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# Progressive Thinking KH. Hasyim Asy'ari and KH. Ahmad Dahlan: Contribution to the Development of Education and the Formation of National Character

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**Abstract.** This study analyzes the progressive thinking of two major figures of Indonesian Islamic education, KH. Hasyim Asy'ari and KH. Ahmad Dahlan, as well as their contribution to the development of education and the formation of national character. Using a historical-analytical approach and literature studies, this study examines the thoughts of the two figures through their works, educational policies, and institutional legacies. KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, the founder of Nahdlatul Ulama, developed the concept of pesantren education that combines classical traditions with the needs of modern times, emphasizing character formation through noble morals and the spirit of nationalism. Meanwhile, KH. Ahmad Dahlan, the founder of Muhammadiyah, introduced the reform of Islamic education by integrating religious and general curricula, as well as applying modern teaching methodologies oriented towards social progress. The findings of the study show that both figures have a progressive vision in balancing Islamic values with the spirit of Indonesian nationalism. They succeeded in creating an education system that not only produced a generation of faith and piety, but also had a high national consciousness. Their contribution is evident in the formation of educational institutions that still exist today, such as NU Islamic boarding schools and Muhammadiyah schools. This study concludes that the progressive thinking of the two figures provides a strong foundation for the development of Indonesian national character education based on moderate and inclusive Islamic values.

**Keywords:** *Progressive Thinking, Islamic Education, KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, KH. Ahmad Dahlan, National Character, Educational Reform*

**Abbreviations:** NU, Nahdlatul Ulama (The largest traditionalist Islamic organization in Indonesia, founded by KH. Hasyim Asy'ari in 1926).

## INTRODUCTION

The early twentieth century marked a critical period in the history of Islamic education in Indonesia. During the Dutch colonial era, Indonesian Muslims faced significant challenges in maintaining their religious identity while adapting to the demands of modernization. The traditional Islamic education system, primarily centered on Islamic boarding schools, was faced with the need for reform in order to remain relevant in a rapidly changing world. This period witnessed the emergence of reformist figures who sought to bridge the gap between Islamic tradition and modern educational methodologies.[1]

The condition of Indonesian Muslims during the colonial period was characterized by socio-economic marginalization and limited access to quality education. The Dutch colonial education system was designed primarily to serve administrative needs and was accessible primarily to the elite classes. Most Indonesian Muslims relied on traditional pesantren education, which while preserving Islamic knowledge, was often not integrated with modern general knowledge and pedagogical approaches. This situation created an urgent need for educational reforms that could empower Muslim communities while maintaining their religious and cultural identity.[2]

In this context, two prominent figures emerged as pioneering reformers of Islamic education: KH. Hasyim Asy'ari and KH. Ahmad Dahlan. Both leaders recognized the importance of educational reform in strengthening the Muslim community and contributing to the development of the nation. KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, through the establishment of Nahdlatul Ulama in 1926, advocated the preservation of traditional

Islamic science while adapting to contemporary needs. KH. Ahmad Dahlan, the founder of Muhammadiyah in 1912, introduced more radical reforms by integrating religious and secular curricula in the modern school environment.[3]

This study aims to address the gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of the progressive thinking of both figures, identifying their contributions to the development of education, and explaining their relevance to the formation of Indonesia's national character. The study also aims to show how their educational philosophy, despite their different approaches, collectively contributes to building the foundations for a moderate and inclusive Islamic education that balances religious values with nationalist fervor. Understanding their heritage is essential for contemporary efforts to develop character education that addresses modern challenges while remaining rooted in Islamic values and Indonesian cultural identity.

## METHODS

### Study area

This research uses a historical-analytical approach combined with descriptive qualitative methods and library research. The historical analytical approach allows a systematic examination of the thoughts and contributions of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari and KH. Ahmad Dahlan in their specific historical context. The descriptive qualitative method allows a detailed interpretation of their educational philosophy and institutional legacy.

The source of research data consists of primary and secondary data. Primary data includes the original works of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, including his books and treatises that discuss the philosophy of education and Islamic jurisprudence, the writings and speeches of KH. Ahmad Dahlan who documents his ideas on educational reform, documents and policy statements from the Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah organizations, as well as historical records of educational institutions founded by the two figures. Secondary data include academic journals focusing on the history of Islamic education and the reform movement in Indonesia, biographical works and scientific analysis of the two figures, academic articles examining their educational philosophy and contributions, and conference proceedings related to Islamic education reform.

### Procedures

This study uses documentation and literature review as primary data collection methods. Documentation involves the systematic collection and organization of primary sources, including texts, organizational documents, and historical records. The literature review includes a comprehensive examination of secondary sources from academic journals, books, and scientific articles. The analysis of historical documents is conducted to understand the context and development of educational policies and practices initiated by both figures.

### Data analysis

Data analysis uses four complementary techniques. Content analysis is used to systematically examine the philosophical foundations and concepts of education presented in primary sources. Comparative analysis identifies similarities and differences in the approaches, methodologies, and visions of the two figures. Historical interpretations place their contributions in the broader context of the development of Indonesian Islamic education. Triangulation of sources ensures validity by cross-referencing multiple sources and perspectives.

To ensure the credibility and reliability of the findings, the study implemented strict validity measures. The credibility of the sources is assessed by prioritizing primary documents and reputable secondary sources. Data verification involves cross-checking information across multiple sources to ensure consistency. Consistency of interpretation is maintained through the application of a systematic analytical framework. The research adheres to scientific standards for historical and educational research, ensuring objectivity and accuracy in presenting the contributions of both figures.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Biography of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari

KH. Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari was born in 1871 in Gedang, Jombang, East Java, into a prominent religious family with a strong tradition of Islamic boarding schools. His father, Kyai Asy'ari, was an Islamic scholar and a respected pesantren leader. From an early age, Hasyim Asy'ari received intensive Islamic education, studying various classical texts under the guidance of prominent scholars in Java and later in Mecca, where he spent seven years deepening his knowledge of Islamic sciences.[4]

His intellectual journey was marked by extensive study of various Islamic disciplines, including fiqh (jurisprudence), hadith, tafsir (interpretation of the Qur'an), and tasawwuf. He studied under renowned scholars of his time, who formed his comprehensive understanding of Islamic traditions. Upon his return to Indonesia, he founded the Tebuireng Islamic Boarding School in 1899, which became one of the most influential Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia.[5]

In 1926, KH. Hasyim Asy'ari founded Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), an organization dedicated to preserving traditional Islamic scholarship while responding to modern challenges. Under his leadership, NU became the largest Islamic organization in Indonesia, advocating for moderate Islam and contributing significantly to the nation's independence movement. His important works include "Adab al-'Alim wa al-Muta'allim" (The Ethics of Teachers and Students), which became the basic text of Islamic education in Indonesia, and numerous fatwas and treatises addressing contemporary religious and social issues. His intellectual legacy continues to influence Indonesian Islamic thought and education.[6]

**Biography of KH. Ahmad Dahlan**

KH. Ahmad Dahlan, born Muhammad Darwis in 1868 in Kauman, Yogyakarta, came from a family of Islamic scholars who served the Sultanate of Yogyakarta. His early education combined the learning of traditional Islamic boarding schools with exposure to reformist Islamic thought. He studied in Mecca several times, where he was influenced by the reform movement led by Muhammad Abduh and other modernist thinkers.

The influence of Muhammad Abduh's thought was profound on Ahmad Dahlan's philosophy of education. Abduh's emphasis on rational interpretation of Islam, the integration of religion and secular knowledge, and the need for educational reform deeply resonated with Ahmad Dahlan's vision for Indonesian Islamic education. These influences shaped his approach to balancing tradition with modernity. [7]

In 1912, Ahmad Dahlan founded Muhammadiyah in Yogyakarta, marking the beginning of a significant Islamic reform movement in Indonesia. Muhammadiyah introduced modern educational institutions that integrated religious and public curricula, established schools, hospitals, and various social welfare programs. Its vision was to create a progressive Muslim community capable of contributing to national development while maintaining an Islamic identity. Ahmad Dahlan's important works include educational curriculum, organizational guidelines, and numerous speeches emphasizing the importance of ijtihad (self-reasoning), social activism, and educational modernization. Although he died in 1923, his legacy lives on through Muhammadiyah's extensive network of educational and social institutions throughout Indonesia.[8]

**KH's Progressive Thought. Hasyim Asy'ari**

***The Concept of Islamic Boarding School Education***

KH. Hasyim Asy'ari developed a distinctive approach to pesantren education that preserves classical Islamic traditions while adapting to modern needs. He maintains the importance of studying classical texts and traditional teaching methods, recognizing their value in transmitting authentic Islamic knowledge across generations. However, he also understands that pesantren education needs to evolve in order to remain relevant in changing times.[9]

His vision of integrating traditional science with contemporary needs was embodied in the adaptation of the curriculum at the Tebuireng Islamic Boarding School and other NU institutions. While maintaining a focus on classical Islamic sciences, he introduced subjects relevant to modern life and national development. This adaptive curriculum approach allowed students to master traditional Islamic knowledge while developing the skills needed by contemporary society. The pesantren curriculum under his guidance balanced religious studies with practical skills, preparing students not only as religious scholars but also as community leaders capable of overcoming social and economic challenges. This approach demonstrates his progressive thinking in preserving tradition while embracing the necessary reforms.[10]

***Character Formation Through Noble Morals***

The center of KH's philosophy of education. Hasyim Ash'ari is the concept of adab (ethics and proper behavior) in education. In the Bible, "Adab al-'Alim wa al-Muta'allim," the work of KH. Hasyim Ash'ari outlines comprehensive guidelines for ethical behavior in the educational process, emphasizing the sacred relationship between teacher and student. He views education not only as a transmission of knowledge but as a transformation of character.[11]

The teacher-student relationship (ta'dzim) in its educational model is characterized by deep respect, moral guidance, and spiritual guidance. Teachers are expected to embody the knowledge they teach, serving as moral examples for students. Students, in turn, are expected to demonstrate deep respect and a sincere devotion to learning. This relationship creates an environment conducive to holistic character

development. His approach to character education is firmly rooted in Islamic values, emphasizing honesty, humility, responsibility, social awareness, and spiritual devotion. He believes that true education should cultivate intellectual capacity and moral integrity, producing graduates who contribute positively to society while maintaining a strong ethical foundation.

### *The Spirit of Nationalism*

KH. Hasyim Asy'ari showed extraordinary nationalist commitment throughout his life, especially during the struggle for Indonesian independence. His famous fatwa stated that jihad against Dutch colonialism mobilized Muslim resistance and showed the compatibility of the Islamic faith with nationalist aspirations. He viewed fighting for national independence as a religious obligation.

The Jihad Resolution of 1945, issued shortly after Indonesia's independence was proclaimed, exemplified his nationalist stance. This resolution called for Muslims to defend the newly independent country from colonial forces seeking to reassert control. His leadership during this critical period united Muslim support for the independence movement. His vision succeeded in integrating Islamic values with Indonesia's national identity, demonstrating that being a devout and committed Muslim was not contradictory but complementary. This integration became the basic principle for NU and influenced Indonesian Islamic thought, contributing to the development of moderate and nationalist Islam in Indonesia.[12]

### *Institutional Heritage*

KH's institutional legacy. Hasyim Asy'ari is evident in NU's extensive network of Islamic boarding schools throughout Indonesia. These institutions continue to preserve its educational philosophy, combining traditional Islamic scholarship with contemporary relevance. NU's educational system, from basic Islamic boarding schools to Islamic colleges, reflects its vision of adaptive traditionalism. NU's current educational institutions maintain an emphasis on classical Islamic texts while incorporating modern subjects and teaching methodologies. This continuity demonstrates the enduring relevance of its educational approach. The system has produced generations of religious scholars, community leaders, and professionals who have contributed to Indonesian society while maintaining a strong Islamic identity.

## Progressive Thinking KH. Ahmad Dahlan

### *Islamic Education Reform*

KH. Ahmad Dahlan's criticism of the traditional education system is rooted in his observation that many Islamic educational institutions are isolated from modern knowledge and the needs of society. He argues that this isolation weakens the capacity of Muslim communities to cope with contemporary challenges and compete in the modern world. His criticism is constructive, aiming to strengthen rather than abandon Islamic education.

His educational reforms introduced innovative teaching methods that emphasized active learning, critical thinking, and practical application of knowledge. He moved away from pure memorization toward methodologies that encouraged student engagement and understanding. This pedagogical shift was a significant departure from traditional practice. Curriculum modernization was at the core of his reform agenda. Ahmad Dahlan advocated integrating religious studies with mathematics, natural sciences, social sciences, and languages. He believed that Islamic education should prepare students for religious understanding and worldly success, viewing these goals as complementary rather than contradictory.[13]

### *Integration of Religious and General Curriculum*

The concept of "progress" is the defining principle of Muhammadiyah's educational philosophy. Ahmad Dahlan envisions a Muslim community that embraces progress in all intellectual, social, economic, and spiritual dimensions. This progressive orientation requires educational reform that equips students with comprehensive knowledge and skills.

His approach rejects the idea that science and religion are incompatible. Instead, he views scientific knowledge as a complement to religious understanding, both of which come from divine wisdom. This integrative perspective encourages Muslims to pursue scientific education without sacrificing their beliefs, cultivating a generation of religious scholars with scientific literacy and scientists with religious values. Ahmad Dahlan's vision of holistic education addresses the holistic development of students intellectually, morally, socially, and physically. Education is not only about acquiring knowledge but about developing well-rounded individuals who are able to contribute to society in various capacities. This comprehensive approach influences the design of the Muhammadiyah school curriculum, which balances academic excellence with character building.[14]

### *Modern Teaching Methodology*

The introduction of the classical system marked a significant innovation in Indonesian Islamic education. Unlike traditional pesantren methods where students study individually or in small groups, the classical system organizes students into tiered classes with a structured curriculum and scheduled lessons. This systematization improves educational efficiency and facilitates wider access to education.

KH. Ahmad Dahlan emphasizes active teaching methods that involve students in the learning process. He encourages questioning, discussion, and the practical application of knowledge rather than passive reception of information. This student-centered approach fosters critical thinking and problem-solving skills, preparing students for real-world challenges. His educational philosophy includes a strong orientation towards social practice. Students are encouraged to apply their knowledge in serving society through various forms of social service and community development activities. This practical dimension ensures that education translates into tangible social benefits, embodying the Islamic principles of beneficial knowledge.[15]

### *Orientation Towards Social Progress*

The concept of tajdid (renewal) in Islam is the basis of Ahmad Dahlan's thinking. He believes that Islam has the dynamism to address contemporary challenges through the reinterpretation and sustainable application of Islamic principles. This approach to renewal encourages progressive thinking while remaining firmly rooted in Islamic sources.

Its religious-social movement combined spiritual development with social activism. Muhammadiyah established not only schools but also hospitals, orphanages, and various charitable institutions. This comprehensive approach showed that Islamic piety should be realized in social service and community welfare, not just in individual service. Muhammadiyah's extensive charitable efforts reflect Ahmad Dahlan's vision of a socially engaged Islam. These institutions provide education, health care, and social services to millions of Indonesians regardless of religious background, embodying the universal values of compassion and service that are central to Islamic teaching.[16]

### *Institutional Heritage*

The institutional legacy of KH. Ahmad Dahlan is evident in the wide network of Muhammadiyah educational institutions, ranging from kindergartens to universities. These institutions continue to implement his vision of integrated religious and general education, producing graduates who excel in both religious understanding and professional competence. The modern Muhammadiyah education system still emphasizes academic excellence, character building, and social responsibility. Muhammadiyah-affiliated schools and universities are recognized for quality education that balances religious values with modern knowledge, continuing Ahmad Dahlan's mission to produce progressive Muslims who are able to contribute to national development.

## Discussion

### *Commonalities in Progressive Vision*

Both KH. Hasyim Asy'ari and KH. Ahmad Dahlan share a fundamental commitment to education reform as a means of empowering the Muslim community. Despite their different approaches, they both realize that education is central to addressing the challenges faced by Indonesian Muslims during the colonial period and beyond. Their progressive vision converges on several key areas.

Both leaders advocated for integrating Islamic values with modern knowledge and methods. Although their strategies differed, they shared the belief that Islamic education must evolve to remain relevant without abandoning core religious principles. This balance between tradition and modernity is a hallmark of Indonesian Islamic education. Their shared orientation towards the advancement of society and national development reflects their understanding that Islamic education must produce graduates who are able to contribute to the progress of society. Both emphasized that religious learning should be translated into social benefits and national service, not isolation from worldly affairs.

### *Differences in Approach*

The methodological differences between the two figures are significant. KH. Hasyim Asy'ari adopted a traditional adaptive approach, preserving the structure of the pesantren while introducing gradual reforms. His strategy was evolutionary, working within the existing framework to introduce the necessary changes. Instead, KH. Ahmad Dahlan pursued a modern-reformist approach, building new institutional forms and integrating a more radical curriculum. His strategy was more revolutionary, creating an alternative educational model.

The institutional basis of their educational movement also differed substantially. The reform of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari centered on the pesantren system, maintaining a residential character and an emphasis on

traditional Islamic texts. The reform of KH. Ahmad Dahlan focused on formal schools with a systematic curriculum and scheduled classes. These different institutional foundations reflected their different visions of how Islamic education should be organized. Their strategic approach can be characterized as evolutionary versus revolutionary. KH. Hasyim Asy'ari sought to reform Islamic education from within traditional structures, minimizing resistance through gradual change. KH. Ahmad Dahlan was willing to create new structures and implement more dramatic changes, although this sometimes led to greater resistance from traditional circles.

***Balance of Islamic Values and Nationalism***

Both figures contributed significantly to the development of moderate Islam (Islam wasathiyah) in Indonesia. Their educational philosophy rejected extremism and emphasized the middle path in Islamic practice and thought. This moderation became a distinctive characteristic of Indonesian Islam, contributing to religious harmony and national unity.

Their teachings incorporated the principle that love of the homeland was part of the faith, successfully integrating nationalist consciousness with Islamic identity. This integration was crucial in mobilizing Muslim support for Indonesian independence and in shaping a national identity that accommodated religious devotion alongside civic commitment. Both contributed substantially to Indonesia's independence struggle, albeit in different ways. The jihad fatwa of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari mobilized the armed resistance, while the education reforms of KH. Ahmad Dahlan prepared a generation of Muslim leaders capable of nation-building. Their combined contributions demonstrate the important role of Islamic education in national development.

**Contribution to the Development of National Education**

***Education System***

The impact of these two figures on the Indonesian national education system is very profound and lasts a long time. The modern pesantren model developed under the influence of NU, based on the vision of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, is a success in adapting traditional Islamic education to contemporary needs. This pesantren maintains religious authenticity while producing graduates who are able to engage with modern society.

The model of the modern Islamic school pioneered by Muhammadiyah, reflects the vision of KH. Ahmad Dahlan, demonstrating the feasibility of integrated religious and public education. Muhammadiyah schools have become a model of educational excellence, combining rigorous religious instruction with strong academic achievement in secular subjects. Both models of education have significantly influenced Indonesia's national education system. The government has incorporated elements of both approaches in developing Islamic education policies, recognizing the value of traditional Islamic boarding schools and modern Islamic schools in the national education landscape.

***Curriculum***

The integration of religious and general subjects, spearheaded by both figures in different ways, has become the standard in Indonesian Islamic education. This integration addresses the artificial dichotomy between religious and secular knowledge, promoting a more holistic understanding of learning that includes both spiritual and secular dimensions.

Their emphasis on balancing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development is in line with contemporary educational psychology and the national curriculum framework. This holistic approach ensures that education develops not only intellectual capacity but also emotional intelligence, moral character, and practical skills. The relevance of their curricular approach to the Indonesian national curriculum is evident in policies that emphasize character education, religious values, and the integration of knowledge domains. The development of contemporary curricula continues to reflect their fundamental insights into the nature and purpose of education.

***Methodology***

Both figures contributed to methodological innovations in Indonesian education. Their emphasis on active learning, critical thinking, and practical application contrasted with the purely passive approach to rote learning. These pedagogical innovations have influenced educational practices throughout Indonesia, both in Islamic and general educational institutions.

A student-centered approach advocated by both figures, especially by KH. Ahmad Dahlan, anticipated contemporary education theories that emphasized learner engagement and participatory learning. This methodological orientation became increasingly central to Indonesia's education reform efforts. Their vision of value-based learning ensured that education served not only instrumental purposes but also moral

and spiritual development. The emphasis on these values remains highly relevant in contemporary efforts to address character building and ethical development in education.

**Contribution to the Formation of National Character**

***Development of Faith and Righteousness***

Both figures prioritized noble character education (noble morals) as the core of their educational mission. They viewed character formation not as a complement to academic learning but as its basic goal. This emphasis on moral education addresses the perennial concern about ensuring that knowledge serves ethical purposes.

Their approach to spiritual development and religious devotion emphasizes sincerity, humility, and consistent religious practices. They teach that true education fosters not only outward obedience but inner transformation and true spirituality. This emphasis on authentic religious commitment remains relevant in contemporary character education. The cultivation of religious obedience in their educational philosophy is balanced by the encouragement of critical thinking and social responsibility. They reject blind conformity while emphasizing the importance of submitting to divine guidance and ethical principles. This balance addresses the contemporary tension between autonomy and authority in character formation.

***Building National Awareness***

Both figures succeeded in instilling a love of homeland in their students, showing that patriotism and religious devotion complement each other rather than contradict each other. Their teachings counter the idea that religious commitment requires alienation from national identity, instead fostering Muslim citizens who are deeply committed to Indonesia's well-being.

The spirit of patriotism they developed was embodied in a willingness to sacrifice for independence and nation-building. Their students played an important role in the struggle for independence and nation-building, demonstrating the practical impact of their nationalist education. This patriotic orientation remains relevant in contemporary efforts to strengthen civic consciousness. Their emphasis on defending the nation reflects the belief that protecting the homeland is a civic duty and a religious obligation. This understanding mobilizes Muslim participation in national defense and continues to shape Indonesian Muslim attitudes toward citizenship and national service.

***Moderate and Inclusive Islamic Values***

Both figures fought for wasathiyah Islam (middle-class Islam), rejecting extremism in religious thought and practice. Their moderate approach became the basis for Indonesia's Islamic identity, contributing to religious harmony and social cohesion. This moderation addressed the contemporary challenges of extremism and religious intolerance.

Their teachings emphasize religious tolerance, recognizing diversity as natural and valuable. They promote respectful engagement with different religious communities, contributing to Indonesia's tradition of interreligious harmony. This inclusive orientation is particularly relevant in the context of contemporary religious tensions and conflicts. Their appreciation of diversity transcends religious differences to encompass cultural, ethnic, and intellectual diversity. They teach that differences enrich rather than threaten people's lives when approached with respect and understanding. This pluralistic orientation supports Indonesia's national motto, "Unity in Diversity."

***Outstanding Characters***

Both figures emphasized honesty and integrity as fundamental virtues in personal and social life. They taught that these ethical qualities should characterize all human interactions, from individual relationships to institutional practices. Their emphasis on integrity addresses contemporary concerns about corruption and ethical degradation.

Their educational philosophy promotes social responsibility, teaching that individuals have an obligation to contribute to the well-being of society and national development. This emphasis on social consciousness ensures that education serves collective benefits, not just individual progress. It remains relevant in overcoming contemporary individualism and social fragmentation. The progressive spirit they develop encourages continuous improvement and innovation while maintaining ethical foundations. They teach that Muslims must lead in the pursuit of knowledge, develop society, and address contemporary challenges. This orientation toward progress, balanced with ethical grounds, addresses the contemporary need for dynamic yet principled leadership.

### Relevance to Contemporary Education

#### *The Challenges of 21st Century Education*

Contemporary education faces many challenges including globalization, rapid technological change, and cultural transformation. These developments create opportunities but also risks, requiring an educational approach that prepares students for a complex and uncertain future while maintaining a stable ethical foundation. The progressive thinking of both figures offers relevant guidance to address these challenges.[17]

The moral character crisis evident in various social problems, corruption, violence and intolerance, highlights the importance of continuous character education.[18]

The emphasis of both figures on moral formation addresses this crisis by insisting that education must cultivate ethical character alongside intellectual development. Their approach offers a model for effective character education. Deradicalization has become an urgent educational challenge in Indonesia and globally. The moderate Islam promoted by both figures provides an antidote to extremist ideologies by demonstrating an authentic Islamic commitment that is consistent with tolerance, national loyalty, and pluralism. Their teachings remain highly relevant to contemporary efforts to counter religious extremism.

#### *Solutions from the Thoughts of the Two Figures*

Value-based character education, at the core of the educational philosophy of both characters, addresses contemporary character crises by grounding moral formation in Islamic principles while promoting universal ethical values. Their approach shows how religious values can inform character education in ways that reinforce rather than divide communities.[19]

Religious moderation, exemplified in the teachings of both figures, offers solutions to the problems of extremism and intolerance. Their balanced approach respects religious commitments while promoting tolerance, critical thinking, and social harmony. This moderation is essential for multicultural societies that seek to accommodate religious diversity while maintaining cohesion. Holistic education, emphasized by both figures, addresses contemporary tendencies toward narrow specialization and instrumental education. Their vision of education that includes intellectual, moral, social, and spiritual development provides a framework for comprehensive human formation relevant to contemporary educational needs.

#### *Implementation in the National Education System*

The strengthening of character education in Indonesia's national education system reflects the continued influence of the thoughts of both figures. Contemporary policies emphasizing character building, religious values, and civic consciousness echo their educational philosophy. Their legacy provides a historical foundation and practical guidance for ongoing efforts to improve character education.[20]

The Merdeka Curriculum (Merdeka Learning Curriculum) recently implemented in Indonesia incorporates principles consistent with their progressive thinking, including flexibility, value integration, and an emphasis on competency development. This curriculum reform reflects the continued relevance of their educational innovations. The Pancasila Student Profile, the core of Indonesia's current education policy, aims to cultivate character traits with faith and piety, global diversity, cooperation, independence, critical reasoning, and creativity that are consistent with the values promoted by both figures. Their educational heritage continues to shape Indonesian educational policies and practices, demonstrating the enduring relevance of their progressive thinking.

## CONCLUSION

This research has shown that both KH. Hasyim Asy'ari and KH. Ahmad Dahlan had a vision of progressive education that contributed significantly to Indonesian Islamic education and the formation of the nation's character. Despite their different approaches, KH. Hasyim Asy'ari and reformist modernism KH. Ahmad Dahlan, they shared a fundamental commitment to educational reform, the integration of Islamic values with contemporary needs, and the cultivation of nationalist consciousness among Muslims.

Their similarities include a recognition of the central role of education in community empowerment, a commitment to balancing tradition and modernity, and a vision of Islamic education that serves religious and national goals. Their differences in the methodology and institutional focus of pesantren versus formal schools, evolutionary versus revolutionary change, reflect different strategic judgments of how best to achieve educational reform in their specific contexts. Their combined contribution to educational development and the formation of national character is evident in the institutional legacy, curricular innovations, and pedagogical advances that continue to shape Indonesian Islamic education. Their emphasis on moderate Islam, character building, and nationalist consciousness provides the basis for

contemporary efforts to develop an education system that respects religious values while serving national development.

This research shows that the progressive thinking of the two figures provides a strong foundation for the education of Indonesia's national character based on moderate and inclusive Islamic values. Their educational philosophy manages to balance religious authenticity with modern relevance, traditional values with progressive methods, and religious commitment with national loyalty. The basis of moderate and inclusive Islamic values promoted by the two figures addresses the challenges of contemporary extremism, intolerance, and social fragmentation. Their teachings show that authentic Islamic commitment can and should be realized in moderation, tolerance, and inclusive engagement with diverse communities and ideas. The educational models they develop remain relevant in contemporary contexts, offering guidance for addressing current educational challenges while maintaining a relationship with historical foundations. Their legacy shows that effective educational reform must respect tradition while embracing necessary innovations, maintaining ethical foundations while pursuing progress.

For the development of education policy, this study shows the importance of maintaining a balanced approach that integrates religious and moral education with academic excellence, respects traditional educational institutions while supporting innovation, and promotes moderate religious values in addition to nationalist consciousness. Policymakers must draw on the legacies of both figures in developing comprehensive education policies. For Islamic educational practices, this study highlights the continued relevance of character building, the integration of knowledge domains, and the balance between tradition and modernity. Educational practitioners in Islamic institutions should learn and implement the pedagogical insights of both figures, adapting their approaches to the contemporary context while maintaining core principles. For the character formation of the younger generation, this study underscores the importance of value-based education that fosters religious devotion and civic responsibility, promotes moderate and inclusive religious understanding, and develops a comprehensive character covering intellectual, moral, social, and spiritual dimensions.

The revitalization of the thinking of both figures in contemporary education requires a systematic effort to study, disseminate, and implement their educational philosophy. Educational institutions, especially those affiliated with NU and Muhammadiyah, should strengthen their relationship with the vision of the founders while adapting to contemporary needs. The application of progressive values in education should include the development of a curriculum that incorporates their emphasis on character building, pedagogical training that emphasizes their teaching methodology, and institutional development that reflects their balanced approach to tradition and modernity. Further research is needed to deepen an understanding of specific aspects of their educational philosophy, examine the implementation of their ideas in various contexts, and explore their relevance to emerging educational challenges. Comparative studies with other Islamic education reformists, both in Indonesia and internationally, will further highlight the importance of their contributions.

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