

## MODERNIZING ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN THE MOST POPULATED MUSLIM WORLD

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**Abstract:** This paper discusses the homegrown endeavors in the most populated Muslim world to modernize Islamic education therein. It focuses on how the modernization of Islamic education comes out of efforts by the so-called traditional Muslim scholars in particular in reforming Islamic education. As a locus of analysis, it deals comparatively with two largest Muslim populations, one in South Asia and another in Southeast Asia. The former is represented by India, and the latter is by Indonesia. This article argues that the traditional Muslim scholars have contributed significantly to the modernization of Islamic education in their own country respectively. It further argues that their position as traditional *'ulama'* does not hinder their progressive role in reforming their respective Islamic institutions. They apply schooling system, adopting “secular” sciences for the curriculum and implementing teaching-learning methods like their reformist colleges and schools established by either the British or the Dutch colonialists. It goes on to say that the traditional *'ulama'* both in South and Southeast Asia have a pivotal position in reforming Islamic education in such a way that rewriting needs to be undertaken in a more proportional way towards the discussion of Islamic education reform in both countries.

**Keywords:** Modernization, Islamic education, traditional *'ulama'*, India, Indonesia.

### Introduction

Modernist and traditionalist dichotomies among Muslims almost occur in almost all areas of Muslim world. People give full attention to modernist Muslims in dealing with the issue of modernization of Islamic education, however. Some examples can be laid. In India, for

instance, the modernization of Islamic education has been identified with Aligarh as it has been referred to as the modernist and reformist groups. Whereas the traditionalist group was attributed to Darul Ulum Deoband. The same case happened in Indonesia, where such an issue modernization of Islamic education has been closely related to Muhammadiyah and Persis which have always been identified as reformist or modernist groups, while the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and their *pesantren* have been considered as traditionalist groups.

As a result, concerning all forms of movement in India in particular, scholars tend to be interested more in writing about the modernization movement of Aligarh education which is considered more modern, innovative, and dynamic. Aligarh was spearheaded by Ahmad Khan.<sup>1</sup> The scholarly works that discuss the movement for educational reform in Aligarh including the role of its central figure, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, are widespread, including those by G.F.I Graham,<sup>2</sup> J.M.S Baljon JR,<sup>3</sup> Shan Muhammad,<sup>4</sup> and S.K. Bhatnagar.<sup>5</sup> In addition, Wilfred Cantwell Smith also paid attention to the modernist movement in India as expressed in his book entitled *Modern Islam in India*.<sup>6</sup>

The same case also happens to Indonesia, where scholars are more interested in writing the educational movement pioneered by the so-

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<sup>1</sup> Sayyid Ahmad Khan was born in Delhi on October 17, 1817 to a family with important position in the government of the Mughal Kingdom. He studied in traditional Islamic education under the guidance of Shah Ghulam 'Ali, a Shaykh of the Naqshabandiyah Order, and Syekh 'Abd al-'Aziz, a famous *ulama'* in Delhi. In addition, he also learned a lot from other scholars. He was involved in the British colonial government since 1838 as saristhadar (scribe). Read G.F.I. Graham, *The Life and Works of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1974), 1; Ruswan Thoyib, "Kolonialisme dan Pembaruan Pendidikan Islam di India dan Indonesia," in Doddy S. Truna dan Ismatu Ropi, *Pranata Islam di Indonesia: Pergulatan Sosial, Politik, Hukum dan Pendidikan* (Jakarta: Logos, 2002), 243-271.

<sup>2</sup> G.F.I. Graham, *The Life and Works of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1974).

<sup>3</sup> J.M.S. Baljon JR, *The Reform and Religious Ideas of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1949).

<sup>4</sup> Shan Muhammad, *Writings and Speeches of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan* (Bombay: Nachiketa Publications Limited, 1972); idem, *Sir Syed Ahmad Khan: A Political Biography* (Meerut: Meenakshi Praksahan, 1969).

<sup>5</sup> Bhatnagar, *History of the M.A.O. College Aligarh* (New Delhi: Asia Publishing House, 1969).

<sup>6</sup> Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Modern Islam in India* (Lahore: Ripon Printing Press, 1947).

called modernist Muslims. Muhammadiyah, Persis and Madrasah Adabiyah educational movements in Padang received tremendous attention from both Western and Indonesian scholars. Meanwhile the development of the movement among traditional Muslims, closely identified with the *pesantren*, has suffered from the lack of attention from scholars.

Karel Steenbrink,<sup>7</sup> one of the Dutch scholars who are concerned with the research of Islamic education institutions, categorizes the Adabiyah Schools in Padang and the Muhammadiyah Schools as modern educational institutions. Its two founders, Abdullah Ahmad and Ahmad Dahlan, are called as reformers of Islamic education in Indonesia because they could combine religious subjects and secular science.

Geertz has labeled the NU as a group of “anti-modernism.”<sup>8</sup> While Benda characterizes the NU with a negative label as “contra reformism,”<sup>9</sup> Wertheim gives a negative attribute as “conservative” and “orthodox”<sup>10</sup> organization to them. Moreover, Von der Mehden wrote that the role of the traditional organization was closely related to stereotypes and biases. He stated, “The influence of Nahdlatul Ulama on the national movement was more negative than positive.”<sup>11</sup>

This article examines the homegrown endeavors in the most populated Muslim world to modernize Islamic education therein. It focuses on how the modernization of Islamic education comes out of efforts by the so-called traditional Muslim scholars in particular, and not by the so-called modernist ones, in reforming Islamic education. As a locus of analysis, it deals comparatively with two largest Muslim populations, one in South Asia and another in Southeast Asia. The former is represented by India with Darul Ulum Deoband as a subject

<sup>7</sup> Karel Steenbrink, *Pesantren, Madrasah dan Sekolah: Pendidikan Islam dalam Kurun Modern* (Jakarta, LP3ES, 1986).

<sup>8</sup> Clifford Geertz, “The Javanese Kijaji: the Changing Role of a Cultural Broker,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 2: 228-249; Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Illinois: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1960).

<sup>9</sup> Harry J. Benda, *The Crescent and the Rising Sun: Indonesian Islam under the Japanese Occupation 1942-1945* (The Hague: W. van Hoeve, 1983).

<sup>10</sup> W. F. Wertheim, *Indonesia Society in Transition: A Study of Social Change* (The Hague: W. van Hoeve, 1966).

<sup>11</sup> Fred R. Von der Mehden, *Religion and Nationalism in Southeast Asia: Burma, Indonesia and the Philippines* (Madison: the University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 138 and 202.

of analysis, and the latter is by Indonesia with the *pesantren* Tebuireng as the case.

### **Modernization of Islamic Education in South Asia**

The renewal of Islamic education in India cannot be separated from the role of Ahmad Khan. He was born in 1817 to a Sayyid family (Arab descendant) who had good relations with the authorities at that time. He pursued his education in traditional institutions in the city of Delhi. He was sent to study under the guidance of Shah Ghulam Ali and Shah Abd al-Aziz.<sup>12</sup> He studied not only religious sciences, such as Arabic, the Qur'an and Hadith, but also Persian, Urdu, mathematics and logic. In the afternoon and evening, his mother brushed up on the lessons he had learned. Having studied various disciplines, Ahmad Khan also explored poems from two famous Urdu poets, namely Mirza Asad Allah Khan Ghalib and Shaykh Ibrahim Zauq.<sup>13</sup> Those two figures colored the poetry later compiled by Ahmad Khan himself. Smith said that "From this point until the Mutiny, his only activity of note was literary; he wrote copiously. He was closely in touch with treatises of medieval sciences, which shows that he had not yet come under the influence of modern culture..."<sup>14</sup>

Stepping on adulthood, Ahmad Khan decided to join the British Colonial to become a clerk (*saristhadar*). His career continued to progress until he was promoted as a *munsif* (low-level judge) at Mainpuri and later at Bijnor in 1857, where there was a very strong Muslim resistance movement against the British colonials known as the Mutiny event. When the Mutiny incident occurred, Ahmad Khan's position was clearly on the British side, and he even refused the resistance. This standing then strengthened the British belief in Ahmad Khan that he was a trustworthy person. After the incident, Ahmad Khan became a good mediator for the British colonial and the Muslims.

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<sup>12</sup> Shah Ghulam Ali was a figure of the Naqshabandi Order and Syah Abd al-Aziz was a well-known *'ulama'* in Delhi. Ruswan Thoyib, "*Kolonialisme dan Pembaharuan Pendidikan Islam di India dan Indonesia*," 251.

<sup>13</sup> Ruswan Thoyib, "*Kolonialisme dan Pembaharuan Pendidikan Islam di India dan Indonesia*," 251.

<sup>14</sup> Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Modern Islam in India: A Social Analysis* (Lahore: Ripon Printing Press, 1943), 7.

Ahmad Khan wrote a book called *Asbab-i Baghawat-i Hind* explaining the reasons for the uprising of the Muslims against the British East India Company in 1957. The book states that the resistance was not planned by Indian Muslims, because it only occurred sporadically so that Indian Muslims are not responsible for the uprising.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, Ahmad Khan also tried persuading Indian Muslims to learn about art and science. He believed that Indian Muslims can receive and learn from the western sciences so that Indian Muslims could keep up with the advancement of science of the West.

The idea of Islamic education renewal in India increasingly developed after Ahmad Khan had the opportunity to directly observe civilization in England and visited several educational institutions there, such as Oxford and Cambridge University. He was very surprised with the English civilization. He arrived in London in 1869 and spent seventeen months there. He wrote a letter which stated that the natives of India, high and low, merchants and petty shopkeepers, educated and illiterate, looked like dirty animals compared to the noble and handsome English in term of education, manners, and uprightness.<sup>16</sup>

Upon returning from Britain in 1871, Ahmad Khan began to spread his idea of renewal to Indian Muslims by establishing “Muslim College” where western culture could be disseminated directly along with the Islamic religion through the western model.<sup>17</sup> It took at least five years of effort needed so that Ahmad Khan was finally able to establish Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College (MAOC) in Aligarh on January 8, 1877. Ahmad Khan felt very happy and honestly confessed

<sup>15</sup> Smith states, “He (Akhmad Khan) wanted to erase the conviction that the Muslims were primarily responsible for the Mutiny, and considered to be disloyal; he thought that it could lead to such a colossal blunder as anti-Britishness. Smith, *Modern Islam in India: A Social Analysis*, 8. Read also Hali, Altaf Husain, *Hayat-i-Javed* translated into English by K.Qadiri dan David J. Mathew (Delhi: Idarah-i dabiyat-i Delhi, 1979), 61-62.

<sup>16</sup> Smith, *Modern Islam in India: A Social Analysis*, 9. Rusman Thoyib translates the text as follows: “Native Indians, both high and low, both wholesalers and shopkeepers, both educated and illiterate when compared to the British in the fields of education, behavior and politeness, look like a dirty animal compared to a man who is manly and capable. Ruswan Thoyib, “*Kolonialisme dan Pembaharuan Pendidikan Islam di India dan Indonesia*,” 258.

<sup>17</sup> Smith, *Modern Islam in India: A Social Analysis*, 10.

in his remarks that the college laying its foundation today and for many years to come has become the dream of his life.<sup>18</sup>

There are several changes to renew Islamic education undertaken by Ahmad Khan among Indian Muslims. First, the institutional model has fully adopted the western system used by Oxford and Cambridge University, including its managers and instructors, which must be the English. Smith stated, "The college was pro-British through and through. It was deliberately modelled after Oxford and Cambridge while the principal and many members of the staff were to be Englishmen."<sup>19</sup>

The second change is related to the curriculum. MAOC adopted the curriculum of western universities with additional Islamic religious subjects. The main language used in the learning process is English while Arabic and Urdu become the second languages. Faculties opened at MAOC include politics, economics, philosophy, history, mathematics, physics, and chemistry.

Ahmad Khan also provided a portion of Islamic religious subject in MAOC as a means to create a good personality. Among religious subjects, the Qur'an interpretation was taught with a rational approach to the 19th century although it only took a small portion. Besides, a dormitory for students was built to prepare and spread the teachings of Islam. In general, it can be concluded that with the establishment of MAOC, Ahmad Khan wanted Indian Muslims not to be left behind from other nations, especially the West in mastering general sciences without abandoning Islamic teachings. Ahmad Khan wants Indian Muslims to be admired not because of their mere religious diversity, but because of their mastery of knowledge, wisdom and moral progress.<sup>20</sup>

### **Modernization of Islamic Education in Southeast Asia**

The renewal of Islamic education in Indonesia has always been identified with the reformer of Islamic teachings. Ahmad Dahlan as the founder of Muhammadiyah is considered the central figure in the

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<sup>18</sup> Muhammad, *Sir Syed Ahmad Khan*, 123 dalam Ruswan Thoyib, "Kolonialisme dan Pembaharuan Pendidikan Islam di India dan Indonesia," 259.

<sup>19</sup> Smith, *Modern Islam in India: A Social Analysis*, 11-12.

<sup>20</sup> Hafeedz Malik, *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muslim Modernization in India and Pakistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 106; Ruswan Thoyib, *Kolonialisme dan Pembaharuan Pendidikan Islam di India dan Indonesia*, 269.

renewal of Indonesian Islamic education. In addition, there was also another reformer of Indonesian Islamic education, namely Abdullah Ahmad, the founder of the Adabiyah School in Padang.

Ahmad Dahlan had two views of the importance of education as a means to form personality and to provide knowledge and skills for students in accordance with the context of the era. In other words, Ahmad Dahlan inspired his student to be a person of “*Kjai sing Kemajuan*”<sup>21</sup> meaning that students with sufficient religious knowledge and competency as well as general science. Ahmad Dahlan's ideas were written and published in *al-Munir*:

*Don't be like our parents  
Demanding one single knowledge  
Fiqih is the only favorable one  
They do not consider other knowledge  
It sounds like European accent  
The faster you learn, the better you will be  
Read books while you can  
You can gain lots of knowledge*<sup>22</sup>

Ahmad Dahlan's thoughts have come into existence as a response to Islamic education which was still carried out with old concepts and did not want to adopt new things as schools were managed by the Dutch.<sup>23</sup> This view later inspired Ahmad Dahlan to reform education by establishing a madrasah.

The school pioneered by Ahmad Dahlan was a madrasah with a basic level or *ibtidaiyah*. The madrasah initially occupied a 2.5 x 6-meter living room.<sup>24</sup> He applied the schooling system using benches,

<sup>21</sup> Hery Sucipto, *K.H. Ahmad Dahlan Sang Pencerah, Pendidik dan Pendiri Muhammadiyah* (Jakarta: Best Media Utama, 2010), 118. See also Muh. Saerozi, *Pembaruan Pendidikan Islam: Studi Historis Indonesia dan Malaysia 1900-1942* (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 2013), 66.

<sup>22</sup> Amir Hamzah Wirjosukarto, *Pembaruan Pendidikan Islam*, 66. See also Mahmud Yunus, *Sejarah Pendidikan Islam* (Jakarta: Mustaka Mahumudah, 1980), 82. The original version says: *Jangan seperti orang tua kita; Menuntut ilmu suatu mata; Fiqih saja yang lebih dicinta; Kepada yang lain matanya buta; Logat Eropah tiga dan empat; Hendak pelajari segera cepat; Membaca buku supaya sempat; Ilmu pengetahuan banyak didapat.*

<sup>23</sup> Ruswan Thoyib, “*Kolonialisme dan Pembaharuan Pendidikan Islam di India dan Indonesia*,” 254-255.

<sup>24</sup> Some argued that Ahmad Dahlan established the initial madrasah in 1911. However, some believed that the madrasah was initiated since 1908-1909. See Ruswan Thoyib, “*Kolonialisme dan Pembaharuan Pendidikan Islam di India dan Indonesia*,” 261. Compare to

blackboards and chairs. The schooling system was adopted from the Dutch education system which was rarely implemented in the Islamic education system among Indonesian *pesantren*. The curriculum covered not only religious knowledge, but also general sciences, such as reading and writing Latin letters, arithmetic, natural science and drawing.<sup>25</sup> Ahmad Dahlan taught not only religious subjects along with his colleague Kholil, a member of Budi Utomo and instructor at a Dutch school, but general science as well.<sup>26</sup> This madrasah was recognized as the first school in Yogyakarta to teach religion and general science together.

The new system of education in madrasah attracted people around Jogjakarta to send their children to madrasah. To fulfill this demand, the madrasah branch was opened in Karangajen (1913), in Lempuyangan (1915) and in Pasargedede (1916). Until 1920, the number of students attending the school reached 787 students with around 32 teachers.<sup>27</sup> Since 1921, the Dutch Colonial Government had allowed Ahmad Dahlan to open branches outside Jogjakarta and to develop Muhammadiyah schools in various regions in Indonesia.

Aside from Ahmad Dahlan with the Muhammadiyah schools, in Minangkabau, one of Indonesian Islamic education reformers, Abdullah Ahmad<sup>28</sup> also established the Adabiyah school in Padang Panjang in 1907. After studying in his hometown, he continued his studies in Mecca while performing pilgrimage. He studied under

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Muh. Saerozi, *Pembaruan Pendidikan Islam: Studi Historis Indonesia dan Malaysia 1900-1942*, 123.

<sup>25</sup> Hery Sucipto, K.H. Ahmad Dahlan Sang Pencerah, *Pendidik dan Pendiri Muhammadiyah*, 118-120.

<sup>26</sup> Badan Penelitian dan Pengembangan Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, *“Sejarah Pendidikan Swasta di Indonesia (Pendidikan Muhammadiyah)”* (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1976), 54.

<sup>27</sup> Ruswan Thoyyib, *“Colonial Experience and Muslim Educational Reforms: A Comparison of the Aligarh and Muhammadiyah Movements”* (Montreal: McGill University, Unpublished Thesis, 1997), 77.

<sup>28</sup> Abdullah Ahmad was born in Padang Panjang in 1878. His father was a famous *‘ulama’* named Haji Ahmad. At the age of 17, he went to Mecca to go on a pilgrimage and study. In 1899, he returned to Padang Panjang and participated in spreading the updates of Islamic teachings by becoming an agent for the renewal magazine after studying for 4 years in Mecca. Deliar Noer, *Gerakan Moderen Islam di Indonesia* (Jakarta, LP3ES, 1996), 46. Read also Abuddin Nata, *Tokoh-Tokoh Pembaruan Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Raja Grafindo Persada, 2005), 10-12

Shaykh Achmad Khatib while in Mecca. After coming home from Mecca, he joined as a group member of "Kaum Muda" (Young People)<sup>29</sup> which proposed the Qur'an and aSunnah as the sole sources of Islam. He also opposed the teachings of the Naqshabandiyah sufi order which developed rapidly in Minangkabau<sup>30</sup> Abdullah Ahmad founded the Adabiyah school in Padang.<sup>31</sup> The establishment of the school, according to some scholars, was a historical event of Islamic education renewal in Indonesia.<sup>32</sup> This was because the schools implemented a schooling system and method, containing both religious and general material that were different from existing Islamic educational institutions, and used professional staffs in madrasah and classroom management.

In organizing the education system, classes in the Adabiyah School were equipped with benches, desks and blackboards. This establishment was motivated by the unfair access to the Dutch-owned schools for lay Indonesians. Assisted by local Muslim traders, Abdullah Ahmad established a school by adopting the Dutch system, namely the schooling system. The curriculum was also adopted from the Dutch School combined with a religious curriculum. Students were taught reading, writing and arithmetic in addition to religious sciences which are still maintained until now. However, the curriculum adoption was implemented after getting the permission from Dutch teachers so that they could provide the same subjects at the Adabiyah School as well. There were 4 Dutch teachers and 2 Indonesian teachers who have teaching competencies at the HIS (Hollandsch-Inlandsche School, Dutch school for natives) level. This was certainly beneficial for the school. There were two visible benefits from this circumstance. First, the quality of Adabiyah School graduates can be equated with the competency of a Dutch school. This was the first recognition by the

<sup>29</sup> Regarding the movements of "Kaum Muda" read Azyumardi Azra, "The Surau and the Early Reform Movements in Minangkabau," *Mizan* 3, 2 (1990), 64-85.

<sup>30</sup> Karel A. Steenbrink, *Pesantren, Madrasah, Sekolah: Pendidikan Islam dalam Kurun Moderen* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1986), 37-38

<sup>31</sup> Before establishing the Adabiya school in Padang, Abdullah Ahmad had actually pioneered the Adabiyah school in Padang Panjang, but received a fierce opposition from the ulemas due to the adoption of the Dutch system in the school he founded. Karel A. Steenbrink, *Pesantren, Madrasah, Sekolah*, 41.

<sup>32</sup> Karel A. Steenbrink, *Pesantren, Madrasah, Sekolah*, 37-40; Read also Abuddin Nata, *Tokob-Tokoh Pembaruan Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia*, 18.

Dutch government for school established by Islamic organizations. The second advantage was that the Adabiyah School could receive a subsidy from the Dutch government because it had been recognized by the Dutch government.<sup>33</sup>

Having explored the account of modernist Muslims education, it should be also born in mind that Muslims traditional education also underwent tremendous transformation. In this regard, two education institutions are highlighted; Darul Ulum Deoband in India and Tebuireng in Indonesia.

### **Traditionalist Muslim Scholars As A key Factor**

The background to the founding of Darul Ulum Deoband and the *Pesantren* Tebuireng is slightly different although the functions and roles played by the two traditional Islamic Education institutions are almost identical to each other. The establishment of Darul Ulum Deoband was a transfer of strategy against the British colonialization. The background was the failure of Muslim resistance led by traditional *'ulama'* in the 1957 uprising which was thwarted by the British colonial government. This condition inspired Muslim leaders, especially from traditional circles, to change their strategy from direct armed contact to "discourse" contact with pens.

In addition to the transfer of strategy, the establishment of Darul Ulum Deoband cannot be separated from efforts to transform religious sciences and preservation of Islamic values that began to disappear as a result of the influence of the invaders through education leading to the Christianization of the Indian people. Thus, the main objective of the establishment of the Darul Ulum Deoband was not only to teach religious disciplines, but also as an instrument of the struggle against the invaders and the British in order to fortify Muslims from the process of Christianization carried out by the missionaries.

On the other side, the establishment of *pesantren* in the beginning was more associated with the spread of Islam. The transmission of knowledge, especially the teachings of Islam is carried out through the Qur'an recitation instruction and *pesantren*. However, in its development especially with the increasing pressure of the invaders, the *pesantren* became not only a place for studying religious knowledge, but also a cultural bulwark in order to protect cultural values from

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<sup>33</sup> Karel A. Steenbrink, *Pesantren, Madrasah, Sekolah*, 39-40.

foreign (Western) cultural influences that were considered not in line with the values of Islamic teachings, and the center of resistance Muslims against invaders: the Dutch and Japanese.

Darul Ulum Deoband and the *Pesantren* Tebuireng are advanced educational institutions intended for students who have completed their studies at the level of the Qur'ān. Still, Darul Ulum Deoband facilitates students to study the Qur'ān before entering a higher level. Whereas at the Tebuireng Islamic Boarding School, it usually receives students who have completed the basic competence of the Qur'ān recitation which is usually carried out in mosques, *langgar* (prayer rooms) or even in the cleric's houses or students themselves.

Regarding the education system, Darul Ulum Deoband seems to be better at organizing than the Tebuireng Islamic Boarding School. The level system applied at Darul Ulum Deoband from grade 1 to grade 6 has a clear gap whether a student has completed his studies. Likewise, a curriculum emphasizing more on Ḥadīth and *fiqh* that is affiliated with the Hanafi School of thought.<sup>34</sup> This will facilitate students in planning their study well.

The conditions in Darul Ulum Deoband are slightly different from those in the Tebuireng boarding school. In Tebuireng, the education system is not as detailed as the learning level in Darul Ulum, but in Tebuireng the caregivers have classified special students who have above average abilities. This level of difference has consequences for class differences and learning methods. The general *santri* (Islamic students) will usually study with the traditional system of the school, namely *sorogan* and *wetonan*. However, the students with abilities above the average are usually taught directly by K.H. Hasyim Ash'ari, the main cleric of Tebuireng *pesantren*, and the methods are usually used for deliberation and discussion.<sup>35</sup>

Although there are classifications in grading in accordance with students' abilities, students do not know exactly when they are considered to have completed their studies in Tebuireng. *Kitab Kuning*

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<sup>34</sup> Ziya-ul Hasan Faruqi, *The Deoband School and the Demand for Pakistan* (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1963), 25.

<sup>35</sup> As explained above, students who directly learn under the guidance of Hasyim Asy'ari using the deliberation method are Abbas Buntet of Cirebon, Manaf Abdul Karim Lirboyo of Kediri, and As'ad Syamsul Arifin of Asembagus Situbondo. Zamakhsyari Dhofier, "The Pesantren Tradition, a Study of the Role of the Kyai," 18.

(books in Arabic script used in *pesantren*)<sup>36</sup> taught in the *pesantren* depends on the expertise of the *'ulamā'* so that if students were deemed to complete the book and be ready to receive a diploma (*ijazah*), they would then be permitted to continue wandering his knowledge to other learning institutions with different competency. However, since there is no fixed curriculum related to learning, the period of study in a *pesantren* is uncertain. *Santri* can stay in the *pesantren* as long as they like; a number of weeks, months, even years or decades. Even though *santri* has finished studying a certain book, they will not dare to leave the *pesantren* as they have not received any permission from the *Kyai* (Islamic cleric).

The *madrasah* system, introduced and implemented by Wahid Hasyim, the son of Hasyim Asy'ari, is a new breakthrough that further clarifies the curriculum and the duration of study for students in the *pesantren* of Tebuireng. With this new schooling system *santri* can predict when their study will come to an end. In fact, the idea of renewal was presented by Wahid Hasyim to his father, Hasyim Asy'ari. He suggested that a special *kitab kuning* would be taught for talented students and are projected to become *'ulamā'*. Meanwhile, average students only learn religious knowledge from Indonesian language books.

Thus, although Darul Ulum Deoband and *Pesantren* Tebuireng are considered traditional institutions, they have implemented a schooling system for the learning process. In addition, they have adopted the modern method from schools managed by modernist Muslims as well as schools managed by the Dutch. The method makes students not only listen actively, but also get involved in the learning process. Students must read the book or chapter they will study before entering the class so that they can participate in the learning process enthusiastically.

Likewise, the curriculum at Darul Ulum Deoband and *Pesantren* Tebuireng, have both adopted many general sciences. At Darul Ulum Deoband, scientific subjects have become an integral part of the curriculum that students must learn. *Pesantren* Tebuireng has students who study Ḥadīth with Hasyim Asy'ari which then becomes the first

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<sup>36</sup> The curriculum is more affiliated with the Ash'ari in the field of theology, fiqh of shafi'iyah and the teachings of Sufism of al-Ghazali. In more details, see Martin van Bruinessen. *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat* (Bandung: Mizan, 1995).

among Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia to do so. Moreover, Madrasah Nizamiyah of pesantren Tebuireng has adopted a curriculum implemented by the Dutch and those who are attributed as reformers of Indonesian Islamic Education. In Nizamiyah, students learned arithmetic, Indonesian, English, singing songs, geography, history and how to organize and manage a library with a fairly complete collection at the time. The following table summarizes the comparison between Darul Ulum Deoband and Tebuireng Islamic Boarding School.

**Table 1.** An Experience of Education Modernization at Darul Ulum Deoband and the *Pesantren* Tebuireng

Points of Comparison	Darul Ulum Deoband	<i>Pesantren</i> Tebuireng
Prominent Figures	Mawlana Muhammad Qasim Nanawtawi, Haji Imdad Allah dan Mawlana Rashid Ahmad Ganggohi ( <i>the Great Trio</i> )	Hasyim Asy'ari Wahid Hasyim
Year of Establishment and location	1867 in Deoband, Uttah Pradesh, India	1899 in Teburieng, Jombang Indonesia
Background	Frustrated from the defeat of the Mutiny war and wishing to arouse the enthusiasm of Indian Muslims through educational institutions as well as political tools against the British	Spread religion through <i>pesantren</i> institutions. In its development, Tebuireng became a stronghold against foreign culture and participated in the struggle against the Dutch
Institutional Modernization	A more modern management system with the presence of Majlis-e Shoora (Consultative Council), Majlis-e A'mila (Executive council), and the existence of the Ministry of Education, Finance and Administrative.	The <i>kyai</i> as the highest authority is assisted by the teaching council ( <i>ustadz</i> ) and <i>lurah</i> ( <i>santri</i> manager).
	Elementary, middle and high and advanced (postgraduate) levels of education	Basic education level ( <i>sifir</i> ), <i>ibtidaiyah</i> , and high level
		Establishment of the Nizamiyah madrasah

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Points of Comparison	Darul Ulum Deoband	<i>Pesantren</i> Tebuireng
		institution by adopting the Dutch schooling system
	Library supported learning process	Library supported learning process
Curriculum Reform	Adoption of 3 institutions (Delhi, Lucknow and Khayrabad)	Introducing Ḥadīth learning to students
	Study period of 10 years. Updated to 6 years	Introducing reading Latin letters, arithmetic, history
	Mastery of Arabic, Farsi and general sciences such as philosophy, arithmetic, logic, etc.	Nizamīyah curriculum consists of 70% general lessons and 30% religion lessons
Modernization of Learning Method	Classical system	Classical system at Madrasah Nizamīyah
	The curriculum and methods are fixed and teachers are required to apply them in the learning process in the classroom	<i>Weton</i> and <i>bandongan</i> methods for <i>santri</i> in general. <i>Santri</i> with higher competencies specifically uses the deliberation method
	Learning evaluation system is well-established	

From the table above, it can be argued that in the context of Islamic education reform in India dan Indonesia, the role of traditional *‘ulamā’* from Darul Ulum Deoband and the *Pesantren* Tebuireng are identical with the reformers of Islamic Education, Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College (MAOC) or better known as Aligarh in India and Muhammadiyah in Indonesia. Ahmad Khan, the founding father of Aligarh, fully adopted the British colonial system used by the University of Cambridge and Oxford, he therefore recruited British persons to be the manager and teaching staffs.<sup>37</sup> The learning system used schooling system by opening general majors, such as economics, politics, mathematics, physics, chemistry and others with English language instruction. In Aligarh, religious learning is accommodated in

<sup>37</sup> Smith states that “*The College was pro-British through and through. It was deliberately modelled after Oxford and Cambridge, .....and the principal and many members of the staff were to be Englishmen.*” Smith, *Modern Islam in India: A Social Analysis*, 11-12.

the curriculum of each department as a medium to manifest good behavior among students.<sup>38</sup>

The education system in Darul Ulum initiated by Mawlana Nanawtawi and his colleagues is identical to Aligarh, which has attempted to adopt general subjects in the Darul Ulum Deoband curriculum with different portions. As a transforming institution of Islamic sciences, the Deoband emphasizes the study of religious sciences, especially Ḥadīth knowledge. Nevertheless, the founders of Darul Ulum Deoband took into account the importance of teaching scientific disciplines in the structure of Deoband curriculum. There are several non-religious disciplines adopted by Darul Ulum such as arithmetic, astronomy, medicine, logic, economics, botany, basic chemistry, physics and philosophy.<sup>39</sup> This shows that the founding scholars of Deoband were quite advanced in understanding and accepting any changes that occurred in India as the needs of the Muslims to deal with the existing challenges, as was his colleague from the reformer, Aligarh.

Related to the language of instruction, Ahmad Khan requires English as the language of instruction.<sup>40</sup> English is required for teachers and the administrative staffs. This contrasts with the founder of Deoband who uses Urdu, the official language of India, as a language of instruction.<sup>41</sup> This can be understood in the context of the establishment of Darul Ulum Deoband which was the failure of 1957 uprising. The reluctance from using English as a language of instruction represents their resistance against the British colonialism of India.

The schooling system in Aligarh as a form of total adoption of the British system was also applied by the founders of Darul Ulum Deoband. In Darul Ulum, learning is classroom-based with grading system and curriculum as well as the examination carried out by a committee. The new system adopted by the founders was certainly

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<sup>38</sup> Hafeedz Malik, *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muslim Modernization in India and Pakistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 106.

<sup>39</sup> M.S. Jain, *The Aligarh Movement: Its Origin and Development, 1858-1906*. (Agra: Sri Ram Mehra, 1965), 42-58. Read also Ruswan Thoyib, "Kolonialsime dan Pembaharuan Pendidikan Islam di India dan Indonesia," 259-260.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Barbara D. Metcalf, "Deobanis," dalam John L. Esposito, *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of the Modern Islamic World* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 362.

different from the system applied by several institutions before the existence of Darul Ulum Deoband which emphasized the *halaqah* system or surrounding the *'ulama'* at the center.<sup>42</sup>

Some educational updates carried out by Hasyim Asy'ari and his son Wahid Hasyim at Tebuireng Islamic Boarding School are quite similar to the educational reform carried out by Ahmad Dahlan with the establishment of a Muhammadiyah school.<sup>43</sup> Ideally, figures from Tebuireng and Muhammadiyah were equally willing to receive educational reforms by adopting more advanced education systems, including from the Dutch system. This indicates that both Muhammadiyah as a reformist institution and Tebuireng as its traditional counterpart are willing to implement an education system that combines religious disciplines and scientific disciplines which include arithmetic, Indonesian, English, geography, history and so on.

In addition to the adoption of a schooling system and curriculum with integrated sciences, both Madrasah Nizamiyah of Tebuireng *Pesantren* and Muhammadiyah School also provide a more certain duration for students to graduate and to proceed to further levels of education.<sup>44</sup> The similar transformation conducted by scholars at Tebuireng is actually sufficient evidence that they have equal position with modernist figures, who are always identified as the reformers of Indonesian Islamic Education, especially Ahmad Dahlan.

### **From Traditionalist Background to Educational Reform: A Comparative Analysis**

Educational reform is essentially originated from Islamic modernism. As Rahman puts it, Muslims underwent severe challenges especially in its social institutions, namely personal status and position of women. He further asserts that this modern challenge was also directed to “purely intellectual proportions,” because no social change could be executed without transforming its underlying thought of Islamic ethic.<sup>45</sup> As Islamic pre-modern reform had asserted, the recipe for this effort is the reinstatement of *ijtihad* and the rejection of

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<sup>42</sup> Sayyid Mahboob Rizvi, *History of The Dar al-Ulum Deoband*, vol. 2 (Ahmedabad: Sahiya Mudranalaya, 1980), 223.

<sup>43</sup> Achmad Zaini, “Perbandingan Peran Ulama Darul Ulum Deoband India dan Ulama Pesantren Tebuireng Indonesia”: 219-220.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>45</sup> Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), 214-215

medieval authorities, namely *madhhab* (school of law) and *ṭarīqah* (Sufi order). As a result, this effort also involved purification from what was considered not Islamic.

Some Muslim modernists like Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Ahmad Khan and Muhammad Abduh all insisted that modernism agenda should involve education reform. Al-Afghani, for instance, urged for the cultivation of philosophical and scientific disciplines by expanding the curricula of education. In similar vein, Ahmad Khan and Muhammad Abduh argued that Muslims should also leave uncritical observance to past authority.<sup>46</sup> Ahmad Khan further asserted that Muslims should embrace science to survive, because Islam is the only religion compatible with reason.<sup>47</sup> This rational statement should be spread through education because Islamic education is not only about religious disciplines, but also scientific disciplines as well.

In contrast to modernist figures explained above, the two traditionalist institutions this article focuses on are unique in this respect. In a sense, they had undergone some sort of reform but not as exhaustive as their modernist counterparts. The *ʿulamāʾ* who founded Dar al-Ulum Deoband as well as Tebuireng *pesantren* were influenced by pre-modern reform. While Dar al-Ulum Deoband founders were heavily influenced by Shah Wali Allah al-Dahlawi reformist thoughts, Hasyim Asy'ari of Tebuireng *pesantren* got inspiration for reforms from his teachers in the *Haramayn* (Mecca and Medina). The two institutions seemed to detach themselves from unorthodox *ṭarīqah*. Admittedly, some founder and principals of Darul Ulum Deoband belonged to Chistiyya order, but it did not become the salient part of Darul Ulum Deoband. In contrast, the founders of Tebuireng were not associated with any *ṭarīqah* whatsoever. In addition, they dedicated their institution in the study of Ḥadīth which newly emerged during the reform in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries CE.<sup>48</sup> This what made the two institutions stand out from the rest of traditionalist Muslims in India and Indonesia respectively that still practiced *ṭarīqah*, albeit

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<sup>46</sup> Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*, 1966, 217

<sup>47</sup> Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*, 1966, 217

<sup>48</sup> Azyumardi Azra, *The Origins of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia* (Crow's Nest: Allen Unwin, 2001), p. 33-49

unorthodox,<sup>49</sup> and accommodated local customs in the practice of Islam.<sup>50</sup>

Even though both Dar al-Ulum Deoband and Tebuireng *pesantren* embraced some sorts of reform, they still retain many aspects of traditionalism, namely commitment to *madhbab*. For Deoband, it was Hanafi school of law, and was Shafii school of law for Tebuireng. Both institutions provided the learning for Islamic jurisprudence to its highest level. The graduates of Dar al-Ulum Deoband were then entitled to become *mufti*,<sup>51</sup> whereas talented graduates of Tebuireng *pesantren* involved in *babth al-masail* which is a fatwa issuing body affiliated to the traditionalist *Nabdhiyin* (NU members).<sup>52</sup>

Despite their commitment to reform, the efforts and degrees towards it seem to be marginal. The inclusion of scientific disciplines was done only to support the core religious disciplines. This is observable from the degree of instruction of these disciplines. Nanawtani of Deoband was reported to allow limited time for studying languages and scientific disciplines so that they would not be distracted from mastering core religious disciplines. The number of scientific disciplines taught in madrasah Nizamiyah Tebuireng was up to 70% of the total time allocation, which included English, Dutch, Arithmetic, Geography, as well as other sciences and skills.

Nonetheless, the fact that the madrasah survived only about three years (1934-1937) is an indication that it was not a successful experiment. The inclusion of scientific disciplines in these two traditional institutions was intended to provide students with practical knowledge once they graduated. These disciplines were also useful for graduates if they wished to enroll in government schools and universities. Thus, the modernism does not go very far in this regard. The call of modernists that Islam is a religion of reason and that Muslims should kept up with the sciences in order to survive the penetration of the West, like the campaign of modernists was absent from the outset. Also, the call of modernists to end the obedience to medieval authority in Islamic jurisprudence (*madhbab*) and Sufism

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<sup>49</sup> Annemarie Schimmel, *Islam in India and Pakistan* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1982), 3.

<sup>50</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java*, 126-127

<sup>51</sup> Barbara Metcalf, "The Madrasa at Deoband: A Model for Religious Education in Modern India," *Modern Asian Studies* 12, 1 (1978), 111-134

<sup>52</sup> Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi Pandangan Hidup Kyai dan Visinya Mengenai Masa Depan Indonesia* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 2011), 51

(*tariqah*) received no audience. The core business of Darul Ulum of Deoband and Tebuireng *pesantren* remains education of Islamic disciplines.

### Conclusion

Based on the explanation above, the founder of Darul Ulum Deoband has the same view as the founder of the *Pesantren* Tebuireng in designing educational institutions by adopting changes or advancements to be applied in his institutions with certain levels that have been carefully thought out. On the other hand, Mawlana Nanawtawi and his colleagues at Darul Ulum Deoband and Hasyim Asy'ari and his son Wahid Hasyim at *Pesantren* Tebuireng are on par with his colleagues Ahmad Khan in India and Ahmad Dahlan in Indonesia, both of whom are known as reformers of Islamic education in both countries respectively. Similarity between them can be seen from the attitude of openness and willingness to accept changes or progress to be implemented in Darul Ulum Deoband and *Pesantren* Tebuireng as his colleague Ahmad Khan who founded the MAOC in India and Ahmad Dahlan who initiated the establishment of Muhammadiyah schools in Indonesia.

In summary, the modernism efforts that had been carried out by these two institutions of traditional Muslim scholars only address certain aspects of Islamic modernism. Both Darul Ulum Deoband and Tebuireng Islamic Boarding School did adopt basic element of schooling system, introducing several non-religious disciplines, and revising its religious curriculum to include Ḥadīth with less emphasis on *tariqah* and Sufism. Their commitment to previous authority in the area of Islamic jurisprudence is still well intact. *Ijtibād*, which is the main calling of Islamic modernism is unheard. They firmly believed that Islamic education is about the mastery of religious disciplines (the Qur'ān, Ḥadīth, and *fiqh*). Other disciplines (science, language, and practical skills) are supportive to religious disciplines. []

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