



Islamic Education Beyond Colonialism: The Development of Muhammadiyah Educational Practices in Bengkulu City Circa 1945-1965

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ABSTRAK

Kemunculan pendidikan Muhammadiyah dalam konteks masyarakat yang berada di bawah penjajahan Belanda menyoroti periode kritis dimana akses terhadap pendidikan sangat terbatas akibat kebijakan penjajahan yang represif. Studi ini meneliti upaya revitalisasi di era pasca kemerdekaan Bengkulu, dengan fokus pada dinamika dan tantangan yang dihadapi dalam mengembangkan inisiatif pendidikan Muhammadiyah. Penelitian ini menggali bagaimana organisasi Muhammadiyah menavigasi dan menangani tantangan pendidikan saat itu, memungkinkan masyarakat Kota Bengkulu untuk mengejar pendidikan berkualitas. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan historis, penelitian ini mengumpulkan data dari berbagai sumber, termasuk tokoh kunci dan referensi terkait pendidikan Muhammadiyah. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa fase awal pengembangan pendidikan Muhammadiyah ditandai dengan minimnya infrastruktur dan kekurangan tenaga pengajar, ditambah dengan integrasi lembaga pendidikan swasta dengan sekolah pemerintah karena kebijakan negara. Melalui penguatan kurikulum dan dukungan dari masyarakat serta pemerintah, baik secara moral maupun spiritual, lembaga pendidikan Muhammadiyah muncul sebagai kekuatan vital dalam memerangi buta huruf. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa pendidikan Muhammadiyah pasca-kemerdekaan memainkan peran penting dalam peningkatan intelektual masyarakat yang terpinggirkan dan upaya pengembangan organisasi Muhammadiyah. Implikasi dari penelitian ini penting untuk formulasi kebijakan pendidikan, karena upaya pendidikan Muhammadiyah secara strategis penting dalam mencapai keunggulan pendidikan.

ABSTRACT

The emergence of Muhammadiyah education in the context of a society under Dutch colonial rule highlights a critical period where access to education was severely restricted due to oppressive colonial policies. This study examines the revitalization efforts in Bengkulu's post-independence era, focusing on the dynamics and challenges encountered in developing Muhammadiyah's educational initiatives. It explores how the Muhammadiyah organization navigated and addressed the educational challenges of the time, enabling the community in Bengkulu City to pursue quality education. Employing a historical approach, this research aggregates data from various sources, including key figures and relevant references related to Muhammadiyah education. The findings reveal that the initial phase of Muhammadiyah's educational development was marked by minimal infrastructure and a shortage of teaching personnel, coupled with the integration of private educational institutions with government schools due to state policies. Through curriculum strengthening and support from the community and government, both morally and spiritually, Muhammadiyah educational institutions emerged as vital forces in combating illiteracy. This study concludes that post-independence Muhammadiyah education played a pivotal role in the intellectual upliftment of the marginalized communities and the organizational development efforts of Muhammadiyah. The implications of this research are significant for the formulation of educational policies, as Muhammadiyah's educational endeavors are strategically important in achieving excellence in education.

KATA KUNCI

Muhammadiyah Bengkulu ; buta huruf ; integrasi lembaga ; al-Islam dan Kemuhammadiyah, Pasca Penjajahan

KEYWORDS

Muhammadiyah Bengkulu; illiterate; institutional integration; al-Islam and Muhammadiyah, Post-Colonization

A. Introduction

Muhammadiyah, an Islamic organization established on November 18, 1912, in Kauman Village, Yogyakarta, by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan, has played a pivotal role in the educational development of Indonesia through its distinct approach towards da'wah. This initiative is characterized by an emphasis on renewal (tajdid) and innovation, distinguishing it from other organizations. The historical trajectory of Muhammadiyah's educational institutions is marked by resilience in the face of challenges, significantly shaped by the dedication of key Muhammadiyah figures towards the advancement of its educational mission.

The founding of Muhammadiyah occurred against the backdrop of Dutch colonial rule, a period during which the political, economic, social, and cultural plight of Muslims in Indonesia was dire.¹ The religious practices of Muslims were hindered by prevalent shirk (polytheism) and bid'ah (innovation in religious matters), impeding their ability to adhere fully to the teachings of the Quran and Hadith. The Islamic education available at the time was insufficient, lagging in its capacity to meet the community's need for religious knowledge due to limited access and an antiquated approach, thereby falling behind in the march towards civilization.²

K.H. Ahmad Dahlan envisioned Muhammadiyah education as a means to address these deficiencies, empowering the community to manage its educational needs autonomously, free from colonial influence. The establishment of Muhammadiyah educational institutions was conceived as an act of charity and a strategic measure towards realizing the organization's ideals. This initiative aimed at enhancing individual competencies in science and knowledge for the betterment of society and the nation, envisioning education as a tool for human development.³ At a time when access to Islamic education was restricted and the community faced criticism and oppression, K.H. Ahmad Dahlan's reformist ideas laid the foundation for a distinct educational system for Muslims.⁴

The journey of implementing these educational reforms was fraught with challenges and opposition from various quarters, including traditional educational establishments and the community itself. Yet, K.H. Ahmad Dahlan's response was marked by wisdom and perseverance, continuously striving towards addressing more complex societal issues through the lens of renewal. Recognizing education as a strategic tool for societal enhancement and adaptability to change, the organization

¹ I. W. Harits et al., "Indonesia Education Today: Dating Back Its History of Islam and Imparting European Education System," *Asian Social Science* 12, no. 5 (2016), <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ass.v12n5p179>; A. Suwignyo, "The Great Depression and the Changing Trajectory of Public Education Policy in Indonesia, 1930-42," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 44, no. 3 (2013), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0022463413000337>.

² Rais, Amin, Ma'arif, Syafi'i, dkk, *Dinamika Pemikiran Islam dan Muhammadiyah (Alamanak Muhammadiyah Tahun 1997M/1417)*, (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar Offset, 1996), 16.

³ Tasman Hamami, "Membangkitkan Kembali Ruh Pendidikan Muhammadiyah," *Tajdidikasi: Jurnal Penelitian dan Kajian Pendidikan*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2009, 1–24.

⁴ Mar'ati Zarro, "Muhammadiyah Sebagai Gerakan Islam dan Pendidikan," *FACTUM: Jurnal Sejarah dan Pendidikan Sejarah*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2020, 61–66.

placed significant emphasis on education as a core component of its mission.⁵ The objectives of Muhammadiyah, formalized between 1921 and 1971, underscore its identity as an educational movement, advocating for a holistic and integrative approach to education that transcends dichotomous divisions and contributes to societal development and progress.⁶

The advent of Muhammadiyah and its reformist agenda heralded a new era in Indonesia, notably in Bengkulu, a region previously resistant to external influences. The introduction of Muhammadiyah's educational initiatives brought transformative changes to traditional and indigenous communities, despite initial resistance. This narrative highlights Muhammadiyah's instrumental role in redefining the educational landscape of Indonesia, fostering an environment conducive to learning and development amidst the challenges of its time.⁷

The aftermath of Indonesia's independence introduced a period of instability that significantly impacted the evolution of Muhammadiyah's educational efforts in Bengkulu. The lingering effects of colonial rule left many educational institutions struggling to survive, exacerbated by a dearth of educational personnel due to ongoing military aggression and a consequent career shift among many educators. Amidst these challenges, the government, alongside Muhammadiyah and other organizations, embarked on a mission to revitalize education in response to widespread illiteracy—a vestige of colonial domination. This study aims to delve into the post-independence dynamics of Muhammadiyah's educational initiatives, offering insights into the historical context and resilience of the Muhammadiyah organization in establishing and enhancing its educational institutions. Muhammadiyah's educational endeavors have made substantial contributions to the advancement of education, infusing Islamic and Muhammadiyah principles, with a paramount goal of fostering the development of Muhammadiyah education and amplifying the participation of Muhammadiyah members in global civilization through Islamic, Indonesian, scientific, linguistic, and vocational excellence. This research carries implications for the formulation of educational policies, underscoring the strategic significance of Muhammadiyah's educational programs in the realm of Islamic education during the critical post-colonial period of 1945–1965 in Bengkulu.

Notwithstanding the current advancements in education, historical examinations of Muhammadiyah's educational initiatives in Bengkulu remain scant, with existing studies offering only a superficial overview of Muhammadiyah's role in education and da'wah, and lacking a historical perspective on its educational institutions. This oversight underscores the necessity of investigating the history of Muhammadiyah's educational efforts to preserve historical sources from the ravages of time and change. It is anticipated that this research will address the gap in historical understanding of

⁵ Dhian Wahana Putra, "Konsep Pendidikan Islam Dalam Perspektif Kiai Haji Ahmad Dahlan," *Jurnal TARLIM* 1, no. 2, 2018, 99–107.

⁶ Syamsul Huda, dkk., "Muhammadiyah Sebagai Gerakan Pendidikan," *TARLIM: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 2, no. 2 September 2.019, 163–73.

⁷ A. Rahman, "Islamic Local Awakening: Study of Muhammadiyah Renewal as the Rise of Islamic Education Identity in South Sumatera," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 5, no. 1 (2019), <http://dx.doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v5i1.4039>.

Muhammadiyah's educational contributions, particularly in Bengkulu, thereby enriching the historiography of Islamic education in Indonesia.

This study adopts a historical research methodology, leveraging both written and oral sources to construct a comprehensive narrative on the development of Muhammadiyah education in Bengkulu. Written sources encompass a diverse array of materials including school founding documents, academic journals, books, newspapers, and records of meetings. Oral sources, on the other hand, are derived from interviews and accounts provided by individuals who have either directly participated in or possess indirect knowledge of the history of Muhammadiyah's educational efforts in the region. The data collection process employs heuristic methods, involving the identification, handling, classification, and meticulous documentation of data.⁸ This is followed by a rigorous source verification process, aimed at ascertaining the authenticity, reliability, and validity of the information gathered. The culmination of this process is a detailed historical analysis, which seeks to offer a nuanced understanding of Muhammadiyah's educational trajectory in Bengkulu. Through this methodological framework, the research aims to contribute valuable insights into the historical dimensions of Muhammadiyah's educational endeavors, enriching the academic discourse on Islamic education in Indonesia.

B. Muhammadiyah Education

Muhammadiyah education emerged as a pivotal reform initiated by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan, aimed at emancipating the indigenous population from the shackles of religious oppression, ignorance, and the tyranny of Dutch colonialism. Recognizing the urgent need to address the malaises afflicting Indonesian society, including religious deviations such as superstition, heresy, and unfounded beliefs (khurafat), Ahmad Dahlan sought to revolutionize the existing paradigm. The educational landscape at the time was markedly exclusive, dominated by the children of nobles and priyayi, under the strict oversight of the Dutch government, leaving indigenous Muslim communities without a specialized learning system. Traditional Islamic boarding schools (pesantrens) were the only avenue for education available to the native population, characterized by their rudimentary facilities and learning methodologies.⁹ For indigenous women, educational opportunities were even more constrained, tailored solely towards preparing them for domestic roles.¹⁰

Ahmad Dahlan's visionary approach heralded a significant shift towards the purification and rejuvenation of Islamic teachings. Muhammadiyah education thus represents an integrated

⁸ Dudung Abdurrahman, *Metode Penelitian Sejarah*, ed. Aziz Safa, 1st ed. (Yogyakarta: Ar-Ruzz Media, 2007).

⁹ Muhammad Arif Syaifuddin, dkk., "Sejarah Sosial Pendidikan Islam Modern Di Muhammadiyah," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2019, 1–9. T. Suharto, "Ma'had Ittihād Al-Islām (Persis) 1984-1996 Wa Al-Ta'lim Al-Qā'im 'Alā Da'āmah Al-Mujtama'," *Studia Islamika* 11, no. 1 (2004), <http://dx.doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v11i1.611>.

¹⁰ Nurhadi M. Munasir, *Dinamika Pemikiran Islam Dan Muhammadiyah* (Yogyakarta: PP Muhammadiyah, 1997). S. S. Rahman, "Aisyyah and the Marriage Issue During the 1928 Indonesian Women's Congress," in *Dissecting History and Problematizing the Past in Indonesia* (2021).

educational model, seamlessly blending general and Islamic education—a hallmark of the organization's pedagogical strategy. This integration extended to the inclusion of Muhammadiyah's values, Islamic teachings, and Arabic language within the curriculum, embodying Ahmad Dahlan's conception of a holistic Islamic education system. His philosophy emphasized intellectual and religious development, advocating for a balanced mastery of both general knowledge and religious studies, the integration of Islamic and general curricula, and the adoption of contemporary educational methodologies prevalent in colonial schools at the time.¹¹

Contrary to the prevailing binary of traditional Islamic education through pesantrens and secular education managed by the Dutch East Indies Colonial administration, K.H. Ahmad Dahlan's Muhammadiyah education system refused to conform to either model. Instead, he innovated by merging aspects of both the Islamic boarding school and Dutch educational systems. This hybrid model employed Western (Dutch) pedagogical methods while retaining a core Islamic curriculum, representing a modernization effort that was revolutionary for its time. Despite facing criticism, ridicule, and opposition, particularly from traditional Islamic scholars (kiai), these challenges did not deter Ahmad Dahlan. Rather, they fueled his determination to advance Muhammadiyah's educational reforms, underlining his commitment to revitalizing Islamic education and fostering an enlightened Muslim community.¹²

The vision and mission of Muhammadiyah's educational initiatives are rooted in the organization's commitment to enhancing human resources to navigate the complexities of the global landscape. This commitment is centered on two pivotal efforts: the reinforcement of faith and piety, and the acquisition of expertise in science and technology.¹³ Muhammadiyah's approach is characterized by its departure from traditional paradigms towards a progressive outlook in both thought and action, particularly in the realm of organizational development. The organization's educational objectives are articulated by the Basic Education Council, which identifies five core outcomes for its students: Islamic values, Indonesian identity, scientific knowledge, linguistic proficiency, and vocational skills.¹⁴

From its inception, Muhammadiyah has positioned itself as a beacon for the purification of Islamic thought while simultaneously serving as a missionary and educational movement. As an organization deeply invested in the educational sector, Muhammadiyah has established a comprehensive array of educational institutions, encompassing formal, non-formal, and informal learning environments. While the significance of formal education through schools is emphasized, the

¹¹ Siti Walidah and D I Aisyiyah, "Analisis Pergerakan Pendidikan Perempuan Serta Kiprah Siti Walidah Di Aisyiyah" X, no. X (2022): 60–74, <https://doi.org/10.32649/ajas>.

¹² Farid Setiawan, *Kebijakan Pendidikan Muhammadiyah 1911-1942*, ed. Hatib Rahmawan (Yogyakarta: UAD Press, 2021), 13-14.

¹³ St. Rajiah Rusydi, *Peran Muhammadiyah Konsep Pendidikan dan Tokoh*, Tarbawi Vol. 1, no. 2, 2016, h. 139–48

¹⁴ Rusydi, "Peran Muhammadiyah (Konsep Pendidikan, Usaha-Usaha Di Bidang Pendidikan dan Tokoh), Jurnal Tarbawi, vol. 2 no. 2, 2016, 139-148.

organization equally values the role of informal education as a critical component of holistic learning, addressing a gap often overlooked by society at large. Muhammadiyah's educational philosophy seeks to fulfill community needs by offering an integrative curriculum that bridges religious and secular knowledge.¹⁵

Endeavoring towards cultivating a broad-minded perspective, the resolutions of the 46th Congress articulate Muhammadiyah's educational philosophy as a means to foster divine awareness, enlightenment, education, and liberation from ignorance and poverty, all aimed at enhancing human welfare and prosperity. This philosophy aligns with the imperatives of national cohesion and the evolving global social order,¹⁶ emphasizing the development of strong character values¹⁷ and a heightened social consciousness as manifestations of altruism.¹⁸ Muhammadiyah's education system remains in sync with advancements in various fields of study, encouraging students to pursue innovation in scientific endeavors without compromising the foundational principles of religious knowledge, which serve as both a guide and a moral compass in the pursuit of academic and technological progress.

C. The Entry of Muhammadiyah into Bengkulu City

GF Pijper provides a poignant account of the socioreligious landscape in Bengkulu prior to the advent of the Muhammadiyah organization. The practice of Islam in Bengkulu exhibited distinct characteristics, diverging from other regions and displaying signs of stagnation. The area's isolation was exacerbated by British governance, which severed connections with Banten and other Islamic hubs in Indonesia, further entrenching its insularity. A significant aspect of local belief was the veneration of saints' graves, with several sacred sites, such as the tomb of Sayyid Muhammad Zayn Al-Makam Madani in Suraulama, and the tombs of Kramat Anggut and Kramat Pantai, holding particular reverence, albeit their influence remained circumscribed.¹⁹

Religious life in Bengkulu was relatively subdued, lacking the presence of high-ranking, widely respected ulama (Islamic scholars) akin to the regional kiai in Java or Banten, referred to as ajengan. Instead, religious leadership in Bengkulu was assumed by societal and governmental leaders, such as the Pasirah, who derived their authority from hereditary or traditional means. These leaders wielded considerable influence over both secular and spiritual affairs. Consequently, initiatives aimed at Islamic rejuvenation and the introduction of modern ideologies encountered significant resistance and

¹⁵ Salto, Bahking Rama, and Muhammad Rusdi Rasyid, "Pandangan Organisasi Sosial Keagamaan; Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah, Tokohnya Dan Kegiatannya Dalam Bidang Pendidikan.Pdf," *Isihumor* 1, no. 1 (2023): 1–12.

¹⁶ Darliana Sormin et al., "Inovasi Pembaharuan Pendidikan Muhammadiyah," *Edukasi Islami: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 11, no. 02 (2022): 683–700.

¹⁷ Nana Sutarna et al., "Character Education of Muhammadiyah," in *Proceedings of the 1st Paris Van Java International Seminar on Health, Economics, Social Science and Humanities (PVJ-ISHESSH 2020)*, vol. 535, 2021, 202–205.

¹⁸ Suhirman et al., "Character Education Concept by KH Ahmad Dahlan in the Context of Covid-19 Crisis," *Annals of R. S. C. B.* 25, no. 3 (2021): 2938–2950.

¹⁹ GF. Pijper, *Fragmenta Islamica; Beberapa Sudi Mengenai Sejarah Islam Di Indonesia Awal Abad XX* (Jakarta: UI Press, 1987), 132-133.

opposition from the community itself,²⁰ illustrating the profound challenges faced by reform movements like Muhammadiyah in their efforts to foster religious enlightenment and progress in Bengkulu.

In Bengkulu City, the tribal chief, referred to as Imam Marga, held the esteemed position of the highest religious authority within the community. Alongside this figure, a clan guardian judge played a pivotal role in overseeing the administration and religious activities within village and community mosques. The presence of mosques for Friday prayers was a common feature across nearly every hamlet, staffed by Imams, Khatibs, Bilals, and Gharims, indicating a structured religious practice at the village level. Marriage ceremonies were conducted by the Reverend Hamlet, with the Imam Marga maintaining records of marriages reported by the Dukuh Pastor, highlighting a system where traditional custom dictated the operational aspects of mosque personnel and religious observances. A portion of the rice zakat was allocated to Imam Marga, though the proceeds from zakat were not managed in alignment with customary law.²¹

Despite these institutional frameworks, it is crucial to note that Bengkulu was not devoid of knowledgeable ulama or individuals deeply versed in Islamic teachings. The general conditions described, while prevalent, did not encapsulate the entire religious landscape of Bengkulu. Among the notable scholars was Soetan Mohammad Zahab, a distinguished figure in Bengkulu's religious history and the grandfather of Sutan Takdir Alisyahbana. His extensive study in Mecca for six years and his significant following highlight a rich, albeit underrepresented, strand of Islamic scholarship in Bengkulu. Zahab's legacy, evidenced by the reverence shown to his grave by the community, underscores the presence of profound religious knowledge and scholarship within Bengkulu, setting the stage for organizations like Muhammadiyah to introduce reforms and enrich the religious fabric of the city.

The foray of Muhammadiyah into Bengkulu City was initiated by KH. Hisyam's visit from Yogyakarta in 1924.²² His arrival marked the beginning of Muhammadiyah's introduction to the residents of Bengkulu City. Initially, the activities of the Muhammadiyah organization were localized around the Bengkulu Market area. However, the organization's presence and endeavors often faced resistance from the "kaum tuo" (elder segments of the community), leading to prolonged debates with the local populace regarding Muhammadiyah's role and presence in the area. This opposition prompted a strategic relocation of Muhammadiyah's activity center to Kebun Ros.

During its nascent stages in Bengkulu, Muhammadiyah's operations proceeded without significant pushback from the traditional community groups, particularly when its efforts were discreetly focused on establishing educational institutions dedicated to religious studies, akin to

²⁰ Pili and Hardiansyah, *Napak Tilas Sejarah Muhammadiyah Bengkulu*, 70.

²¹ Pili dan Hardiansyah, *Napak Tilas*, 70.

²² Pili dan Hardiansyah, *Napak Tilas*, 70.

Muhammadiyah's ethos. Nonetheless, as the organization began to expand its reach across Bengkulu, encountering similar growth trajectories as other Indonesian Muslim associations, it faced opposition from conservative Islamic factions. The resistance was especially pronounced against Muhammadiyah's religious outreach (tabligh) efforts within Bengkulu.²³ This period underscored the challenges Muhammadiyah faced in embedding its reformist agenda within the socio-religious fabric of Bengkulu, navigating the complexities of traditional beliefs and the skepticism of established religious circles.

In its initial phase in Bengkulu City, Muhammadiyah concentrated on two primary endeavors: da'wah (Islamic preaching) and education. To bolster its educational mission, the organization established the Ros Garden Muhammadiyah Elementary School on April 30, 1926. These ventures served as foundational pillars for Muhammadiyah's establishment and subsequent activities in the region. Alfian, drawing from primary sources such as the 1927 Muhammadiyah East Indies Annual News, notes that at this time, Bengkulu hosted a single Muhammadiyah branch, which was still in its formative stage.²⁴

Hamka records indicate that by 1927, Bengkulu City was home to a community association named Muhibul Ihsan, also referred to as Sumatra Thawalib, founded by individuals from Minangkabau and Bengkulu City. This organization, characterized by its modernist Islamic approach, laid the groundwork for religious revitalization in Bengkulu.²⁵ Intrigued by Muhammadiyah's reformist agenda, which resonated with their own principles, Muhibbul Ihsan dispatched religious teachers to the 18th Muhammadiyah Congress in Yogyakarta in 1929 as observers. This event marked the beginning of a more formal engagement with Muhammadiyah, leading to the deployment of teachers and preachers from Yogyakarta to Bengkulu by the Muhammadiyah Executive Board.

Yunus Anis, a Muhammadiyah missionary from Java, further enriched the community's understanding of Muhammadiyah's vision, mission, and objectives during his visit to Bengkulu. His efforts, which included fund and alms collection alongside his teachings, culminated in the formation of a 13-member Muhammadiyah Branch in Bengkulu. This development prompted the Central Muhammadiyah Management to review the new branch to ensure its alignment with Muhammadiyah principles, notably through the establishment of madrasas embracing modern educational concepts.

By the end of 1927, as Abdul Munir Mul Khan documents, the Hoofbestur (central leadership) of Muhammadiyah, led by M. Yunus, officially recognized the Bengkulu branch. According to G.F. Pijper, recognition by the central leadership was contingent upon the establishment of key organizational structures, including a secretariat, a house of worship, and a school, which collectively

²³ Oktarini, Dkk., *Sekolah Muhammadiyah Zaman Colonial*, 1-9.

²⁴ Alfian, *Muhammadiyah The Political Behaviour of Muslim Modernist Organization Under Dutch Colonial* (Yogyakarta: UGM Press, n.d.), 247.

²⁵ Hamka, *Ayahku*, (Jakarta: Umminida, 1982), 120.

symbolized the focal points of Muhammadiyah's charitable and educational efforts in the area.²⁶ This strategic approach facilitated the embedding of Muhammadiyah's reformist ideals within the local religious and educational landscape of Bengkulu City.

In 1929, marking a significant milestone for Muhammadiyah in Bengkulu, the branch's inaugural conference was convened, featuring Yunus Anis as the delegate from the Muhammadiyah central board (Hoofbestuur). This event saw the appointment of Yunus Djamaludin as the first Muhammadiyah Consul in the region. A noteworthy period in the history of Muhammadiyah's Bengkulu branch occurred in 1938 during President Soekarno's exile in Bengkulu. His active involvement in Muhammadiyah, particularly as an educator at the Muhammadiyah Kebun Ros Elementary School, infused a unique vitality into the organization's local activities.

Observing the declining health and the consequent challenges faced by Yunus Djamaluddin in fulfilling his consul duties, Soekarno recommended Haji Abdul Karim (Oey Tjeng Hien) from Bintuhan for the consul position. This proposal was unanimously accepted at a meeting attended by prominent Muhammadiyah figures including Soekarno, Oey Tjeng Hien (who served as consul until 1952), Zainul, Navis, Hassan Din, Ahmad Kancil, and Yahya Pasar Bar.

The focus of the Muhammadiyah Bengkulu branch, consistent with the organization's broader mission, was on da'wah (Islamic preaching) and education. To bolster its cadre of preachers and educators, the branch actively recruited individuals from Minang, particularly graduates of Sumatran Thawalib, and alumni from Kulliatul Muallimin. These recruits were also supported by delegates sent from the Muhammadiyah central office (PP Muhammadiyah) in Yogyakarta,²⁷ reinforcing the organization's commitment to advancing its educational and religious outreach initiatives in Bengkulu.

D. Post-Independence Muhammadiyah Education (1945–1965) in Bengkulu City

The narrative provided outlines the evolution and challenges of Muhammadiyah education in Bengkulu City during the post-independence era of Indonesia from 1945 to 1965. This period was marked by significant endeavors to revitalize and expand educational opportunities amidst the backdrop of newfound national sovereignty, overcoming the legacy of colonialism and navigating the complexities of building a modern educational infrastructure. The efforts were characterized by four key developments:

1. Integration of Educational Institutions in Bengkulu after The Proclamation

The proclamation of Indonesia's independence on August 17, 1945, marked a pivotal moment in the nation's history, symbolizing liberation from colonial rule. This event held profound significance for the entire Indonesian populace, including Bengkulu's citizens, who were eager to

²⁶ GF. Pijper, *Fragmenta Islamica; Beberapa Studi Mengenai Sejarah*, 132-133.

²⁷ Amnah Qurniati Amnur, "Sejarah Perkembangan Pendidikan Islam Di Bengkulu Abad XX," *Disertasi UIN Jogjakarta*, 2017.

shed the remnants of colonial oppression. In the aftermath, there was a nationwide push towards catching up in various sectors, particularly in education, as a means to propel national progress. The government played a crucial role in this endeavor, encouraging the population to embrace education. Leadership across various organizations made concerted efforts to motivate community participation in schooling, leading to the reopening of schools that had been shuttered.²⁸

In the nascent stages of independence, Muhammadiyah educational institutions, alongside those affiliated with Taman Siswa and PERTI, faced numerous challenges, including a scarcity of teaching staff and a lack of a cohesive education system. These challenges were not exclusive to Muhammadiyah but were also experienced by other private and even public schools. Despite these obstacles, the end of Japanese occupation in Bengkulu City and the proclamation of independence facilitated a resurgence of Muhammadiyah and other private educational entities from their precarious situation.

To bolster the education sector's revival, the government initiated the integration of private lower education institutions with state elementary schools (SD) in Bengkulu. This integration aimed to enhance the efficacy, development, and capacity of state schools to incorporate teaching staff from the private sector, responding to community needs and requests. Far from undermining private educational institutions, this government initiative sought to consolidate resources, fostering stronger, more cohesive educational programs.²⁹

The necessity for this integration policy stemmed from the widespread neglect of schools and the acute shortage of teaching staff prevalent at the time. The integration was envisioned as a strategy to rejuvenate and amalgamate efforts towards the revitalization and construction of educational facilities that had fallen into disrepair. By amalgamating educational entities, it was anticipated that the demand for qualified teachers and educational resources would be alleviated, allowing institutions to concentrate more on educational development and student enrichment.

2. Limited Teaching Staff

The revival of educational institutions in the post-Japanese colonial era posed significant challenges, given the long period of neglect and the selective educational opportunities previously available, which were often restricted to certain groups. This neglect had left a void in the educational landscape, which community leaders and the Muhammadiyah organization were keen to address, despite the limitations of the time. The community's determination, alongside Muhammadiyah's efforts, underscored a collective resolve to enhance educational opportunities through da'wah.

²⁸ Kebudayaan and Tradisional, *Sejarah Sosial Daerah Kota Bengkulu*, 88.

²⁹ Daerah, *Sejarah Pendidikan Daerah Bengkulu*, 123-124.

Navigating these constrained conditions to sustain and initiate educational programs demanded considerable effort. Muhammadiyah educational institutions, with community support, garnered both moral and material assistance. This support played a crucial role in sustaining educational endeavors, providing for both ongoing and newly established schools. A significant hurdle was the departure of teachers from the region, either to participate in the Community Education Development Course (KPPM) in Yogyakarta or to engage with military organizations, further complicating the recovery of the educational sector.

To address the acute shortage of teaching personnel, the government and educational organizations made concerted efforts to recruit alumni from Dutch and Japanese colonial-era schools as teachers in post-independence schools. This strategy was partly successful in fulfilling the immediate need for educators with basic general knowledge.³⁰ Moreover, the establishment of vocational training centers and the recruitment of teachers from outside Bengkulu, such as Yogyakarta and West Sumatra, facilitated the gradual refinement of the curriculum, despite its initial simplicity due to colonial constraints.

Teachers played a pivotal role in the execution of Muhammadiyah's educational vision. The organization's response to the post-independence political and security challenges involved mobilizing its members to reinforce the educational infrastructure. This initiative was seen as essential for continuing Muhammadiyah's mission of religious education and outreach, especially for those still in dire need of both secular and religious learning. Through these efforts, Muhammadiyah educational institutions not only aimed to recover from the disruption caused by colonialism and war but also sought to solidify their role in shaping an informed and enlightened community.

3. Curriculum Improvement

During the era known as the Old Order, the Indonesian government persisted with the Dutch educational framework, wherein schools maintained by the government did not incorporate religious education as a compulsory subject. Instead, religious studies were offered as elective courses, subject to the consent of parents. Unlike Muhammadiyah, other Islamic educational institutions of the time did not include modern sciences in their curricula, focusing exclusively on Islamic religious teachings. Nonetheless, the innovative approach to Islamic education envisioned by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan, which advocated for the integration of scientific and technological studies with Islamic teachings, began to find resonance within the broader national education system,

³⁰ *Kebudayaan and Tradisional, Sejarah Sosial Daerah Kota Bengkulu*, 88.

particularly with the advent of the New Order, marking a period of significant educational transformation.³¹

In the immediate aftermath of Indonesia's declaration of independence, the educational system underwent a process of reform and renewal, fueled by a collective desire for national cohesion and the shared hardships of the era. The Japanese elementary education system (Sho-gakko) was reconstituted into the Indonesian People's School (Sekolah Rakyat - SR), offering a six-year curriculum. This revised curriculum was carefully curated to reflect the aspirations of the newly independent nation, removing Japanese influences in favor of an emphasis on the Indonesian language and national history. Efforts to standardize education across all levels aimed to elevate the quality and breadth of educational content, while the acute shortage of qualified teaching staff was mitigated by enlisting volunteers, including high school graduates, who were offered opportunities for further training in practical and pedagogical skills.³²

Muhammadiyah educational institutions continued to adhere to the pedagogical principles established by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan. These principles underscored the importance of a holistic educational model that harmoniously blends general knowledge, sciences, and technology with Islamic studies, encompassing theology, ritual practice, and ethics, while also emphasizing the development of linguistic proficiency, particularly in Arabic. This comprehensive approach ensured that the curriculum at Muhammadiyah schools was not narrowly focused on a singular discipline but was instead inclusive of a broad spectrum of religious, scientific, and technological subjects, thereby equipping students to navigate and contribute to the evolving global landscape.

4. Development of Muhammadiyah Educational Institutions

The post-independence era saw a significant escalation in the pursuit of education within Bengkulu City, marked by a surge in the establishment of new schools to eradicate illiteracy and ensure that education was accessible to all. This period was characterized by the government's initiative to set up secondary schools at the first level, such as SMP (Junior High School), STP, and Kartini School. Concurrently, Muhammadiyah revitalized the Madrasah Muallimin, and the Zending organization established St. Corolus. Additionally, vocational courses in typing, sewing, cooking, and baking were introduced in various locations, catering to students outside the formal education system.

The national constitution provided a framework for addressing educational challenges, aligning with the aspirations to build a quality, educated society.³³ Despite facing issues such as inadequate educational facilities, a shortage of teachers, particularly for extracurricular activities

³¹ Lilis Karyawati Adisty Nabilah Fitri, Sutarjo, "Konsep Pendidikan Islam Menurut K. H. Ahmad Dahlan," *Jurnal Edumaspul* 6, no. 1 (2022): 1049–1053.

³² Daerah, *Sejarah Pendidikan Daerah Bengkulu*, 82.

³³ Kebudayaan and Tradisional, *Sejarah Sosial*, 88.

and English language instruction, economic instability, and limited communication tools, the Bengkulu City Regional Government developed comprehensive strategies. These included opening communication lines, promoting transmigration to boost workforce numbers, enhancing per capita income through agricultural and industrial development, and prioritizing educational advancement by constructing school buildings across the region.³⁴

The collective effort of the government and community to foster educational development was evident in the opening and improvement of schools, despite the shortage of educational staff and facilities. Many teachers were alumni of educational institutions established during Dutch and Japanese rule. The European, Dutch, and Japanese educational styles, heavily influenced by military discipline, were replaced by a focus on national unity and the elimination of colonial divisions, emphasizing the singular principle of Indonesian independence.

By the 1950s, Bengkulu City boasted 6 SR (Sekolah Rakyat, now known as SD or Elementary School), 1 State Middle School, 1 DGB, and several private schools, including Muhammadiyah schools. The limited number of educational institutions did not deter the community's eagerness to overcome illiteracy and pursue religious education.³⁵

Post-independence governance saw various policies enacted to propel national development across sectors, including education, aiming not only to enhance scientific knowledge but also to reinforce religious education amidst the challenges of transitioning from colonial rule.³⁶ The "physical revolution" period witnessed the closure of many educational institutions, which gradually reopened in the 1950s to resume community education efforts.

Islamic organizations, including Muhammadiyah, contributed to this resurgence by establishing madrasa-style educational institutions. In 1955, Muhammadiyah inaugurated Muallimin Muhammadiyah in Kebun Ros under the leadership of Djalal Sajuthi. PERTI launched the Islamic First School (SMPI) in Malabero, led by Mazni Hasan, and Tarbiyah Islamiah in Bengkulu, directed by Zainul.³⁷ It was recorded that four madrasahs in 1955 received assistance from the Head of the Office of Islamic Religious Education³⁸, with the following details:

Table 1: Madrasah Recipients of Aid in 1955–1956 in Bengkulu City

Number	Madrasa Name	Amount of Assistance
1	Mu'alimin Muhammadiyah	Rp. 4.464
2	S.M.P.I Perti Bengkulu	Rp. 504
3	Ibtidaiyah Muhammadiyah Kebun Ros	Rp. 1.020
4	Islamic Tarbiyah PERTI Bengkulu	Rp. 1.112

*Source: National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia*³⁹

³⁴ Kebudayaan and Tradisional, *Sejarah Sosial*, 89.

³⁵ Kebudayaan and Tradisional, *Sejarah Sosial*, 89.

³⁶ Syaputra, *Madrasah di Bengkulu: Sejarah dan Perkembangannya*, 5.

³⁷ Syaputra, *Madrasah di Bengkulu*, 5.

³⁸ Ee Syaputra, *Dari Madrasah dan Pesantren Hingga Sekolah Islam Terpadu: Dinamika Lembaga Pendidikan Islam di Bengkulu Pasca Kemerdekaan Hingga Reformasi* (Jakarta: Direktorat Sejarah, 2019), 35.

³⁹ Syaputra, *Madrasah di Bengkulu*, 5.

The post-independence era in Bengkulu City witnessed significant support from the government towards educational development, a reflection of the collective effort to advance the nation's educational landscape. In 1955, two Muhammadiyah educational institutions, *Mualimin Muhammadiyah* and *Ibtidayah Muhammadiyah Kebun Ros*, received financial assistance from the government, amounting to Rp. 4,464 and Rp. 1,020, respectively. This funding played a crucial role in the operational sustenance and enhancement of school facilities, underpinning the institutions' commitment to providing quality education.

The allocation of government funds was strategically utilized to procure books and learning support equipment, thereby enriching the educational resources available at Muhammadiyah schools. This financial support not only facilitated the day-to-day operations of these institutions but also significantly contributed to the improvement of educational delivery, ensuring that students had access to a broad spectrum of learning materials. Such investments in educational infrastructure underscore the importance placed on education in the national agenda, aiming to foster a well-equipped, knowledgeable, and skilled generation capable of contributing to the country's progress and development.

E. Conclusion

The period from 1945 to 1965 was a crucial era for Muhammadiyah education in Bengkulu City, marked by a series of complex dynamics following the independence of the Republic of Indonesia. The integration of private educational institutions into the state education system emerged as a pivotal strategy to rejuvenate and reconstruct the educational landscape, particularly at the elementary level, which had suffered significant disruptions during Japanese colonial rule. This period witnessed a pronounced shortage of teaching staff within Muhammadiyah schools, a challenge that was addressed by recruiting educators from other regions, notably Yogyakarta and West Sumatra, to ensure the educational process could continue effectively.

A key focus during this time was the enhancement of the curriculum, aimed at ensuring a more structured and comprehensive educational framework. The support from the community and government towards Muhammadiyah's educational initiatives was evident in the provision of moral, spiritual, and material assistance, which played a critical role in developing and sustaining educational facilities and programs.

This research, while offering a general overview of the history of Muhammadiyah education in Bengkulu City during the specified period, acknowledges the limitations posed by the availability of historical sources. Therefore, it serves as a preliminary exploration that paves the way for further in-depth investigations. Future research could delve deeper into the establishment and evolution of Muhammadiyah educational institutions in Bengkulu City post-independence, leveraging insights from individuals who played significant roles in these developments. This study lays the groundwork for

subsequent research endeavors, encouraging a more nuanced understanding of the contributions and challenges of Muhammadiyah education in shaping the educational sector in Bengkulu City during a transformative period in Indonesia's history.

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