

# SYED SHEIKH AL-HADI'S VIEWS ON THE EDUCATIONAL REFORMS IN MALAYA

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## Abstract

Though there is a growing body of literature on Syed Sheikh al-Hadi, few focuses on his contributions to the educational reform. Thus, this study analyzes Syed Sheikh al-Hadi's views on the educational reforms. Al-Hadi was discontent with the traditional Islamic education in Malaya because of its inadequacy to prepare the future generation to meet the challenges of modernity. For this purpose, al-Hadi emphasized the reform of Islamic education system through the madrasah, which would offer both the religious and secular subjects. Further, al-Hadi proposed the Malay-Anglo school: integrating the positive elements of the Malay school with the English school for the benefits of the Malay students. In order to revitalize the society, al-Hadi emphasized that women's education needed to be addressed urgently. Besides contributing to theoretical discussion, al-Hadi was also involved in various capacities in the establishment and management of several madrasahs: Madrasah Iqbal Islamiah, Madrasah al-Hadi dan Madrasah al-Masyhur. This study adopts the textual study approach in examining the relevant primary sources. At the same time, it connects the text with the larger socio-historical contexts, which shaped the production of ideas and text.

**Keywords:** *Syed Sheikh al-Hadi, Educational Reform in Malaysia, Muslim reform and Women education*

## INTRODUCTION

Muslim reformism emerged in the Malay Peninsula during the early twentieth century as a response to the phenomenon of Muslim backwardness vis-à-vis the West. The signing of the Pangkor Engagement in 1874 marks the beginning of the imposition of British influence in the Malay Peninsula. It also clearly indicated the abrupt decline of the power of the Malay rulers' vis-à-vis the British. Accordingly, the concerned Malay intellectuals including the reformists began to wonder what had gone wrong. The Malay reformists argued that one of the main reasons for the Malay backwardness was due to the intellectual stagnation and the lack of an integrated and holistic education system – catering for both the worldly (*dunya*) and otherworldly (*akhirah*) needs. In so doing, the reformists put emphasis on the significance of knowledge and education in reforming the Muslim society. Syed Sheikh al-Hadi (henceforth, al-Hadi), who epitomised the Malay reformists, played a major role in criticising the existing educational systems and offering recommendation at improving the Islamic schooling system. This study focuses on al-Hadi's views and contributions to the educational reforms in Malaya.

## SYED SHEIKH AHMAD AL-HADI'S BRIEF PROFILE

al-Hadi was born in Kampung Hulu, Melaka. He was of the Hadhrami-Malay descent. After receiving early education in Malacca; in 1874, Al-Hadi moved to Riau with his family and Raja Ali Kelana adopted the young al-Hadi. As a result, in Riau, Al-Hadi had a privileged life and received the best available education there (Hassan, 2019). Moreover, al-Hadi was also exposed to Riau's rich literary, cultural, and religious activities.

The critical-minded al-Hadi, would not just blindly follow any given religious rule if his teachers could not convince him with a logical explanation. These critical and inquisitive attitudes toward knowledge would form one of the fundamental aspects of his intellectual works (Zakariya, 2017: 481).

In 1881, al-Hadi was sent to pursue religious learning at *pondok* in Kuala Terengganu, then, a reputable center of Islamic learning in the Malay Peninsula. However, al-Hadi was not really interested in religious learning and did not pay much attention to his studies. Thus, during the few years he was in Terengganu he was not focused on learning. Rather, he spent most of his time there mingling with the children of the Terengganu royal family until Raja Ali Kelana called him back to Riau (Zakariya, 2009). From this event, it appears that Al-Hadi's first-hand experience with the traditional Islamic learning did not go well and it might have left a lasting impression on al-Hadi's mind.

After completing his education in Riau, al-Hadi was appointed as a manager of Batam Bricks Company of Raja Ali Kelana in Singapore in 1901 (Zakariya, 2009). There he collaborated with the reformists and published *al-Imam* on 23 July 1906 to disseminate reformist ideas (Hamzah, 1991). However, *al-Imam* was forced to close its operation in 1908 due to financial and administrative problems. Besides, publishing periodical, the reformists in Singapore also established Madrasah al-Iqbal al-Islamiyyah in 1908. This madrasah offered both religious and secular subjects, in Singapore in 1908. It represented the first attempt to bring about reform to the traditional religious education in Malaya.

al-Hadi moved to Johor in 1909 and served as a *shari'ah* lawyer there (Alwi, 1999). After leaving Johor, he proceeded to his hometown, Malacca in 1914 where he opened Madrasah al-Hadi with the support of Haji Bachik. However, this madrasah too was short-lived due to the financial constraints and the lack of support from the mainstream conservative Muslims (Alwi, 1999). However, this school did not receive favourable reception from the public and was forced to close in the subsequent year. After al-Hadi left Malacca for Penang in 1919, Haji Bachik continued to promote the reformist ideas in central Malacca through the medium of the Islamic school. Haji Bachik made concerted efforts to enhance the Islamic school by recruiting teachers from overseas including from Egypt and West Sumatra. The slow growth of Islamic reform in Central Malacca further received a severe blow with the death of Haji Bachik in 1936, and consequently, Islamic reform there faded away.

Meanwhile around 1916, al-Hadi went to Penang: a cosmopolitan city in the Straits Settlements. He was appointed the Principal of Madrasah al-Masyhur around 1916 and served there until 1919 (Daud, 1979). After resigning from the Madrasah in 1919, al-Hadi devoted his time to literary activities, producing numerous works – articles, books and novels – on various subjects. He established his own periodical and a weekly newspaper. (Abu Bakar, 1994). al-Hadi died of brain disease at his home in Penang on 20 February 1934.

## AL-HADI'S VIEWS ON EDUCATION

Before examining al-Hadi's views on education, it is relevant to understand al-Hadi's religious worldview. The fundamental aspect of al-Hadi's religious thought is his emphasis on the compatibility of Islam with reason. This is demonstrated through the publication of al-Hadi's *Kitab Agama Islam dan Akal (Islam and Reason)*. In a preface to this book, al-Hadi stated that he intends to inform Muslims that every aspect of Islam is compatible with reason. al-Hadi stated that if Muslims examine the obligatory rituals carefully, they would notice their utilities, benefits and relevance to contemporary needs (al-Hadi, 1931). He prompts the Malays to exercise rationale faculty in the religious and socio-economic matters. In al-Hadi's mind, rational faculty is a central element in his understanding of Islam. Shahrudin Maaruf points this out as follows,

For Syed Sheikh Alhady, religious observances and practices have no meaning whatsoever if they are not subjected to the test of rationality or reason. The emphasis on knowledge in Islam is understood to be extension of the emphasis on reason (Maaruf, 2014: 77).

al-Hadi was deeply concerned with the culture of knowledge yet at the same time saw a lot of benefits from pursuing knowledge (Sulaiman et. al. 2011). al-Hadi's rational and utilitarian views of religion influenced his views on education. Accordingly, Al-Hadi regarded knowledge as the main element for the progress of society. He considered educational institution as an important means for the advancement of the Malay community. According to al-Hadi, the success of Europeans in the subjugation of the Muslim world was primarily achieved by knowledge and technological advancements (al-Hadi, 1907). Similarly, according to al-Hadi, the Japanese people had been successful in the modernization of their country due to the acquisition of knowledge and their national pride (al-Hadi, 1907). However, he deplored that the Malays had become reluctant in the acquisition of knowledge and science (al-Hadi, 1930; al-Hadi, 1907). al-Hadi called on the Malays to be awakened and realize that, "The community must equip itself for the war of survival, accumulate strength and power comparable to enemy's power of mind and knowledge, which is the basis for all types of power" (al-Hadi, 1930c: 215).

al-Hadi was discontent with the existing educational systems in Malaya because "he thought they did not fulfil the nature and purpose of education in Islam" (Abu Bakar, 1994: 100). In Malaya, then there were two opposing knowledge systems: the traditional and the modern. Islamic studies were taught at the traditional Islamic learning center especially *pondok*. Whereas *pondok* offered only Islamic and Arabic subjects, the modern education, which was primarily offered by the Christian missionaries and the British government covered modern subjects (Abu Bakar, 1994: 100). al-Hadi believes that educational dualism, which separated the two important components of knowledge was problematic because the traditional Islamic learning needed to emulate many aspects of modern educational system. Similarly, English school was not attractive to the Malay-Muslim students due to the lack of Islamic subjects.

Conceptually, al-Hadi did not accept the division of knowledge into religious and secular. He argues that all branches of knowledge are very important and dependent on each other (al-Hadi, 1930). He argues that "We would not benefit from the doctrine of Divine Unity [*tawhid*] and *fiqh* [codified canon law] if we had not understood and appreciated the other various branches of knowledge" (al-Hadi, 1930). al-Hadi condemned the traditionalist scholars who focus on the oneness of God (*tawhid*) and Islamic law; at the expense of language and grammar (al-Hadi, 1930). He asserted that during the classical age of Islam, the Muslim scholars studied all types of knowledge; and they used their own knowledge for the benefits of their society unlike Muslim scholars in Malaya (al-Hadi, 1930). He encouraged the Malay-Muslims to learn all kinds of knowledge

for the advancement of their society and for the protection of their country from foreigners' attacks (al-Hadi, 1930c). From the above discussion, it is clear that having been influenced by the utilitarian approach to knowledge, al-Hadi recognized the importance of Islamic subjects. At the same time Muslims must also strive to learn all branches of modern knowledge. This view is in line with the famous tradition, which encourages Muslims to seek knowledge even in China. Similarly, another famous tradition states that,

Wisdom is the lost property of the believer, so wherever he finds it, then he is more worthy of it (Sunan al-Tirmidhi, 2687).

It is highly probable that al-Hadi was responding to the prevailing attitude of the conservative Muslims in early twentieth century Malaya who were apprehended to learn the modern sciences. For al-Hadi, such attitude would be an obstacle for human progress because without the mastery of modern knowledge such as science and technology, Muslims would be lagging behind the industrially and technologically advanced Europe. Al-Hadi's was impressed with the English education system and he urged the Malay-Muslims to emulate such system:

When an indigenous people have education comparable to that of the invaders, follow the way these intruders educate their children, venture into any industry and profession, use the same shield in the battle of life, then surely they would survive and compete with the foreigners (al-Hadi, 1930c: 215).

al-Hadi's unhappiness with the traditional Islamic education was reflected through his attitude towards schooling system in Malaya. Personally, al-Hadi sent his son Syed Alwi, and grandson, Mohamed Alwi to the vernacular schools. Moreover, Mohamed Alwi (1999) states that al-Hadi wished his grandson could receive his tertiary education at Oxford University or at other English university rather than at al-Azhar University. Although al-Hadi encouraged the Malays to attend the English schools, he did not neglect; rather emphasized the significance of religious education. Thus, accordingly, he wanted his grandson, Mohamed Alwi to study religious subjects and Arabic (Mohamad Alwi, 1999). However, he deplored that the majority of Malays (as a result of the traditional Islamic learning system) had not understood the real meaning of Islam and they blindly imitated the teachings of the traditionalist scholars (al-Hadi, 1907).

To sum up, al-Hadi's rationalist and utilitarian interpretation of Islam influences his concept of knowledge. He views knowledge and education as significant vehicles for the advancement of the society. Farid Alatas (1985: 17) states that "al-Hady exhorted Malays to cultivate reason and sciences, and to develop themselves economically, in order to prepare themselves for the future to be an independent people in the context of a just state". Further, Al-Hadi promoted the Malays to establish schools based on the modern models of Japan and Europe. He condemns the authority of the traditionalist religious scholars and their understanding of knowledge and Islam. He prompts Malays to study all kinds of knowledge rather than specializing merely one branch of religious sciences.

## **AL-HADI'S PROPOSAL OF THE ANGLO-MALAY SCHOOL**

Having experienced and witnessed first-hand the educational systems in Malaya, al-Hadi was convinced that the existing schools in Malaya were inadequate to produce students with good attributes. Therefore, al-Hadi proposed the establishment of an Anglo-Malay school in order to make quality education accessible to the Malays. This matter was important because the majority of the Malays attended the Malay vernacular schools, whose quality was inferior to the Government and Missionary-operated English schools. The basic objective of the Malay vernacular school was "to enable pupils to acquire reading and writing, knowledge of the Malay language, elementary arithmetic and

geography” (Abu Bakar, 1994: 113). In fact, the Malay schools was established not to produce students with good attributes. Instead, the Malay schools “were intended mainly [only] to make Malays better fishermen and peasants” (Abu Bakar, 1994: 113). Pupils who completed their studies at the Malay schools were eligible to be employed only as “policemen, peons, customs, clerks, forest rangers and mining overseers” (Abu Bakar, 1994: 113). Conversely, the curriculum of the English schools was more modern and enriching. The GES was commercial and vocational-oriented. Its students had to take Cambridge Local Examinations. al-Hadi, who saw a big gap between the quality of the Malay school and the English school, realized the significance of modernizing the Malay school so that it could emulate the best practice at English school. As a result, he proposed to set up Anglo-Malay school to cater for the Malays who unable to be admitted to the GES. The main reasons for this were limited seats at the GES, fierce competition among all major ethnic groups, Malay student’s age and parent’s economic status. Thus, the creation of the Anglo-Malay school would solve this problem and simultaneously provide quality education accessible to the marginalized group: the Malays.

The Anglo-Malay school as proposed by al-Hadi plans to introduce a system “in which Malay, the language of the sons of the soil of the Peninsula, and English, the language of the rulers and the administration, ought to be taught” (al-Hadi, 1930a: 206). In this proposed school, the medium of instruction would be Malay and English. The curriculum would cover the traditional and rational sciences (al-Hadi, 1996). He proposed the teaching of religious subjects in Malay,

We should revive the Malay language, regulate and reconstruct its grammar. We should teach the pupils religious knowledge in Malay using citations from Arabic sources to teach what is obligatory, and then those citations should in turn be translated and clearly explained in Malay (al-Hadi, 1930a: 206).

al-Hadi proposed the Anglo-Malay school to use the curriculum of the Government English School (henceforth, GES) thus opening opportunities for its graduates to get government recognition and employment opportunities similar to the English Schools. (Abu Bakar, 1994).

The Anglo-Malay school would significantly help the Malays because whereas the Chinese and Indian students received their education in English schools, Malays stayed away from the English schools. Al-Hadi believed that without proper access to quality education, “our children will be crushed until they are annihilated, enveloped by other ethnic groups who struggle to safeguard their own children in our Motherland” (al-Hadi, 1930a: 207). It is clear that the article was written during the dramatic increment of the Chinese in Malaya. He warned the Malays to take educational measures against the other ethnic groups.

al-Hadi saw an urgent need for the Anglo-Malay school because the Malay students who graduated from the Malay schools could not continue their education in English schools due to the age limit and their lack of English (al-Hadi, 1930a). Therefore, al-Hadi offered the teaching of English in his proposed school in order to deal with this problem. Furthermore, to attain British recognition of the certificates of his proposed school, he outlined an examination system and governmental regulations. Thus, the graduates of this school would be able to apply for positions in the colonial administration. He even considered adopting the GES syllabus in the Anglo-Malay School, alongside religious subjects, and the teaching of Malay and English (Abu Bakar, 1994).

It is clear that al-Hadi attempted to provide the solution to the current educational problems in Malaya, particularly the exclusion of Malays from GES due to age restriction, poverty, and the limited availability of places (Abu Bakar, 1994). He called for people to discuss the establishment of this proposed school (al-Hadi, 1930a). However, the proposal of an Anglo-Malay School remained within the pages of *al-Ikhwān* and was not

taken seriously by the Malay Muslim community. Linda Tan (1999: 160) points out as follows, "Was he not aware that his proposal for a foreign and secular education was not in harmony with the spirit of national and religious revival which he so keenly aroused?". al-Hadi's project of an Anglo-Malay School is a clear reflection of his educational shift from the madrasah education. Ismail F. Alatas (2005: 281) argues that al-Hadi represents "the secularization of Malay worldview".

### AL-HADI'S VIEWS ON WOMEN'S EDUCATION

The Malay reformists did not establish any educational institution dedicated to women, although some of them were aware of the significance of women's education. No one was more vociferous on this point than al-Hadi, who produced a lot writings promoting women empowerment in education in particular, and society in general. He touched upon the issue of women's education in an article entitled "*Changes in the Upbringing of Girls are Urgent*" published in *al-Ikhwān* in 1930 (Al-Hadi, 1930b). He first mentioned that there had been an insufficient discussion on how girls would be brought up in his contemporary intellectual circle. He drew the reader's attention to the importance of sports for healthy boys and girls as follows, "We cannot be called perfect creatures unless the care of their bodies and minds is perfected... Balance of mind depends on the health of the body" (al-Hadi, 1930b: 226). He argued that the English had been a good example of balancing between mind and body, "The English were very active because they were accustomed to physical exercises, such as playing football, swimming, and horseback riding. And their freedom from restrictions greatly helped in the upbringing of their children, both boys, and girls" (al-Hadi, 1930b: 226).

al-Hadi criticized the limited role of women in the Malay society. He blamed the unenlightened men for the backwardness of women in society (al-Hadi, 1930). For example, the conservative society tended to restrict women's role to delivering babies and bringing them up in the community. Further, he claimed that these types of women's functions are similar to that of the female animals,

Her present function to give birth and to bring up her offspring is not unlike that of other females species in the animal kingdom; there is little difference in these functions as between human and animal females (Al-Hadi, 1930b: 227).

According to him, if women were given a proper education, their children would be aware of how they behaved like women and how children are brought up. Furthermore, good education for females would lead to the improvement of society, because females control the home and the education of children. According to al-Hadi,

... if the women as heads of their households were to possess enlightened minds and to be knowledgeable, they would be able to run their homes properly and put their households in order ... For if each member of the extended family conducts himself properly, then the conduct of the whole community will be proper (Al-Hadi, 1930: 227).

al-Hadi emphasized that women's educational needs should be resolved immediately for the benefit and progress of society. He saw education for female as a key factor for the progress of the Malay society (Tan, 1999: 153-154). He argued that the ignorance of women is one of the significant factors of the decline of a community. Therefore, women's education is the most important issue and element in the progress of society (al-Hadi, 1930b). He warned that if female education did not improve, Malay societies would face more challenging problems (al-Hadi, 1930b).

al-Hadi did not provide a proper plan of education for Malayan women because he regarded female education as a significant component of the overall societal development. Therefore, he focused more on the improvement of the status of women instead of the preparing an educational blueprint for women. Although he did not come up with the proper plan for female education, al-Hadi sowed the seeds of the empowerment of women education through his writings.

Besides, providing theoretical discussion and criticism of the traditional Islamic learning system in Malaya, al-Hadi was also involved in various capacities in managing and enhancing several madrasahs: Madrasah al-Iqbal al-Islamiyyah, Madrasah al-Hadi and Madrasah al-Masyhur al-Islamiyyah. Therefore, brief discussion on Al-Hadi's roles in these madrasah is warranted.

### **AL-HADI AND MADRASAH AL-IQBAL AL-ISLAMIYYAH**

Besides the publication of the first reformist periodical, *al-Imam* (1906-1908), the Malay-Muslim reformists, including al-Hadi contribute in the establishment of Madrasah al-Iqbal Islamiyyah in Singapore, with the financial assistance of the Riau Court (Alwi, 1999; Tan, 1999). There is the paucity of information regarding the details of the madrasah in the existing literature. The first known director of the madrasah was 'Uthman Affandi Ra'fat, an Egyptian (Abu Bakar, 1994). The majority of the staff, specifically in some disciplines, probably originated from the Arab world, owing to the lack of qualified local teachers (Tan, 1999; Hamzah, 1991).

al-Hadi's role in the establishment of the madrasah is ambiguous. According to Za'ba (1939), a close associate of al-Hadi and a well-known author, al-Hadi himself was responsible to establish this school. Nonetheless, this claim seems to be inaccurate because there is no information and evidence concerning this in *al-Imam* and other primary sources. However, it seems more likely that al-Hadi was instrumental in securing the financial support to the madrasah, from Raja Ali Kelana, owing to his close connection with him (Tan, 1999).

This madrasah adopted a comprehensive curriculum: consisting of both religious subjects and modern sciences, including English, mathematics, town planning, and geography (Alwi, 1999; Abu Bakar, 1994). Madrasah, unlike the *pondok*, was systematic. The madrasah system comprised of three main levels: the primary education, secondary education, and higher education (Aljunied & Hussin, 2005). Despite its comprehensive curriculum and organized system, this madrasah was forced to stop operation in Singapore in 1909, and relocated to Pulau Penyengat was renamed Madrasah al-Ahmadiyah (The Ahmadi School) (Abu Bakar, 1994).

To sum up, the reformists took the initiative in formulating an alternative educational system to the *pondok* system. They combined the religious and secular subjects to meet the needs of students in Malaya. They desired to change the worldview of children by way of education, equipping them with an awareness of contemporary and socio-political issues and to have knowledge in religious and secular matters. Although al-Hadi seems to have played an indirect role in the establishment of the madrasah, it is possible that he contributed to the development of its system and curriculum. Hence, this experience provided al-Hadi with the example of his individual attempt Madrasah al-Hadi in Malacca.

### **AL-HADI AND MADRASAH AL-HADI**

After the closure of Madrasah al-Iqbal Islamiyyah, in 1914, al-Hadi founded his own school named Madrasah al-Hadi with the financial support of his philanthropic associate,

Haji Abu Bakar Ahmad (d.1938), in his hometown Malacca (Alwi, 1999). Syed Alwi (1999) states that the madrasah was a religious school and used Arabic as the medium of instruction, in contrary to Madrasah al-Iqbal al-Islamiyyah. However, there is the lack of data on the staff, curriculum and teaching methods of this madrasah. Ibrahim Abu Bakar (1994) argues that the main purpose of the madrasah was to disseminate the original teachings of Islam among the students. Furthermore, it is supposed to provide the children of urban-based elites with contemporary education. The madrasah had remained active over a period of the two years, between 1915 and 1917 because of two main reasons. Firstly, the madrasah could not attract the interest of both students and parents, who were influenced by the anti-reformist propaganda, which caused it to struggle financially (Alwi, 1999; Tan, 1999; Zakariya, 2009); and adequate qualified scholars could not be recruited to the madrasah owing to its financial problems, which reduced the quality of instruction.

### **AL-HADI AND MADRASAH AL-MASYHUR AL-ISLAMIYYAH**

Madrasah al-Masyhur al-Islamiyyah grew out of the Qur'anic school established by the Arab community in Penang in 1916. Among its founders were Mazhar 'Aidid, Shaykh 'Ali Bawazir, Sayyid Umar al-Saqah, Sayyid 'Umar Mazhar dan Shaykh Hassan Baghdadi. When al-Hadi migrated to Penang in 1918, this madrasah had undergone administrative reorganization. At the same time, al-Hadi was appointed as the Principal. The madrasah was relocated to Tek Soon Street from Kampung Jawa Lama thanks to the financial support of the Malay philanthropist Haji Bachik during al-Hadi's headmastership. The number of students reached by approximately 300 in the new complex. The curriculum consisted extensively of religious subjects like Arabic grammar, Qur'anic exegesis, and fiqh (Abu Bakar, 1994). Furthermore, Syed Alwi taught English to the students in the madrasah, and it had a female division (Alwi, 1999).

The staff of the madrasah comprised of Arab teachers and Malay reformists. For example, Shaykh 'Abd Allah Maghribi, who hailed from Libya, worked in the madrasah as a principal after the resignation of al-Hadi until 1920. In addition, Sheikh Tahir contributed to the development of the madrasah as a teacher as a result of the invitation of al-Hadi. The madrasah had produced graduates of good quality. For instance, Haji Abu Bakar Ash'ari (1904-1970) and Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy (1911-1966) were well-known graduates of the madrasah (Tan, 1999). Thus, it is said that the madrasah played a vital role in the development of new intelligentsia in colonial Malaya and its graduates contributed to the spread of Islamic reformism in the Malay states (Mohd. Sarim, 1999).

Despite remarkable achievements of Madrasah al-Masyhur, Al-Hadi resigned as its principal. There is disagreement concerning the timing of his resignation. William Roff (1967) asserted that al-Hadi had served the madrasah between 1918-19 Ibrahim Abu Bakar (1994) argued that al-Hadi worked in the madrasah between 1917 and mid-1919. The second argument is more plausible because Shaykh Maghribi was appointed as a principal in 1919, and the madrasah faced financial problems at that time, which seems to have been a factor in his resignation. There are also claims that Al-Hadi resigned due to disagreements with Shaykh Maghribi. It is equally possible that his resignation was merely in order to spend more time writing books and publishing a periodical (Mohd. Sarim, 1999). Mohd. Sarim claims that al-Hadi relinquished his post in 1919, and Ibrahim Abu Bakar (1994: 73) concludes, "al-Hadi discovered that none of the three religious schools had become a fertile ground for propagating Islamic modernism".

After his last endeavour at educational reform, al-Hadi devoted his time to writing. He produced numerous writings on various subjects in the forms of articles and books.

In addition, he published *al-Ikhwān* (1926-1931) and *Saudara* (1928-1941). He also established his own printing house named Jelutong Press in Penang.



## CONCLUSION

al-Hadi played an important role in bringing about the reforms of Islamic education in Malaya. As a prolific writer, he primarily promoted his ideas through writings. His concept of educational reform is based on al-Hadi's rational and utilitarian interpretation of Islam. Accordingly, Al-Hadi considers knowledge and education as substantial means for the betterment of the society. Thus, he prompts the Malays to open schools with balanced and holistic curriculum encompassing the religious and secular sciences. He fosters the Malays to study all kinds of beneficial knowledge rather than specializing merely one branch of religious sciences.

al-Hadi was also involved in various capacities in the management and establishment of three madrasahs in the Straits Settlements. However, his efforts were short-lived primarily because of financial constraints and the lack of response from the mainstream conservative Muslims. Al-Hadi also touched upon the significance of education for women and children through his articles and books. Although al-Hadi could not establish any school for women, he encouraged the enhancement of the role of women in society. In addition, to solve the educational problem in Malaya he proposed the establishment of an Anglo-Malay School, but this idea was not implemented due to the lack of response and support.

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