

Muhammad Abduh's Thought on Islamic Education Reform and Its Contemporary Implications in Indonesia

Rahmadani Akbar

Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Email: rahmadaniakbar2001@gmail.com

Rahmad Alkhadafi

Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Email: rahmadalkhadafi7@gmail.com

Shofiyullah Muzammil

Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Email: shofiyullah1001@gmail.com

Abstract: This study aims to analyze Muhammad Abduh's thoughts on Islamic educational reform and describe their relevance to the dynamics of contemporary Islamic education in Indonesia. Using a literature review method with descriptive-critical analysis of Abduh's primary works and secondary literature, this study identified four main ideas of reform: Abduh's rejection of blind imitation and his encouragement to develop a culture of critical thinking; criticism of tendentious books that paved the way for strengthening critical literacy and developing more objective teaching materials; reform of educational institutions that emphasized the integration of religious and modern sciences; and revitalization of the Islamic intellectual heritage (turats) through a contextual and interdisciplinary approach to reading. These findings show that Abduh's thinking can provide philosophical and practical direction for the development of madrasah and pesantren curricula, the improvement of teacher competence, and the modernization of learning methods that are more dialogical, rational, and adaptive to the challenges of the 21st century. Thus, this study contributes to explaining how Abduh's reformist ideas can be implemented to strengthen the quality and relevance of Islamic education in Indonesia.

Keywords: Muhammad Abduh; Renewal; Islamic Education

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15575/jipai.v5i1.46678>

Received: 01, 2025. Accepted: 05, 2025. Published: 06, 2025.

Copyright: © 2025. The Authors.

Licensee: JIPAI: Jurnal Inovasi Pendidikan Agama Islam is licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution License](#).

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a very important role in shaping human character and the advancement of civilization (Alimin, 2023). In Islam, education is not only meant to develop knowledge, but also to instill spiritual and moral values (Cahyadi & Della, 2021). However, the changing times have presented new challenges for Islamic education. For example, many Islamic educational institutions still use traditional approaches, such as rote learning and a focus on classical texts, thereby limiting the scope for developing critical thinking, creativity, and mastery of modern knowledge (Dwi Noviani & Zainuddin, 2020).

At the national level, the 2022 PISA report shows that Indonesian students' literacy, numeracy, and science skills are still below the OECD average. These findings indicate that the Indonesian education system needs to be reformed so that learning is more relevant to the needs of the 21st century (PISA, 2022). In the context of Islamic education, an official report from the Ministry of Religious Affairs through EMIS 4.0 shows that quality improvement and digitization in madrasahs are still ongoing (Kemenag RI, 2024). Various aspects such as institutional data integration, teacher competency improvement, and competency-based curriculum development still need refinement. The results of the Indonesian Madrasah Competency Assessment (AKMI) are also used as a diagnostic tool to map students' literacy, numeracy, and reasoning abilities. These results form the basis for the Ministry of Religious Affairs to design more targeted learning improvements. On the other hand, BAN-S/M accreditation shows that the quality of madrasahs is not yet uniform. Many madrasahs still need strengthening in terms of governance, learning processes, and internal quality assurance (Susetyo & N. Ummu Athiyah, 2021). Furthermore, studies on Islamic boarding schools also show that the modernization process has begun, but the application of modern science and digital literacy is not yet evenly distributed across all Islamic boarding schools (Darajat dkk., 2022).

These challenges indicate that Islamic education in Indonesia needs to undergo more serious and focused reforms. In this regard, the ideas of Muhammad Abduh are highly relevant. Abduh proposed reforms to Islamic education that emphasized the integration of religious and modern knowledge, the use of critical thinking, and the renewal of teaching methods (Ningsih, 2021). Abduh promoted a curriculum that combined religious studies with science, mathematics, and philosophy (Suwahyu, 2022). Given current social, cultural, and technological developments, Abduh's ideas need to be reexamined to ensure they are relevant to the context of Islamic education in Indonesia. The challenges facing Indonesia, such as the dominance of traditional approaches and the limited integration of modern science into Islamic education, show that Abduh's ideas are still highly relevant (Priyanto, 2020; Susyanto, 2022).

Previous studies have discussed Abduh's ideas from various perspectives. Afifah Irfindari et al. highlight the relevance of reforming educational objectives (Afifah Irfindari dkk., 2021). Suwahyu then explained Abduh's vision for curriculum reform and teaching methods (Suwahyu, 2022). Asifa emphasized the importance of an integrated curriculum and varied learning methods (Asifa, 2018). However, these studies generally still focus on describing Abduh's thinking conceptually and have not yet examined in depth its relevance in facing the challenges of Islamic education in Indonesia in the contemporary era, such as digitalization, globalization, and social change. Therefore, this research is important to contextualize Abduh's thoughts in the current situation of Islamic education in Indonesia, so that it can provide new contributions to the direction of Islamic education reform.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a library research approach as described by Creswell, which emphasizes systematic analysis of written sources to answer research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This approach was chosen because the research focused on examining Muhammad Abduh's thoughts through his original works and relevant academic studies. The research data sources consist of two types. First, primary sources, namely Muhammad Abduh's original works such as *Risalat al-Tawhid*, writings in *al-Manar* magazine, and other works containing his ideas on educational reform. Second, secondary sources, namely journal articles, books, research reports, and academic writings that examine Abduh's thoughts or modern Islamic education.

The selection of sources was based on certain criteria, namely direct relevance to the theme of Islamic educational reform, academic credibility as evidenced by the reputation of the publisher or journal, and the recency of the source, especially in the context of Islamic education in Indonesia. To maintain data validity, this study applied source triangulation, which involves comparing Abduh's views in primary works with scholars' interpretations in secondary sources, and matching them with the context of Islamic education in Indonesia. Cross-comparisons were made to avoid interpretive bias and ensure that the analysis of Abduh's thoughts was not based on a single source.

The data was analyzed using a descriptive-analytical approach. The first stage involved systematically describing the contents of primary and secondary sources to understand Abduh's thought structure. The second stage consisted of an in-depth analysis of his principles of reform by examining core themes such as rationality, integration of knowledge, curriculum reform, and educational methods. The third stage was contextual interpretation, which involved connecting Abduh's ideas with the challenges and developments of Islamic education in Indonesia. This analysis process enabled researchers to identify the

implications of Abduh's thinking more clearly and in a manner relevant to the contemporary state of Islamic education in Indonesia.

RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research Result

This literature review analyzes Muhammad Abduh's primary works and secondary literature to identify his thoughts on Islamic educational reform. Text analysis was conducted through thematic categorization of Abduh's thoughts from his writings and historical documents about his intellectual activities. This process yielded four main themes, namely the intellectual biography of Muhammad Abduh, criticism of taqlid, curriculum and teaching method reform, and the revitalization of turats and educational institution reform.

The Intellectual Biography of Muhammad Abduh

Muhammad Abduh was born in rural Egypt in 1849, specifically in the village of Mahallah Nasr (Az-Zahra dkk., 2021; Houtsman, 1987). His father, Abduh Hasan Khairullah, came from a family with Turkish ancestry, while his mother had lineage connected to Umar bin Khattab, one of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad who was famous for his justice and wisdom (Abduh, 1992). His parents' lives were marked by frequent moves from one village to another before finally settling in Mahallah Nasr, where Muhammad Abduh was born. The rural environment in which Muhammad Abduh grew up had a profound influence on the formation of his character and views. Although his parents had no formal education, they had a strong religious spirit (Nasution, 1986).

Muhammad Abduh was encouraged to learn to read and write so that he could read and memorize the Qur'an. After mastering these skills, he was guided by a teacher to memorize the Qur'an and successfully completed it within two years. In 1862, he was sent to Tanta to study religion at the Sheikh Ahmad Mosque. However, after two years of studying Arabic, nahwu, sharaf, fiqh, and other subjects, he felt that he did not gain a deep understanding because the learning method only emphasized memorization. Unsatisfied with the memorization method, Muhammad Abduh decided to leave his studies in Tanta. He ran away and stayed at the house of one of his uncles, but after three months, he was forced to return to Tanta. His belief that studying was of no benefit led him to return to his village with the intention of working as a farmer (Nata, 2000).

In 1865, at the age of 16, Muhammad Abduh got married. However, only forty days after his marriage, his parents forced him to return to continue his studies in Tanta. Even so, he did not immediately go to Tanta, but to the house of one of his uncles, Sheikh Darwish Khadr, who was from his father's side. It

was his uncle who changed the course of Abduh's life. With patience, his uncle persuaded him to read books together and explained each sentence with deep insight. This approach succeeded in awakening Abduh's love of knowledge and encouraged him to continue seeking deeper knowledge, until he finally decided to go to Tanta and continue his studies (Nasution, 1986).

After completing his studies in Tanta, Muhammad Abduh continued his education at al-Azhar in 1866. In 1869, a great scholar named Said Jamaluddin al-Afghani came to Egypt. Al-Afghani was known as a mujahid, mujaddid, and a scholar who was very knowledgeable in the Islamic world. At that time, Muhammad Abduh was still a student at al-Azhar. He first met al-Afghani when Abduh visited his home with Sheikh Hasan at-Thawil. During the meeting, they discussed Sufism and interpretation. From that moment on, Abduh became interested in al-Afghani because of his depth of knowledge and modern way of thinking. Abduh greatly admired him and often stayed close to him. In addition to Abduh, many al-Azhar students were invited to not only discuss religious knowledge, but also to learn from al-Afghani about modern knowledge such as philosophy, history, law, state administration, and others. In addition, al-Afghani also encouraged them to devote themselves to society and fight to eliminate orthodoxy and fanatical thinking, replacing it with more progressive thinking (Nata, 2000).

After al-Afghani moved to Egypt, Abduh continued to maintain their relationship and often accompanied him to various meetings. Furthermore, Abduh became increasingly aware of the dire internal conditions in Egypt. He clearly saw the poor treatment received by farmers, who were the backbone of the Egyptian economy. Heavy taxes, oppression by local officials, and injustice in land distribution made life very difficult for farmers (Adams, 1933). In addition, Abduh also witnessed irregularities in politics marked by corruption, nepotism, and weak leadership. Not limited to domestic issues, Abduh also began to understand the complexity of the challenges facing Egypt in the international political and economic arena. Foreign intervention, especially from Europe, further exacerbated the situation. Colonial powers often disguised their exploitation with claims of a mission to improve the lives of the Egyptian people or efforts to bring European-style "progress." Abduh realized that this intervention was, in fact, nothing more than a new form of colonialism aimed at controlling resources and weakening the independence of the Egyptian nation (Al-Bahi, 1986).

In 1877, Muhammad Abduh completed his studies at al-Azhar and obtained the title of 'alim. He began teaching at al-Azhar, then at Dar al-'Ulum, and also at his own home. When al-Afghani was expelled from Egypt in 1879 for his alleged involvement in a movement against Khedive Taufik, Abduh, who was also considered to be involved in the incident, was also expelled from

Cairo. However, in 1880, he was allowed to return to the capital and was then appointed editor of the Egyptian government's official newspaper, *al-Waqa'i al-Mishriah*. At that time, Egyptian nationalism was beginning to grow. Under Abduh's leadership, *al-Waqa'i al-Mishriah* not only presented official news, but also articles discussing issues of national interest in Egypt (Nasution, 1986).

When Egyptian officers, led by Urabi Pasha, attempted to overthrow the long-standing Ottoman Turkish rule that had shackled Egypt, the movement initially showed significant success. The officers were able to seize control of the government and raise the hopes of the Egyptian people for greater sovereignty and justice. This movement was based on the spirit of nationalism, with the aim of freeing Egypt from oppressive foreign influence (Nasution, 1986). However, this success did not last long. Britain, which viewed this movement as a threat to its colonial interests in the region, immediately intervened militarily. Under the pretext of maintaining stability and preventing chaos, Britain attacked Egypt, crushed Urabi Pasha's resistance, and strengthened its grip on the country. This event resulted in a crushing defeat for Egyptian officers and deepened British colonial domination in the region. Muhammad Abduh, who was involved in this political event, felt the direct impact of the movement's failure. His involvement not only demonstrated Abduh's support for the Egyptian people's struggle, but also revealed his commitment to fighting injustice and colonial power. As a result of his involvement, Abduh was arrested and imprisoned. This bitter experience became a turning point in his life. He decided to shift the focus of his struggle from politics to education (Qomar, 2022).

In 1884, Muhammad Abduh and his teacher, Jamaluddin al-Afghani, founded and published a revolutionary journal called *al-Urwah al-Wusqa* (The Strong Bond). This journal not only served as a medium for voicing ideas of Islamic reform, but also as a tool for intellectual struggle against colonialism and stagnation among Muslims. *Al-Urwah al-Wusqa* emphasized the importance of Islamic unity (pan-Islamism), the need for religious reform that returned to the pure teachings of Islam, and the struggle against Western imperialism. Although the journal's publication was short-lived due to pressure from the colonial government, the ideas contained within it left a significant impact on the Islamic world.

Ten years after his involvement in *al-Urwah al-Wusqa*, in 1894, Abduh was appointed a member of the *Majlis A'la al-Azhar*, the highest council at al-Azhar University. In this role, Abduh worked hard to bring about change and improvement in this oldest educational institution. He sought to reform the curriculum to include modern sciences, such as mathematics, natural sciences, and philosophy, in addition to religious studies. Abduh also encouraged more rational and critical teaching methods, moving away from a purely textual

approach. With these steps, he sought to make al-Azhar an educational institution that was not only a center for Islamic studies but also relevant to the developments of the times.

In 1899, Abduh was appointed mufti of Egypt, making him the highest-ranking cleric in the country. This position gave Abduh considerable influence to realize his ideas in the fields of law and religion. As mufti, he was known for his progressive and reformist fatwas. One of the important principles he emphasized was that Islamic law must be understood dynamically, taking into account the social context and changes of the times. In his view, Islamic law is not rigid, but must be able to provide solutions to the problems of modern society.

Abduh served as mufti until his death in 1905. During his tenure, he not only strengthened the relevance of Islamic law in Egyptian society, but also laid the foundations for the Islamic reform movement that influenced generations of Muslim intellectuals around the world. His dedication to religious and educational reform made Abduh one of the most important figures in the history of modern Islamic reform (Nasution, 1986).

Abduh's Criticism of Taqlid

An analysis of *Risalat al-Tawhid*, Abduh's fatwas, and various commentaries on his thoughts shows that criticism of taqlid is one of the core elements of the educational reform he proposed. In many of his writings, Abduh argues that the practice of taqlid among Muslims has stunted their intellectual development. Taqlid causes people to passively accept the opinions of scholars without attempting to understand the basis for their validity (Abduh, 1992). For Abduh, this kind of attitude makes it difficult for people to progress and unable to cope with the changing times.

Abduh offered the concept of *ittiba'* as an alternative to taqlid. *Ittiba'* means following the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad with rational understanding, not merely imitating without knowing the reasons behind them (Syahrizal & Kasim, 2023). According to Abduh, people who already have the ability to think and understand arguments should not continue to blindly follow others. On the contrary, for the general public who do not yet have adequate scientific abilities, blindly following others can be a safe way to keep them on the right path (Qomar, 2022). In other words, Abduh did not reject taqlid entirely, but set limits on who could practice taqlid and who should abandon it.

In addition, Abduh also criticized the tradition of rigidly practicing a particular school of thought. He believed that excessive attachment to one school of thought made people less open to arguments and views that might be stronger or more relevant to the current situation (Abduh, 1992). When some

scholars accused him of abandoning *Asy'ariyah* and leaning towards *Mu'tazilah*, Abduh replied that he did not follow anyone blindly. He only followed the strongest arguments. This attitude shows his principle of thinking, namely that truth must be measured based on arguments and reason, not based on sectarian ties.

As a consequence of his criticism of blind imitation, Abduh emphasized the importance of reopening the door of *ijtihad* to those with sufficient scholarly ability (Nasution, 1986). In his view, *ijtihad* is a serious and independent thought process to understand Islamic law in accordance with the needs of society and the times (Hodgson, 1974). This idea later became an important foundation for the emergence of the discourse on modern Islamic renewal, as emphasized by Nur Cholis Madjid (Madjid, 1994).

From the results of the text analysis, it appears that Abduh's criticism of *taqlid* was not only aimed at the religious practices of the community, but also at the way of learning, the education system, and the way Muslims build knowledge. This criticism became the foundation for his ideas about a more rational curriculum, learning methods that encourage understanding, and educational institutions capable of producing creative and independent thinkers.

Curriculum and Learning Method Reform

An analysis of Muhammad Abduh's various writings, including those published in *al-Manar*, shows that one of the main focuses of his reforms was improving the curriculum and teaching methods. Abduh saw that Islamic education at that time was too focused on memorization and repetition of texts, and therefore failed to encourage deep understanding. In his view, learning that relied solely on memorization would not produce a generation that was critical, rational, and ready to face the developments of the times (Nata, 2000).

To that end, Abduh pushed for changes to the curriculum that would transcend traditional boundaries. He proposed that Islamic education should combine religious knowledge with modern sciences. According to Suwahyu, Abduh emphasized that mathematics, science, history, philosophy, and other sciences were important subjects that needed to be taught in order to strengthen students' critical thinking and analytical skills (Suwahyu, 2022). For Abduh, Islamic education should not be opposed to modern science, because Islam itself strongly encourages the pursuit of knowledge and the development of reason.

In terms of learning methods, Abduh rejected teaching models that placed teachers as the sole source of knowledge. According to him, it is not enough for teachers to simply read from books or explain the contents of texts literally; they must engage students in dialogue, ask questions, and help them understand the

reasons behind each teaching. He believed that learning should develop critical and logical thinking skills, rather than simply repeating the opinions of previous scholars. Therefore, dialogical, analytical, and reason-oriented learning methods became an important part of Abduh's ideas for educational reform.

Abduh's criticism of tendentious books was also closely related to the idea of curriculum reform. He believed that many books circulating at that time contained narrow views, incited fanaticism, or excessively glorified certain figures (Al-Bahi, 1986; Sutrisno, 2023). According to Abduh, books like these do not contribute to the intellectual development of the people because they only encourage readers to defend certain opinions without allowing room for in-depth analysis. He emphasized that teaching materials should encourage readers to think critically, not just accept things as they are.

Thus, the curriculum and teaching method reforms proposed by Abduh were part of a broader effort to revive the intellectual glory of Islam. He wanted students to not only master religious knowledge, but also to understand modern realities and make a real contribution to civilization. According to Abduh, a good Islamic education is one that produces individuals who are faithful, rational, and capable of responding to the challenges of the times.

Turats Reform of Educational Institutions and Revitalization of Heritage

Analysis of historical documents, Abduh's writings, and researchers' studies show that the educational reforms proposed by Abduh did not stop at ideas about curriculum and teaching methods. He also paid great attention to reforming educational institutions and preserving Islamic intellectual heritage (turats) so that it would remain relevant to the times.

Among the institutions that received the most attention from Abduh was al-Azhar, which at that time was a symbol of Islamic scholarship but also faced great challenges due to its rigid teaching traditions. Abduh saw that the decline of al-Azhar was not only caused by static learning methods, but also by institutional management that was unresponsive to social change and scientific developments. Therefore, when given the opportunity to become part of the Majlis A'la al-Azhar in 1894, he pushed for structural reforms. The reforms he carried out included improving the evaluation system, reorganizing the curriculum, and opening up space for modern sciences such as mathematics, science, and philosophy (Al-Bahi, 1986; Qomar, 2022).

Abduh's efforts were considered quite progressive, although they did not completely change the core scientific structure of al-Azhar. Fazlur Rahman assessed that Abduh's influence in modernizing al-Azhar was more evident in the aspects of management and educational administration, rather than in the core theological or philosophical thinking of the institution (Rahman, 1985).

This assessment shows that the renewal of Islamic educational institutions is a complex process that requires a long time. Nevertheless, Abduh's efforts remain an important part of the history of modern Islamic educational reform, and provide a basis for future generations to continue the changes at al-Azhar and other Islamic scientific institutions.

In addition to institutional reform, Abduh also paid great attention to the classical Islamic scholarly heritage or *turats*. According to him, *turats* has a wealth of values and ideas that are very important to study, but should not be understood rigidly. Abduh emphasized the importance of "reviving" old works, not by imitating them literally, but by selecting, interpreting, and adapting them to the needs of the times (Al-Bahi, 1986). He saw that not all classical thinking was in line with modern conditions, so a critical selection process was needed to separate relevant and irrelevant ideas.

In addition, Abduh rejected fanaticism towards certain figures in the *turats*, which would only hinder the development of the community's thinking. According to Qomar and Sutrisno, this fanaticism causes the community to only accept one viewpoint without considering the possibility that other ideas may be more appropriate to the context (Qomar, 2022; Sutrisno, 2023). Therefore, Abduh encouraged people to use the *turats* as a source of inspiration, not as a barrier that restricts intellectual creativity.

Overall, the reform of educational institutions and the revitalization of the *turats* offered by Abduh are two sides of one grand goal: to rebuild the intellectual dynamism of Muslims. Institutional reform is necessary so that Islamic education has a strong and modern system, while revitalization of the *turats* is necessary to maintain the continuity of Islamic scholarship with a more relevant and open spirit.

Discussion

This discussion links the four main findings of the above research to the state of Islamic education in Indonesia. Through this approach, it can be seen that Muhammad Abduh's ideas are not only relevant to the context of 19th-century Egypt, but also have made a significant contribution to the renewal of Islamic education in Indonesia today.

Rejection of Blind Imitation and Strengthening Critical Thinking in Indonesian Islamic Education

Abduh's criticism of the practice of *taqlid* is highly relevant to the current needs of Islamic education in Indonesia. Abduh viewed *taqlid* as an attitude of accepting opinions without argumentation, which ultimately hinders the intellectual development of the *ummah*. This idea is very much in line with the condition of *madrasahs* and Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia, which are

still struggling to build a culture of literacy, numeracy, and reasoning skills among students. Various reports from the Ministry of Religious Affairs through AKMI and madrasah quality evaluations show that strengthening higher-order thinking skills remains a major challenge in the learning process (Kemenag RI, 2024).

In this context, Abduh's ideas can serve as a philosophical basis for encouraging a shift in learning patterns from rote memorization to more analytical and reflective methods. Many madrasahs have begun to adopt HOTS-based and contextual learning approaches, which are in line with Abduh's view that students should be given the space to understand the reasons and meanings behind religious teachings, rather than just mechanically repeating the material (Basri dkk., 2022). This approach also helps students develop problem-solving skills, reasoning skills, and an understanding of the diversity of thought within Islam.

The role of teachers is also very important in this reform framework. According to Abduh, educators should not only function as conveyors of information, but must also be facilitators who guide students to think independently. In the context of Indonesian education, this means that teachers need to create a dialogical learning environment, encourage students to discuss, and guide them to review various religious perspectives with an open mind (Romano dkk., 2021; Yi dkk., 2023).

The application of this approach is becoming increasingly important in Indonesian society, which is culturally and religiously diverse. By encouraging students to understand the logical reasons behind differences in schools of thought and scholars' views, Islamic education can produce a generation of Muslims who are more tolerant, wise, and able to interact productively in social life. In line with Abduh's spirit, Islamic education in Indonesia needs to continue to develop an intellectual culture that values critical thinking and avoids blind obedience.

Curriculum Updates and Their Relevance to the Integration of Science in Madrasahs and Islamic Boarding Schools

Muhammad Abduh's ideas on curriculum reform are closely related to the current needs of Islamic education in Indonesia. Abduh rejected the dichotomy that separates religious knowledge and modern knowledge. For him, Muslims cannot progress if they only study classical texts without understanding science, technology, and contemporary knowledge (Guessoum & Bigliardi, 2023). He emphasized that Islamic education should encourage students to understand religious teachings rationally while also learning subjects that are useful for modern life.

Abduh's view is very relevant to the development of the madrasah curriculum in Indonesia, which is now beginning to integrate religious, scientific, social, and technological studies into a single educational framework. The latest curriculum emphasizes the importance of competency-based learning, contextual learning, and scientific integration that does not separate faith and knowledge (Marcotte & Gruppen, 2022; Siti Rohmah Kurniasih dkk., 2023). This principle is in line with Abduh's thinking that Islamic education should shape individuals who have strong spirituality but are also able to compete in the modern world.

In addition to madrasahs, Islamic boarding schools are also undergoing a curriculum renewal process. Many modern Islamic boarding schools have begun to include subjects such as science, technology, foreign languages, and digital literacy in their curricula. In Salafi Islamic boarding schools, renewal efforts are being made by enriching the study of classical Islamic texts with more systematic teaching methods that are relevant to modern life (Harmathilda dkk., 2024). Although this process was uneven, the direction of the reform indicated that Abduh's idea of integrating knowledge was beginning to be applied in the Indonesian Islamic education system.

Another important point in Abduh's thinking is his criticism of the use of textbooks that are tendentious or lack objectivity. This criticism is in line with the Indonesian government's efforts to improve the quality of religious education teaching materials, so that they are more moderate, inclusive, and relevant to the needs of students. The development of Islamic Education (PAI) textbooks and madrasah curricula that are more responsive to contemporary issues shows how Abduh's principles can be used as a basis for developing quality teaching materials.

Overall, the curriculum reforms proposed by Abduh provide a strong philosophical framework for Islamic education in Indonesia. The integration of knowledge, a rational approach, and learning that is relevant to the times are urgent needs if madrasahs and Islamic boarding schools are to produce a generation of Muslims who are intelligent, adaptive, and competitive. By adopting the spirit of Abduh's reform, Indonesian Islamic education can strengthen its religious identity without neglecting the demands of the 21st century.

Institutional Reform: Inspiration for Strengthening the Quality of Madrasahs and Islamic Higher Education Institutions

Muhammad Abduh's thoughts on institutional reform are highly relevant to the current needs of Islamic education management in Indonesia. Abduh not only emphasized curriculum reform, but also stressed the importance of improving the structure, governance, and overall education system. It was this

institutional-level reform that he implemented when reforming al-Azhar, from improving management, reviewing teaching methods, to implementing more objective evaluation standards (Samsul Bahri & Erni Qomariyah, 2023).

The principles of institutional reform proposed by Abduh are in line with the conditions of Islamic education in Indonesia, especially madrasahs, Islamic boarding schools, and Islamic higher education institutions (PTKI). Various official reports, both from the Ministry of Religious Affairs and BAN-S/M, show that the biggest challenge for Islamic educational institutions lies not only in the quality of the curriculum, but also in the management of the institutions. Many madrasahs and Islamic boarding schools still need to improve their quality management systems, learning management, teacher competencies, and internal quality assurance mechanisms (Fachrudin, 2021).

In this context, Abduh's ideas provide a philosophical foundation for efforts to modernize the management of Islamic education. The reform of al-Azhar shows that significant change must begin with restructuring the system. In Indonesia, this is reflected in various programs to improve the quality of Islamic education, such as strengthening madrasah accreditation, developing teacher competencies, and modernizing education data through an integrated information system.

At the university level, Abduh's thinking is also relevant to the transformation of IAIN into UIN. This change not only expanded faculties and study programs but also strengthened the integration of religious and general sciences in the institutional structure. This spirit of renewal reflects Abduh's principle that Islamic educational institutions must be able to respond to the needs of modern society without losing their religious identity.

Furthermore, institutional reform is also related to the establishment of a strong academic culture. Abduh encouraged the creation of a learning environment that is open to criticism, dialogue, and innovation (Amir & Rahman, 2021). In the Indonesian context, this is highly relevant because Islamic education still needs to promote a productive and collaborative academic culture, whether in madrasahs, Islamic boarding schools, or Islamic higher education institutions. A healthy academic environment will strengthen the role of teachers as agents of change and ensure that the learning process runs more effectively.

Thus, Abduh's thoughts on institutional reform make an important contribution to the direction of Islamic education reform in Indonesia. Improving governance, enhancing teacher quality, and fostering a critical academic culture are concrete steps that are in line with Abduh's spirit of reform in building Islamic educational institutions that are more adaptive, advanced, and relevant to the challenges of the times.

Revitalization of Heritage and Strengthening of Islamic Studies in the Archipelago

Muhammad Abduh's thoughts on the importance of revitalizing turats are highly relevant to the direction of Islamic education in Indonesia. For Abduh, turats, or classical Islamic scholarship, is an important source for understanding the foundations of Islamic teachings (Elston, 2022). However, he emphasized that the turats must be critically examined, not passively accepted or treated as an unquestionable doctrine. This critical attitude was at the heart of Abduh's renewal of thought: tradition must continue to be respected, but it must also be reinterpreted in order to remain relevant to the developments of the times.

This view is very much in line with the needs of Islamic education in Indonesia, which has a rich tradition of local scholarship, especially from the scholars of the archipelago. Various Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia maintain the tradition of studying classical Islamic texts, which is an important part of the turats. However, in the modern context, this study requires a more systematic, dialogical, and relevant method to the needs of students. Many Islamic boarding schools are now beginning to develop new approaches to teaching classical texts, such as contextual analysis, thematic studies, and interdisciplinary discussions that connect classical texts with contemporary social realities (Yuspa & Arifin, 2024). This approach is in line with Abduh's idea that turats should be used as inspiration for solving modern problems, not merely memorized or quoted without consideration.

In addition, the revitalization of heritage is also evident in the efforts of various Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia that have begun digitizing classical manuscripts written by scholars from the archipelago. This effort opens up wider access for academics, students, and Islamic boarding school students to rediscover the intellectual wealth of Indonesian Islam. This initiative revives the same spirit as Abduh, namely utilizing the scientific heritage of the ummah as intellectual capital to build a more advanced civilization.

The revitalization of turats is also evident in the emergence of various new approaches to Islamic studies in universities. Concepts such as "Islam Nusantara," "Islam Berkemajuan," or "Islam Moderat" combine classical traditions with modern scientific approaches. These concepts do not abandon the roots of Islamic tradition, but interpret them contextually in accordance with the needs of Indonesia's diverse society. This view is in line with Abduh's idea that tradition must be understood in the light of reasoning and social development.

Thus, Abduh's revitalization of Islamic heritage provides direction for Islamic education in Indonesia to maintain a balance between tradition and modernity. This approach enables students to gain a deep understanding of Islamic heritage while also developing critical, adaptive, and creative thinking

skills. Through critical reading of the turats, Islamic education can produce a generation that is able to appreciate the intellectual heritage of Islam while still responding to the challenges of the times in a relevant and innovative way.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

Conclusion

This study aims to examine Muhammad Abduh's reformist ideas and identify their implications for contemporary Islamic education in Indonesia. Based on an analysis of Abduh's works and related academic literature, this study shows that Abduh's ideas are not only historically relevant but also provide a philosophical foundation and practical direction for the reform of Islamic education in Indonesia.

First, Abduh's criticism of taqlid provides a basis for strengthening a culture of critical thinking in madrasahs and Islamic boarding schools. His views emphasize that religious learning should encourage rational understanding, dialogue, and openness to differences. This is in line with the needs of Indonesian Islamic education, which is currently strengthening literacy, numeracy, and reasoning skills.

Second, Abduh's idea of integrating religious and modern knowledge provides direction for the development of a more holistic madrasah and pesantren curriculum. The concepts of an integrated curriculum, competency-based learning, and strengthening digital literacy show that Abduh's principles of reform have found room for implementation in Indonesian Islamic education policy.

Third, Abduh's institutional reform efforts inspired the restructuring of Islamic education governance in Indonesia, both through improved accreditation, strengthened quality assurance, increased teacher competence, and institutional transformation of Islamic higher education institutions. This shows that educational reform requires not only curriculum revision, but also systemic change.

Fourth, Abduh's thoughts on revitalizing turats provide an important perspective for the development of Islamic studies in the archipelago. His critical approach to classical heritage is in line with initiatives to digitize manuscripts, develop Islamic studies in the archipelago, and take a contextual approach to understanding classical texts.

Thus, this study contributes to the literature by mapping a clearer relationship between Abduh's thoughts and the reality of Islamic education in Indonesia based on empirical data and actual policies. This research shows that Abduh's ideas of renewal can be adapted into concrete strategies to improve the quality of Islamic education, both in terms of learning, curriculum, and governance. These findings are expected to serve as a reference for

policymakers, educators, and researchers in designing a more relevant, progressive, and competitive model of Islamic education in the contemporary era.

Implication

This study shows that Muhammad Abduh's reformist thinking has important implications for the renewal of Islamic education in Indonesia. Theoretically, his emphasis on *ijtihad*, freedom of thought, and the integration of religious knowledge with modern science provides a philosophical basis for strengthening Islamic education that is more rational, contextual, and adaptive to the developments of the times. Meanwhile, in practical terms, Abduh's ideas are in line with various national Islamic education reform agendas—from strengthening reasoning skills as highlighted in AKMI, developing a curriculum that integrates science and Islamic values, to modernizing learning methods in madrasas, Islamic boarding schools, and Islamic universities. His encouragement of critical thinking supports the transformation of the role of teachers as learning facilitators, while his call to revive the *turats* is relevant to efforts to digitize manuscripts and strengthen the study of the intellectual heritage of Islam in the archipelago. Thus, this research shows that Abduh's thinking not only contributes to academic discourse but also offers concrete directions for progressive, inclusive, and relevant Islamic educational practices in Indonesia today.

REFERENCES

- Abduh, M. (1992). *Risalat at-Tauhid*. Bulan Bintang.
- Adams, C. (1933). *Islam and Modernisme in Egypt*. Oxford University Press.
- Afifah Irfindari, A., Al Jannah, A. A., & Ridhani Abwi, Z. (2021). Perspektif Muhammad 'Abduh dalam Pembaharuan Pendidikan Islam. *Jurnal Pendidikan Indonesia*, 2(8), 1306–1312. <https://doi.org/10.36418/japendi.v2i8.247>
- Al-Bahi, M. (1986). *Al-Fikr al-Islam al-Hadist wa Shiratuh bi al-Isti'mar al-Gharbi* (S. Sa'ad, Penerj.). Pustaka Panjimas.
- Alimin, H. A. (2023). The Concept Of Islamic Education According To The Education of Ibnu Miskawaih And Al-Ghazali. *Lentera Pendidikan : Jurnal Ilmu Tarbiyah Dan Keguruan*, 26(1), 171–181. <https://doi.org/10.24252/lp.2023v26n1i12>
- Amir, A. N., & Rahman, T. A. (2021). The Influence of Muhammad Abduh in Indonesia. *International Journal Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, 23(1), 27–59. <https://doi.org/10.21580/ihya.23.1.7076>

- Asifa, F. (2018). Pemikiran Pendidikan Muhammad Abduh dan Kontribusinya Terhadap Pengembangan Teori Pendidikan Islam. *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam*, 15(1), 88–98. <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.2018.151-06>
- Az-Zahra, F., Nuranisa, & Nurhasanah, S. (2021). The Concept Of Thinking Of Islamic Religious Education By Muhammad Abduh. *Al-Ulum: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*. <https://doi.org/10.56114/al-ulum.v2i1.116>
- Basri, H., Suhartini, A., Nursobah, A., & Ruswandi, U. (2022). Applying Higher Order Thinking Skill (HOTS) to Strengthen Studentsâ€™ Religious Moderation at Madrasah Aliyah. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 8(2), 207–220. <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v8i2.21133>
- Cahyadi, A., & Della, D. A. (2021). The Character Education in Learning of Islamic Education: An Analysis of Character Values in Islamic Education Textbook for V Grade Islamic Elementary School. *SYAMIL: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam (Journal of Islamic Education)*, 9(2), 83–98. <https://doi.org/10.21093/sy.v9i2.3555>
- Darajat, D. M., Rosyidin, I., & Fahrudin, D. (2022). Pesantren and madrasa-based digital literacy practices: The case of the Darunnajah Islamic Boarding School, Jakarta. *Islamic Communication Journal*, 7(2), 257–272. <https://doi.org/10.21580/icj.2022.7.2.13619>
- Dwi Noviani & Zainuddin. (2020). Inovasi Kurikulum terhadap Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam di Sekolah Umum. *TAUIH: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 2(1), 17–37. <https://doi.org/10.53649/tauih.v2i1.73>
- Elston, M. (2022). Becoming Turâth: The Islamic Tradition in the Modern Period. *Die Welt des Islams*, 63(4), 441–473. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700607-20220026>
- Fachrudin, Y. (2021). Strategi Peningkatan Mutu Sekolah Berbasis Pesantren. *Dirasah*, 4(2), 91–108.
- Guessoum, N., & Bigliardi, S. (2023). *Islam and Science: Past, Present, and Future Debates* (1 ed.). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009266550>
- Harmathilda, H., Yuli, Y., Hakim, A. R., & Supriyadi, C. (2024). Transformasi Pendidikan Pesantren di Era Modern: Antara Tradisi dan Inovasi. *Karimiyah*, 4(1), 33–50. <https://doi.org/10.59623/karimiyah.v4i1.51>
- Hodgson, M. G. S. (1974). *The Venture of Islam*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Houtsman, M. T. (1987). *First Encyclopedia of Islam 1913-1936*. E. J. Brill.
- Kemenag RI. (2024, September 15). *EMIS 4.0: Gerbang Data Pendidikan Kementerian Agama*. https://kemenag.go.id/opini/emis-4-0-gerbang-data-pendidikan-kementerian-agama-rKxmf?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- Madjid, N. (1994). *Kontekstualisasi Doktrin Islam Dalam Sejarah*. Paramadina.

- Marcotte, K. M., & Gruppen, L. D. (2022). Competency-Based Education as Curriculum and Assessment for Integrative Learning. *Education Sciences*, 12(4), 267. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci12040267>
- Nasution, H. (1986). *Pembaruan dalam Islam Sejarah Pemikiran dan Gerakan*. Bulan Bintang.
- Nata, A. (2000). *Pemikiran Para Tokoh Pendidikan Islam*. PT.RajaGrafindo Persada.
- Ningsih, A. (2021). Pembaharuan Pendidikan Islam (Studi Pemikiran Muhammad Abduh Dan Rasyid Ridha). *Jurnal Penelitian Agama*, 22(1), 87–101. <https://doi.org/10.24090/jpa.v22i1.2021.pp87-101>
- PISA. (2022). *PISA 2022 Result*. OECD.
- Priyanto, A. (2020). Pendidikan Islam dalam Era Revolusi Industri 4.0. *J-PAI: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam*, 6(2). <https://doi.org/10.18860/jpai.v6i2.9072>
- Qomar, M. (2022). *Wacana Islam Inklusif*. IRCiSoD.
- Rahman, F. (1985). *Islam Dan Modernitas Tentang Transformasi Intelektual* (Ahsi, Penerj.). Pustaka Pelajar.
- Romano, M. R., Díaz-Almeyda, E., Namdul, T., & Lhundup, Y. (2021). Dialogue-Based Learning: A Framework for Inclusive Science Education and Applied Ethics. *Frontiers in Communication*, 6, 731839. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2021.731839>
- Samsul Bahri & Erni Qomariyah. (2023). Reformasi Manajemen Kelembagaan Dan Kurikulum Pendidikan Muhammad Abduh Di Mesir. *Journal Publicuho*, 6(3), 1156–1166. <https://doi.org/10.35817/publicuho.v6i3.310>
- Siti Rohmah Kurniasih, Erni Haryanti, & A. Heris Hermawan. (2023). Integrasi Ilmu dan Iman dalam Kurikulum: Studi Kasus pada Sekolah Dasar Islam Terpadu. *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam Al-Thariqah*, 8(1), 77–93. [https://doi.org/10.25299/al-thariqah.2023.vol8\(1\).11607](https://doi.org/10.25299/al-thariqah.2023.vol8(1).11607)
- Susetyo, B., & N. Ummu Athiyah, C. (2021). Peta Mutu Pendidikan Madrasah Berdasarkan Akreditasi. *Andragogi: Jurnal Diklat Teknis Pendidikan dan Keagamaan*, 9(1), 71–80. <https://doi.org/10.36052/andragogi.v9i1.223>
- Susyanto, B. (2022). Manajemen Lembaga Pendidikan Islam Dalam Menghadapi Era Digital. *Al-Madrasah: Jurnal Pendidikan Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*, 6(3), 692. <https://doi.org/10.35931/am.v6i3.1072>
- Sutrisno, A. (2023). Re-Orientasi Pendidikan Islam Perspektif Muhammad Abduh Dan Relevansinya Di Lembaga Pendidikan Islam Madura. *Jurnal Perspektif*, 15(2), 131–143. <https://doi.org/10.53746/perspektif.v15i2.84>
- Suwahyu, I. (2022). Telaah Terhadap Konsep Pembaharuan Pendidikan Islam Muhammad Abduh. *Al-Tarbawi Al-Haditsah: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 7(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.24235/tarbawi.v7i1.10112>
- Syahrizal, & Kasim, T. S. A. T. (2023). Practice of Ittiba' al-Sunnah (Following the Sunnah) at Al-Fatah Islamic Boarding School Temboro Magetan East

- Java Indonesia. *Journal of Islamic Education*, 9(2023), 38–47. <https://doi.org/10.22452/jier.vol9no2023.4>
- Yi, C., Nasri, N. B. M., & Jiao, J. (2023). Exploration and Analysis of Middle School Teachers' Classroom Questioning Methods from the Perspective of Dialogue Education. *Journal of Law and Sustainable Development*, 11(6), e834. <https://doi.org/10.55908/sdgs.v11i6.834>
- Yuspa, A., & Arifin, A. (2024). Evolusi dan Strategi Efektif dalam Pengajaran Kitab Kuning: Mencari Keseimbangan antara Tradisi dan Modernitas dalam Pendidikan Islam. *Interdisciplinary Explorations in Research Journal*, 2(2), 1053–1062. <https://doi.org/10.62976/ierj.v2i2.600>