Mixing Educational System: Progressive Learning at SMA Muhammadiyah PK Surakarta

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Abstract

This research goal is to offer a description of the implementation of progressivism in the educational process at SMA Muhammadiyah PK Surakarta. This has implications for whether the fusion of two distinct educational traditions, namely modern European education and classical Indonesian Islamic education, can result in a progressive educational establishment. The research design utilized for this study was qualitative, and the respondents were the school principal and teachers at SMA Muhammadiyah PK Surakarta. The researchers utilized 15 indicators of progressivism, namely lesson plans, real-life case examples, problem-solving, teaching methods, discussion, deductive-inductive techniques, student projects, reading books, updating information, reading campaigns, differences of opinion, student learning styles, classroom atmosphere, critical thinking, and types of exams. The results of this study demonstrate that this school is a highly progressive school. This study presents empirical proof that an educational model that integrates contemporary European education with Islamic education can generate a progressive educational approach, rather than a restrictive Islamic education model presented in modern education. The findings suggest that Islamic education can become a progressive and advanced education model.

Keywords: *Progressivism, Muhammadiyah, School, Education, Islamic Education*

INTRODUCTION

Islamic Boarding schools (pesantren), which is the oldest educational institution in Indonesia, is believed to have existed since the 16th century, and some sources suggest its existence as early as the 12th century. During the colonial period, the Portuguese and Dutch had a significant impact on the development of education in Indonesia. This colonial influence evidently had both positive and negative aspects. On the positive side, it introduced modern educational institutions to the country. However, the negative aspect was that Dutch education was characterized by extreme racism, with students being segregated based on their race, namely Europeans, Natives, and Chinese. On the other hand, another positive aspect of Dutch education was that it provided a model of modern education that was gradually adopted by the Indonesian education system, including Islamic Boarding School (Islamic boarding school (pesantren)(Harits et al. 2016)

In the early 1900s, the Dutch established schools for native children as part of their ethical policy, Dutch Ethical Policy *(Politik Etis/Politik Balas Budi)*. Some of the schools initiated by the Dutch government included the HIS, MULO, HBS, ELS, HCS, TELS, Kweekschool, STOVIA, and others. There were also schools intended for the lower class, such as the *"ongko loro"* schools, which aimed to provide basic competencies in reading, writing, and arithmetic for low-level employees(Suratminto 2013).

The schools established by the Dutch for European children were the ELS (Europese Lagere School) and TELS (Tweede Europese Lagere School). Meanwhile, schools for natives consisted of the EHIS (Eerste Hollands Inlands School) and THIS (Tweede Hollands Inlands School). There was also the HCS (Hollands Chineesse School), a special school for Chinese children. In all of these schools, religious education was not allowed, and any violation of this was considered resistance against the colonial government(Yahdan Ibnu Human Saleh 1991).

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In addition to its ban on religious education, the Dutch expansion of its educational model was also projected as a new form of colonization to replace Islamic educational institutions, such as Islamic boarding schools (pesantren)(Muhammad Ali 2004). In response to this reality, KH. Ahmad Dahlan, the founder of Muhammadiyah from Kauman, Yogyakarta, promptly established the Madrasah Muhammadiyah. At that time, Islamic boarding school (pesantren) was the prevailing form of education for Muslim communities in Indonesia, and it was believed to have existed since the time of the Wali Songo(Isbah 2016). Azyumardi Azra has noted that Islamic boarding school (pesantren) has inveterate roots in the history of the Indonesian nation and has had a significant impact on the modern life of Indonesian society(Azra 2015). Islamic boarding school (pesantren) can be considered one of the important pillars of Islamic civilization in the archipelago, particularly in the context of maintaining moderate Islamic beliefs to this day(Mustain Thahir 2014).

Ahmad Dahlan established Madrasah to accommodate the educational interests of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), which have deep roots in the history of the Indonesian nation, as well as the educational interests of modern Dutch-style education. Madrasah, in essence, is a combination of Islamic boarding school (pesantren), which emphasizes the teaching of Islamic religious content, and modern European-style schools, which focus on teaching secular subjects. Madrasah has become a renewal educational institution that continuously modernizes educational management, including curriculum, student affairs, teaching staff, and facilities(Fuad 2004).

According to Nadlifah (2016), KH. Ahmad Dahlan formulated the educational goals of Muhammadiyah based on the concept of *"kyai intelek"* (intellectual religious leaders) and *"intelek kyai"* (religious leaders with intellectual capabilities). The message that KH. Ahmad Dahlan conveyed to his students was, "*Dadiyo kyai sing kemajuan, lan aja kesel-kesel anggonmu nyambut gawe kanggo Muhammadiyah"* which means, *"become a progressive priest and never be waried of working for Muhammadiyah."* This message has transformed into the philosophy behind the establishment of moderate Madrasah that aligns religious and secular knowledge, known as "Progressive Islam," in the present day(Jubba et al. 2022).

The slogan *"Islam Berkemajuan"* (Progressive Islam) was adopted by Muhammadiyah during the 47th Muktamar Muhammadiyah held in Makassar from August 3-7, 2015. The theme of the event was "Gerakan Perubahan Menuju Indonesia Berkemajuan" (Movement for Change towards Progressive Indonesia), which embodies the concept of promoting a moderate, progressive, and contextual understanding of Islam (Mustofa, 2015). "Islam Berkemajuan" represents a form of progressive Islam(Arifin, Mughni, and Nurhakim 2022) that aims to address various global challenges(Hasnan Bachtiar 2020) by making Islam in Indonesia a progressive force(Darojat and Chair 2019).

On the other hand, in the context of Islamic education reform, there are at least three approaches: (1) Islamic education reform-oriented towards modern European education, (2) Islamic education reform based on pure Islamic sources, and (3) Islamic education reform-oriented towards nationalism(Ni'mah 2014). The modernization of Muhammadiyah's education system was achieved by adapting the Dutch education system to Islamic education(Palahuddin 2020).

The question is whether the model adopted by Ahmad Dahlan, which combined the European education system with Islamic education, was able to produce a progressive and advanced education system? This is the question to be addressed in this research.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study was conducted with the primary objective of investigating the implementation of progressive values in SMA Muhammadiyah PK Surakarta. As an educational institution, Muhammadiyah schools, including SMA Muhammadiyah PK Surakarta, represent the continuation of the madrasah tradition established by Ahmad Dahlan. The research was carried out in January 2021, employing a qualitative research approach. The qualitative methodology was chosen to explore the phenomenon in its natural setting, without any intervention or manipulation. Data collection was conducted in a manner that minimized the potential subjective biases of the researcher. The data for this study were obtained through direct observations and interviews with key informants, including the school principal, teachers, and students of SMA Muhammadiyah PK Surakarta.

This research utilized the snowball sampling technique for data collection through interviews. Snowball sampling is a sampling technique where initially a small number of individuals are selected as samples, and then these samples are requested to refer their acquaintances to be included in the sample, resulting in an increasing number of samples. The sampling process aimed to obtain a descriptive overview of the characteristics of the observed units, allowing for generalization. The researchers collected data from a portion of the population known as the sample. To analyze the collected data, the researchers employed the interactive data analysis model technique. The steps of the interactive data analysis model technique, as proposed by Miles and Huberman(Miles, Huberman, and Saldana 2014), are as follows:
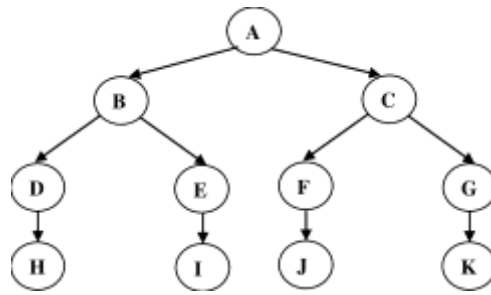
Figure 1. Snowball

The researcher conducted data collection at SMA Muhammadiyah PK Surakarta using observation, interviews, and documentation with appropriate strategies. The data was then further analyzed in subsequent processes. Data reduction was carried out, involving the selection, focus, abstraction, and transformation of raw data. As the data was collected through interviews, document analysis, and direct field visits, written notes were condensed to focus on the research area, namely progressive and prophetic values. The reduced data was then presented in a sequential manner and verified to ensure its validity and reliability. Finally, generalization was performed, which involved forming an idea or conclusion from a specific phenomenon or event.

The obtained research findings from direct field observations were subsequently organized into data patterns. The interconnections among the data were then mapped out, focusing on cause-and-effect relationships and directing toward specific outcomes. This mapping of data facilitated the creation of a framework for drawing conclusions or generalizations, ensuring the validity and reliability of the findings.

DISCUSSION

Progressive Education

Progressive education is a philosophical movement that aims to advance towards a better direction(Huda and Kusumawati 2019), embodying progressive ideology(Bowers 1967). This educational model has been implemented in various parts of the world. John Dewey, a prominent progressive education thinker, has had a significant influence on education practices in Muhammadiyah since its inception(Fadlillah 2017; Muhammad Ali 2004).

Progressive education has been acknowledged since the era following the Renaissance. One of the early proponents of this educational model, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1783)(Oelkers 1998), referred to progressive education as student-centered education. Roughly a century later, Maria Montessori (1897) introduced progressive education in Italy, thereby affording students with cognitive impairments an opportunity to compete with their non-disabled peers(Rebecca Garte 2017).

In 1919, the United States saw the establishment of the Progressive Education Association. This organization formulated seven key principles that would go on to significantly influence the American education system. These principles included the following: (1) the freedom for children to develop naturally, (2) teachers serving as guides rather than task-givers, (3) the application of scientific study to children's development, (4) greater attention to all factors that affect the physical development of students, (5) cooperation between schools and

families to meet the needs of students, (6) an emphasis on various course subjects and tasks, and (7) progressive schools serving as leaders of the education movement. Despite being a new movement, this approach was not without its challenges(Tom Little 2013).

In addition to the seven points above, progressive education has certain principles, including education as a process that begins and ends with the child (student-centered); students learn actively; teachers act as facilitators; schools are cooperative and democratic; and learning focuses on problem-solving(Fadlillah 2017).

Progressive education also focuses on achieving creative individual quality; being oriented towards the present, not the uncertain future; basic patterns centered on group participation(Fadlillah 2017); assuming that humans have unique abilities to overcome various problems that threaten humans themselves; directing towards comprehensive thinking skills training; educating students in a way that makes them productive and agile in a constantly changing world; and teaching democratic values(Kloss 2018).

Progressive learning must include renewing the education system, redefining the objectives of education, and improving the techniques for organizing education, and the learning process in education. Students are the center of progressive learning. They are expected to have the ability to comprehend teaching materials independently, with the teachers only providing assistance when necessary.

In the realm of Islam in Indonesia, the Mambaul Ulum Surakarta Madrasah holds the distinction of being the first madrasah to adopt a progressive Islamic education approach. This occurred during its establishment in 1905, which predates the establishment of Muhammadiyah by Ahmad Dahlan in 1918, by several years(Setiawan et al. 2022). However, Ahmad Dahlan drew inspiration for his progressive education principles from Middle Eastern intellectuals such as Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Ridha rather than Mambaul Ulum(Fanani 2019).

Progressive pedagogy embodies the initial spirit introduced by KH. Ahmad Dahlan through the concept of *tajdid* or re-establishment. This vision became evident with his establishment of a madrasah that adopted a European-style classroom system while preserving Islamic curriculum content. Notably, KH. Ahmad Dahlan imparted a message to his students, "*Dadiyo kyai sing kemajuan, lan aja kesel-kesel anggonmu nyambut gawe kanggo Muhammadiyah*", urging them to become progressive kiai and remain steadfast in their efforts within the Muhammadiyah movement. Building upon the notion of a "progressive *kiai* (priest)" educational stakeholders within Muhammadiyah subsequently formulated the concepts of *kiai*-intellectual and intellectual-*kiai*. This philosophy profoundly influenced the foundation of madrasahs, where the amalgamation of religious and secular knowledge is emphasized to cultivate religious scholars (kiai) who concurrently epitomize intellectual pursuits, and vice versa(Suyatno et al. 2022).
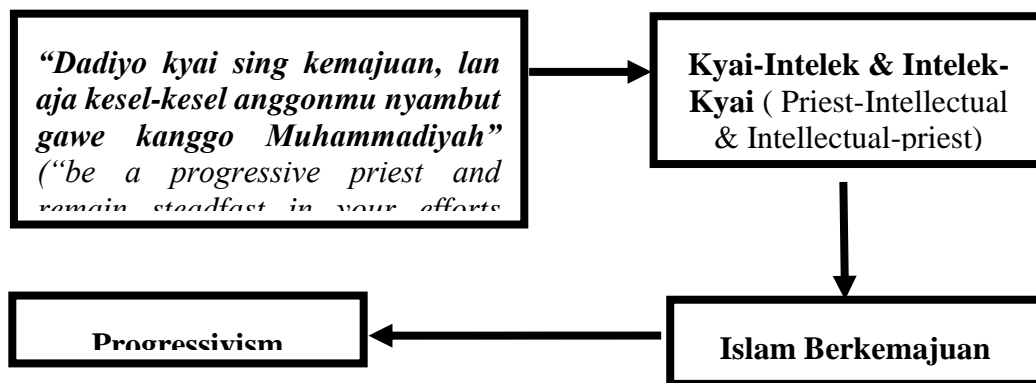

Figure 2. Progresivise Education in Muhammadiyah

1. SMA Muhammadiyah PK Surakarta

SMA Muhammadiyah PK Surakarta is a charitable effort of Muhammadiyah (AUM) owned by the Muhammadiyah Branch Leadership (PCM) of Kottabarat Surakarta. The school is considered one of the leading

schools in Surakarta due to its excellent programs such as tahfidz class, khitobah, and extracurricular activities. SMA Muhammadiyah PK Surakarta claims to have implemented progressive education which prompted researchers to conduct a study on school's implementation of this educational approach.

Researchers presented a *conceptual framework* as follows:
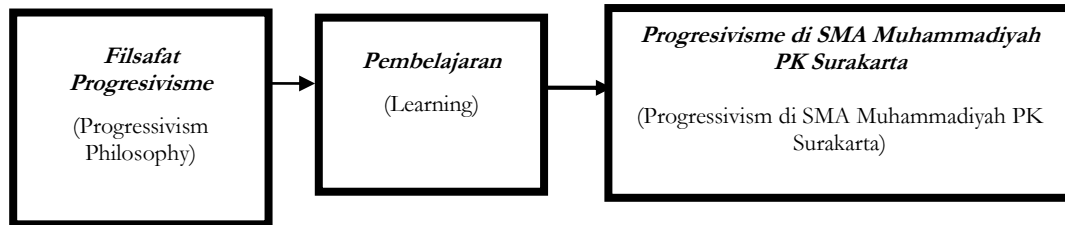
Figure 3. Conceptual Framework

SMA Muhammadiyah PK Surakarta is located on Jalan Pleret Raya, Sumber, Banjarsari, Surakarta. The school was established in 2016 and has successfully graduated students on two occasions. At present, the student population at SMA Muhammadiyah PK Surakarta is 132, with each class accommodating 44 students. The school is staffed with 25 teaching personnel who instruct six classes encompassing different areas of study, namely, 10th-grade Science, 10th-grade Social Sciences, 11th-grade Science, 11th-grade Social Sciences, 12th-grade Science, and 12th-grade Social Sciences. Additionally, a specialized Tahfidz (Qur'an memorization) instructor has been appointed to oversee the Tahfidz program, which operates independently of regular academic activities.

The main vision of this school is to make its students the *ulul albab* generation. In Islamic tradition, *ulul albab* means intelligent and having the sense of not only correct but also wise understanding. Furthermore, the mission is to realize the actualization of Islamic values in a meaningful way, to carry out accelerated quality of education that can be correlated with higher education, and to develop learning models that can serve students' learning styles.

Through the researcher's observations, progressivism emerges as an *hidden curriculum* at SMA Muhammadiyah PK Surakarta, manifesting in the everyday teaching and learning processes in the school. *Hidden curriculum*, referring to unspoken agreements, beliefs, and common practices within an institution or community(Andarvazh, Afshar, and Yazdani 2017; Gardner 2010) is perceptible in the school's educational activities. The implementation of *hidden curriculum* is noted for its positive impact, fostering constructive habits and behavior among students during their academic endeavors(Kian, Ehsangar, and Izanloo 2020; Gordon 1984).

Lestari (2016) asserts that one of the factors contributing to the failure of education in cultivating individuals of character is the lack of balance in the development between the *programmed curriculum* (referring to the formal, written curriculum) and the *hidden curriculum*. The objectives of Islamic education can be realized if a harmonious integration between the formal written curriculum and the *hidden curriculum* exists. Programmed curriculum and *hidden curriculum* can be likened to a pair of wings on an aircraft, both enabling SMA Muhammadiyah PK Surakarta to take flight and soar to greater heights.

In the pursuit of investigating the extent to which progressive educational values are being implemented within SMA Muhammadiyah PK Surakarta, the researcher compiled a list of questions that correlated such values with those of the institution. In particular, the list of questions for all teachers consisted of specific indicators that aimed to capture the degree of progressiveness among educators in the learning process. The resulting responses were then analyzed using an interactive model data analysis of the interview results in order to categorize them according to the levels of progressiveness. These categories were subsequently described as "less progressive," "progressive," and "very progressive." The outcomes of this study are expected to provide a means of *mapping* the level of teacher progressiveness in the school. The indicators used in this research were derived from various progressive education theories by John Dewey.

It is noteworthy that SMA Muhammadiyah PK Surakarta has already implemented various progressive education practices in its daily activities. For instance, the school's learning approach is problem-solving oriented, with an emphasis on applying the acquired knowledge and skills in practical situations. Problem-solving is regarded as the ultimate objective of the learning process while understanding the subject matter is considered an intermediate goal.

Furthermore, the learning process at the institution also leverages real-life cases from the community, with teachers providing real-life examples from various sources such as the internet, TV, and mass media. This approach is aimed at fostering students' abilities to think systematically and logically, as well as to increase their *problem-solving* skills. Students are also encouraged to engage in project-based learning, which is intended to enhance their critical thinking skills.

The mentorship role of a teacher is very crucial in progressive learning, which is student-centered and designed to facilitate comprehension of subject matter. To this end, Mualifah (2013) recommends the use of a lesson plan. Given the goals of progressivism, which seeks to promote rapid advancement and the need for a flexible and evolving curriculum, a well-designed lesson plan is essential to support this approach. It should accommodate the diverse learning styles of students, and the teachers at SMA Muhammadiyah PK Surakarta have developed a reference lesson plan for their teaching.

This reference lesson plan functions as a practical tool for educators at SMA Muhammadiyah PK Surakarta, in line with the principles of progressive education. The role of teacher mentorship is not only emphasized in delivering content, but also in guiding students through a learning process that encourages critical thinking, problem solving, and active participation.

Lesson plans, designed with flexibility as a principle, allow teachers to adapt their teaching strategies to meet students' individual needs and learning styles. By accommodating diverse learning preferences, the school recognizes the importance of personalized education within a general progressivism framework. This approach creates a student-centered environment where learners are empowered to explore topics at their own pace, encouraging a deeper understanding of the course material.

In the realm of progressive education, the role of the teacher is not to be viewed as the central figure in the learning process, but rather as a mentor or caregiver to the students. Parenting styles can be categorized into three types: *authoritative* (reasonable demands), *authoritarian* (demanding obedience), and *permissive* (giving in to the child's desires). Teachers are considered as educators with extensive knowledge and experience in the field of education (Puger, 2015). They play a strategic role as advisors, mentors, and directors for students. Suparlan (as cited in Syamrabusta, 2020) posits that there are four essential skills that a teacher must possess, which include planning learning programs, executing and leading the learning process, analyzing the progress of the learning process, and fostering relationships with students. Progressive learning requires skilled teachers to guide students. The teacher's function in the learning process is not that of a central figure but rather as a director who determines the direction of the learning process.

Despite not being the central figure, the teacher's presence and capabilities remain important. In progressive education, teachers must plan learning activities that stimulate students' interest and curiosity. Additionally, teachers need to know how to organize student group work effectively. As previously mentioned, the basic pattern of progressive teaching is centered on group participation(Fadlillah 2017). Progressive education should be open to social reality by being flexible in accordance with social realities, so that knowledge becomes more complex and complete. At SMA Muhammadiyah PK Surakarta, teachers are required to read books and update their knowledge. Teachers are obligated to follow the latest developments in their respective subjects.

Moreover, progressive learning does not only aim to teach students to understand subject matter but also to help them acquire deeper meaning or wisdom from the material. The student's ability to understand the meaning or wisdom of a subject matter is measured by their ability to answer essay-type questions in exams. SMA Muhammadiyah PK Surakarta prioritizes improving students' analytical skills. Thus, the ability to write an analysis is highly prioritized.

In the concept of progressive education, students are assisted by teachers in understanding the relationship between theory and facts in the field. The teacher's assistance becomes meaningful if the student comprehensively understands the relationship between theory and field facts. Students should not be considered as empty vessels that can be freely filled. If this were to happen, the learning process would only be a *transfer of knowledge* from teacher to student, rather than encouraging students to think, plan, and complete their projects(Fadlillah 2017). The main focus that should be done in the classroom is the problem-solving process by using deductive and inductive techniques. This process involves deriving theories and hypotheses from the problem at hand, followed by testing these hypotheses through data collection and analysis. This problem-solving process is known as the deductive-inductive technique (Puger, 2015). Teachers must be able to master the deductive-inductive technique in order to enlighten students about a phenomenon. The teachers at SMA Muhammadiyah learn teaching techniques such as deductive and inductive methods that are routinely applied.

Researchers have identified several indicators of progressivism based on the descriptions above. These indicators are used to measure the level of progressivism among teachers at SMA Muhammadiyah PK Surakarta. These indicators include: (1) *lesson plans*, (2) real-life case examples, (3) *problem-solving*, (4) teaching methods, (5) discussion, (6) deductive-inductive techniques, (7) *student projects*, (8) book reading, (9) information update, (10) reading campaigns, (11) opinion diversity , (12) student learning styles, (13) class atmosphere, (14) critical thinking, and (15) types of exams/tests. These indicators are used by researchers to measure the level of progressivism among teachers at SMA Muhammadiyah PK Surakarta. Ultimately, the researchers categorized SMA Muhammadiyah PK Surakarta based on the research results, including "Very Progressive," "Progressive," or "Less Progressive."

Tabel 1. Teachers' Progresivisme Level of at SMA Muhammadiyah PK Surakarta

No	Indicator	Category
1	Lesson plan	Very Progressive
2	Real-life case examples	Very Progressive
3	Problem solving	Very Progressive
4	Teaching methods	Very Progressive
5	Discussion	Very Progressive
6	Deductive-inductive techniques	Progressive
7	*Student projects*	Progressive
8	Book reading	Very Progressive
9	information update	Very Progressive
10	reading campaigns	Very Progressive
11	opinion diversity	Progressive
12	student learning styles	Very Progressive
13	class atmosphere	Very Progressive
14	critical thinking	Very Progressive
15	types of exams/tests	Progressive

The results of the indicators presented in the table above indicate that 11 components show "Very Progressive," while only 4 components indicate "Progressive." The percentage of the "Very Progressive" indicator is 73.33%, which exceeds the 50% threshold. This signifies that the teachers at SMA Muhammadiyah PK Surakarta are "Very Progressive" in their pedagogical practices.

The progressive education model implemented at SMA Muhammadiyah PK Surakarta demonstrates that, despite being a product of a combination of modern European education and traditional Indonesian Islamic

boarding school (pesantren), the school can produce a progressive and open educational approach. This approach is grounded in strong roots that are deeply embedded in the local cultural context, while also being flexible enough to adapt to the demands of the modern era. The findings of this study provide evidence that Islamic education can be both modern and progressive without compromising its fundamental values and traditions.

One noteworthy aspect of the school's progressive model is its ability to nurture a holistic educational experience. Students not only engage with a curriculum that aligns with global standards but also benefit from the incorporation of Islamic teachings that foster moral and ethical development. The study affirms that the synthesis of traditional Islamic values and progressive educational practices contributes to the well-rounded development of students, preparing them for the challenges of the modern world.

Furthermore, the findings emphasize the importance of the local cultural context in shaping the progressive education model at SMA Muhammadiyah PK Surakarta. The school's ability to integrate Islamic values into a contemporary framework demonstrates a harmonious coexistence of tradition and modernity. This balance is crucial for sustaining the relevance and effectiveness of Islamic education in the evolving landscape of global education.

CONCLUSION

Reflecting progressive philosophy, progressive education is a philosophical movement that seeks to shift education in the direction of improvement. Across the world, this educational concept has been put into practice. From the school's founding, John Dewey, a well-known progressive education theorist, has had a big impact on its educational methods. Progressive education also follows a number of key principles: learning is problem-solving oriented; teachers serve as facilitators; students take an active role in their education; schools are cooperative and democratic; and education is a process that starts and ends with the child (student-centered).

In addition, progressive education emphasizes developing a creative individual quality, living in the present rather than worrying about the future, fundamental patterns based on group engagement, the idea that people are uniquely capable of solving a variety of issues that threaten them, a focus on comprehensive thinking skills training, educating students to be productive and adaptable in a world that is changing all the time, and teaching democratic values.

An in-depth analysis of various indicators for SMA Muhammadiyah PK Surakarta confirms that the school, as one of the leading schools with many achievements in Solo and Central Java, is a progressive, advanced institution. This study strongly demonstrates that Islamic schools can adopt a progressive approach to education, rather than being restricted to a closed curriculum based on modern education. The findings of this study have significant implications for the development of education in the Muslim world and beyond. Overall, SMA Muhammadiyah PK Surakarta is a very advanced institution, as the study's findings show. The researcher's observations indicate that progressivism functions as a hidden curriculum at SMA Muhammadiyah PK Surakarta, showing up in the regular teaching and learning activities there. This study provides empirical evidence that, as opposed to the constrictive Islamic education model seen in modern education, an educational model that combines Islamic education with modern European education can produce a progressive educational approach.

This research opens up opportunities for further research, namely research with the same model in different schools. Each school has unique values and characteristics that are different from other schools, so it is necessary to see their good values so that they can be an inspiration for others. A following research can be done to compare a school with another using a myriad of given indicators. Back to the core problem, a researcher also can reexamine the indicators whether they could properly represent the correct value of progressivism or only depict the surface as pseudo-progressivism. It is important to continue this research by focusing on evaluating the real impact of implementing progressivism values on academic achievement, character development, and students' readiness to face future challenges. In addition, further research could explore parental and community perceptions of progressivism in the school environment.

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