

## THE CONCEPT OF INDEPENDENT LEARNING AND KH. AHMAD DAHLAN'S THOUGHT IN EDUCATION

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**Abstract.** *This study discusses the similarities between KH Ahmad Dahlan's educational thoughts through Muhammadiyah education and the concept of independent learning which was initiated by the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, Republic of Indonesia, Nadiem Makarim. By using the library research method, the authors conclude that the educational thinking of KH. Ahmad Dahlan and the policy of the Minister, Nadiem Makarim, have several similarities, including: the existence of innovation in the substance-oriented curriculum of learning system, wanting an independent Indonesian education process, innovation from educational institutions to create human resources that have a direct positive impact on the progress of the nation and country, as well as creating competent human resources to respond to the challenges of the times.*

**Keywords:** KH Ahmad Dahlan, Nadiem Makarim, independent learning

**Abstrak.** *Penelitian ini membahas titik persamaan antara pemikiran pendidikan KH Ahmad Dahlan melalui pendidikan Muhammadiyah dengan konsep merdeka belajar yang digagas oleh Menteri Pendidikan, Kebudayaan dan Riset Teknologi, Republik Indonesia, Nadiem Makarim. Dengan menggunakan metode kajian pustaka (library research), penulis berkesimpulan bahwa pemikiran Pendidikan KH. Ahmad Dahlan dengan kebijakan Menteri, Nadiem Makarim memiliki beberapa kesamaan, di antaranya: adanya inovasi dalam sistem kurikulum pembelajaran yang berorientasi pada substansi, menginginkan proses pendidikan Indonesia yang mandiri, inovasi dari lembaga pendidikan untuk menciptakan sumber daya manusia yang berdampak positif langsung bagi kemajuan bangsa dan negara, serta menciptakan sumber daya manusia yang kompeten untuk menjawab tantangan zaman.*

**Kata kunci:** KH Ahmad Dahlan, Nadiem Makarim, Merdeka Belajar

## INTRODUCTION

To realize an advanced and prosperous society in the future, education is a part that must be taken seriously (Mustaghfiroh, 2020). In this regard, Indonesia also places great emphasis on the importance of education, which is affirmed in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia as the state constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which is to educate the nation and it is part of the full responsibility of the state. With the aim to improve students' abilities to transform themselves into human beings, have faith and fear to God, have character, have a creative spirit, be independent, knowledgeable, excel, and make the best contribution to the life of the nation and state. With that, national education must be an absolute requirement that must be fulfilled because it has a major influence on global competition (Ardika, IWD, Sitawati, AR, & Suciani, 2017)

The proof of an advanced and modern society can be seen from the

implementation of qualified education, in other words, a qualified education will have an impact on the quality of human resources (Wisarja & Sudarsana, 2017). The changes that occur at this time are so very fast, while the problems are so very complex. Indeed, the current educational process must be able to adapt to the situation, and be able to produce students according to the needs of the times (Sherly et al., 2020). In education context, Indonesia always experiences policy changes in every period of government leadership. Different ministers have different policies. In this Joko Widodo's era, Minister of education, culture, research, and technology, Nadim Makarim issued a policy of "independent learning" (Murti & Heryanto, 2020) in the education system in Indonesia.

Nadim Makarim, who is usually referred to as *Mas Menteri*, has received a lot of attention from all parties for his "independent learning" policy, whether they are ordinary people, teachers, education activists,

students and even academics, with pros and cons. The policy of “independent learning” carried out by the minister Nadiem Makariem is an effort to return national education to the substance of the law by giving freedom to schools, students and teachers so that they are then able to innovate, be independent, and be creative. The concept of the “independent Learning” policy is one form of getting out of the education system where the dominance of the central government is still high, towards schools, monotonous learning where the teacher dominates in the learning process and students memorize more than do reasoning on learning. With that, the “independent learning” policy is an attempt to restore the substance value of education itself, in order to improve the quality of Indonesian human resources who will be able to adapt to the progress of time, especially in the era of the industrial revolution 4.0 (Sherly et al., 2020).

In this article, the authors uncover the relationship between “independent learning” and KH Ahmad Dahlan's educational thought, analyze, and try to understand its similarities. KH Ahmad Dahlan's

thoughts in education in the early days of the establishment of Muhammadiyah schools required a spirit of renewal. The spirit of educational renewal was able to create a creative and innovative, not to depend to teachers or clerics to innovate in the learning curriculum system. So that the education system developed by KH Ahmad Dahlan can produce graduates who are able to be a solution to the dynamics of life and answer the challenges of time.

## **METHOD**

In writing this article, the method used is library research, where the authors collect data from scientific works, journals and so on. The data collected from several literatures are then analyzed with reflective thinking. This approach attempts to analyze, compare, and reflect on the thoughts of previous researchers' writings related to this study. The conclusion of the reflective approach is then described in the form of words and language in a natural context (Moleong, 2019).

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Education is a conscious and planned effort carried out in an effort to increase the potential of students, either intellectually, morally or spiritually. So far, the educational process is considered not quite successful or can be said to have failed. One of the factors that cause failure in education is due to the absence of freedom and the spirit of humanity in the learning process. Teachers and students in self-actualization and implementing creativity, have very limited space. Students are emphasized to memorize some learning materials and are limited by several learning rules that make students feel confined and do not have enough a critical spirit.

A meeting evaluation carried out by the government, namely the ministry of education and culture in a joint meeting with the heads of the education office from all over the country, on the implementation of the national exam so far which has become an annual agenda in Indonesian education. Based on the evaluation decision that was held, there were data findings, in the implementation of the national exam, the material tested was very dense in

material, which made students and teachers required to test the mastery of the content, not the ability to reasoning. The implementation of the national exam only assesses the cognitive aspects of student learning outcomes, has not touched the character of students as a whole. On the other hand, the education process in Indonesia, National Standard of School Examination (Ujian Sekolah Berstandar Nasional, USBN) is a requirement for student graduation. Administration related to educators (teachers) for example the 2013 Curriculum assessment, is something that is very complicated and also the Lesson plan (Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran, RPP) so far which is felt to curb the independence of teachers in preparing study plans with the competence of each teacher. The implementation of the zoning system is also a problem, where public protest on the acceptance of new students.

Based on the official website owned by the Ministry of Education and Culture at the [kemendikbud.go.id](http://kemendikbud.go.id) website, in accordance with the instructions of President Joko Widodo and the Vice President, that to improve the quality of Indonesia's educational resources, through the

Minister of Education, Nadiem Makarim, issued four policies, namely the National Standard of School Examination (USBN) was replaced with an exam (Assessment) conducted by schools. The National Examination (UN) was changed to a minimum competency assessment and character survey, teachers were given the freedom to develop lesson plans, and the New Student Admissions Regulations (PPDB) were more flexible (Kemendikbud, 2019). Freedom to learn is a policy initiated by Minister Nadiem Makarim. This policy was issued not without reason (Saleh, 2020), because the minister of education and culture wants to restore the national education system to the substance of the law, namely the freedom for schools, teachers, students to be able to innovate freely. This “free learning” policy was issued to create qualified human resources (HR) in the current era of global competition.

#### **a. National Standard of School Examination is replaced with Assessments**

The achievement of the educational ideals of the Indonesian nation until now is still seen from the learning evaluation process carried out

(assessment). So that the exams carried out in each school are a reflection of the quality of the educational institution. If the success of the educational process is seen with a value above the agreed minimum criteria (KKM), then the learning process can be said to be successful, and vice versa.

The implementation of the National Standard of School Examination (USBN) in its implementation is not the same as its identity. Linguistically, when we hear school exams, what comes to our minds is, the implementation of these exams is carried out in full by the school. However, in practice, according to the findings of Minister Nadiem Makarim, that the National Standard of School Examination (USBN) is still strongly dominated by the Government, what is meant here is that educational institutions do not have full rights in their implementation. In addition, Nadiem Makarim also considers that the competency measure for the 2013 curriculum has not been implemented holistically. This is what made the Minister of Education issued a new regulation, namely Permendikbud 43 of 2019.

The policy of independent learning by eliminating the National Standard of School Examination (USBN), streamlining the preparation of the RPP, and also eliminating the zoning system, is an idea that has emerged too late. This policy idea should have been better if it had been carried out 15 years earlier so that there would be no criticism from the public for previous policies that were deemed inappropriate to be issued.

The national exam which was carried out starting from 2014 with a limited scope, namely using a computer which we usually know as the Computer-Based National Examination (UNBK), is carried out with the desire to make it easier to make exam scripts, answer questions, and evaluate exam results of students. With the implementation of this computer-based exam, it is hoped that the effectiveness and efficiency of the budget will be realized compared to the paper-based national exam. In the implementation of USBN which refers to the regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture No. 23 of 2016 relating to the standard of assessment which is written in Article 8 No. 2, that there are three benefits in implementing the exam, namely, (1) as

a quality planning program or aligning education. (2) become a benchmark for assessment to continue further education. (3) provide assistance to schools in order to improve the quality of schools and conduct the nurturing. Based on the three implementation processes above, an examination with national principles is carried out, such as the national standard of school exam and also the national exam.

The policy of independent learning, especially regarding USBN issued by the minister of education and culture, is the answer to the problems that occur in the field, among which are the issue, where the Ombudsman regarding some strange findings in the implementation of the National Examination and USBN, namely, (1) division of questions in some areas are not closely monitored by the competent authorities, including in this case the ministry itself. (2) The Ministry and the security forces did not coordinate well to supervise the printing process and distribution of questions, which resulted in the leakage of questions. (3) Question leaks also occur on the independent supervisor who is doubtful. This happened because the exam supervisor comes from the

school itself. (4) the contribution made by the teacher is Rp. 25,000, to get the answer key.

The concept of independent learning issued by the ministry of education and culture, namely the National Standardized School Examination (USBN) is replaced by an assessment, which is an opportunity for schools to maximize the government's trust to conduct exams objectively, so that the process starts from planning until the exam is carried out by the school can be more authentic, and school teachers are more independent in assessing student learning outcomes. In addition, the funds spent in the implementation of the National Standard of School Examination (USBN), which can be said to be very large, can be diverted to developing the capacity of teachers and schools, in order to improve the quality of learning in schools.

#### **b. Making Learning Implementation Plan (RPP)**

Learning is a school activity that cannot be done haphazardly. Therefore, there needs to be a plan that has a goal and achieves the success of the learning process activities. This goal is none other than a teacher's reference in carrying out

the learning process actively, creatively, innovatively, and independently. The preparation is adjusted according to psychological conditions and age growth, so that the desired achievements can be realized effectively and efficiently on graduatee competencies.

The preparation of lesson plan within a certain time, teachers have variations in their responses. Sometimes the concept of lesson plans made does not have a purpose, suddenly the next school year is used. There are lesson plans arranged for each class that are different, the reason is because the character of each class is not the same, there are lesson plans that are used for one meeting and some are for one time learning material. Thus the preparation of lesson plans in several schools, teachers have different ways, in determining learning materials, learning methods used, flow of activities, determination of competencies (basic competencies /KD and individual competencies /KI), to the references used. Overall, in compiling it, still referring to the Basic Competencies, as well as Competencies which the curriculum center has determined and recorded.

Based on empirical experience, educators have a rather heavy task load. First, teachers are still given the job of writing lesson plans before carrying out their teaching tasks, secondly in the teaching process the teacher must also be based on the lesson plans that are made as a measuring tool for the success of learning plans, basic competencies and core competencies are not compiled by themselves, and the third is staff. educators are still monotonous over the material that has been determined, while the teacher is a manager in the class who has his own creativity and can create potential in the classroom and the teacher is also the one who understands the situation in the classroom.

In implementing learning according to basic competencies and core competencies, which are contained in the 2013 curriculum, teachers also have a tough task, namely instilling character values. With the many tasks of teachers starting in learning planning, implementation, evaluation, as well as realizing learning goals, of course teachers in carrying out this process in this transitional period of advanced Indonesian government, teachers need to be

appreciated and also several educational institutions. The concept of independent learning created by the minister of education and culture has three criteria, namely (1) efficiency, where a teacher in preparing lesson plans no longer spends time and energy. (2) Effective, where the preparation is right on the goals and objectives of learning. (3) student-oriented, what is meant here is the importance of seeing readiness, interest,

Freedom of learning which is echoed by the minister of education and culture, must also place teachers as educators who must be independent in the teaching process in the classroom. In essence, an educator, oriented to the condition of students, creates a simple, directed, flexible lesson plan, it becomes part of the task of a teacher. The elimination of uniformity in the format determined by the education unit is a must. This is because it is also important for teachers to carry out renewable innovation and creativity effectively and efficiently.

The concept of “Freedom of Learning” according to the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia aims to produce



educational outcomes that are much better than before, the education system must be oriented to substance and have a holistic understanding of the learning process to increase self-potential (Saleh, 2020). In this case, according to the Minister of Education and Culture, it can be interpreted as a form of curriculum implementation must be fun, so that with this it can create a positive attitude of students in responding to the learning process. On the other hand, Ali Ridho, a lecturer at IAI Al-Khairat Pamekasan also stated that the "free learning" policy that had been issued by the minister of education and culture was an objective activity to conduct an assessment of students, where in the process of carrying out the assessment was actually carried out by those who understand and understand very well the characteristics and personalities of students (Alaika M. Bagus Kurnia PS et al., 2020).

Changes in the 4.0 revolution era have complex challenges as well as opportunities for educational institutions. What makes an educational institution progress and development is that it must have new innovations and be able to establish

cooperative or collaborative relationships. If we do not have the ability to innovate and collaborate, our education will suffer a setback, if the opposite happens, our educational institutions can produce human resources who are superior, intelligent and able to answer the challenges of today's era. Of course this process is not as easy as turning the palm of the hand. Educational institutions can harmonize the education system with the progress of the times. The education system is expected to be able to create students who have the skills, who are able to think critically, are able to solve problems, are innovative and creative.

### **Renewal of KH Ahmad Dahlan in Muhammadiyah Education**

Talking about KH Ahmad Dahlan cannot be separated from his actions and contributions of thought in advancing the Indonesian nation through the Muhammadiyah organization. For his services KH Ahmad Dahlan through Presidential Decree No. 657 of 1961 was designated as a national hero who has contributed to education in Indonesia (Mitochondria - Indonesian Wikipedia, Free Encyclopedia, nd). One of the births of the educational

reform movement carried out by KH Ahmad Dahlan at that time was inseparable from the dualism of the education system. The first education system was implemented by the Dutch East Indies with a liberal and discriminatory education model. The second is the education system carried out by the Natives, namely the pesantren learning system which was outside the control of the Dutch East Indies government.

In the management and teaching process of the two education systems, there are very significant differences. The education system managed by the Dutch East Indies produced graduates who were creative, confident, but did not understand religious teachings and even cornered religion. On the other hand, the education system carried out by the natives is a traditional learning system, which only teaches religious education, where in the learning process the teacher (Kiyai) dominates by only reading and explaining. Meanwhile, the students can only listen and listen to what is conveyed by the teacher, so that this second education tends to be inferior, less creative and the graduates of the students have not been able to be a

solution to the needs of the times (Sutarto et al., 2020).

The learning process carried out by KH Ahmad Dahlan in Muhammadiyah education at that time was a learning process by applying inductive, scientific, and question and answer methods. In the learning process there is freedom, it does not make a teacher more domineering, and students are given the freedom to seek a truth with their own reasoning for the learning process. Muhammadiyah schools founded by KH Ahmad Dahlan also made changes to the curriculum by combining Dutch East Indies education with pesantren education. What makes the Muhammadiyah school curriculum different from the Dutch East Indies school is that it includes religious education in the curriculum as compulsory education. Muhammadiyah school education also applies regional languages,

Educational reforms initiated by KH Ahmad Dahlan can be broadly stated that this education exists when the education conditions of indigenous peoples are very concerning, they are left behind by Dutch schools, Islamic boarding schools are not able to be managed in

a modern and creative way which results in The output of Islamic education is not able to be a solution to the problems and dynamics of the times.

### **Islamic Education in the Dutch East Indies**

Education at that time before reaching the era of the Islamic education reform movement, the role of *suara* and *pesantren* was the face of traditional Islamic educational institutions, from several centuries before until entering the 20th century. Traditional educational institutions such as *pesantren* are identical with Javanese culture, while *surau* have a Minangkabau cultural background. The two educational institutions became the face of traditional education from indigenous peoples, especially Muslims.

The presence of Islamic boarding schools is a very simple cultural process. The forerunner at that time was a young *kyai* who graduated from an Islamic boarding school opening recitations in his village. This long process will prove whether the people around the village are interested in the recitation conducted by the young *kyai* or vice versa. The level of *pesantren* at that

time can be classified into two levels, the first is the initial or basic level, at this level the focus of teaching is the teaching of the Koran, where students are taught short letters in *Jus-Amma*. Besides that, *tajwid* learning is also opened to improve the reading of the Koran up and correctly. Usually in ending the process of this first level of education, the procession of the graduation ceremony or *khataman* is carried out. Furthermore, students who have passed the first level, will proceed to the second level, which is to carry out the learning process about the yellow book. Before proceeding to this stage, the students will go through a process, mastery of the Arabic language properly and correctly. Usually at this stage the students have a lot of difficulties and are overwhelmed and not a few students fail to go through the process.

In the Minangkabau tradition, the *surau* is a characteristic that each tribe has. *Surau* in the Minangkabau tradition has a function as a place of worship and education for Muslims. In the management of education in the *surau*, everything is left to the religious teacher, and the teacher becomes the owner of the highest authority in the *surau*, because his

abilities have been recognized. the education system in the surau is not much different from the education in the pesantren, it's just that education in the surau at an advanced level adds lessons related to the science of logic. The teaching of logic, which was carried out in the 18th century until entering the 19th century, was the forerunner to the birth of the dynamics of Islamic thought in Minangkabau, the ability to use tongues (rhetoric), argue rationally,

Education carried out by pesantren and surau during the Dutch East Indies period, was an education that only taught religious education. The shortcomings in the indigenous education system at that time, lay in the learning method that was still carried out conservatively, the method of memorizing the Qur'an which was carried out without being followed by an understanding of the verse. Traditional education, which only taught religious teachings at that time, made the Dutch colonial government not find any political advantage over the two educational institutions. Even though at that time the Dutch colonial really needed workers from educated natives according to European educational standards to fill strategic

positions in the government, but this was not obtained from graduates of Islamic boarding schools and mosques (Mu'arif, 2012).

## **Muhammadiyah Education**

### **Philosophy**

In the philosophy of education there are several types of philosophical schools, namely, Progressivism, essentialism and social reconstruction. Progressivism argues that the basic purpose of education is to develop the abilities of a learner to the fullest. Essentialism argues that the main task of education is to preserve culture. While the flow of social reconstruction argues that education is essentially a process of change individually and collectively with organizations. in the journal (Sutarto et al., 2020). Said Tuhuleley argues that the educational philosophy of Muhammadiyah is explicitly included in the amalgamation of the three schools, namely progressivism, essentialism, and social reconstruction.

Amin Abdullah (in Sutarto et al., 2020) states that there are four paradigms in Muhammadiyah's view of education. The first is critical-hermeneutical reform. Where Muhammadiyah in achieving its goals reaffirmed to return to the Al-Quran

and Hadith, supported by the spirit of pouring out thoughts in earnest (*ijtihad*) and renewal (*tadjud*). In the implementation of *ijtihad* and *tadjud* cannot be separated. With this *ijtihad* and *tadjud*, Muhammadiyah can implement a school education system that combines general knowledge and religious knowledge. This process produces an education system that teaches science holistically and is integrated in the exact social field.

The second paradigm is educational reform which is characterized by essentialists and perennialists. In this educational reform, it emphasizes aspects of the essential values contained in the Al-Quran and Hadith that must be applied in the educational process absolutely. The third characteristic is the renewal of education characterized by social reconstruction carried out with an organizational system in achieving ideas and ideas in the field of Muhammadiyah education. The characteristic of the fourth paradigm of Muhammadiyah education reform is that it is progressive where the education carried out is always future oriented. Therefore, in the implementation of education, Muhammadiyah always carries out

evaluation, correction, improvement and refinement of work systems and patterns of thinking in order to improve quality to answer challenges in the future.

The educational reform paradigm put forward by Amin Abdullah in the educational philosophy of Muhammadiyah, we can draw its outline, that the basis of Muhammadiyah education is to combine knowledge and the power of reason with revelation (Al-Quran and Hadith). Revelation is the basic principle in operational stages, where people must be able to master in various sectors of life and scientific fields in advancing life on this earth, as long as it does not conflict with the basic principles contained in the Al-Quran and Hadith.

## **CONCLUSION**

In the discussion above, it can be concluded that first, there are the relationships between the concept of independent learning carried out by Nadiem Makariem and the thought of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan's education. There are similarities in making new breakthroughs in advancing education, to prepare generations according to

the needs of the time. Second, there are exercises in improving the school learning system which are less substantial, where the memorization method is still dominant, the active learning process in the classroom is still dominated by the teacher, which makes the teacher the main reference. The three concepts of “Independent Learning” initiated by Nadiem Makariem have similarities with the concept of educational thought initiated by K.H Ahmad Dahlan, namely, the independence and flexibility of educational institutions in exploring the abilities, intelligence and potencies of students creatively, innovatively, fun and democratically.

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