'im & Yanto, 2025).

2. Integration between Religious Knowledge and General Knowledge

Both Ahmad Dahlan and Hasyim Asy'ari emphasized the importance of integrating religious and general knowledge. They both encouraged students to master both spiritual and general knowledge to face the challenges of the times (Marlini et al., 2024; Musliadi, 2022).

3. The Importance of Morals and Ethics

Both place morality and ethics at the heart of education. Teachers and students are encouraged to emulate moral and ethical values, such as compassion, sincerity, and social responsibility, in the learning process (Q. Aini, 2023).

4. Empowerment and Social Service

Ahmad Dahlan and Hasyim Asy'ari both saw Islamic education as a path to empowering the people and serving the community. For both, education was not merely for personal gain, but should benefit broader social progress and welfare (Mokmin, 2025; Musliadi, 2022).

5. The Basis of the Qur'an and Sunnah

The educational thoughts of these two figures are firmly rooted in the teachings of the Koran and Sunnah, as well as the classical Islamic scientific tradition, which emphasizes balance between *duniawi* (worldly) and *ukhrawi* (hereafter) aspects (Q. Aini, 2023; Mokmin, 2025; Mun'im & Yanto, 2025; Musliadi, 2022).

DISCUSSION

The Dialectic of Modernity and Traditionalism in the Educational Thought of Ahmad Dahlan-Hasyim Asy'ari

1. Definition and Characteristics of Modernity and Traditionalism

Modernity in Islamic education is characterized by innovation, adaptation, integration of knowledge, and responses to the challenges of the times. Traditionalism emphasizes the preservation of values, the authority of classical scholarship, and spirituality (Mokmin, 2025; Mun'im & Yanto, 2025). These two currents are not absolute separations but rather interacting spectrums. Understanding these two currents is crucial because the dynamics of Islamic education evolve between them. Every change or renewal always involves a negotiation between the demands of contemporary developments and a commitment to upholding the fundamental values rooted in the Islamic scientific tradition.

2. The Articulation of Dialectics in Ahmad Dahlan's Educational Thought

Ahmad Dahlan viewed modernity as inevitable. He implemented reforms in the curriculum, teaching methods, and educational management. Muhammadiyah pioneered modern schools, integrating religious and general knowledge, and adopted modern classroom systems, evaluation methods, and management practices (Fitri et al., 2022; Kug, 2022). Dialogue, discussion, and problem-solving-based learning became its hallmarks, fostering critical, creative, and adaptive individuals. This approach not only introduced new learning methods but also shifted the orientation of education toward a progressive mindset that positions students as active subjects with the capacity to process, understand, and respond to social realities more broadly and openly.

3. The Articulation of Dialectics in Hasyim Asy'ari's Educational Thought

Hasyim Asy'ari viewed Islamic boarding schools as a defense of tradition while still allowing for innovation. Changes in *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) are reflected in the addition of general subjects, strengthening management, and adapting to the needs of modern society (Musliadi, 2022). Nahdlatul Ulama plays a role in preserving the traditions of *Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah* while also being sensitive to contemporary issues, including economic, social, and technological developments. This approach demonstrates that the traditionalism he embraces is not an act of isolation but an effort to maintain core values

while adapting to new contexts. Thus, *pesantren* remain relevant and have bargaining power in the development of modern society.

4. Dialectical Synthesis: An Effort to Find Common Ground

The synthesis of modernity and traditionalism is realized in the integrative model of Islamic education. Ahmad Dahlan and Hasyim Asy'ari both rejected the separation of knowledge. They emphasized character and an adaptive attitude to change. This model is relevant in facing the challenges of globalization and digitalization by balancing innovation and value preservation. This synthesis demonstrates that Islamic education can continue to develop without losing its normative foundation and can offer a stronger approach to changing times by fostering dialogue between progressive thought and maintained traditional values.

The Relevance of the Educational Thoughts of the Two Figures to the Reconstruction of the Contemporary Islamic Education Paradigm

1. Challenges and Problems of Contemporary Islamic Education

Contemporary Islamic education faces dualism in its curriculum, a values crisis, and the demands of the digital era. The curriculum is often divided between religious and general subjects, while character crises and weak soft skills are key issues. The digital era demands innovation, technological literacy, and curriculum adjustments (Hasanah et al., 2024; Mokmin, 2025). These challenges are further exacerbated as educational institutions grapple with rapid social change, the instant culture of the younger generation, and the growing need for 21st-century competencies. This situation demands a contemporary Islamic educational design that not only maintains Islamic identity but also responds to technological disruption and global dynamics.

2. Ahmad Dahlan's Contribution to Thought

The founder of Muhammadiyah's ideas offered an integrated curriculum, active, participatory learning methods, and a focus on personality development and the strengthening of soft skills. Responsiveness to current developments is a hallmark, with the adoption of technology, modern management, and an orientation toward community needs (Hasanah et al., 2024). The Muhammadiyah educational model has long served as a benchmark for the emergence of more adaptive and progressive Islamic educational

institutions. Through his ideas, Ahmad Dahlan demonstrated that modernity is not a threat to Islamic values. Instead, the two can coexist through measured, innovative, and structured educational initiatives. It has led to the birth of a system capable of developing a generation that is independent, productive, and sensitive to social issues in various situations.

3. Contribution of Hasyim Asy'ari's Thought

The thinking of the founder of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) placed spirituality, manners, and ethics in the teacher-student relationship at the core of the entire educational process. For him, Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) were not merely tradition-based institutions, but living spaces that continually adapt to the times (Suyuti, 2022). This was achieved by introducing general education courses and improving management, while maintaining the spirit of sincerity, exemplary behavior, and spiritual depth as their foundation (Sholehuddin, 2021). It is where the strength of Islamic boarding schools lies: their reassuring simplicity and the firmness of values that shape character.

His thinking reminds us that Islamic education is inseparable from efforts to cultivate a pure soul and polite behavior. In this way, Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) serve as moral anchors in a constantly changing world. The educational model he offers does not separate scientific advancement from spiritual depth (Huda, 2024). Instead, the two reinforce each other, ensuring that intelligence does not lose its morality and that modern developments remain rooted in the values that guide humans toward becoming whole individuals.

4. Contextual and Adaptive Islamic Education Model

The integration of modern and traditional values presents a more contextual and flexible model of Islamic education that adapts to change. Islamic educational institutions are encouraged to design curricula that integrate general and religious knowledge, incorporate creative learning methods, and implement streamlined, modern management, while maintaining the pulse of tradition and spirituality at their heart (Madarik & Puadi, 2022). It is in this blend that education finds its balance.

This educational model provides students with space to develop both technical skills and more refined spiritual abilities. The result is not only intelligent and skilled graduates, but also individuals with strong character and steadfast values. In this way, Islamic education can reassert itself as a space for forging complete human beings, becoming a generation ready to

navigate the modern world. A generation that is confident, yet firmly connected to the values that shape their identity.

5. Critical Reflection and Future Prospects

The reconstruction of the Islamic education paradigm, grounded in the dialectic of these two great figures, opens up vast opportunities to produce a generation of Muslims with strong personalities, knowledge, and adaptability to developments. Nevertheless, contemporary challenges remain, ranging from resistance to reform and limited resources to the complexities of the rapidly evolving digital world. Therefore, various recommendations should be pursued, such as strengthening curriculum integration, providing teacher training that fosters both soft skills and technological proficiency, and developing more innovative, multi-stakeholder education management (Hasan, 2023; Suripto, 2023; Waskito & Kholik, 2020).

Given these dynamics, it is clear that the future of Islamic education rests on institutions, educators, and communities' ability to build an open, collaborative, and forward-thinking learning ecosystem. An ecosystem that not only meets the needs of the times but also maintains the spiritual and moral identity that has been the soul of Islamic education since its inception.

CONCLUSION

This study of the Islamic educational philosophies of Ahmad Dahlan and Hasyim Asy'ari demonstrates that modernity and traditionalism have never existed as mutually exclusive poles but rather engage in a dynamic dialectic that balances and corrects itself, forming a critical foundation for the development of Islamic education in Indonesia. Differences should not be viewed as threats but as creative tensions that open opportunities for educational innovation. Ahmad Dahlan's thought represents modernity, emphasizing the integration of knowledge, curriculum reform, active learning methods, and flexible educational management to meet contemporary demands. At the same time, Hasyim Asy'ari underscores the importance of traditional roots, spirituality, ethics, and the teacher-student relationship in character formation. Despite epistemological differences, both approaches share the goal of producing true Muslims who harmonize faith, knowledge, and virtuous deeds. The synthesis of their thoughts highlights the necessity of balancing innovation with the preservation of core values, where curriculum and teaching methods must be

continuously updated without neglecting spiritual and ethical strengthening, and preserving tradition should not close the door to scientific and technological progress. The synergy of these elements makes Islamic education both relevant and empowered.

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