

# Transformative Educational Leadership of Ahmad Dahlan and its Relevance to the Development of Muhammadiyah Education

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**Abstract.** The success of an educational institution is largely determined by its leaders. Leadership is a very crucial aspect, perhaps even the most important in an organization. To face the very complex challenges of future education, transformative educational leaders are needed. Muhammadiyah has crossed the ages with the development of its charitable educational endeavors. All of this cannot be separated from the transformative educational leadership of Ahmad Dahlan, the Muhammadiyah founder. This research will explore the characteristics of transformative leadership and its relevance to the development of Muhammadiyah education. By using the literature research method (library research) it was found that Ahmad Dahlan has all the characteristics of a transformative educational leader. Such as a) Having charisma; b) Always present intellectual stimulation; c) Having attention and concern for each individual follower; d) Motivation that inspires followers; e) Trying to increase the capacity of its followers; f) Give more examples than talk a lot. The relevance is in the inheritance of the three main values of Ahmad Dahlan's leadership: sincerity and exemplary; continuous progress and innovation; and lifelong education in Muhammadiyah educational institutions ranging from primary, secondary and tertiary levels. *Keywords: Ahmad Dahlan; educational leadership; Transformative*

## 1 Background

The low quality of education is largely determined by the quality of leadership in education, because leaders can move and direct the organization to achieve its goals. As said by Suparman (2007), one of the educational problems that arise today is the low quality of education at every level and unit of education. Various efforts have been made, among others through various training and improvement of teacher qualifications, provision and improvement of educational facilities / infrastructure, as well as improving the quality of education management. However, various indicators of the quality of education have not shown an even improvement. The same thing, even worse, afflicts educational institutions that carry the flag of Islam, from primary level education to higher education [1]. The

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problem boils down to aspects of education management, which more specifically is the leadership factor.

It can be said that leadership is one of the most crucial aspects, perhaps even the most important in an organization. Without qualified leadership or leaders, an organization will not progress or stagnate, it could be dissolved. The goals that have been agreed upon and designed will not be realized. The forward and backward of the organization is determined by the quality of leadership. Leaders and people who are led are two currencies that cannot be separated. Leaders will not be able to do much without the participation of the people they lead. Likewise, people who are led will not effectively carry out their duties and obligations without motivation, direction, supervision, and cooperation with the leader [2].

In carrying out their duties, leaders of educational organizations are required to have a vision of the organization and their duties as leaders. They are required not only to be good managers but also to be able to bring the organization they lead to achieve qualitative changes, so having a clear vision is important. A vision is not just a plan or goal but a picture of what the future will look like. As an idea and image of the future, the vision must be clear, concise, challenging, future-oriented which must be formulated together between leaders and educational staff in order to create commitment to the vision [2].

The challenges of education today and in the future are not easy. It takes a visionary-transformative educational leader. According to Nizar, there are seven challenges to education today; First, the challenges of globalization, free market eras as well as free competition in material products and services. Second, the challenge of the free market (free trade). Islamic education is challenged in filling spiritual intelligence, morals that begin to erode in line with the development of communication, science and technology. Third, dishonesty. Indonesia has almost reached the point of zero trust society or a society that is difficult to trust. Education in Indonesia has a great responsibility to answer this challenge. Fourth, the challenges of 21st century education. Fifth, the nation's internal challenges. There are two internal challenges of the nation, namely, multi-dimensional reform of society and decentralization in various fields including education. Sixth, the challenges of Islamic education scientists. Seventh, the challenge of leadership crisis [2].

Muhammadiyah was born from the figure of an educator or teacher and supported by people who work as teachers. Ahmad Dahlan saw that the problem of education was the main root that caused the Indonesian nation, especially Muslims, to lag behind. That's why he took the path of education as the main means of da'wah. The Islamic renewal movement initiated by Ahmad Dahlan was closer to the education movement [3]. According to data from the Muhammadiyah Da'wah Syiar Center, the Muhammadiyah Charity (2022) has 440 Islamic boarding schools, 20,233 kindergartens, 2,817 elementary schools, 1,817 junior high schools, 1,364 senior high schools, 171 universities, 355 hospitals, and 562 orphanages ([muhammadiyah.or.id](http://muhammadiyah.or.id)).

The number of educational charities that continue to grow after Ahmad Dahlan's death cannot be separated from the role of visionary and transformational educational leadership. The next generation after Ahmad Dahlan truly understood the spirit of Ahmad Dahlan's education movement. His charismatic leadership was able to mobilize his students. However, charismatic leadership is not enough to carry Muhammadiyah through the ages. So it is very interesting to examine Ahmad Dahlan's visionary-transformative leadership, which could be the key to Muhammadiyah's success in managing education

There have been many writings, journals, researches that study Ahmad Dahlan, but there are still few who write about the transformative leadership of KH Ahmad Dahlan, one of which was written by Ruslan Rasid who studied the Transformative Leadership of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan in Muhammadiyah [4]. This study concludes that KH Ahmad Dahlan, besides being a reformer or mujaddid in his time, also has a charismatic, inspiring, exemplary leadership model, and has intellectual intelligence so that he is able to think visionary-

anticipatory thinking that brings Muhammadiyah to continue to progress and develop. However, this study does not specifically discuss Ahmad Dahlan's transformative educational leadership.

## 2 Research Method

This research is a literature research with a qualitative-descriptive approach [5]. The design of this research is descriptive analytical, which is research that describes Ahmad Dahlan's transformative leadership, then interpreted, analyzed based on research methods, with a historical-philosophical approach. According to Bakker and Zubair [6] the historical approach is intended to examine and reveal the biography of KH Ahmad Dahlan, his works and the development of his mindset related to transformative educational leadership. While the philosophical approach is used to examine and interpret in depth to then actualize its relevance to the development of Muhammadiyah education today.

The sources of literature used in the research are; (1) textbooks and references, which contain Ahmad Dahlan's educational methods; (2) journals or reports on research results, which are the results of new research or are a continuation of previous research on Ahmad Dahlan's transformative educational leadership; (3) theses, theses, or dissertations related to Ahmad Dahlan's transformative educational leadership; and (4) magazines, journals and newspapers, which contain articles on Ahmad Dahlan's transformative educational leadership.

## 3 Results and Discussion

### 3.1 Ahmad Dahlan's Educational Thought

Kiai Haji Ahmad Dahlan, whose real name was Muhammad Darwis, was born in Kauman, Yogyakarta in 1285 AH coinciding with 1868 AD. His father, Kiai Haji Abubakar bin Kiai Haji Muhammad Sulaiman, who had a lineage up to Maulana Malik Ibrahim, was a clerical official - from the word *penghulu*, meaning the minister of Islamic religious affairs - of the Ngayogyakarta Sultanate, with the title *Penghulu Khatib* at the Sultanate's Great Mosque. Meanwhile, his mother, Nyai Abubakar, was the daughter of Kiai Haji Ibrahim bin Kiai Haji Hasan, also a *Kapengulon* official of the Ngayogyakarta Sultanate [7].

Muhammad Darwis did not enjoy Western education (education provided by the Dutch), known as the *Gubernemen's* school for children of the nobility whose graduates were usually referred to as *Kapir Landa* [8]. He grew up since childhood from parental education. He received his first religious education from his father. Studying the Koran and learning the basics of religious science, so that at the age of eighteen he was able to read the Koran fluently and *mematamkan* his reading up to 30 juz. Another ability he had was making handicraft items and toys. Like most boys, Ahmad Dahlan also liked to play kites, spinning tops and other traditional games [9].

After completing his basic education in *nahwu*, *fiqh* and *tafsir* in *Yogya* and its surroundings, he went to Mecca in 1890 to perform worship and study there for a year. One of his teachers was *Shaykh Ahmad Khatib*. Around 1903 he revisited the Holy Land and stayed to study for two years [10]. Considering that he already had sufficient knowledge in his homeland, he received a lot of additional religious knowledge more easily. As is common for *hajj pilgrims* at that time - even today - Darwis received a certificate to change his name, from *Sayyid Bakri Syatha*, a *shaikh / teacher* in Mecca, he received the new name *Haji Achmad Dachlan* [7].

Ahmad Dahlan's educational ideas cannot be separated from the form of resistance to the existing education system at that time. He was disturbed to see that Islamic schools (traditional huts) only taught religious subjects without the slightest touch of general sciences. It even seemed to reject all influences that came from the colonizer's country such as the way of dressing, Latin letters, including the sciences that came from the West. Everything that smells of colonizers is kafir, and haram. On the one hand, the education run by the Dutch government - although managed in a modern way - only aims to be pragmatic, worldly, secular, and full of Dutch imperial interests [11]. As a result, there was a scientific dichotomy, a very wide separation between religious science and Western science.

Despite the advantages of pesantren education, this institution has not been able to answer the challenges of life that continue to develop. A good education is one that is appropriate and can answer the demands of the society in which students live. Ahmad Dahlan criticized the traditionalists who run education without relevance to the needs and development of the times [8]. In general, Islamic education (pondok pesantren) does not have a class system, no exams or learning evaluations, and a limit on the length of study in class. It is more dominant in emphasizing the power of memorization. The branches of knowledge studied are about Islamic religious sciences sourced from yellow books such as hadith, musthalah hadith, sunnah fiqh/ushul fiqh, monotheism, Sufism, mantiq science, falaq science and Arabic language [9]. The teaching methods used are sorogan, wetonan, memorization, muzakarah, and others.

In Muhammadiyah schools, religion is taught as a compulsory subject and students are required to obey religious rules. In these schools, science education and foreign languages are also included in the curriculum. The Muhammadiyah school system also maintained a strong Islamic dimension, but it was done in a different way to the earlier Islamic schools with their strong pesantren style. With his example of new educational methods and systems, Dahlan also wanted to modernize traditional religious schools [12].

To intensify his educational programs and improve the quality of Islamic education, Dahlan established Mu'allimin (male teachers) and Muallimat (female teachers) schools. It was in these schools that teachers for Muhammadiyah primary and secondary schools were educated. Along with the establishment of these schools, Dahlan also established the Muballigin (male preachers) and Muballigat (female preachers) schools at the same level as secondary schools. These schools were the main foundation for the idea of establishing an Islamic university a decade later [12].

The view of Islamic education stems from the effort to develop reason in the educational process that aims to grow creativity so that Muhammadiyah citizens have a spirit of tajdid (renewal). Therefore, since its establishment Muhammadiyah has prioritized creativity. In line with the spirit of renewal that Ahmad Dahlan aspired to, namely developing reason, rejecting heresy, khurafat and taklid, and prioritizing ijtihad. It is expected that every graduate of Muhammadiyah education displays broad insight, is not conservative, and becomes a free individual [9].

### **3.2 Transformative Leadership**

Transformational leadership is built from two words, namely leadership, which means any action taken by someone to coordinate, direct, and influence others to achieve goals, while transformational is changing something into another different form. Transformational leadership is measured in relation to the effect the leader has on his or her followers. Formulations of transformational leadership theory include charisma, intellectual stimulation, individualized attention. For example, a principal applies transformational leadership theory if he is able to change the energy of both human and non-human resources to achieve school goals [13].

According to Barnard M. Bass, transformative leadership is a leadership style that engages followers, provides inspiration, and is committed to realizing a shared vision and goals for an organization, and challenges followers to become innovative problem solvers, and develops leadership capacity through training, mentoring, with various challenges and support [14]. Meanwhile, according to Downton, transformational leadership is helping their followers to exceed expectations in making their vision a reality [15].

Transformative leadership can also be defined as leaders who use their charisma to transform and revitalize their organizations. However, transformative leadership is different from charismatic leadership. Transformative leaders are more concerned with revitalizing their followers and the organization as a whole rather than giving top down instructions. Transformative leaders position themselves more as mentors who are willing to accommodate the aspirations of their subordinates. Transformative leaders place more emphasis on how to revitalize their institutions, both at the organizational and institutional levels [16].

The characteristics of transformative leaders are as follows: a) Have charisma; b) They always present intellectual stimulation, meaning that they always help and encourage their followers to recognize various problems and ways to solve them; c) Transformative leaders have attention and care for each individual follower. They provide encouragement, attention, support to followers to do the best for themselves and their communities; d) Transformative leaders always provide motivation that inspires their followers by communicating effectively by using symbols, not only using verbal language; e) They try to increase the capacity of their followers to be independent so that they cannot always depend on their leaders; f) Transformative leaders provide more examples than talk a lot. This means that there is an exemplary side that is presented to the followers by working more than a lot of fiery speeches without concrete actions [17].

### **3.3 Ahmad Dahlan's Transformative Educational Leadership Model**

As the founder of the largest Islamic organization in Indonesia with thousands of educational charities, it can be said that Ahmad Dahlan is a transformative leader with the following characteristics. *First*, he is charismatic. Charismatic leadership is seen in the way a leader communicates by evoking empathy and strong emotions in the people around him. This was very visible when KH Ahmad Dahlan saw the problem of the wrong qibla in the mosques of Yogyakarta and also the Gede Kauman mosque. But changing the qibla direction is not an easy matter. Ahmad Dahlan took many approaches, ranging from the discourse of change, to gathering scholars for deliberation and discussion. The desire to change the Qibla direction was executed by his students by giving slanted lines in the Gede mosque without the knowledge of KH Ahmad Dahlan. They were moved by their teacher's exposure. This shocked the management of the Gede mosque which resulted in the demolition of KH Ahmad Dahlan's langgar.

*Second*, visionary. Seeing the phenomenon of dichotomous education between religious and general sciences, Ahmad Dahlan did not hesitate to adopt modern education models and methods as far as they could bring progress to Muslims. He adopted the concept of Western (read: Dutch) education, but critically while still referring to the normativity of Islamic teachings. This is a model of synthesis between old elements and new elements coming from the West. Maintaining the religious spirit and religious lessons as the basis, while new things such as techniques and organizational models are taken from Western schools. For example, developing the school and madrasa system by combining teaching methods and content using a modern system. Even the names of Dutch schools such as HIS for Elementary School, MULO for Junior High School, AMS for General High School, Kweekschool for Low

Teacher School and HIK for Upper Teacher School were used by Ahmad Dahlan by adding "Muhammadiyah" behind them such as HIS Muhammadiyahs and so on.

In formulating educational goals, KH Ahmad Dahlan always looked to the future. He often repeated to his students the visionary advice, namely, "*Dadijo Kyai sing kemadjoen, lan adja kesel-kesel anggonmu njamboet gawe kanggo Mochammadiyah.*" which means, "Be an intellectual scholar who is able to keep up with the times, and do not feel tired of working for (through) Muhammadiyah." [18]. There are three meanings that can be drawn from Ahmad Dahlan's message above. First, the word "*kiai*" contains a message of Islamicity. How education can produce students who master deep Islamic knowledge, obey worship and have noble character. Second, the word "progress" implies modernity. How students are able to master science and technology that is beneficial to the universe, elevating human dignity. Third, the word "*ojo kesel anggonmu nyambut gawe kanggo Muhammadiyah,*" has the meaning of cadre. Education should be able to give birth to cadre for the association, people and nation [19]. So it can be concluded that Ahmad Dahlan's educational goal was "Creating intellectual clerics and intellectual clerics who are ready to become warrior cadres."

"Creating intellectual clerics and intellectual clerics" is the vision of an educational movement that will always be actual. Ahmad Dahlan's *tajdid* and innovative spirit will always be relevant to the changing times. As he contextualized Islamic teachings in the form of real charity that the people really needed. Ahmad Dahlan has pioneered a very modern education in his day.

*Third*, leaders who encourage their followers to recognize various problems and ways to solve them. KH Ahmad Dahlan in the learning process always provides life problems that need to be resolved. Learning is divided into two parts; first, learning science or theory; second, learning charity or doing and practicing. Learning must be done little by little, level by level, for example, a learner learns the letters a, b, c, d, if he does not understand correctly, then there is no need to add the next letters, namely e, f, g, and h. Similarly, in learning that requires deeds. Likewise, in learning that requires deeds, there is no need to add if you are not able to do it [20]. Therefore, when one of the students asked about the *araita* lesson that was always repeated, Ahmad Dahlan commented, "Not yet... you have not understood *surah al-Ma'un.*" Even though they had memorized it by heart. So at the next meeting before starting the lesson of *surah al-Ma'un* Ahmad Dahlan asked his students to bathe orphans and the poor. After bathing, they were given new clothes. After that they were invited to eat together. After the meal was finished, before they returned to their respective places, they were given pocket money. After everything was finished, Ahmad Dahlan then faced his students and said, "Let's move on to the next recitation." [21].

*Fourth*, leaders who provide support to their followers to do what is best for themselves and their communities. The teachings of sincerity in charity characterize Ahmad Dahlan's leadership. This sincerity has been exemplified by himself in all his actions such as when building a *mushalla*, making his house a classroom and financing all school needs with his personal money. Like his message, "Do not seek your livelihood in the association, but live Muhammadiyah [8].

*Fifth*, inspiring his followers by communicating effectively using symbols, not only using verbal language. For Ahmad Dahlan, education was not merely school, but living life as a teacher and student. The educational motto he developed was, "To be both teacher and student." Being a teacher means spreading one's knowledge while being a student means using one's whole life to learn [11]. Operationally, this concept shows that in the context of learning, the teacher is a figure who never stops learning. In addition to being a figure who is *digugu* and imitated, teachers must always continue to learn. The profile of smart people does not stop when they understand something, but those who never stop learning. The teacher is not the owner of absolute knowledge, he is only a facilitator for his students who at the same time carry out the learning process [22].

*Sixth*, increasing the capacity of his followers to be independent so that they cannot always depend on their leaders. From the beginning, Ahmad Dahlan cultivated collective-collegial leadership, which is leadership that is equal and together. Leadership that does not depend on a charismatic figure. From the beginning, KH Ahmad Dahlan carried out organizational tasks by delegating certain parts to Muhammadiyah members. H.B. Muhammadiyah has planned that the entry of these fields is accepted and given a place as part of H.B. Muhammadiyah with the names: (1) Hoofd Bestuur Muhammadiyah School Section, chaired by Br. H.M. Hisham. (2) Hoofd Bestuur Muhammadiyah Tabligh Section, chaired by Br. H.M. Fakhruddin. (3) Hoofd Bestuur Muhammadiyah section of Penolong Kesengaraan Oemoem chaired by Br. H.M. Syoedja' (4) Hoofd Bestuur Muhammadiyah section of Taman Pustaka chaired by Br. H.M. Mokhtar (Syoedja', tt). This was also the message he often conveyed to his students, "Keep going to school, become a teacher, doctor, engineer, and so on. Then return to Muhammadiyah. Live Muhammadiyah, don't look for life in Muhammadiyah." [23]. Shows the spirit of continuity of struggle.

*Seventh*, giving more examples than talking a lot. Ahmad Dahlan did not leave many written works, he was a man of charity (action) so that the slogan "little talk, a lot of work" was very thick following the spirit of the Muhammadiyah movement [24]. Persistence in fighting can be seen in the pioneering of his first school. With 8 students, Ahmad Dahlan transformed the living room of his house with a size of 2.5 m x 6 m into a classroom, utilizing 2 of his tables, 2 benches made by himself from leftover mori cloth boxes and a blackboard made of suren wood. And Ahmad Dahlan himself acted as the teacher [9]. At that time it was known as the "Kiai School." This was the first modern school built and managed by Indigenous people independently. It was inaugurated on December 1, 1911 and named Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Diniyah Islamiyah [25]. At that time there were only 29 students, which six months later increased to 62 students [9].

After the school was established, another problem arose, namely teacher salaries. It has been a year since the teachers have not received their rights, which is also not much, KH Ahmad Dahlan did not have the heart to delay the payment for how many months, so he invited a friend of the Muhammadiyah Management to register KH Ahmad Dahlan's household goods from small household items table chairs, stools, wall glass, wall clocks, kapstok and others. Clothing ranging from terumpah karsanah, sarong palekat, underwear and suits haris Qamish clothes, robes and surban-surban except one surban, one suit, two underwear and two old sarong. It was as if KH Ahmad Dahlan stripped himself and stripped the house to the bone. Nevertheless, KH Ahmad Dahlan remained in a joyful mood because the sale of his goods got the attention of many people, so that the price became more than expected. According to previous estimates, the price was only around 400 to 500 guilders. But after the sale was completed, it turned out that it could reach 4000 guilders or less. Many of the items were sold several times, because they were sold by auction. The sale was closed with alhamdulillah and many thanks. KH Ahmad Dahlan only took 60 guilders, while the rest remained with Muhammadiyah to cover his debts to teachers who were equally suffering [26].

### **3.4 Relevance to Muhammadiyah Education**

Strong leadership brings Muhammadiyah to continue to make reforms, especially in education, educate and lift this nation from backwardness and ignorance. Collective-collegial transformative leadership is seen in KH Ahmad Dahlan's dialog with his students. One of his students questioned the school that KH Ahmad Dahlan established in his house [24]. "Kiai, is there a school here? What school is here, Kiai."

"O, son, this is Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Islamiyah to give lessons in Islam and general knowledge to our children in Kauman village," Kiai Dahlan replied.

"Who holds it, and who is the teacher, Kiai?" asked his student.

"The one who holds it and is the teacher is me," Kiai Dahlan replied again.

"Wouldn't it be better if the school was held by the kiai himself, because then every year it would have to be graduated, so it would be as if the school belonged to the kiai himself, then if the kiai died and the heirs could not continue, then the school would stop, like the huts, kiai. When the kiai dies, then the students disperse. Therefore, we propose that the school should be held by an organization so that it can continue forever," explained his student.

Kiai Dahlan nodded his mustakanya (head) indicating his inner emotion, and stated, "That is very good and I will record it in my heart with gold ink." This dialog illustrates the process of cadre regeneration while it is going on. Before it is broken, it will have changed. New cadres must be born as a continuation of KH Ahmad Dahlan's struggle with Muhammadiyah as a means of struggle. KH Ahmad Dahlan's teachings and exemplars such as sincerity, struggle, courage, work ethic, rigor, orderliness of management, progress and real action continue to be passed on through Muhammadiyah education via Kemuhammadiyah (PKM) education subjects for primary and secondary education and Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyah (AIK) lessons for higher education.

## 4 CONCLUSION

Transformative leadership is leadership that is able to coordinate, direct, and influence others to achieve goals, while transformational (transformational) means changing something into another different form. KH Ahmad Dahlan has the characteristics of a transformative leader with the characteristics of a) Having charisma; b) Always presenting intellectual stimulation; c) Transformative leaders have attention and care for each individual follower; d) Providing motivation that inspires followers by communicating effectively by using symbols, not only using verbal language; e) Attempting to increase the capacity of his followers to be independent so that they cannot always depend on their leaders; f) More examples than talking. Give more examples rather than talking a lot.

Its relevance to the progress of Muhammadiyah education can be seen in Before the patah has changed. New cadres must be born as a continuation of KH Ahmad Dahlan's struggle with Muhammadiyah as a means of struggle. KH Ahmad Dahlan's teachings and exemplars such as sincerity, struggle, courage, work ethic, rigor, management regularity, progress and real action continue to be passed on through Muhammadiyah education via Kemuhammadiyah (PKM) education subjects for primary and secondary education and Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyah (AIK) lessons for higher education.

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