

# The Eclecticism of Ahmad Dahlan's Ideas at Muhammadiyah Universities

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines Ahmad Dahlan's educational philosophy and its application at Muhammadiyah University of Palembang (UMP). Dahlan emphasized Islamic education as a means to enhance societal welfare and align with human needs. A qualitative approach was employed, incorporating phenomenology to explore subjective experiences of study participants. Primary data was gathered through participant observation and in-depth interviews, while secondary data was derived from institutional documents and literature on Dahlan's educational philosophy. Findings reveal that Dahlan's educational principles, while foundational, remain unsystematized. He advocated for Islamic education grounded in practical life improvement, aligning with people's needs. At UMP, implementation of Dahlan's philosophy is partial. Shifts have occurred, notably in the principles of education, which now align more with national education system laws than solely the Quran and Hadith. Additionally, leadership at UMP shows limited integration of Dahlan's ideas, often exhibiting elitism that diminishes organizational inclusivity and support for marginalized communities. The study highlights gaps between Dahlan's foundational principles and their practical application at UMP. Leadership challenges and adherence to broader educational frameworks contribute to these discrepancies. While Ahmad Dahlan's educational philosophy offers essential principles for Islamic education, UMP has yet to fully realize its potential. Addressing leadership and systemic alignment issues is critical to enhancing the institution's adherence to Dahlan's vision.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Ahmad Dahlan was a trailblazer in Islamic education, introducing a model that seamlessly integrated religious teachings with general knowledge. In the Muhammadiyah education system, he emphasized the harmonious development of two fundamental aspects of human needs: material and spiritual (Kuntoro, 2006). This approach stemmed from his critique of the secular education provided by the Dutch East Indies government, which he believed was ill-suited to the deeply religious character of Indonesian society (Hasbullah, 2001). Recognizing the limitations of this secular system, which he felt

stifled students' intellectual and personal growth, Ahmad Dahlan established Muhammadiyah schools that combined religious studies with general education to foster well-rounded individuals (Arlini, 2021).

Ahmad Dahlan was a reformer in Indonesian Islamic education who attempted to integrate religious education and general knowledge. He viewed the importance of a balance between spiritual and material needs in education as a path to societal progress. His main motivation arose from the reality of the education system during the Dutch East Indies, which tended to be secular and less in line with the religious culture of Indonesian society (Hasbullah, 2001). According to Dahlan, this secular system had weaknesses in shaping the character and abilities of students, because students were only equipped with limited knowledge and were less able to think comprehensively.

Dahlan developed a vision of education that united religious teachings and general knowledge, creating a teaching method that not only emphasized Islamic values but also opened up space for intellectual progress. By establishing Muhammadiyah schools, Dahlan presented a curriculum that taught general and religious subjects simultaneously, allowing students to gain a strong understanding of religion while also having adaptive abilities in society. This effort overcomes the limitations of sectoral education and produces a generation that is able to contribute to national development.

In addition to integrating religious and general education, Dahlan introduced modern teaching methods that replaced the *sorogan* system with more varied and interactive methods. He gave an example of how a Muslim needs to practice the teachings of the Qur'an in real deeds, not just memorizing or understanding theoretically. Dahlan also encouraged an attitude of tolerance and openness of thought in facing differences, emphasizing that Islam teaches openness and respect for diversity. Thus, he instilled in students pragmatic social values that function in solving social problems and strengthening an inclusive life ethos.

Muhammadiyah education, pioneered by Ahmad Dahlan, has evolved into a widely embraced model within Indonesian society, known for its integration of Islamic values and responsiveness to societal and temporal changes. Research highlights that Muhammadiyah's flexibility and inclusivity in its vision, mission, and curriculum have been pivotal to its success in Indonesia's national education landscape (Amaliah & Lubis, 2020; Wibisono & Handayani, 2021). These features allow Muhammadiyah to cater to diverse societal needs, ensuring its enduring relevance. Dahlan envisioned this reform effort as a way to illuminate the nation's intellectual life and provide moral and mental enlightenment for the younger generation (Munandar et al., 2022).

Despite the established reputation of Muhammadiyah education, gaps remain in understanding how Ahmad Dahlan's foundational ideas are practically manifested in modern higher education, particularly in addressing contemporary challenges. While studies have analyzed Muhammadiyah's adaptability and contributions to secondary education (Suyanto, 2021; Azra, 2022), limited attention has been given to the role of Muhammadiyah higher education institutions in bridging Islamic and general education to tackle global educational demands.

This study addresses these gaps by examining how Muhammadiyah Higher Education embodies and operationalizes Ahmad Dahlan's educational philosophy in the contemporary context. Specifically, it investigates how the eclecticism and adaptive diversity of Muhammadiyah Higher Education reflect Dahlan's ideals and contribute to advancing a holistic educational philosophy that integrates religious and secular learning.

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on Muhammadiyah's higher education practices as a modern reflection of Dahlan's ideas, shedding light on their relevance in addressing global challenges such as technological advancements, ethical dilemmas, and multiculturalism in education. By exploring these dimensions, this study aims to demonstrate the practical and philosophical contributions of Muhammadiyah Higher Education in promoting a balanced and inclusive approach to learning in the modern era.

The findings are expected to provide significant insights into how Islamic-based educational institutions can remain relevant and innovative while preserving their foundational values. This study

contributes to the broader discourse on educational reform, offering a model that bridges tradition and modernity, and presents implications for Islamic and general education globally.

## 2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research methodology to explore the leadership practices and application of Islamic values among Muhammadiyah figures, with a focus on their adaptability to contemporary educational challenges. The chosen approach is **phenomenological**, aiming to understand and interpret the subjective experiences and perceptions of participants involved in Muhammadiyah's leadership and educational practices.

### 2.1 Research Design and Participants

The study targets key individuals in Muhammadiyah's leadership ecosystem, specifically national Muhammadiyah figures, leaders from the Muhammadiyah University of Palembang (UM Palembang), and Muhammadiyah figures in Palembang. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure their experiences and roles are directly relevant to the research objectives. A sample of 6-8 participants was chosen, representing diverse perspectives within the Muhammadiyah organization.

### 2.2 Data Collection Methods

The data collection process employed a combination of methods to ensure rich and triangulated insights. Non-participant observation was conducted to contextualize participants' leadership practices and their application of Islamic values through their daily activities. Semi-structured interviews provided an in-depth understanding of participants' interpretations and applications of Ahmad Dahlan's educational philosophy, their integration of Islamic values, and the leadership challenges they face in a modern context. This flexible approach allowed for deeper exploration of emergent themes. Additionally, document analysis was carried out on official records, including organizational documents, publications, and activity reports, to identify recurring themes and patterns related to Muhammadiyah's practices.

### 2.3 Researcher's Role and Reflexivity

As the primary research instrument, the researcher actively engaged in reflexivity to identify and mitigate potential biases. Maintaining a reflective stance throughout the research process ensured that interpretations were grounded in participants' experiences rather than preconceived assumptions.

### 2.4 Validity and Reliability

The credibility of the research was enhanced through the triangulation of sources and methods, which involved cross-referencing data from interviews, observations, and document analysis. Additional measures included:

- Member Checking: Participants reviewed the findings to confirm the accuracy of interpretations.
- Peer Debriefing: Independent reviewers provided feedback to ensure objectivity.

### 2.5 Data Analysis

The data analysis process involved systematically organizing the data through coding and grouping them into thematic categories to highlight patterns and relationships. The results were then presented in descriptive narratives, enriched with direct quotations, tables, and figures to ensure clarity and contextual understanding. To develop robust and substantiated conclusions, an iterative approach was employed, revisiting the data and verifying findings to ensure accuracy and reliability.

### 2.6 Rationale for Methodological Choices

The use of a phenomenological approach enables a deep exploration of the lived experiences of Muhammadiyah leaders, particularly how they interpret and implement Islamic values in their leadership and educational roles. This methodology is well-suited to uncovering the nuanced ways in

which these leaders navigate contemporary challenges while staying true to the foundational principles of Muhammadiyah.

The study aims to contribute to the broader understanding of how faith-based leadership practices can provide meaningful solutions in modern educational contexts, thereby extending current research on leadership and values-driven education within Islamic and global frameworks.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 *Eclecticism in Ahmad Dahlan's Educational Philosophy*

Ahmad Dahlan's educational philosophy exemplifies eclecticism, a methodological approach that selects and integrates elements from diverse traditions to create a harmonious and functional system (Bagus, 2000; Nas, 2002). This eclecticism is evident in Dahlan's efforts to blend Islamic and Western educational philosophies, creating a system that addresses both spiritual and intellectual needs. His approach reflects a synthesis of traditional Islamic education with modern methodologies, incorporating progressive ideas from figures like John Dewey, who emphasized experiential learning, and Ki Hadjar Dewantara, who prioritized character and moral education. Such integration underscores Dahlan's commitment to balancing religious principles with the practical requirements of modern society.

The eclecticism of Ahmad Dahlan's thoughts can also be seen from its relevance to the thoughts of various figures, both in the Islamic world and educational figures outside the Islamic world. The construction of Ahmad Dahlan's thoughts when compared to the educational progressivism figure John Dewey contained in his book, *Experience and Education* illustrates the suitability. This is illustrated in the article written by M. Ali et al. He describes that Ahmad Dahlan emphasizes the aspect of reason which in John Dewey's terms is called Intelligence, Practice in Ahmad Dahlan's view is called Experience in Dewey, and Progress in Ahmad Dahlan's view is called Progress in Dewey (Mohamad Ali et al., 2016).

#### 3.2 *Comparative Analysis with Prominent Educational Thinkers*

Dahlan's thoughts align with various educational thinkers across cultural contexts. For instance, his emphasis on integrating reason, practice, and progress mirrors John Dewey's focus on intelligence, experience, and progressivism (Mohamad Ali et al., 2016). Similarly, his adherence to character formation resonates with Ki Hadjar Dewantara's educational ideals (Supala et al., 2020). Furthermore, Dahlan's acknowledgment of reason as the basis of human knowledge is akin to Ibn Khaldun's view of education as a rational and transformative process, essential for intellectual and social development.

The thoughts and struggles of KH. Hasyim Asyari and Ahmad Dahlan whose work and struggles were so central, especially in the field of education, have determined the direction of education in the country, an education that is based on Islam and also in accordance with the needs and developments of the times. The agenda for developing Islamic educational thought and the analysis of various dimensions and contents are not understood only in terms of its "conventional" understanding for education, but rather in its broad sociological understanding (Ridla, 2002).

Another side of Ahmad Dahlan's educational thinking when compared to Ki Hajar Dewantara, can be seen that Ahmad Dahlan, at that time, acted as a teacher at a Dutch school and founded an educational institution, where religion and general knowledge were taught together. In this process, Ahmad Dahlan always adhered to the principle of Understanding Islamic teachings, the source of which is only the Qur'an and Al-Sunnah, and to be able to understand it properly must use a healthy mind in accordance with the spirit of Islam. While the educational model he applied consisted of Tarbiyah, Ta'lim, and Ta'dib.

Ibn Khaldun, who argues that education actually starts from the learning process which is classified into three aspects, namely before learning, the learning process takes place and after learning.

According to Ibn Khaldun, all of these processes start from the basic assumption of the nature of human reason. Human reason is what differentiates it from other creatures of Allah. The nature of reason makes humans always seek the essence of something, which is then called knowledge. In order to gain knowledge, humans must ask for help from experts (teachers) to explain what they want to know. From here comes a teaching.

Meanwhile, Ahmad Dahlan views that the learning process starts from the basic nature of reason that accepts all kinds of knowledge. Knowledge is nutrition for human reason, because without reason, humans will not live. In order to revive reason, humans in the process will always seek knowledge. Knowledge can be obtained from someone who teaches it (teacher), and the person who teaches it gets knowledge from his teacher, and so on. Thus, there is a process of knowledge transformation in order to achieve the search for knowledge.

Ahmad Dahlan's educational thoughts include Integralistic Education, Adopting Substance and Modern Dutch Educational Methodology in Religious Education Madrasahs, Giving Content of Islamic Teaching in Public Schools Modern Dutch and Implementing the Cooperative System in the field of education. However, This idea of educational thinking has not yet been well-systematized (Saihu, 2018). The idea of thinking Ahmad Dahlan's education is easily visible from what he has done, such as the establishment Muhammadiyah organization and the establishment of the Muhammadiyah Madrasah educational institution in Kauman (Ismail, 2023).

Ahmad Dahlan's educational thoughts with thoughts Another education figure described that Islamic education must be oriented towards life which is better and meets the needs of the people (Rijal, 2014). Education in Islam is not just about looking afterlife life but it must also have an impact on worldly life. Therefore everything related to Islamic education (Al-Quran and As Sunnah) must be relevant to worldly life (Ahyani, H., Abdulloh, AY, Permana, 2020).

### **3.3 Integration of Religious and General Knowledge**

Discussing the dynamics and problems of Islamic education is actually discussing something that is very complex and will probably never be completely discussed, it is difficult to find a bright spot and difficult to complete the design, and there will never be a final solution, because discussing Islamic education is actually also related to the problems of Muslims with a very large number, with patterns of life, including their respective customs and cultures which are very dynamic. Various thoughts and solutions have been put forward by expert figures, especially concerning the concept and its implementation, which of course the colorful thoughts of these figures are strongly influenced by their outlook on life, values, environment, culture and life experiences that they have gone through.

However, there is a strong impression that in one thing, these expert figures, have the same idea that Islamic education must aim to provide provisions and develop the potential of faith, Islam, and ihsan. In addition, so that Islamic education is balanced and integral and students are prepared to face their future with full confidence and full responsibility. The correct idea related to education includes 3 (three) basic elements, namely: process, content, and recipient. The concept of education carried out by Ahmad Dahlan is the concept of integrative Islamic education, where he combines secular education and religious education, not dichotomizing the two.

This was triggered by the political, cultural and environmental conditions that occurred at that time. The implementation of education carried out in schools managed by the Dutch government did not include subjects or religious teachings, especially Islam. Meanwhile, Islamic religious education carried out in Islamic boarding schools, surau or mosques and there was no knowledge in its teaching because it was considered unimportant and "infidel". Such a situation made Ahmad Dahlan restless and pondered the solution. This was because the ideals of education initiated by Ahmad Dahlan were the creation of new humans who were able to appear as "ulama-intellect" or "intellect-ulama", namely a Muslim who had steadfastness and extensive knowledge, strong physically and spiritually (Nugraha, 2010).

So to realize that ideal, Ahmad Dahlan combined the two educational systems (philosophies) that were in effect at that time, secular (which was carried out by schools managed by the Dutch) and Islamic boarding school education. In order to integrate the two educational systems, Ahmad Dahlan took two actions at once, namely providing religious lessons in secular Dutch schools, and establishing his own school where religion and general knowledge were taught together.

As an organization, of course Muhammadiyah is different from other religious mass organizations, Muhammadiyah has been active in the field of education since the beginning, the most prominent characteristic of its movement is establishing schools, even public schools, not madrasahs which are usually developed in Islamic boarding schools, which are generally managed and developed by scholars at that time. The schools developed by Muhammadiyah continue to grow, and now even have all levels and types of education, from pre-school level, to higher education in the Doctoral program. Thus, Muhammadiyah will make a great contribution to the development and development of Human Resources for this nation, through its alumni in various fields of science. If its religious education program is managed well, it will greatly contribute to contributing human resources with ideal behavior as expected in PP Number 55 of 2007.

This happened because since the beginning of its establishment, Muhammadiyah has been concerned/put serious attention to education. The field of education for Muhammadiyah as an Islamic movement with the color of *tajdid/reformist/reformer* is one of the efforts to overcome or break the vicious circle of problems faced by the Indonesian people who are predominantly Muslim. The problems of the Indonesian nation since before independence until now are actually still focused on the problems of ignorance (lack of education), poverty, backwardness and other social or welfare problems, especially those related to physical material problems in addition to mental spiritual problems.

The above is emphasized, as in Kuntowijoyo's notes, the dynamics of Muhammadiyah after the 38th Congress in Ujung Pandang increasingly show its character as a charity movement with a more social dimension. This is evident from Muhammadiyah's orientation to increase the number of schools, colleges, hospitals, orphanages, and others. Or in other terms it is better known as a charity movement. The orientation as a cultural movement translated into social practice, especially in the fields of education and social services, is actually not new to Muhammadiyah. Since the beginning, Muhammadiyah has tried to overcome the problems that plagued Muslims at that time, namely ignorance and backwardness, through education. So that the field of education becomes a leading program of the Muhammadiyah Association in increasing the intelligence of the community (Sazali, 2005).

A cornerstone of Dahlan's philosophy is the integration of religious and general knowledge, a principle that permeates Muhammadiyah educational institutions. At the Muhammadiyah University of Palembang (UMP), this is reflected in a curriculum that blends Islamic studies with contemporary disciplines, fostering holistic student development. Programs like the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) study program exemplify this integration, combining foundational Islamic teachings with modern pedagogical approaches. Extracurricular activities further support this integrative model, focusing on leadership training and community engagement to cultivate well-rounded graduates.

The color of Ahmad Dahlan's thinking is clearly visible in the vision and mission of the Muhammadiyah educational institution as an Islamic movement, *da'wah* and *tajdid*. Muhammadiyah's goal is to uphold and uphold the Islamic religion so that a true Islamic society can be realized. According to Muhammadiyah, this goal can be achieved by carrying out *da'wah*, one of which is through education. Thus, the vision and mission of Muhammadiyah education is of course always consistent and oriented towards the aims and objectives of Muhammadiyah education itself. Renewal in the field of teaching is focused on the purification of Islamic teachings by returning to the Al-Quran and Sunnah using a healthy mind (Rusydi, 2015).

Renewal in the field of thought is the development of insight (vision) in implementing teachings related to worldly transactions permitted by sharia or modernization of world management in accordance with Islamic teachings, such as state management and aspects related to life in the fields of

economy, politics, socio-culture, and defense and security, so that a superior, just, and prosperous society is realized which is approved by Allah SWT. While the main mission of the Muhammadiyah movement is to uphold and uphold the Islamic religion in the sense of implementing Islamic teachings through Islamic preaching amar ma'ruf nahi munkar in various fields of activity. (Salito et al., 2023) .

The vision and mission of Muhammadiyah education contain the meaning that education in the Muhammadiyah environment in developing human resources anticipates various challenges in the future, which inevitably require a strategic development fulcrum. In this context, two main fulcrums are used as the mainstay of the anticipation process, namely efforts to strengthen faith and piety to Allah SWT, mastery of science and technology (Rohman, 2019) .

This statement can be seen at the Muhammadiyah University of Palembang with the opening of a study program that not only studies religious sciences, but also establishes a study program that is relevant to the development of the times. However, the Muhammadiyah University of Palembang still makes Islamic teachings the main foundation in every discipline taught in all study programs. This is based on the vision and mission of the Muhammadiyah University of Palembang which states that the Muhammadiyah University of Palembang has a vision of becoming a national standard university and producing highly competitive graduates and excelling in Islamic-based science and technology in 2022 towards an international standard university.

This vision means that the University of Muhammadiyah Palembang is oriented towards strengthening faith and piety to Allah SWT, as well as the development and mastery of science, technology, and art to improve the welfare of all Indonesian people. This means that the University of Muhammadiyah Palembang plays a role in supporting the implementation of regional autonomy.

In an effort to become a superior university, UM Palembang adheres to the strength of faith and piety in educational activities, research and community service. In addition, professional performance is centered on the characteristics of sincerity, honesty, and Islamic brotherhood.

As a university, Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang focuses on quality education so that its graduates are able to strengthen human resources that are useful, effective and pious. In addition, Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang conducts pure and applied research to find new technologies that are beneficial to the nation and religion. The results of the research are applied through community service to improve their welfare. Thus, Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang carries out mutually supportive missions, namely:

1. Implementing the Catur Dharma of Higher Education to produce graduates who have national-level academic competencies, uphold Islamic and national values, and prepare infrastructure towards an international standard university.
2. Preparing students and alumni who have high integrity based on Islamic and Muhammadiyah values to create a young generation with character and organizational cadres.
3. Carrying out the development of science, technology and art through research and its application for the welfare of society.
4. Developing a conducive learning climate to produce graduates who have intellectual, emotional and spiritual intelligence.
5. Developing a competency-based education system (hard skills and soft skills) that is integrated with the business world and public sector.
6. Implementing academic, human resources, financial and quality management based on planning and information technology to create Good University Governance (GUG).
7. Making the Balance Scorecard (BSC) based performance management system a quality assurance tool and a performance assessment tool for implementing units at the Muhammadiyah University of Palembang to motivate them to achieve.

As is known, the establishment of the Muhammadiyah organization was greatly influenced by the Islamic renewal movement in the Middle East, such as the renewal carried out by Muhammad Abduh. The core of the most fundamental Islamic renewal and modernism movement lies in the field of education.

If Muhammadiyah wants to carry out Islamic modernization that does not deviate from the Qur'an and Al-Hadith, of course, Muhammadiyah must establish educational institutions based on modern Western procedures while still being within the corridor of Islamic rules. This is what then advances the image of Muhammadiyah as a reform organization, by establishing educational institutions with a Western system. However, what happened was that the modernization carried out by Muhammadiyah was only limited to practical things (such as establishing schools, hospitals, etc.), not continuing with ideological matters. This means that the reform carried out by Muhammadiyah has slightly forgotten the use of the *ijtihad* method which emphasizes contextual and rational reason, this is thought to have happened because the Muhammadiyah Association which developed in the 80-90s "forgot" the *ijtihad* reform, and was too busy with the "routine" problems of the organization.

Looking at the current development of PTM, according to Tobroni there are four pillars that make PTM continue to develop dynamically. First, the spirit of Islam and Muhammadiyah as the basis for making PTM a means to enlighten Muslims, the Indonesian nation, and humanity. Second, the existence of PTM cannot be separated from the Muhammadiyah Association as the pioneer of its establishment.

Muhammadiyah, culturally and organizationally, is a social base that became a foothold and support when it first emerged, developed, and advanced as it is today. The name "Muhammadiyah" behind "University" is a very valuable social and symbolic capital. So it is natural that many people put their trust in PTM because of the (symbolic) identity of Muhammadiyah and the (social) network it has. Third, the Higher Education Council (Dikti) is an institution that assists the Muhammadiyah Central Leadership in coordinating and improving the quality of PTM management. It is through this council that the development and all kinds of PTM problems throughout Indonesia are monitored and solved. The Dikti Council also works to facilitate the development of the capacity of good university governance of PTM throughout Indonesia. Fourth, the PTM Leadership is the spearhead. They are the ones who lead, move and develop PTM every day. Visionary, creative, innovative leadership, daring to make breakthroughs in developing PTM is very much needed in the PTM environment. The integration of these four pillars is the basis for developing PTM.

The educational philosophy taught by Ahmad Dahlan is an eclecticism that combines the best elements of various traditions and thoughts. In the Muhammadiyah education curriculum, this is reflected in the effort to integrate religious knowledge and general knowledge harmoniously. Muhammadiyah education seeks to provide a balance between Islamic religious knowledge and general knowledge needed by students in facing the challenges of the modern world. This philosophy is not only theoretical, but also practical and is reflected in the curriculum and pedagogy applied at the Muhammadiyah University of Palembang (UMP).

One of the clearest examples of the application of Dahlan's philosophy is in the curriculum and teaching methods at UMP, which focus on the integration of religious knowledge and general knowledge. For example, in learning, there are courses that combine religious knowledge with science or social sciences, such as the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) study program that teaches the basics of Islam along with modern educational methodologies. In addition, UMP also applies an experiential learning approach that is reflected in extracurricular activities that support the development of student character, such as leadership training and social programs that involve students in social and charitable activities.

### ***3.4 Challenges in Implementation***

Despite its successes, the implementation of Dahlan's philosophy faces challenges, particularly in resource allocation and consistency across Muhammadiyah institutions. Limited infrastructure and uneven access to quality teaching resources hinder the full realization of integrative education, especially in rural areas. Additionally, balancing the preservation of religious values with the demands of modern education remains a pressing issue, particularly in the context of globalization and the digital era.

Eclecticism in the context of Muhammadiyah education is the combination of various educational thoughts and methodologies from various traditions. Ahmad Dahlan tried to combine the best elements of traditional Islamic education with modern methods taken from Western educational thoughts, such as those influenced by figures such as John Dewey. This philosophy makes Muhammadiyah education inclusive and flexible in responding to the needs of the times.

Ahmad Dahlan's philosophy on integrative education can be compared to the educational thoughts of other great figures. John Dewey, for example, emphasized the importance of experiential learning, which is reflected in Muhammadiyah's educational practices through educational methods that emphasize the development of practical skills and active learning (Susmita et al., 2023). Ki Hadjar Dewantara, who emphasized the importance of character and moral values in education, also has similarities with Dahlan's thoughts which prioritize character formation through holistic education (Supala et al., 2020). Meanwhile, Ibn Khaldun's idea of education that focuses on intellectual and social development is also in line with Dahlan's vision, which considers education to form people who are spiritually and intellectually intelligent.

### **3.5 Applications of Dahlan's Philosophy at UMP**

The principles of integrative education championed by Dahlan are exemplified at UMP, where religious teachings and general knowledge are harmoniously combined. Courses like those in the PAI program not only emphasize Islamic teachings but also equip students with practical skills for the modern world. Additionally, experience-based pedagogical approaches, such as leadership training and social programs, enable students to apply their knowledge in real-world contexts.

One of the main challenges in implementing Dahlan's educational philosophy is the difference in resources in various branches of Muhammadiyah education. Several Muhammadiyah educational institutions in the regions are constrained by limited facilities and infrastructure, which affects the full implementation of the principle of integrating religious and general knowledge. In addition, in the context of globalization and modernization, there are challenges in maintaining a balance between maintaining religious values and accommodating the demands of modern education that continue to grow.

Concrete applications of Ahmad Dahlan's educational philosophy are clearly demonstrated in various programs at the Muhammadiyah University of Palembang (UMP), particularly in the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) study program. This program exemplifies the integration of religious studies with experience-based educational methodologies, reflecting Dahlan's commitment to holistic education. Beyond delivering religious content, the PAI program equips students with practical skills and knowledge, bridging theoretical understanding with real-world application. For example, students engage in community service projects, leadership training, and fieldwork that allow them to apply Islamic principles in addressing contemporary societal challenges.

Additionally, the curriculum is designed to balance religious teachings with modern disciplines, preparing students to navigate the complexities of the modern educational landscape. Courses emphasize critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration, ensuring that graduates are not only well-versed in Islamic knowledge but also capable of contributing meaningfully to their communities and professions. By integrating Islamic values with modern educational approaches, programs like PAI embody Dahlan's vision of creating well-rounded individuals who are spiritually grounded and intellectually capable.

Such initiatives highlight the adaptability of Dahlan's philosophy, demonstrating its relevance in preparing students to face global challenges while remaining rooted in their faith. This alignment between theory and practice ensures that UMP graduates are equipped to be leaders in both their professional fields and in upholding moral and ethical values in society.

While Muhammadiyah's integrative education has positively impacted many, gaps remain in its implementation. Future efforts should focus on enhancing resources and infrastructure across all Muhammadiyah institutions to ensure equitable access to quality education. Additionally, further

research is needed to explore how Dahlan's principles can be adapted to emerging challenges, such as the demands of the digital era and globalization. By addressing these gaps, Muhammadiyah can continue to fulfill its mission of creating a just, prosperous, and intellectually vibrant society in line with Islamic values. This approach will ensure the continued relevance of Dahlan's vision in shaping a modern, inclusive, and impactful educational framework that benefits both individuals and society.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Ahmad Dahlan's eclectic educational philosophy has been effectively integrated into Muhammadiyah Higher Education (PTM), particularly through curricula and pedagogy that combine religious and general knowledge. Muhammadiyah University of Palembang (UMP) exemplifies this integration by offering programs that balance Islamic values with modern educational demands and implementing experience-based learning and extracurricular activities to foster holistic character development. However, challenges persist, including uneven implementation across Muhammadiyah branches due to resource disparities and the influence of globalization, which introduces secular ideas that may conflict with Dahlan's vision. Additionally, curriculum design has not been fully systematic in embedding Dahlan's principles at all educational levels. To address these challenges, PTM institutions, including UMP, are encouraged to systematize Dahlan's philosophy in curricula and teaching methods, enhance experience-based education, and develop cross-disciplinary programs integrating Islamic and general knowledge. Strengthening Muhammadiyah's identity as an inclusive yet Islamic-centered institution can counter the impact of secular ideas. Despite its focus on a single institution and qualitative methodology, this study highlights the need for broader research into Dahlan's educational philosophy across diverse Muhammadiyah institutions, particularly in remote areas, to evaluate its impact on student outcomes and character formation. Expanding these insights can help adapt Dahlan's philosophy to meet contemporary global educational challenges.

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