



# KH. Ahmad Dahlan and the Muhammadiyah Movement: Trailblazers of Educational Transformation in Indonesia

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## Article Information

Received: January 10, 2025  
Revised: February 3, 2025  
Accepted: February 25, 2025  
Online: March 14, 2025

## Keywords

KH. Ahmad Dahlan  
Muhammadiyah Movement  
Educational Transformation

## ABSTRACT

*KH. Ahmad Dahlan, born Muhammad Darwis in 1868 in Yogyakarta, was a scholar, educator, and reformer who founded Muhammadiyah in 1912. He was concerned with education and religious understanding among Indonesian Muslims, who were lagging. Muhammadiyah aimed to advance education, health, and social welfare by establishing schools that integrated religious and secular knowledge. Before Muhammadiyah, education in Indonesia was dominated by traditional pesantren and madrasah, with less relevant methods to contemporary developments. KH. Ahmad Dahlan introduced modern teaching methods that encouraged critical thinking and understanding. This study employs a literature review method to explore the contributions of KH. Ahmad Dahlan and the Muhammadiyah movement are transforming education in Indonesia. Data were collected from academic journals, books, conference papers, and credible online sources discussing the history, philosophy, and influence of KH. Ahmad Dahlan and Muhammadiyah. The research findings indicate that KH. Ahmad Dahlan and Muhammadiyah brought significant changes to Indonesian education by integrating religious and secular education, using the Indonesian language as the medium of instruction, emphasizing character education, and promoting gender equality. Muhammadiyah also introduced modern teaching methods and holistic social services. These contributions have enhanced access to and quality education, strengthened national identity, and influenced national education policies. This study provides a deep understanding of the pivotal role of KH. Ahmad Dahlan and Muhammadiyah, in educational reform, offer valuable lessons for the future development of the education system.*

## INTRODUCTION

KH. Ahmad Dahlan, born Muhammad Darwis in 1868 in Yogyakarta, was a scholar, educator, and reformer with a grand vision for advancing the Indonesian Muslim community and society. In the early 20th century, he observed a significant lag in education and religious understanding among Indonesian Muslims, who were primarily bound by rigid, traditional practices that had become less relevant to contemporary developments ([Fera Andini et al., 2024](#); [Hasan & Taufiq, 2023](#)). KH. Ahmad Dahlan recognized that education was the key to empowering the community and liberating them from

ignorance and backwardness. With this in mind, he was determined to reform the educational system to be more progressive and inclusive ([Hasan & Taufiq, 2023](#)).

In 1912, KH. Ahmad Dahlan founded Muhammadiyah, an organization advancing education, health, and social welfare. Muhammadiyah emerged from his deep concern over the deplorable state of education. Under his leadership, Muhammadiyah established schools that combined religious and secular knowledge. Muhammadiyah schools provided comprehensive religious education and modern scientific knowledge, rarely taught in traditional educational institutions ([Arman & Deswita, 2023](#); [Hamzah et al., 2023](#)). This initiative paved the way for a new generation that was well-educated and equipped to face contemporary challenges.

Before the establishment of Muhammadiyah, education in Indonesia was dominated by pesantren and madrasah, which employed very traditional teaching methods. Although these institutions played a crucial role in disseminating religious knowledge, their teaching methods often failed to address the evolving needs of the time ([Darmayanti et al., 2024](#); [Marlini et al., 2024](#)). Additionally, access to formal education was minimal and restricted to particular social groups. Education for women was also minimal ([Khoirudin et al., 2020](#)). In this context, Muhammadiyah's modern and inclusive educational approach brought a significant and much-needed change.

The contributions of KH. Ahmad Dahlan and Muhammadiyah extended beyond the establishment of schools. Muhammadiyah introduced various innovations in teaching methods, curriculum, and educational management ([Khoirudin et al., 2020](#); [Pratiwi & Nurhakim, 2023](#)). For instance, using the Indonesian language as the medium of instruction in Muhammadiyah schools helped strengthen national identity and facilitated more comprehensive access to education for all social strata ([Ana Maulida Sabila et al., 2023](#)). Moreover, Muhammadiyah emphasized the importance of character education and moral integrity, which were in line with Islamic teachings but presented in ways relevant to the advancements in science and technology ([Samsiadi, 2023](#)).

The importance of studying KH. Ahmad Dahlan and Muhammadiyah lie in understanding how education can serve as a tool for social transformation. Their contributions to the reformation of Indonesia's educational system offer valuable lessons on the practical implementation of educational reforms ([Azaki Khoirudin and Ari Anshori, 2018](#); [Kurnia Wati, 2023](#)) by studying the history and innovations introduced by KH. Ahmad Dahlan, we can draw inspiration to develop a better educational system in the future, focusing on the mastery of knowledge and the cultivation of strong character and moral integrity.

Before the emergence of the Muhammadiyah movement, the Indonesian educational system faced numerous serious challenges. Education at that time was dominated by traditional systems that were ineffective in providing knowledge and skills relevant to contemporary developments. Low literacy rates, limited access to education, and rigid teaching methods were among the main issues hindering educational progress in Indonesia. This situation demanded changes and innovations in the educational system ([Darmayanti et al., 2024](#); [Saputra et al., 2023](#)).

This study aims to explore KH's contributions. Ahmad Dahlan and the Muhammadiyah movement to the transformation of education in Indonesia. By examining the history and development of Muhammadiyah, this research will reveal how the approaches and innovations introduced by KH. Ahmad Dahlan successfully changed Indonesia's educational landscape, improving education quality and providing broader social access.

This research is highly significant as it provides a deeper understanding of the crucial role of KH. Ahmad Dahlan and Muhammadiyah in the history of Indonesian education. This study adds to the existing literature and offers a new perspective on how educational reforms can be successfully implemented in different contexts. Understanding KH. Ahmad Dahlan's contributions allow us to derive valuable lessons for developing and improving educational systems in the future.

## **METHODS**

This research employs a literature review methodology to explore the contributions of KH. Ahmad Dahlan and the Muhammadiyah Movement to educational transformation in Indonesia. The literature review approach allows for a comprehensive synthesis of existing knowledge, facilitating a deeper understanding of these educational reformers' historical and contemporary impacts ([Snyder, 2019](#)). The data sources for this study include academic journals, books, conference papers, and credible online

resources that discuss the history, philosophy, and influence of KH. Ahmad Dahlan and the Muhammadiyah Movement. The inclusion criteria for selecting literature involve works that specifically address the educational initiatives and reforms introduced by KH. Ahmad Dahlan, the evolution and activities of the Muhammadiyah Movement, and the broader context of educational changes in Indonesia. Exclusion criteria filter out sources that do not provide substantive insights or are not directly related to the focus of this study.

Data analysis involves systematically identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing the findings from the selected literature. This process includes coding the information to identify key themes and patterns related to the educational philosophies and reforms introduced by KH. Ahmad Dahlan, the implementation strategies of the Muhammadiyah Movement, and their impact on the Indonesian educational landscape. By analyzing these themes, the study aims to construct a detailed narrative highlighting the transformative role of KH. Ahmad Dahlan and the Muhammadiyah Movement in Indonesian education. The methodological rigour in selecting and analyzing the literature ensures that the findings provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the subject, contributing valuable insights to educational history and reform.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### ***Key Contributions of KH. Ahmad Dahlan***

#### *Establishment of Muhammadiyah*

One of the most significant contributions of KH is Ahmad Dahlan's founding of Muhammadiyah in 1912. Recognizing the need for reform in the Indonesian educational system, he established this organization to address the community's various social, religious, and academic challenges ([Arman & Deswita, 2023](#); [Parwanto, 2021](#)). Muhammadiyah's primary mission was to provide a modern education that balanced religious teachings with general knowledge, thereby creating a more holistic approach to learning. This initiative was groundbreaking as it aimed to modernize Islamic education and make it more relevant to the needs of contemporary society ([Sebastian & Stanley, 2019](#); [Sutarna et al., 2021](#); [Tentiasih et al., 2023](#)).

Under KH. Ahmad Dahlan's leadership, Muhammadiyah, rapidly expanded its reach and influence. The organization established numerous schools, hospitals, and social services across Indonesia, all aimed at improving the quality of life for the community. The success of Muhammadiyah in various sectors demonstrated the effectiveness of Dahlan's vision and approach ([Fera Andini et al., 2024](#); [Hasan & Taufiq, 2023](#); [Izzati et al., 2021](#)). Today, Muhammadiyah remains one of Indonesia's largest and most influential socio-religious organizations, continuing to uphold the principles and objectives set forth by its founder ([Solihati et al., 2021](#)).

#### *Integration of Religious and Secular Education*

KH. Ahmad Dahlan introduced an innovative educational model that integrated religious and secular education. Traditionally, Islamic schools in Indonesia focused solely on religious studies, often neglecting subjects such as mathematics, science, and literature. Dahlan recognized that this approach was insufficient for preparing students to meet the demands of the modern world. He believed a comprehensive education should include religious teachings and general knowledge to create well-rounded individuals ([Amirudin, 2018](#); [Saputra et al., 2021](#); [Syahrul et al., 2024](#)).

To implement this vision, Muhammadiyah schools offered a balanced curriculum that included Islamic studies alongside modern subjects. This dual approach ensured that students received a broad education, equipping them with the skills and knowledge needed for various aspects of life ([Khoirudin et al., 2020](#); [Pratiwi & Nurhakim, 2023](#)). The integration of religious and secular education not only enhanced the students' intellectual capabilities but also strengthened their moral and ethical foundations. This holistic educational model has since been widely adopted and remains a cornerstone of muhammadiyah's educational philosophy ([Abdul Aziz et al., 2021](#); [Sijabat & Ahmad, 2022](#)).

#### *Use of Indonesian Language as Medium of Instruction*

At a time when education in Indonesia was often conducted in Arabic or Dutch, KH. Ahmad Dahlan pioneered using the Indonesian language as the medium of instruction in Muhammadiyah schools. This decision was revolutionary, as it made education more accessible to the broader population who were

more familiar with the local language. By using Indonesian, Dahlan ensured that students could better understand and engage with the material being taught, which significantly improved the overall quality of education ([Albany, 2021](#); [Ana Maulida Sabila et al., 2023](#); [Setyarini et al., 2018](#)).

Adopting Indonesian as the medium of instruction also had significant cultural and national implications. It helped foster a sense of national identity and unity among students, promoting a common language that could bridge diverse ethnic and regional groups within Indonesia. This move was instrumental in strengthening the national movement and preparing the younger generation to contribute to developing an independent Indonesia. The use of the national language in education continues to be a critical factor in fostering national cohesion and identity ([Nurhidayat et al., 2024](#); [Samsiadi, 2023](#); [Samsuriadi et al., 2024](#)).

#### *Emphasis on Character Education*

KH. Ahmad Dahlan strongly emphasized character education, believing education should impart knowledge and build moral and ethical values. He was convinced that intellectual development should go hand in hand with cultivating good character and social responsibility ([Azaki Khoirudin and Ari Anshori, 2018](#); [Kurnia Wati, 2023](#)). In Muhammadiyah schools, character education was integrated into the curriculum, instilling values such as honesty, integrity, discipline, and empathy ([Darmayanti et al., 2024](#); [Saputra et al., 2023](#)).

The emphasis on character education aimed to produce well-rounded individuals who were knowledgeable, morally upright, and socially responsible. KH. Ahmad Dahlan believed these qualities were essential for creating a just and prosperous society ([Kurniawanti & Kumalasari, 2020](#); [Marlini et al., 2024](#)). The focus on character education helped students develop a strong sense of ethics and community, preparing them to be responsible citizens and leaders. This approach has had a lasting impact on Indonesian education and continues to be a core principle in Muhammadiyah schools ([Ali, 2023](#); [Arman & Deswita, 2023](#); [Parwanto, 2021](#)).

#### *Promotion of Gender Equality in Education*

KH. Ahmad Dahlan was a proponent of gender equality in education at a time when educational opportunities for women were severely limited. He recognized that excluding women from educational opportunities hindered the overall progress of society. To address this issue, he advocated for and facilitated the establishment of schools for girls, providing them with the same educational opportunities as boys. It was a significant step towards empowering women through education and promoting gender equality in Indonesian society ([Darmayanti et al., 2024](#); [Khoirudin et al., 2020](#); [Samsuriadi et al., 2024](#); [Saputra et al., 2021](#)).

Establishing girls' schools under Muhammadiyah was a radical move that challenged traditional norms and expectations regarding gender roles by providing quality education to women, KH. Ahmad Dahlan helped to elevate their status and empower them to contribute more effectively to their communities and the nation ([Khoirudin et al., 2020](#); [Tentiasih et al., 2023](#)). This focus on gender equality in education laid the groundwork for future generations of educated and empowered women, significantly contributing to Indonesia's social and economic development.

#### *Adoption of Modern Teaching Methods*

In contrast to the rote memorization techniques prevalent in traditional Islamic education, KH. Ahmad Dahlan introduced modern teaching methods that encouraged critical thinking, understanding, and application of knowledge. He believed that students should not merely memorize facts but should also understand concepts and be able to apply their knowledge to solve real-world problems. This approach was a departure from the traditional emphasis on rote learning and marked a significant shift towards a more dynamic and interactive form of education ([Abdul Aziz et al., 2021](#); [Hasan & Taufiq, 2023](#); [Samsiadi, 2023](#)).

To implement these modern teaching methods, Muhammadiyah schools adopted various innovative practices. These included using teaching aids, practical experiments, and interactive learning activities that engaged students and made learning more effective and enjoyable ([Ana Maulida Sabila et al., 2023](#); [Khoirudin et al., 2020](#)). Focusing on critical thinking and problem-solving skills helped students better understand their subjects and prepared them for future academic and professional

challenges ([Samsuriadi et al., 2024](#); [Setyarini et al., 2018](#)). These modern teaching methods have since become integral to Muhammadiyah's educational approach and have been widely adopted in Indonesian education ([Khoirudin et al., 2020](#)).

#### *Establishment of Health and Social Services*

Recognizing the interconnection between education, health, and social welfare, KH. Ahmad Dahlan expanded the scope of Muhammadiyah's work to include health and social services. He understood that education alone was not enough to improve the quality of life for the community. Therefore, he established clinics, hospitals, and orphanages to address the broader needs of society, creating a holistic support system that complemented the educational initiatives of Muhammadiyah ([Hasan & Taufiq, 2023](#); [Samsiadi, 2023](#); [Samsuriadi et al., 2024](#)).

Establishing health and social services under Muhammadiyah significantly contributed to the community's well-being. These services provided much-needed healthcare and social support, particularly to the underprivileged and marginalized groups ([Darmayanti et al., 2024](#); [Saputra et al., 2021, 2023](#)) by addressing educational and social needs, KH. Ahmad Dahlan's holistic approach ensured a more comprehensive and sustainable improvement in the quality of life for the community. This integrated model of education, health, and social welfare continues to be a defining feature of Muhammadiyah's work and has contributed significantly to its lasting impact on Indonesian society ([Ali, 2023](#); [Hasan & Taufiq, 2023](#); [Syahrul et al., 2024](#)).

#### *Advocacy for Educational Reform and Social Change*

KH. Ahmad Dahlan was an educator and a social reformer who actively advocated for educational reform and social change. He challenged the status quo and encouraged the Muslim community to embrace modernity and progress. Through his writings, speeches, and actions, he promoted the idea that education was a critical tool for achieving social justice and economic development. His advocacy for educational reform laid the groundwork for subsequent changes in the Indonesian educational system ([Abdul Aziz et al., 2021](#); [Parwanto, 2021](#)).

Dahlan's efforts in advocating for social change went beyond education. He called for greater social justice, economic equity, and poverty and ignorance eradication. His vision for a reformed society was rooted in Islamic principles, inclusiveness, and forward-looking, aiming to create a modern, progressive Indonesia. The social reform initiatives he championed continue to inspire and guide efforts towards educational and social development in Indonesia, demonstrating the enduring relevance of his contributions ([Hasan & Taufiq, 2023](#); [Pratiwi & Nurhakim, 2023](#); [Samsuriadi et al., 2024](#)).

### ***Role of the Muhammadiyah Movement***

#### *Establishing a Network of Schools*

The Muhammadiyah Movement is under the visionary leadership of KH. Ahmad Dahlan made significant strides in transforming the educational landscape of Indonesia by establishing a network of schools. Recognizing the inadequacies in the traditional education system, Muhammadiyah focused on creating institutions that provided a balanced education incorporating both religious and secular subjects. By 1920, Muhammadiyah had established several schools in Yogyakarta and surrounding areas, which became the model for future Muhammadiyah educational institutions ([Hamzah et al., 2023](#); [Samsiadi, 2023](#)).

These schools were characterized by their inclusive approach to education. Unlike traditional pesantren that focused predominantly on Islamic studies, Muhammadiyah schools offered a curriculum that included subjects such as mathematics, science, literature, and social sciences alongside religious education ([Ana Maulida Sabila et al., 2023](#); [Marlini et al., 2024](#)). This approach ensured students were well-prepared for the modern world while maintaining religious values. Establishing these schools laid the foundation for Indonesia's more inclusive and progressive educational system, catering to the community's diverse needs ([Darmayanti et al., 2024](#); [Samsuriadi et al., 2024](#)).

#### *Curriculum Reform and Innovation*

A key aspect of Muhammadiyah's educational reform was the curriculum overhaul. Traditional Islamic education in Indonesia often relied heavily on rote memorization and was limited in scope.

Muhammadiyah introduced a more dynamic and comprehensive curriculum that encouraged critical thinking and practical application of knowledge. Subjects such as natural sciences, social sciences, and languages were integrated into the curriculum, providing a well-rounded education ([Sijabat & Ahmad, 2022](#); [Syahrul et al., 2024](#)).

Furthermore, Muhammadiyah emphasized the importance of using the Indonesian language as the medium of instruction. This decision not only made education more accessible to a broader segment of the population but also helped foster a sense of national identity and unity ([Ana Maulida Sabila et al., 2023](#); [Sutarna et al., 2021](#)). The curriculum reform also included character education, focusing on building moral and ethical values in students. This holistic approach to teaching was instrumental in developing well-rounded individuals who were knowledgeable, morally upright, and socially responsible ([Izzati et al., 2021](#); [Kurnia Wati, 2023](#); [Sutarna et al., 2021](#)).

#### *Teacher Training and Professional Development*

Muhammadiyah recognized that effective educational reform required well-trained and motivated teachers. To this end, the movement strongly emphasized teacher training and professional development. Muhammadiyah established teacher training colleges and conducted regular workshops and seminars to enhance the skills and knowledge of educators. These training programs focused on modern teaching methods, classroom management, and integrating religious and secular education ([Marlini et al., 2024](#); [Nurhidayat et al., 2024](#); [Syahrul et al., 2024](#)).

The professional development initiatives also instilled a sense of mission and dedication among teachers. By emphasizing the importance of their role in shaping the nation's future, Muhammadiyah encouraged teachers to be proactive in their professional growth and adopt innovative teaching practices. This focus on teacher quality was crucial in ensuring the successful implementation of Muhammadiyah's educational reforms and maintaining high school education standards ([Setyarini et al., 2018](#); [Syahrul et al., 2024](#)).

#### *Inclusive Education and Gender Equality*

One of the hallmark features of Muhammadiyah's educational reform was its commitment to inclusive education and gender equality. At a time when educational opportunities for women were severely limited, Muhammadiyah established schools for girls, providing them with the same quality of education as boys. This radical move challenged societal norms and paved the way for greater gender equality in Indonesian society ([Darmayanti et al., 2024](#); [Samsuriadi et al., 2024](#)).

Inclusive education was also reflected in Muhammadiyah's efforts to provide education to marginalized and underserved communities. The movement established schools in rural and remote areas, ensuring children from all backgrounds had access to quality education. These initiatives promoted social equity and contributed to the overall development of Indonesian society by empowering all individuals through education ([Khoirudin et al., 2020](#); [Samsuriadi et al., 2024](#); [Saputra et al., 2023](#)).

#### *Community Engagement and Social Services*

Muhammadiyah's approach to educational reform extended beyond the classroom. The movement actively engaged with the community and integrated social services into its academic model. This holistic approach was based on the belief that education should address the broader needs of society. Muhammadiyah established clinics, hospitals, and orphanages alongside its schools, providing comprehensive support to the community ([Ana Maulida Sabila et al., 2023](#); [Darmayanti et al., 2024](#)).

Community engagement was also fostered through various extracurricular activities and social programs organized by Muhammadiyah schools. These activities aimed to develop students' social skills, leadership qualities, and civic responsibility ([Kurniawanti & Kumalasari, 2020](#); [Sebastian & Stanley, 2019](#)). By involving students in community service and social projects, Muhammadiyah instilled a sense of social awareness and commitment to societal well-being. Integrating education and social services was instrumental in creating a supportive and nurturing student environment and promoting the community's overall development ([Hasan & Taufiq, 2023](#); [Nurhidayat et al., 2024](#)).

### *Adoption of Modern Educational Technologies*

In keeping with its progressive approach, Muhammadiyah quickly adopted modern educational technologies to enhance the learning experience. The movement recognized the potential of technology in making education more effective and accessible ([Parwanto, 2021](#)). Muhammadiyah schools began incorporating audiovisual aids, scientific equipment, and computer technology into their teaching methods. This early technology adoption helped students gain practical skills and stay abreast of technological advancements ([Parwanto, 2021](#); [Sijabat & Ahmad, 2022](#)).

Modern educational technologies also facilitate more interactive and engaging learning experiences. Teachers were trained to use these tools effectively, improving teaching quality and making learning more enjoyable for students. Muhammadiyah's forward-thinking approach to integrating technology into education set a precedent for other educational institutions in Indonesia, contributing to the modernization of the country's educational system ([Ana Maulida Sabila et al., 2023](#); [Marlini et al., 2024](#); [Parwanto, 2021](#)).

### *Advocacy for Educational Policy Changes*

Muhammadiyah's influence extended beyond its network of schools; the movement actively advocated for broader educational policy changes at the national level. Muhammadiyah engaged with policymakers and government officials through its leadership and various platforms to promote educational reforms aligned with its inclusive and progressive education vision. The movement's advocacy efforts were instrumental in shaping national educational policies and standards ([Albany, 2021](#); [Marlini et al., 2024](#)).

This advocacy also included efforts to standardize and improve the quality of education across Indonesia. Muhammadiyah worked towards implementing educational policies that promoted equal access to education, improved teacher training, and integrated modern pedagogical methods ([Izzati et al., 2021](#); [Khoirudin et al., 2020](#)). By leveraging its extensive network and influence, Muhammadiyah was vital in driving systemic changes in the Indonesian educational landscape, ensuring that its reformative principles were adopted widely.

### *Sustained Impact and Legacy*

The impact of Muhammadiyah's educational reforms has been profound and lasting. The movement's emphasis on a balanced education integrating religious and secular knowledge has become a model for many other academic institutions in Indonesia ([Ana Maulida Sabila et al., 2023](#); [Izzati et al., 2021](#)). Muhammadiyah's schools continue to produce well-equipped graduates who can contribute positively to society, both academically and morally ([Hasan & Taufiq, 2023](#)).

The legacy of Muhammadiyah's educational reforms is also evident in the ongoing influence of its principles and practices. The movement's commitment to inclusive education, gender equality, and community engagement continues to inspire educational initiatives across Indonesia. Muhammadiyah's holistic approach to teaching, which addresses both intellectual and social needs, remains a cornerstone of its enduring success and influence in shaping the future of Indonesian education ([Darmayanti et al., 2024](#); [Kurnia Wati, 2023](#); [Pratiwi & Nurhakim, 2023](#)).

## **Transformative Impact**

### *Widespread Access to Quality Education*

The Muhammadiyah Movement's efforts significantly increased access to quality education across Indonesia. Before Muhammadiyah's initiatives, education was often limited to a privileged few, with many children, particularly in rural areas, having little to no access to formal schooling ([Ana Maulida Sabila et al., 2023](#)). Muhammadiyah established numerous schools, including those in remote and underserved regions, democratized education by providing opportunities for children from all backgrounds to receive a quality education. This expansion of educational access has played a crucial role in improving literacy rates and educational attainment across the country ([Izzati et al., 2021](#); [Pratiwi & Nurhakim, 2023](#); [Samsuriadi et al., 2024](#)).

The quality of education provided by Muhammadiyah schools set a new standard in Indonesian education. Muhammadiyah schools offered a well-rounded curriculum that prepared students for religious and worldly challenges by integrating religious and secular subjects. This balanced approach

ensured that students received a comprehensive education that was both relevant and practical ([Saputra et al., 2021](#); [Tentiasih et al., 2023](#)). The success of Muhammadiyah's educational model has been widely recognized, leading to its adoption by other academic institutions and influencing national educational policies ([Sebastian & Stanley, 2019](#); [Tentiasih et al., 2023](#)).

#### *Modernization of Educational Methods*

One of the most transformative impacts of the Muhammadiyah Movement was the modernization of educational methods. Traditional Indonesian education often relied on rote memorization and outdated pedagogical approaches. Muhammadiyah introduced innovative teaching methods that emphasized critical thinking, problem-solving, and practical application of knowledge ([Amirudin, 2018](#); [Saputra et al., 2023](#); [Setyarini et al., 2018](#)). This shift towards a more dynamic and interactive education helped develop students' cognitive skills and fostered a deeper understanding of the subjects ([Saputra et al., 2021](#)).

Adopting modern educational technologies further enhanced the learning experience in Muhammadiyah schools. By incorporating audiovisual aids, scientific equipment, and, later, computer technology, Muhammadiyah ensured that students were exposed to the latest advancements in education ([Izzati et al., 2021](#); [Pratiwi & Nurhakim, 2023](#)). This early adoption of technology improved teaching quality and prepared students for the technological demands of the modern world ([Sijabat & Ahmad, 2022](#)). The movement's forward-thinking approach to education has impacted the overall modernization of the Indonesian educational system ([Hasan & Taufiq, 2023](#)).

#### *Promotion of Inclusive and Gender-Equal Education*

Muhammadiyah's commitment to inclusive and gender-equal education brought about significant social transformation in Indonesia. Before Muhammadiyah's interventions, educational opportunities for girls were severely limited, and many children from marginalized communities were excluded from formal education. By establishing schools for girls and ensuring that education was accessible to all, regardless of gender or social background, Muhammadiyah challenged traditional norms and promoted more significant social equity ([Khoirudin et al., 2020](#); [Samsuriadi et al., 2024](#)).

The emphasis on gender equality in education profoundly impacted the role of women in Indonesian society. Educated women were empowered to contribute more effectively to their communities and the nation, leading to greater gender parity in various sectors ([Khoirudin et al., 2020](#); [Samsiadi, 2023](#)). Muhammadiyah's inclusive approach also helped to break down social barriers and fostered a more cohesive and equitable society. The movement's efforts in promoting inclusive and gender-equal education continue to inspire and guide educational initiatives in Indonesia ([Darmayanti et al., 2024](#)).

#### *Strengthening National Identity and Unity*

Using the Indonesian language as the medium of instruction in Muhammadiyah schools played a critical role in strengthening national identity and unity. At a time when education was often conducted in foreign languages, Muhammadiyah's decision to use Indonesian helped to foster a sense of national pride and cohesion among students. This move was instrumental in unifying diverse ethnic and regional groups within Indonesia, promoting a shared understanding of identity and purpose ([Khoirudin et al., 2020](#); [Nurhidayat et al., 2024](#); [Sijabat & Ahmad, 2022](#)).

The focus on national identity was further reinforced by integrating character education into the curriculum by instilling values such as honesty, integrity, and social responsibility. Muhammadiyah schools aimed to develop well-rounded individuals who were knowledgeable and committed to their nation's well-being. This emphasis on character education has had a lasting impact on Indonesian society, creating a responsible and morally upright citizenry ([Kurnia Wati, 2023](#); [Sutarna et al., 2021](#)).

#### *Influence on National Educational Policies*

The Muhammadiyah Movement's transformative impact extended beyond its school network to influence national educational policies. Muhammadiyah's success in implementing innovative and effective educational practices caught the attention of policymakers and academic leaders. The movement's advocacy for educational reform and its active engagement with government officials



helped to shape national policies that aligned with Muhammadiyah's vision of inclusive and progressive education ([Samsiadi, 2023](#); [Samsuriadi et al., 2024](#); [Tentiasih et al., 2023](#)).

One of the critical areas of influence was integrating religious and secular education into the national curriculum. Muhammadiyah's balanced approach served as a model for educational reform, leading to the adoption of similar practices in public schools across Indonesia. Additionally, Muhammadiyah's emphasis on teacher training and professional development set a new standard for educational quality, prompting the government to implement policies to improve teacher education and training nationwide ([Solihati et al., 2021](#); [Syahrul et al., 2024](#)).

#### *Long-Term Social and Economic Development*

The transformative impact of Muhammadiyah's educational reforms has contributed significantly to Indonesia's long-term social and economic development. Muhammadiyah helped create a more educated and skilled workforce by providing quality education to a broader population segment. It, in turn, has driven economic growth and development, as educated individuals are better equipped to contribute to various sectors of the economy ([Hasan & Taufiq, 2023](#)).

The social benefits of Muhammadiyah's reforms are equally significant. The movement's emphasis on character education and social responsibility has fostered a culture of civic engagement and community service ([Sutarna et al., 2021](#)). Graduates of Muhammadiyah schools are not only academically capable but also socially conscious and committed to improving their communities ([Izzati et al., 2021](#)). This holistic approach to education has helped to build a more just, equitable, and cohesive society, laying the foundation for sustainable development in Indonesia.

#### *Legacy and Continuing Influence*

The legacy of the Muhammadiyah Movement's educational reforms continues to shape Indonesian education today. Muhammadiyah schools remain a benchmark for quality education, and the movement's principles and practices are widely respected and emulated ([Darmayanti et al., 2024](#)). The ongoing influence of Muhammadiyah is evident in its educational institutions' continued growth and success, which number in the thousands across Indonesia ([Amirudin, 2018](#); [Ana Maulida Sabila et al., 2023](#)).

The movement's enduring impact is also reflected in the broader educational landscape. Muhammadiyah's innovative approaches and advocacy efforts have set a precedent for educational reform, inspiring subsequent generations to continue modernizing and improving the educational system ([Hasan & Taufiq, 2023](#); [Marlini et al., 2024](#)). The transformative impact of Muhammadiyah's efforts serves as a testament to the power of education as a tool for social change and development. Muhammadiyah has left an indelible mark on Indonesian education and society through pioneering work, ensuring its legacy of progress and reform will endure for generations ([Ana Maulida Sabila et al., 2023](#); [Parwanto, 2021](#)).

## **CONCLUSION**

The contributions of KH. Ahmad Dahlan, through the establishment of Muhammadiyah, has significantly impacted education in Indonesia. By integrating religious and secular education, using the Indonesian language as the medium of instruction, and emphasizing character education and gender equality, Muhammadiyah has been able to create a holistic and inclusive educational model. These innovations not only enhance the quality of education but also strengthen national identity and promote social equality. The movement has also expanded access to education in remote areas, improving literacy and learning opportunities for all segments of society.

Moreover, Muhammadiyah's active role in advocating for educational policy and professional development for teachers has brought systemic changes to the national education system. The integration of modern technology in teaching and the provision of social services by Muhammadiyah demonstrates a holistic approach to improving the quality of life in the community. The legacy of KH. Ahmad Dahlan and Muhammadiyah continue to influence education today, serving as an example and inspiration for other educational institutions in Indonesia to create inclusive, progressive, and high-quality education.

### Funding and Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no funding and conflicts of interest for this research.

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