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Comparative Analysis of Islamic Educational Thought of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari and KH. Ahmad Dahlan

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A B S T R A C T

This study aims to: (1) examine the educational thought of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, (2) explore the educational ideas of KH. Ahmad Dahlan, and (3) identify the similarities and differences between the two. This research employs a library research design with a philosophical approach, using literature review as the main data collection technique and descriptive as well as content analysis for data interpretation. The findings reveal that: (1) KH. Hasyim Asy'ari emphasizes Islamic education as a process of forming a complete human being who seeks closeness to Allah SWT and attains happiness in both worldly and spiritual dimensions. (2) KH. Ahmad Dahlan views the purpose of Islamic education as producing individuals who master religious knowledge while possessing a broad and modern worldview. (3) Both scholars share similarities in their educational goals, commitment to Islamic reform, intellectual lineage, emphasis on Islamic education, establishment of educational institutions, efforts to raise Muslim awareness, and focus on building an educated generation, positioning education as a tool for transformation. However, their differences lie in their approaches to religious education, curriculum orientation, teaching methods, and specific educational objectives.

1. Introduction

Education is fundamental to human life; from birth, individuals must undergo education. Without it, they will experience ignorance as adults, whether in terms of knowledge or daily life. Through education, humans can be distinguished as the noblest of creatures compared to others. In Islam, education is highly emphasized, and it is obligatory for both Muslim men and women to seek knowledge. As stated in the Hadith: "Seeking knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim, male and female" (HR. Imam Muslim) (Setiawan et al., 2021). This underscores that Islamic education is not only a religious command but also a foundation for human development and societal progress.

According to Jalaluddin, the goal of Islamic education must be formulated from the philosophical values embedded in the philosophy of Islamic education itself. The objective of Islamic education, according to him, is identical to the purpose of Islam itself. This view has sparked both support and opposition among scholars. Those who oppose this view argue from the paradigm of the philosophy of science, where the fundamental framework of knowledge should be based on empirical experience, not revelation, whose truth is absolute and difficult to verify empirically, as it is not part of scientific inquiry. However, Islam is not merely a religion; according to H.A.R. Gibb, as cited by Jalaluddin, Islam is not just a theological system but a complete civilization (Wibowo, 2020). This academic discourse demonstrates the dynamic nature of Islamic educational philosophy, which must balance revelation, reason, and empirical experience.

In the Indonesian context, Islamic education faces complex and diverse issues (Lestari & Masyithoh, 2023). A major challenge lies in the quality gap between formal and non-formal Islamic education. While madrasahs have long become part of the national education system, many still struggle with limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of qualified educators. Conversely, pesantren often face constraints in funding sustainability and limited access to modern educational resources. Additionally, there remains an imbalance between Islamic education providers and the national education system, contributing to disparities in curriculum relevance, educator competence, and institutional governance.

The competence of educators also becomes a pressing issue. Although many teachers exhibit strong dedication, knowledge gaps and insufficient pedagogical skills continue to challenge the quality of Islamic education. As Lestari & Masyithoh (2023) note, strengthening professional development and pedagogical training is necessary to improve the effectiveness of teaching. At the same time, the rapid advancement of technology and globalization introduces new dilemmas for Islamic education. The widespread accessibility of global information and cultural products can challenge Islamic values, necessitating a more adaptive educational system capable of producing students with strong Islamic identities amid global influences.

A deeper understanding of the essence of Islamic education is crucial to address these issues. One effective way to comprehend this essence is by examining the thoughts of influential figures who have shaped Islamic educational discourse in Indonesia. Among these figures are KH. Hasyim Asy'ari and KH. Ahmad Dahlan, whose contributions have significantly shaped educational practices and Islamic institutions nationwide. KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, as the founder of Nahdlatul Ulama, and KH. Ahmad Dahlan, as the founder of Muhammadiyah, represent two intellectual traditions that continue to influence contemporary Islamic education (Hasanah & Mahfud, 2021).

Previous studies have explored the educational thoughts of these two scholars. Fadhilah Luthfiyyah Zain et al. (2024) examined their educational perspectives through a literature review, focusing on similarities and differences. Muahmaad

Darwis et al. (2024) contextualized their thoughts in relation to nationalism and citizenship, while Maulidnawati et al. (2022) discussed their relevance to current Islamic educational challenges. These studies demonstrate increasing scholarly interest in understanding how classical Islamic education can respond to modern educational needs.

Islamic education, according to Syamsuddin (2022), is not merely the transfer of religious knowledge but a comprehensive system aimed at forming the personality of Muslims spiritually and intellectually. This idea aligns with the Qur'anic and prophetic emphasis on knowledge as a foundation of faith (Setiawan et al., 2021). Furthermore, Jalaluddin (2020) argues that the philosophical foundation of Islamic education is inseparable from the purpose of Islam itself, which aims to achieve balance in worldly and spiritual dimensions. Throughout history, figures such as Al-Ghazali and Ibn Khaldun have emphasized moral character development and societal advancement as core goals of Islamic education. Nonetheless, debates persist regarding the level to which revelation or empirical experience should guide educational philosophy (Wibowo, 2020).

Educators hold a central role in shaping Islamic education. Yusuf (2023) highlights that teachers must serve as role models in moral behavior and spiritual guidance. This aligns with the educational ideals of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari and KH. Ahmad Dahlan, both of whom envisioned educators as figures who embody Islamic virtues and guide students holistically (Hasanah & Mahfud, 2021). This underscores the relevance of their educational thoughts to contemporary educational reforms. The evolution of Islamic education in Indonesia has been significantly shaped by the nation's socio-political dynamics. Rahman (2021) argues that Islamic education must integrate national identity and contribute to unity and citizenship formation. Both KH. Hasyim Asy'ari and KH. Ahmad Dahlan promoted educational models that balanced Islamic principles with the needs of Indonesian society. KH. Hasyim Asy'ari emphasized inclusivity and cultural adaptation, while KH. Ahmad Dahlan advocated for modernization through the integration of Western educational methods within an Islamic framework (Lestari & Masyithoh, 2023).

Given these multiple challenges ranging from quality disparities to technological shifts it becomes increasingly important to revisit the insights of foundational Islamic educational thinkers. Both KH. Hasyim Asy'ari and KH. Ahmad Dahlan played crucial roles in developing educational institutions and shaping the philosophical foundations of Islamic education in Indonesia. Their ideas remain influential and relevant for contemporary efforts to reform and strengthen Islamic education (Hasanah & Mahfud, 2021; Lestari & Masyithoh, 2023). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to: (1) examine the educational thoughts of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, (2) explore the educational thoughts of KH. Ahmad Dahlan, and (3) identify the similarities and differences between the educational thoughts of both figures.

2. Methodology

This study is classified as *library research*, where literature serves as the primary source of data. A *philosophical approach* is employed to critically, evaluatively, and reflectively examine the educational thoughts of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari and KH. Ahmad Dahlan. This approach is suitable for exploring their perspectives on Islamic education, particularly their views on moral education. The data used in this research is divided into primary and secondary sources. Primary data includes *Adabul 'Alim wal Muta'alim* (The Etiquette of Knowledge for Teachers and Students) by KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, and *Pemikiran Pendidikan Islam KH. Ahmad Dahlan* by Dr. Asrori Mukhtarom. Secondary data includes works like *K.H. Ahmad Dahlan (1868-1923)* by Dr. Abdul Mu'thi and *Pendidikan Islam Bidang Akhlak KH. Ahmad Dahlan* by Fahrul Rahman, as well as biographical texts like *Kiai Haji Hasyim Asy'ari: Riwayat Hidup dan Pengabdiannya* by Heru Sukadri (Lestari & Masyithoh, 2023; Hasanah & Mahfud, 2021).

Data collection is performed through *library research*, a method of gathering and analyzing written materials such as books, articles, and journals related to the research topic. The core focus is on Islamic educational philosophies, with a particular emphasis on moral development as outlined by both KH. Hasyim Asy'ari and KH. Ahmad Dahlan. Library research allows for a thorough examination of their contributions to Islamic education, especially as it pertains to ethics, pedagogy, and the moral formation of students. This process involves the identification and selection of key texts that offer insight into the educational systems and moral frameworks established by these scholars (Adlini et al., 2022; Suryani, 2024).

The data analysis method employed is *content analysis*, a qualitative technique aimed at systematically interpreting the meaning and social context embedded in the texts. According to Soejono (2022), content analysis helps uncover underlying themes within a work by examining the text's content, structure, and context. In this study, content analysis will be used to extract and compare the core educational principles of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari and KH. Ahmad Dahlan, focusing on their views regarding Islamic education and its role in moral development. This analysis will help identify the similarities and differences in their educational philosophies.

Finally, the research will proceed through several stages: first, an in-depth textual examination of the primary and secondary sources, followed by a comparative analysis of the educational thoughts of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari and KH. Ahmad Dahlan. The analysis will then contextualize these thoughts within their historical and cultural settings, examining their relevance to contemporary Islamic education. The data will be synthesized to derive conclusions on how these scholars' ideas can provide solutions to current challenges in Islamic education (Wibowo, 2020; Setiawan et al., 2021).

3. Results and Discussion

Biography of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari

KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, born Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari, was born into an elite Javanese kyai family on February 14, 1871, in Gedang Village, Jombang. He passed away in Jombang on July 25, 1947, due to high blood pressure. His father, Asy'ari, was the founder of the Keras Pesantren, while his grandfather, Kyai Usman, founded the Gedang Pesantren. KH. Hasyim Asy'ari was the third of eleven siblings. His mother, Nyai Halimah, was the daughter of Kyai Usman, and his father came from Demak. The Hasyim family lineage traces back to Kyai Sihah, who founded the Tambakberas Pesantren in Jombang (Hasyim & Ari, 2020).

Biography of KH. Ahmad Dahlan

KH. Ahmad Dahlan was born in Kauman, Yogyakarta, in 1868. He passed away on February 23, 1923, and was buried in Karangkajen, Yogyakarta. In recognition of his contributions to Indonesia's independence, he was declared a National Hero by the Indonesian government in 1961. His lineage traces back to the Prophet Muhammad SAW through a long line of prominent Islamic figures. As a child, he was named Muhammad Darwisy. His father, K.H. Abu Bakar, served as the khatib (preacher) at the Yogyakarta Grand Mosque, while his mother, Nyai Abu Bakar, came from a respected family in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta (Dahlan & Darwis, 1923).

Similarities and Differences in the Educational Thoughts of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari and KH. Ahmad Dahlan

The educational thoughts of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari and KH. Ahmad Dahlan share several commonalities, which can be summarized in the following table:

Table 1. Similarities between the Educational Thoughts of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari and KH. Ahmad Dahlan

No	Aspect	Description
1	General educational goals	Both emphasized the importance of becoming scholars with extensive religious and general knowledge, serving the community, and striving for happiness in both this world and the Hereafter.
2	Islamic Reform	Both advocated for the reform of Islam in Indonesia to enhance the faith and quality of Muslim life.
3	Academic lineage	Both had similar academic mentors, such as KH. Cholil Bangkalan, Kyai Shaleh Darat, and Syekh Ahmad Khatib Al-Minangkabawi, creating a shared intellectual heritage.
4	Importance of Islamic education	Both highlighted the significance of education in improving the quality of Muslim life, with KH. Ahmad Dahlan founding Muhammadiyah schools and KH. Hasyim Asy'ari advancing Islamic education through pesantren.

5	Establishing educational institutions	Both founded educational institutions to promote Islamic learning, such as pesantren and schools.
6	Raising Muslim awareness	Both worked to raise awareness among Muslims about the importance of education and knowledge.
7	Building educated generations	Both sought to create generations with profound knowledge and good character.
8	Education as a tool for change	Both viewed education as a critical means for societal transformation.

Table 1 illustrates the shared vision between the two figures. KH. Hasyim Asy'ari believed in producing complete individuals who sought to draw closer to Allah SWT and attain happiness in this world and the Hereafter, while KH. Ahmad Dahlan aimed to produce individuals proficient in both religious and general knowledge, serving the Muhammadiyah cause. Both emphasized Islamic reform, though they approached it differently based on their contextual understanding of the needs of the time (Febrimardiansyah, 2019; Jumrah & Ondeng, 2022).

Differences in the Educational Thoughts of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari and KH. Ahmad Dahlan

Despite their similarities, the educational ideas of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari and KH. Ahmad Dahlan also diverged in several key aspects, as shown in the following table:

Table 2. Differences in the Educational Thoughts of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari and KH. Ahmad Dahlan

No	Aspect	KH. Hasyim Asy'ari	KH. Ahmad Dahlan
1	Approach to religious education	Emphasized traditional and classical Islamic teachings.	Focused on modern interpretations based on the Qur'an and Hadith, contextualized to contemporary society.
2	Curriculum	Prioritized classical Islamic subjects such as fiqh, tauhid, and tasawuf.	Developed a broader curriculum that included modern subjects alongside traditional Islamic studies.
3	Educational method	Focused on experiential learning and traditional methods like Sorogan and Bandongan.	Applied rational and contextual methods in his teaching, integrating modern educational models.
4	Specific educational goal	Aimed to preserve and develop traditional Islamic scholarship.	Aimed to create Muslims who could apply deep religious knowledge to modern life.

Table 2 outlines the key differences in their educational philosophies. KH. Hasyim Asy'ari's approach to education was more traditional, centered around classical Islamic knowledge and experiential learning methods like Sorogan and Bandongan. In contrast, KH. Ahmad Dahlan's method was modern, incorporating rationality and adapting education to the needs of the modern world (Akademika, 2022; Mainuddin & Septiani, 2022). The comparison between the educational thoughts of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari and KH. Ahmad Dahlan reveals not only similarities and

differences but also a deeper philosophical foundation shaped by their distinct socio-historical contexts. Understanding these contexts is crucial to interpreting their contributions to Indonesian Islamic education.

KH. Hasyim Asy'ari developed his educational ideology during a period marked by the strengthening of traditional pesantren networks across Java and increasing colonial interventions in religious affairs. Pesantren, during his era, functioned as autonomous socio-religious institutions that preserved Islamic scholarship and Javanese Muslim identity. Hasyim's emphasis on classical texts (*kutub al-turats*), mastery of Arabic grammar, and traditional learning methods was shaped by the need to protect Islamic orthodoxy and preserve scholarly transmission inherited from centuries of Javanese pesantren tradition. His orientation toward safeguarding tradition was, therefore, a response to both external (colonial pressures) and internal (the rise of reformist movements) challenges.

In contrast, KH. Ahmad Dahlan lived through rapid social transformation in early 20th-century Java, where modernization, Western education, and global Islamic reform movements from the Middle East influenced Muslim society. Engagement with modernist thinkers—such as Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida—shaped Dahlan's idea that Islamic education must align with rationality, science, and social welfare. His teaching approach was thus inherently reformist, aiming to equip Muslims to respond to modern challenges such as colonial bureaucracy, social inequality, and educational backwardness. His founding of Muhammadiyah schools marked a shift from traditional pesantren toward structured, classroom-based modern education.

A synthetic analysis reveals that both scholars, despite differing methodologies, were driven by the same fundamental aspiration: the empowerment of the Muslim community through knowledge. KH. Hasyim Asy'ari emphasized *religious depth* and the continuity of Islamic scholarship, while KH. Ahmad Dahlan emphasized *religious relevance* and the need to apply Islamic values in solving modern societal problems. Their strategies represent two complementary paradigms:

1. Preservation vs. Renewal: Hasyim Asy'ari preserved classical Islamic sciences to maintain continuity with past scholarship, whereas Ahmad Dahlan renewed Islamic education to ensure its relevance in the contemporary world.
2. Collective Piety vs. Social Praxis: Hasyim Asy'ari encouraged moral discipline and spiritual formation through traditional methods, while Dahlan encouraged social involvement as an expression of religious devotion.
3. Traditional autonomy vs. Modern institutionalization: Pesantren under Hasyim maintained autonomy and flexibility, while Dahlan institutionalized education with structured curricula and organizational systems.

This synthesis highlights that Indonesian Islamic education today benefits greatly from the convergence of both approaches: the spiritual depth of the pesantren tradition and the scientific-progressive orientation of Muhammadiyah education.

The combined insights from both scholars provide important guidance for today's educational challenges:

1. Integrating Classical and Modern Knowledge: Modern Islamic schools can adopt Dahlan's structured curricula while retaining the pesantren's ethical-spiritual training as emphasized by Hasyim. This hybrid model strengthens intellectual depth and practical competence.
2. Promoting Character and Social Engagement: Both scholars emphasized morality and community service, which align with current demands for character education (*pendidikan karakter*) and civic responsibility in Islamic schools.
3. Adaptive Curriculum Development: Dahlan's contextual approach encourages modern Islamic institutions to continuously update curricula based on technological advancement, global issues, and societal needs.
4. Teacher Competency: Hasyim Asy'ari's insistence on scholarly mastery underscores the importance of highly qualified educators, while Dahlan's methodology encourages teachers to adopt innovative and learner-centered approaches.
5. Strengthening Identity in a Globalized Era: Hasyim's focus on preserving Islamic identity helps counter the erosion of cultural-religious values, while Dahlan's modernism ensures that Muslim students remain competitive in global arenas.

Although KH. Hasyim Asy'ari and KH. Ahmad Dahlan took different paths traditionalist and modernist their visions collectively enriched Indonesian Islamic education. Their thoughts are not oppositional but complementary, forming a dual legacy that shapes pesantren and modern Islamic schools today. The synthesis of their ideas provides a powerful framework for designing contemporary Islamic education that is spiritually grounded, intellectually dynamic, and socially responsive.

4. Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion of the research, it can be concluded that the educational thought of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari emphasizes the goal of education, which is first, to become a complete human who strives to get closer to Allah SWT, and secondly, to achieve happiness in both this world and the hereafter. KH. Hasyim Asy'ari's educational vision is to preserve the values of Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jama'ah in Indonesia, while remaining open to new ideas that bring benefits. Meanwhile, KH. Ahmad Dahlan's educational thought aims to produce individuals who are knowledgeable in religious sciences and possess broad perspectives. KH. Ahmad Dahlan also categorized education into three types: moral and ethical education, individual education, and societal education. His educational vision was for the Muslim community to compete with other nations, avoid being left behind, and be productive.

The similarities in the educational thoughts of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari and KH. Ahmad Dahlan lie in their efforts for the reform of Islamic education, their shared intellectual lineage, the importance they place on Islamic education, and their establishment of educational institutions. Both also aim to increase the awareness of the Muslim community, create generations that will carry on the nation and religion, and view education as a tool for positive change. However, the differences between their educational thoughts are evident in their approaches to religious education, the curriculum they applied, the methods of teaching they employed, and the specific educational goals each sought to achieve.

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