

Syekh Abdullah Ahmad Figure of Renewal Islamic Education

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to find out what Abdullah Ahmad's idea of renewing Islamic education was. The type of research used is qualitative research with a historical approach. This research data was taken from the Google Scholar database, the author used Google Scholar as the main source of information by analyzing documents related to the idea of renewing Islamic education by Abdullah Ahmad. The results of this research show that first, the curriculum according to H. Abdullah Ahmad is that there is no separation between general knowledge and religious knowledge, the two must be balanced, not separated. Second, effective learning methods according to H. Abdullah Ahmad, namely; (a) debating club method, (b) praise and punishment method, (c) play and recreation method. Third, the learning media offered by H. Abdullah Ahmad uses a system of using tables, chairs and whiteboards in the learning process. Fourth, Media, the use of print media as a learning medium according to H. Abdullah Ahmad is also necessary so that the educational message reaches the learning objectives. Fifth, Education Cost Budget. With the change to HIS, Adabiyah succeeded in getting subsidies from the Dutch colonial government.

Keywords: Abdullah Ahmad; Renewal; Madrasah Adabiyah

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1. INTRODUCTION

During the early development of Islamic education in Indonesia, the methods were very simple and regional. During this period of growth, the educational journey process began with learning the basics of Islamic knowledge in traditional institutions such as surau in West Sumatra, meunasah in Aceh, langgar and rajug on the island of Java. Then Islamic boarding school educational institutions emerged with boarding houses, mosques, kiai, yellow books, and santri. In this educational process, the existence of kiai is seen as the sole authority who chooses teachers. This education system does not have an academically designed curriculum, student graduation standards, student entry and graduation times, and does not use traditional facilities such as chairs, tables and blackboards. Education systems tend to be exclusive, which means they are not open to current developments and do not interact with outside society.

At the beginning of the 20th century, ideas and movements for Islamic reform in Indonesia began to spread widely and continued to roll out continuously. The Minangkabau region is one of the objects that cannot be separated from this reform, it could even be said that this region predominantly received the initial touch of the modernization of Islamic education. Many thinkers

New thinkers emerged from Minangkabau Islamic figures, including H. Abdullah Ahmad, a figure born in Padang Panjang in 1878 who initiated reforms in the field of education. The Minangkabau reforms had a major influence on other regions in Indonesia for example North Sumatra. Al Washliyah, which is an Islamic organization from Medan, learns about management education for Minangkabau in the field of education.

This paradigm of Islamic modernization thinking has actually existed in Minangkabau since puritanization emerged as a breakthrough in the Minangkabau people's syncretistic understanding of Islam. However, along with the movement of religious groups, Islamic modernization increasingly developed in the early 19th century, by building modern religious schools and replacing the traditional surau system with a modern, classical education system with diplomas and curriculum. Madrasah Adabiyah in Padang Panjang originated from the Jembatan Besi surau led by Haji Abdullah Ahmad and Haji Rasul. In Minangkabau, this school has a significant influence.

Sheikh Abdullah Ahmad, a reformer of Islamic education from West Sumatra, is known as an educational figure and thinker who has ideas about the importance of building a new, moderate and dynamic Islamic world and promises quality education for the progress of Islamic society. Therefore, he attempted to introduce a system

and a new version of the religious education model where learning activities take place in classrooms equipped with benches, tables and blackboards, just like in government schools. To create quality graduates who have competitiveness and readiness to enter the world of work, he applies a standardized curriculum, the vision of graduates is adjusted to the development needs of the world of work, and every student who has completed their studies is given a diploma. Furthermore, this research is directed at examining the modernization or renewal of Islamic education with its object at the Adabiyah School educational institution, by first introducing the benchmarks for "modernization" of Adabiyah, the profile of Abdullah Ahmad as its founder, the history of the growth and development of Adabiyah, Abdullah Ahmad's modernization thoughts, and accompanied by an analysis of aspects of the modernization of Adabiyah School.

2. METHODS

The type of research used in this research is qualitative research with a literature study approach (*Library Research*) and history (*historical research*) by using descriptive analysis to collect facts and ideas from various research results and opinions from historians accompanied by related analysis, so as to reveal important aspects of the modernization of Islamic education that have occurred in institutions *Adabiyah School*. About the ideas of Islamic education and the renewal movement by Abdullah Ahmad. This is aimed at understanding the ideas of Islamic education and reform carried out by Abdullah Ahmad in West Sumatra before the Reformation. This research is focused on scientifically reviewing literature relevant to the research theme.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

2.1. Renewal of Educational Institutions: Madrasah Adabiyah

Heading 1: Biography of Sheikh Abdullah Ahmad

Abdullah Ahmad is a reformer from Kota Padang Panjang who was born in 1878. His father's name is H. Ahmad, a Minangkabau scholar and a Bugis cloth merchant. Abdullah Ahmad began his education by studying the sciences of Islam under the tutelage of his parents and a number of teachers in his area. By his parents, he was then admitted to a 2nd grade school in Padang Panjang. This school is given to natives in Padang Panjang. At the age of 17 (1895), Abdullah Ahmad went to Makkah to perform the Hajj. Later, he took advantage of this opportunity to continue his religious studies with Sheikh Ahmad Khatib who was a Minangkabau scholar who had previously settled in Makkah. For 4 years studying in Makkah, Abdullah Ahmad observed the development of the Wahabiyah movement that was developing at that time.

The Wahhabi movement seeks to eliminate the practice of heresy, superstition and superstition, as well as problems *imitation*. Then, Abdullah Ahmad returned to Minangkabau in 1899. After that, he dedicated his knowledge at Surau Jembatan Besi Padang Panjang by becoming a teacher. Here, he applies traditional teaching methods, namely the halaqah system. Abdullah Ahmad then reformed his traditional teaching system with a religious school system called Adabiyah School. The learning process with this classical system uses the usual facilities found in schools implemented by the Dutch government, such as tables, benches and blackboards. This situation received resistance from traditional ulama, because it was considered to imitate the

methods used by infidels. Because the resistance was very strong, Abdullah Ahmad finally decided to move to Padang in 1909. He then became a teacher at the Ganting Grand Mosque. He replaced his uncle Sheikh Abdul Halim who died (Fathoni, 2023).

Abdullah Ahmad's efforts to develop education continued until the end of his life. He was known as a figure who had a high Islamic commitment, but was open to accepting modern developments, and for the sake of the advancement of Islamic education, he was ready to take cooperative action with the Dutch East Indies government in power at that time, if it was deemed that this was more beneficial from the aspect of the benefit of the Muslim community.

Despite age *Adabiyah School* It's not too long since it was founded, but in historical records in Indonesia, Abdullah Ahmad is a leading figure who succeeded in setting an example for the next generation in terms of developing modern Islamic schools in the country. The modernization movement that he carried out was eventually followed by subsequent educational institutions, such as *Madras School* which was founded by M. Thaib Umar (1910), *Muhammadiyah Madrasah* which was founded by Ahmad Dahlan (1912), *Diniyah School* which was founded by Zainuddin Labai (1915), *Arabiyah School* which was established by Sheikh Abbas (1918), and so on. Abdullah Ahmad died in 1934 and was buried in Padang (Farabi, 2020).

Heading 2: Adabiyah Madrasah

Adabiyah School, the first modern Islamic school in Indonesia, is often referred to as an educational institution that pioneered the renewal of Islamic education in the archipelago. Through its founding figure, H. Abdullah Ahmad, this school had developed rapidly, in line with the traditions of the Minangkabau people who at that time liked to engage in learning Islamic sciences. As a pioneer of reform in Minangkabau, Abdullah Ahmad has often been involved in various science learning activities since his youth. Islamic knowledge in his hometown. Since his youth, he actively followed education in suraus, then continued studying religious sciences in Makkah for about 5 years, then returned to his homeland to help his father (who is also a scholar) in organizing study activities at Padang Panjang surau (Ahmad, 2024).

Activities in holding religious studies increased when Abdullah Ahmad moved to Padang in 1906. After actively participating in tabligh activities and meetings held to discuss religious studies, one year later he founded the *Adabiyah* association. Initially, this association consisted of eight students who were active in carrying out religious studies on an ongoing basis. In subsequent developments, this increased to 300 people, and some of those who gathered to attend the religious study consisted of

adults.

With this active religious study, Abdullah Ahmad was motivated to change his traditional learning system to a modern Islamic school system called Adabiyah School. The name of this institution symbolically illustrates the rise of science as the main pillar of the revival of Islamic civilization, and some historians estimate that the name Adabiyah was inspired by the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad, which was narrated by Ibn alSam'ani "My God has educated me, so He gave me the best in my education".

In historical records, the Adabiyah School was founded by Abdullah Ahmad in 1907, exactly eight years after he returned to study from Mecca. The desire to establish a school

Modern Islam has been embedded for a long time, when it was filled with the brilliant ideas of modernists from the Middle East such as Muhammad 'Abduh. However, on a practical level, he only founded the Islamic School after making intensive contact with his colleague in Singapore, Tahir Jalaluddin. In fact, in 1906, he deliberately visited his friend directly for the main purpose of establishing the school he dreamed of. Tahir Jalaluddin himself is one of the reformers who has planned to establish a modern school in Singapore. The plan has been published in a magazine *al-Imam* the Singapore publication is also circulated in Padang and Abdullah Ahmad always reads it. Apart from his contact with Tahir Jalaluddin, Abdullah Ahmad's strong desire to establish an Adabiyah School also grew because he saw the orderly and good governance of schools in Padang (A. Efendi, 2008).

Abdullah Ahmad was interested in establishing systematic education under the auspices of Adabiyah, because not all children from Padang Panjang could enter government schools. Initially the Adabiyah School was founded in Padang Panjang, his hometown. This school's education system is very different from the way of education at the surau. Even though Abdullah Ahmad owns Surau Jembatan Besi, he is more interested in managing modern schools than building his surau (Asrohah, 1999).

Consistently, he ran the school by teaching religious sciences and adding lessons in reading and writing Latin and arithmetic. If education at the surau is not carried out on a class-by-class basis, then the education plan at Adabiyah School is arranged based on class. In its ideal plan, the Adabiyah School is expected to become a kind of Islamic governance school that carries a reforming character with a mission to liberate the people from the attitude of taqlid. Two years later, the Adabiyah School failed to develop, both for reasons of the surrounding situation and for Abdullah

Ahmad's own condition. Since its inception, the school has faced challenges from the community

Padang Panjang, most of whom do not like the education pattern implemented by Abdullah Ahmad. If not for his persistence, the Adabiyah School would not have been able to stand up again because it barely got any students, because in that area the people were still stuck with the surau system.(Johan, 2022)

His too drastic method of carrying out reforms meant that the figure of Abdullah Ahmad did not receive full support from the ulama and the public. At the school location, Abdullah Ahmad also sells cloth to support the operational costs of his educational institution. Even though he was selling, his business activities were not profitable. In addition, the facilities available in the area are also not sufficient to support his aspirations in terms of publishing a newspaper. Not discouraged, Abdullah Ahmad moved (the Adabiyah School) to Padang. In this city he pioneered the establishment of "*Oesaha Company*" (in 1914), because he was of the view that to achieve economic and educational progress, an organization was needed.

Through this organization, in a short time he already had customers for his fabric sales business. Unlike in Padang Panjang, the presence of the Adabiyah School in Padang received an encouraging response from traders, although it still faced challenges from the ulama and lay people. The development of this school in Padang has achieved significant progress, partly because the curriculum places more emphasis on general subjects which are almost like HIS. To improve the quality of education at the school, Abdullah Ahmad involved four Dutch-speaking teachers (Maiwinda, 2020).

To be able to teach at the HIS level, several indigenous teachers are required to have a diploma. Religious subjects at HIS are only given twice a week. The remainder is allocated to general subjects and reading, writing and arithmetic skills. Because of the quality of education and teaching curriculum. This school received recognition from the Dutch government in 1915. Conditions like this show that the Adabiyah School was the first Islamic school at HIS level founded by Minangkabau Muslims, and perhaps even the first in Indonesia. This school is also popularly known as HIS Adabiyah. However, in contrast to HIS which was limited to nobles and officials, the Adabiyah School was open to the public as long as they could contribute by paying tuition fees which were not very expensive. For this reason, traders really like this school so they send their children to study at this school.(Nurul Syalafiyah, 2020)

If you look at the curriculum aspect, the learning content of Adabiyah School is indeed more similar to Dutch schools. This is because Abdullah Ahmad as the

founder was very influenced by the school system developed by the Netherlands, so that society was seen as going too far in changing the Islamic education system. Even though the school's educational activities take place with its formal learning system, Abdullah Ahmad also holds weekly recitations. This shows that he carried out activities in developing Islamic education not only in schools, but also in society.

In historical records, the ideas and efforts to reform Islamic education in Minangkabau have never waned and stopped, even though Abdullah Ahmad has died. The influence that Abdullah Ahmad developed in laying the foundations for the establishment of the modern Islamic School, was in fact followed by other figures after him. They also established and developed schools, although the educational pattern they applied was not too similar to Dutch-style schools. The latter form of school seems to be more popular with the wider community, so that the number of schools has increased to villages in the Minangkabau region. Maybe the founders of those schools can learn a lot from them. The consequences that Abdullah Ahmad received were because of his very drastic way of changing Islamic education. (Syamsuddin, 2013)

Heading 3: Renewing the Education System: Curriculum, Methods and Infrastructure

a. Curriculum

According to H. Abdullah Ahmad, the curriculum means that there is no separation between general knowledge and religious knowledge, the two must be balanced, not separated. *Adabiyah School* considered to be the pioneer of Indonesia's national education pattern, the first as a general plus religious education institution, the second as a religious plus general educational institution. In the curriculum aspect before it changed to HIS Adabiyah, the portion of Islamic subjects was quite large. However, after changing to HIS Adabiyah, the religious education portion was only 2 hours a week. It can be concluded that Abdullah Ahmad's education program applies the concept of an integrated education curriculum (*integrated curriculum of education*), namely the integration of general knowledge with religious knowledge and language in educational programs. In Abdullah Ahmad's view, both Arabic and Dutch play a very important role in achieving the ideals of reform and in the context of transferring knowledge through efforts to translate knowledge that was originally in a foreign language into Malay (Indonesian) (Farabi, 2020).

As recorded in history, the change from Adabiyah School to HIS Adabiyah occurred in 1915. In this case, Mahmud Yunus emphasized that Adabiyah was the first HIS to include religious subjects in its learning activities, in addition to teaching

general subjects. Abdullah Ahmad views that the world of education must implement the concept of integration. This is because Islamic education must be able to produce graduates who master general sciences and modern technology, in addition to mastering the basics of Islamic knowledge.

Thus, it is very necessary to establish a school that can implement collaboration between the two. The establishment of Adabiyah School is the answer to this goal. As previously explained, the Adabiyah School is religious in nature with a modern system.(Ahmad, 2022)

b. Learning Methods

In terms of methods, Abdullah bin Ahmad applies methods *debating club*. The method now known as the discussion method is a method that provides the widest possible opportunity for students to ask questions and dialogue openly about various matters relating to religious issues which at that time were considered very taboo and not considered civilized (Putra Daulay, 2009). This was done as an effort to change the old way of placing students passively and given less freedom, while teachers used more time. According to Abdullah Ahmad, in the process of growth and development, the level of thinking continues to increase from time to time. Thinking logically cannot be achieved by humans naturally, but must be developed and trained through a series of exercises carried out continuously. In line with this, educators should pay attention to the level of thinking of children, so that the learning material provided can be digested and accepted by students well. This is what Abdullah Ahmad implemented(Lubis, 2009).

According to Abdullah, other methods that need to be implemented are play and recreation methods. According to him, children need to be given time to play and have fun and rest during the ongoing teaching and learning process. Because if there is no time to rest, it can damage the child's previously good behavior, because he gets bored with activities that drain a lot of his thinking power. Another consequence is that his heart will die, his understanding of the learning material given will be dull and the light of his mind will be extinguished.

c. Infrastructure

The infrastructure offered by H. Abdullah Ahmad uses a classroom system and includes facilities such as tables, chairs and blackboards as media in the learning process. Students sit in chairs and face forward. However, this was not found at that time because the study habit at surau schools used the halaqah method, namely students sitting cross-legged on the floor around their teacher. And according to H. Abdullah Ahmad, the use of print media as a learning medium is also necessary so

that the educational message reaches the learning objectives. For this reason, he published al-Munir magazine as an educational medium that had a wider reach. (Yunus, 1996)

4. CONCLUSION

Adabiyah School is recorded as the "first" educational institution which acts as a madrasa (religious school) not only in Minangkabau, but also the "first" throughout Indonesia. This educational institution was founded in 1907, by Abdullah Ahmad, a moderate cleric born in Minangkabau. The idea of establishing this school was obsessed when he came home from school *al-Iqbal al-Islamiyah* in Singapore. Not even two years after the founding of the Adabiyah School, this educational institution faced reactions and criticism from conservative ulama groups in Padang Panjang. Seeing the unstable atmosphere, Abdullah Ahmad moved the education center he was looking after to the city of Padang. In this new location, Adabiyah received significant welcome and support from the Muslim community who were more open to accepting reforms.

Even though the Adabiyah School educational institution did not last long over time, it can be said to be a "modernizer" who was successful in laying the foundation and example of the establishment and development of the first modern Islamic school in Indonesia. The modernization efforts he had made were eventually followed by Islamic educational institutions that emerged later, both before independence and after. For the case in Indonesia at that time,

Adabiyah School is the first modern Islamic school that adheres to the classical education system. Adabiyah shows new characteristics that are different from other traditional Islamic educational institutions which do not use classrooms, benches, tables, blackboards, modern curricula and diplomas. Adabiyah School aims to combine the Dutch model of general education pattern colored by the Islamic education system. Therefore, the curriculum implemented by Adabiyah is *integrated curriculum*. In the field of general studies which was deemed to need quality improvement, 4 professional teachers from the Netherlands were presented. All of this is done to increase the effectiveness and quality of the goals and education system being implemented. The education system adopted by Adabiyah School can be said to be consistent with the value system that applies in Padang, namely maintaining the values of Islamic education, in addition to requiring mastery of general sciences.

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