



# Mahmud Yunus' Contribution in the Development of Islamic Higher Education in Indonesia

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## Abstract

Mahmud Yunus is a leading Islamic education figure in Indonesia. He is an educational figure within the Ministry of Religion who has contributed a lot to developing the establishment of Islamic universities in Indonesia. He is not only known as an activist, but also as a conceptor, which is demonstrated through his written works. This research aims to analyze how Mahmud Yunus contributed to the development of Islamic Higher Education in Indonesia. This research uses qualitative methods with content analysis types. The research data sources were taken from books on the history of Islamic universities and the works of Mahmud Yunus. The results of the research found three findings related to Mahmud Yunus' contribution to the development of Islamic higher education in Indonesia, i) as the conceptualizer for the establishment of the Higher Islamic School as the first higher education institution in Indonesia (1940) in Padang, ii) changing the Jakarta Religious Sciences Service academy with the Yogyakarta State Islamic Religious College to become the first State Islamic Religious Institute in Indonesia on 24 August 1960 .iii) As the initiator of the birth of the Imam Bonjol Padang State Islamic Institute and was appointed as its first rector in 1966-1970.

## INTRODUCTION

Mahmud Yunus is an educational figure who has his own style of thought that is recognized in the Islamic world, because of the level of education and dedication he has contributed to the development of the world of Islamic education. This can be seen from the achievements and reputation he has achieved throughout his career (Igisani, 2018; Maya et al., 2019; Nadia, 2023). The name Mahmud Yunus is quite well known and familiar in the history of the development of Islamic education in Indonesia (Supriatna, 2022). He can fulfill his profile as a teacher, lecturer, educator and official, he has left an impression and message that cannot be forgotten.

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Mahmud Yunus is also known as a productive writer, not only writing books related to Islamic education but also writing in other Islamic fields. His career and profession as a teacher and educator began as a madrasa teacher in his village and continued until Mahmud Yunus was finally appointed as the first Chancellor of the Imam Bonjol Padang State Islamic Institute (Igisani, 2018; Maya et al., 2019; Nadia, 2023). Mahmud Yunus is among the educational figures within the Ministry of Religion who always think about, fight for and help manage the implementation of religious education in Islamic madrasas, schools and colleges (Abdulloh, 2020; Asror et al., 2023). In the course of his life, he not only contributed to making changes and developing the Islamic education system, but also contributed to increasing Indonesian Muslims' understanding of the holy book Alquran through Karim's translation and interpretation of the Alquran.

The presence of Islamic educational institutions such as madrasas and Islamic universities in Indonesia is a continuation of the efforts initiated by Mahmud Yunus and other national figures Mahmud Yunus is also said to be one of the figures and architects of the modernization of Indonesian Islamic education (Suryani et al., 2023). Mahmud Yunus' struggle in the field of education has been going on since he was young until the end of his life (Nata, 2023; Zulyadain, 2018). His works in the field of Islamic science are still used as references in the study of Islamic science. This proves that Mahmud Yunus during his lifetime had carried out heroic acts or produced extraordinary achievements and works for the development and progress of the nation and state of the Republic of Indonesia (Jalil, 2024). Mahmud Yunus is a figure who throughout his life has struggled, served, devoted his life, and produced extraordinary works for the nation and state. Mahmud Yunus's monumental works which are used as references include Tafsir Alquran in Indonesian as the first form of interpretation in Indonesian and the Arabic-Indonesian Dictionary (Syarifah, 2020). Apart from that, Mahmud Yunus' ideas, thoughts, footsteps and works have been widely used as objects of study at bachelor's, master's and doctoral levels, both by students studying at home and abroad.

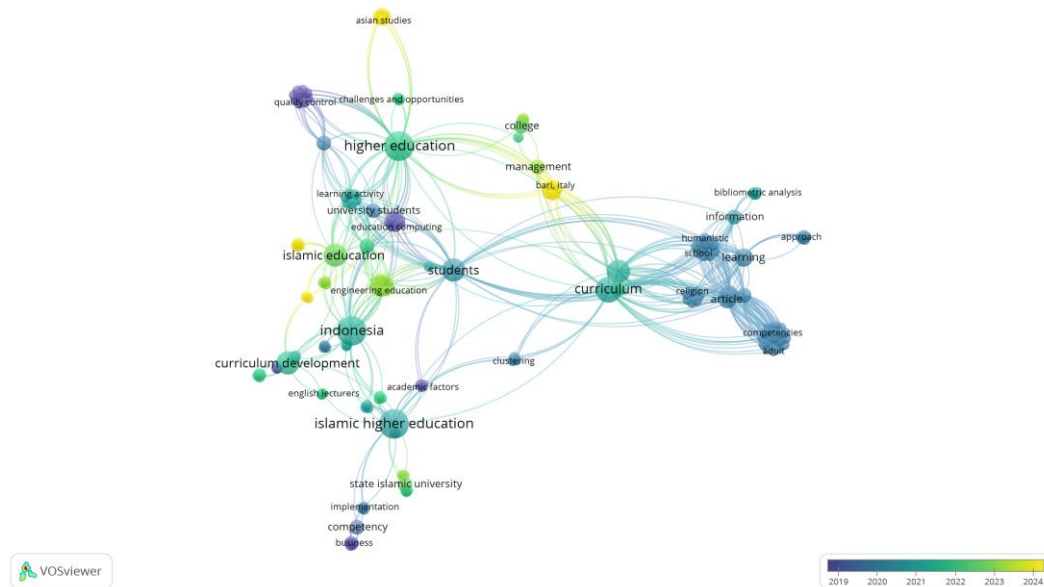
Mahmud Yunus' style of thinking in the field of Islamic education can be seen in several of his books, including: History of Islamic Education, this book contains the history of Islamic education during the time of the Prophet Muhammad, the time of the caliphate, the time of the Umayyads, the time of the Abbasids, and Islamic education after the fall of Baghdad (Adelia & Mitra, 2021; Aulia et al., 2023). History of Islamic Education in Indonesia is the first book in the history of Islamic education in Indonesia (Huda et al., 2023). This book explains the history of the development of Islam and Islamic educational institutions, starting from the history of the development of famous madrasas to the development of Islamic universities in Indonesia. Biography of Mahmud Yunus, this book contains the life journey of Mahmud Yunus, starting from his childhood, adolescence, career until his death (Amalia et al., 2023). Next is the book *Special Methodology for Religious Education*. This book contains rules and methods for teaching religion in elementary schools, teaching religion in junior high schools, teaching religion in high schools, teaching religion in the 6-year State Religion Teacher Education and teaching religion in universities. *At-Tarbiyah wa At-Ta'lim*, this book consists of volumes I, II, III, and is one of the books adopted as a guidebook at the Gontor Ponorogo Modern Islamic Boarding School (Mubarokah et al., 2023). *Principles of Islamic Education and Teaching*, this book was written as a result of lecturing at the Jakarta State Islamic Institute, containing his main thoughts and experiences while teaching as a lecturer and dean at the Jakarta State Islamic Institute's tarbiyah faculty.

The impressions and messages he left behind can be read through his written works. As an educator, Mahmud Yunus has fulfilled the requirements, because the qualities that an educator must having adequate knowledge, noble character,

compassion, honesty and being a role model for his students (Ilyas, 2022; Sabri, 2017). If explored more deeply, it can be understood that Mahmud Yunus is a figure who has struggled a lot in providing his devotional service in the development of Islamic education in Indonesia. He has spent almost his entire life contributing to the development of Islamic education in Indonesia, starting from the Dutch and Japanese colonial era even until the time of independence. Mahmud Yunus throughout his life has spent his time teaching, reading, writing and thinking about the development of Islamic education.

Mahmud Yunus' educational thoughts, even though he had previously acquired traditional educational capital, have contributed a lot to the development of Islamic education in Indonesia, both before independence and after Indonesia's independence. Mahmud Yunus's educational thoughts are not influenced by the situation and conditions in which the traditional education system is still applied, what is even more interesting about Mahmud Yunus's educational thoughts is that he is not interested in efforts to purify (cleanse or eradicate) Islam from the practices of heresy, superstition and khurafat as is the case. what Islamic thinkers were doing at that time (Iskandar, 2017; Dalip, 2020). Mahmud Yunus's style of educational thinking is actually focused on how Indonesian Muslims can learn and utilize advances in modern science (Anam, 2023).

Based on the Scopus database, it refers to previous research from 2019-2024 using the keyword development of Islamic higher education, as in figure 1 below.



**Fig 1. Keywords regarding the development of Islamic higher education (database Scopus)**

The results of the researcher's analysis with the help of the Vosviewer software show that previous research related to the development of Islamic higher education in Indonesia has never been researched before by researchers from various countries. No one has yet been found who discusses the contribution of Islamic education figures in developing Islamic higher education in Indonesia. The only research available in Scopus data was Curriculum Development in Islamic Universities in Indonesia. So this research is worth carrying out because no research has been found from world researchers regarding the contribution of figures in the development of Islamic higher education, especially in Indonesia.

Mahmud Yunus' educational thoughts when compared with educational figures of his time, he was a figure who had high attention and commitment to

efforts to build, improve and develop Islamic religious education as an integral part of the education system intended for all Indonesian people, especially those of the Islamic faith. His ideas and thoughts in the field of education as a whole are strategic and this is pioneering work, in the sense that it has never been done by Islamic education figures before. As a figure, leader and scientist who is reliable and respected both by the Indonesian people themselves and internationally. Based on the previous explanation, it is understood that Mahmud Yunus is an Islamic education figure whose contribution to Islamic education has been tested and recognized nationally and internationally (Kamal & Nata, 2017). Therefore, if we look at it from a perspective, several scientific requirements in the study of a figure have been fulfilled. This is different from other educational figures in terms of their character and contribution to the development of Islamic higher education.

## METHODS

This research uses qualitative research methodology, with a type of library research with content analysis methods. Library research is research conducted using written library work data in the form of documents in the form of books or literature (Mahanum, 2021; Sari & Asmendri, 2020). The research data sources consist of primary and secondary data sources. The primary data sources are books written directly by Mahmud Yunus, while the secondary data sources are journals and previous articles, theses and dissertations that are relevant to this research. This research obtained results using content analysis techniques. The aim of this research is to analyze Mahmud Yunus' contribution to the development of Islamic higher education in Indonesia.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Biography of Mahmud Yunus

Mahmud Yunus was born on 10 February 1899 AD to coincide with 30 Ramadhan 1316 AH, in Sungayang Batusangkar Village, Tanah Datar Regency, West Sumatra and died on Saturday 16 January 1982 AD to coincide with 20 *Rabi'ul Awal* 1402 AH. Mahmud's birthplace Yunus is approximately 7 km from Batusangkar City as the center of the capital of Tanah Datar Regency and 12 km from Nagari Pagaruyung as the center of the former Minangkabau Kingdom. Traditionally and culturally, his homeland always upholds its traditional and religious values in everyday life. Mahmud Yunus was born into a prominent family in Nagari Sungayang which had strong religious overtones (Jamal, 2017; Zulmardi, 2009).

His father was a farmer named Yunus bin Incek from the Mandailing tribe and his mother was Hafsa bint M. Thahir from the Chaniago tribe. Mahmud Yunus' father was an alumni of surau students and had sufficient religious knowledge, so he was appointed Imam Nagari. At that time, this position was given by custom by the children of the nagari to one of its citizens who was worthy to occupy it on the basis of the religious knowledge he possessed. Apart from that, Yunus bin Incek is also known as an honest and upright person. Mahmud Yunus's mother was illiterate because she had never received a school education, especially since there was no school in her village. However, he was raised in an Islamic environment. Hafsa's mother was named Doyan bint Muhammad Ali, while Hafsa's grandfather was named Sheikh Muhammad Ali, with the title *Engku Kolok*, a cleric who was quite popular in Sungayang at that time. Thus, genealogically, Mahmud Yunus could be said to be a descendant of a cleric in Sungayang. Meanwhile, Hafsa's job is weaving. He has the expertise to weave cloth decorated with gold thread, which is traditional Minangkabau cloth used in traditional ceremonies.

Since childhood, Mahmud Yunus has shown his strong interest and tendency to deepen the knowledge of Islam. Seeing that, Hafsa's brother (Mahmud Yunus'

mother) named Ibrahim with the title *Dt. Sinaro Sati* a rich merchant in Batusangkar at that time really paid attention to the talent and intelligence possessed by his sister's son, namely Mahmud Yunus in Minangkabau who was called "*kamanakan*". Ibrahim encouraged Mahmud Yunus to continue his education and study abroad with the support of expenses for that need. This gives a picture of the responsibility of a brother to the mother (in Minangkabau it is called "*mama*") to *kamanakan* that happened in Minangkabau at that time in the community structure that adheres to the matrilineal system, such as the traditional saying that reads: *The child is held on the lap, the kamanakan is guided, the village urang is held on his back* (the child is in the lap, the future is directed, the surrounding community is considered).

A prevalence that occurs completely at that time that responsibility *mama* to *kamanakan* not based on the father's incompetence *kamanakan* itself, but more because of the responsibility and strength of one's role *mama* in Minangkabau. Ibrahim himself has a son who is the same age as Mahmud Yunus. It is titled *Grandfather Sati*, who is very expert in the field of customs. This factor is assumed to be the reason why Mahmud Yunus lacks outstanding knowledge in the field of Minangkabau customs. This is because Ibrahim seems to want different skills between his son and nephew. He directed his children to focus more on traditional issues because he saw a tendency for his children to be interested in traditional issues, so he channeled his passion to study with traditional experts, until he mastered the ins and outs of Minangkabau customs well. On the other hand, Ibrahim saw that Mahmud Yunus had more prominent developments and trends in the field of religion, so he supported this trend. Economic support from the *mama*, also accompanied by encouragement from his parents, Mahmud Yunus from childhood to adolescence was only tasked with the necessity and focus of studying well without having to take part in thinking about the family economy in helping his parents earn a living, even though Mahmud Yunus was the only son. in his family, and with him a younger sister named Hindun. Meanwhile, his father died when Mahmud Yunus was still small.

### **Established and Leads a Higher Islamic School in Padang**

Muslims, who constitute the majority of Indonesia's population, always try to find various ways to build a complete Islamic education system, starting from the simple Islamic boarding school education system to the level of the Islamic Higher Education system (Hartono et al., 2022; Iswati, 2023). On December 9, 1940, under the leadership of Mahmud Yunus, the first Islamic school was founded, namely Islamic college on December 9 1940 in Padang, West Sumatra (Rasmin, 2018). The institution consists of two faculties, namely the faculties of sharia/religion and education and Arabic language. The aim to be achieved by the establishment of this institution is to educate ulama, especially in Minangkabau society.

On July 8 1945, with the assistance of the Japanese occupation government, to commemorate the Isra' Mi'raj of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, an Islamic High School was founded in Jakarta. The aim of establishing this higher education institution was initially to produce intellectual ulama figures, namely ulama who studied Islamic religious knowledge widely and in depth, and had the general knowledge that is necessary in today's modern society. Study at this institution lasts for two years to achieve a baccalaureate degree, plus another two years to achieve a complete bachelor's degree. The curriculum taught mostly takes or imitates that applied at al-Azhar University in Cairo. To study in this education is given for preparation (matriculation). This matriculation level is open to holders of previous Dutch East Indies secondary school diplomas, and also those who have graduated from a Madrasah Aliyah. Both types of graduates generally require introductory courses of one or two years. For graduates of Dutch East Indies secondary schools, it is intended to increase their knowledge of Arabic and religious knowledge, while

for alumni of madrasah aliyah it is intended to obtain a higher quality in general knowledge.

To further explain the contribution of Mahmud Yunus' thoughts in the development of Islamic higher education in Indonesia, it can be seen from his career in leading several Islamic universities as follows. Mahmud Yunus's success in developing madrasa education further gave rise to his desire to establish an Islamic High School in Padang, and this wish was realized on November 1, 1940. This High School was officially opened on December 9, 1940. This Islamic High School is a tertiary institution The first Islam in Minangkabau and even in Indonesia. The Islamic High School was founded by Islamic Teacher Education in Padang in December 1940 and as the first leader was once again entrusted to Mahmud Yunus (Lestari et al., 2021; Rahawarin et al., 2020). This high school consists of two faculties, namely the Sharia Faculty and the Arabic Language Education Faculty.

To prepare the lesson plan, a committee was formed consisting of: Dt. Perpatih Baringek, secretary of Minangkabau-raad, as chairman. Mahmud Yunus Secretary. Next are the members; Sheikh Ibrahim Musa, Mr Abu Bakar Jaar, Mukhtar Yahya, Director of Islamic College, Abd. Muluk head of HIS Government, Hosen Yahya, member. The Islamic High School ran smoothly until 1942, but unfortunately when the Japanese army entered the city of Padang (March 1942) and ruled Indonesia, the Islamic High School was forced to close, because the Japanese government only allowed schools/madrasas to open from low to middle level. just. Thus ends the history of the Islamic High School for Islamic Teacher Education in Padang (Afriзал, 2022).

### **Developing State Islamic Religious Universities into State Islamic Religious Institutes in Indonesia**

When the State Islamic College was established in Yogyakarta, Mahmud Yunus was actually asked to take part in teaching. But he always refused because in his view a State Islamic College should be established in Jakarta. He and Arifin Tamyang tried to establish a State Islamic College in Jakarta, but were rejected by P&K on the grounds that Mahmud Yunus' ideas in carrying out Islamic Education Reform had no legal basis.

Mahmud Yunus and his friends who were in Jakarta at that time finally founded the Academy for Religious Sciences. Mahmud Yunus serves as dean. Since then there have been two Islamic universities: the State Islamic College in Yogyakarta and the Islamic Religious Sciences Service Academy in Jakarta. In subsequent developments, Mahmud Yunus proposed again to the Minister of Religion, Wahib Wahab, that the Islamic Religious Sciences Service Academy be made a full undergraduate level university. After seeing the results achieved, the Minister of Religion proposed to President Soekarno that the State Islamic Religious Universities and the Islamic Religious Sciences Service Academy be integrated into one tertiary institution. Finally, the proposal was granted and the State Islamic Institute was established. Thus, it can be concluded that the establishment of Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia is the result of the undeniable contribution of Mahmud Yunus' thought. The establishment of the Islamic Religious Institute was the result of integration between the Islamic Religious Sciences Service Academy and the State Islamic Religious College (Rasdiany et al., 2022). The approval of Mahmud Yunus' proposal was the biggest moment for the establishment of the State Islamic Institute in Indonesia. Thus, according to the author, it is not an exaggeration if Mahmud Yunus is called one of the "founding figures of the State Islamic Institute in Indonesia".

The State Islamic Institute was inaugurated on August 24 1960 in Yogyakarta. This institution was originally born from two Islamic higher education institutions which were later merged into the State Islamic Institute. The two institutions are the

State Islamic College in Yogyakarta and the Religious Sciences Service Academy in Jakarta. The aim of establishing the State Islamic Institute is to provide teaching and university education and to become a center for developing and deepening knowledge about the Islamic religion. The establishment of the State Islamic Institute in Yogyakarta consists of sharia and ushuluddin faculties, while the Jakarta State Islamic Institute consists of tarbiyah and adab faculties.

The Ushuluddin Faculty, which consists of speculative aspects of Islamic religious knowledge, such as philosophy, Sufism, comparative religion and da'wah. which operates in the field of education and teaching, which prepares religious teachers. Faculty of Adab or Humanitarian Sciences, specializing in Islamic history and Arabic in particular. Mahmud Yunus himself also served as dean of the Tarbiyah faculty (1960-1963). When he was Dean of the Tarbiyah Faculty of the Jakarta State Islamic Institute, he was involved in overseas activities several times. In 1961, it was his first trip on assignment from the Ministry of Religion to go to nine Islamic countries, namely: Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq, Tunisia and Morocco. This visit was aimed at studying religious education in these countries.

In the following year (1962), Mahmud Yunus had the opportunity to attend the trial of *Majlis A'la Istisyari Al-Jami'ah Al-Islamiyah* in Medina in April 1962 at the invitation of King Sa'ud which he received through the Saudi Embassy in Jakarta. Then he was active as a participant in the Buhuts Al Islamiyah Congress at Al-Azhar University which took place in Egypt four times, in 1964, 1965, 1966 and 1967. In this Congress, Mahmud Yunus presented a paper entitled "*Al-Israiliyyat fi Tafsir wal Hadits*" which received a serious response from the participants. In 1969, Mahmud Yunus was again invited to attend *Majlis A'la Istisyari Al-Jami'ah Al-Islamiyah* in Medina. Mahmud Yunus' activities abroad have made him increasingly prominent in his field, because it is supported by the international experiences he has gained from these activities.

#### **Initiator of the Birth of the Imam Bonjol State Islamic Institute in Padang**

The establishment of the Imam Bonjol Padang State Islamic Institute in principle began with its first faculty, namely the tarbiyah faculty, marked by the establishment of the Padang Indonesian Graduate Association in 1958 at the initiative of the commander of the West Sumatra 17 August Operations Command. Azhari founded the Imam Bonjol Padang Foundation. This foundation started its movement by pioneering the establishment of the Islamic Religion Faculty with the Tarbiyah department. Finally, the Tarbiyah Faculty was inaugurated on October 1, 1963, with the status of a branch of the Faculty of the Tarbiyah Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic Institute, Jakarta.

In 1966, the Tarbiyah Faculty, Branch of the Al-jamiah Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic Institute, Jakarta, located in Padang, was inaugurated as the Al-jamiah Imam Bonjol State Islamic Institute, Padang. In the same year three faculties were also inaugurated: the Sharia Faculty in Bukittinggi, the Adab Faculty in Payakumbuh and the Ushuluddin Faculty in Padang Panjang and were inaugurated as a branch of the Al-Jami'ah Imam Bonjol State Islamic Institute in Padang based on the Decree of the Minister of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia No. 77/1966 dated 21 November 1966. In subsequent developments, the Imam Bonjol Padang State Islamic Institute added new faculties, including in 1968 the Padang Sidempuan Branch Tarbiyah Faculty was established and in 1970 the Ushuluddin Faculty was established which was also located in Padang Sidempuan. In 1968 the Da'wah Faculty was established in Solok, and in 1971 the Batusangkar branch of the Sharia Faculty.

Since 1976, the Tarbiyah Faculty, Da'wah Faculty, Sharia Faculty, Ushuluddin Faculty and Adab Faculty have been centered in Padang. Meanwhile, the Faculty of Sharia, Bukittinggi Branch and the Faculty of Tarbiyah, Batu Sangkar Branch, each

remain in the same location and have not been moved. In 1997, the Tarbiyah Faculty in Batusangkar finally changed to the Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar State Islamic College and the Bukittinggi Sharia Faculty changed its status to the Syekh Jamil Jambek Bukittinggi State Islamic College. From that year until 1998, the Imam Bonjol Padang State Islamic Institute had five faculties and one postgraduate program, the Imam Bonjol Padang State Islamic Institute, which was founded in 1994 in Padang. The faculties at the Imam Bonjol Padang State Islamic Institute are the Tarbiyah Faculty, Sharia Faculty, Ushuluddin Faculty, Postgraduate Program and Adab Faculty.

Apart from the Imam Bonjol Foundation which was previously established and has also succeeded in establishing several faculties, it is also important to remember that there is another factor which is no less important in facilitating the birth of the Imam Bonjol Padang State Islamic Religious Institute, namely the establishment of the West Sumatra State Islamic Religious Institute Welfare Foundation on 7 October 1964 coincides with 30 Jumadil Awwal 1384 H, which was pioneered by Mahmud Yunus, H, Mansur, Dt. Nagari Basa and H (Folandra, 2020). Izzuddin Marzuki in front of Notary Hasan Qalbi. The aim of establishing this Foundation by the three figures above is: First, Raising the level of welfare and perfection of the Padang State Islamic Institute with all faculties and branches that will be established in the future, second, participate in helping in the development of Padang Negeri Islamic Religious Institute, third, advancing general education and Islamic education, fourth, develop the Muslim personality to fulfill the development of the universal plan in the mental/spiritual field, fifth, active in developing Islamic teachings (Putra et al., 2020).

He has undertaken many religious activities and religious education in the past, both as Dean at the Academy of Religious Sciences in Jakarta, as Dean at the Tarbiyah Faculty of the State Islamic Institute of Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, as well as Head of the Religious Education Institute at the Department of Religious Education and as lecturer at several universities. The experiences mentioned above are certainly a consideration for the Minister of Religion to entrust him with the position of Chancellor of the Imam Bonjol State Islamic Institute in Padang. He held this position from 1967 until he retired at the end of 1970. This period was considered sufficient to pioneer, nurture and develop an Islamic higher education institution, namely the newly established Imam Bonjol State Islamic Institute.

Based on the activities and experiences that Mahmud Yunus has participated in abroad, this has made him even more prominent in his field, because it is supported by the international experiences he has gained from these activities (Furqan, 2019). Because Muslims were so enthusiastic about welcoming the establishment of Islamic universities, in a number of provinces branch faculties were established, both based in Yogyakarta and Jakarta.

Mahmud Yunus was the first chancellor of the Imam Bonjol State Islamic Institute, Padang, West Sumatra, and led it from its founding in 1966 until 1970. That was the last position that Mahmud Yunus held while he was an employee of the Department of Religion (Elkhaira et al., 2020). Even though Mahmud Yunus has the status of a high-ranking employee who has retired, for the rest of his life he still serves as a teacher.

## CONCLUSION

The contribution of Mahmud Yunus' thoughts in the development of Islamic Higher Education in Indonesia can be seen from his contribution as one of the initiators and drafters of the establishment of the first Islamic Higher Education institution in Indonesia, namely the Islamic High School in 1940 in Padang, contributing to initiating and proposing the establishment of the Religious Sciences Service Academy in 1940. in 1957 in Jakarta, contributed in fighting for the Jakarta

Academy of Religious Sciences and the Yogyakarta State Islamic College to be merged into the State Islamic Institute, the proposal was approved by the Minister of Religion, then the State Islamic Institute of Religion was officially established in Indonesia on August 24 1960, consisting of from the Jakarta State Islamic Institute and the Yogyakarta State Islamic Institute, contributed to the birth of the Imam Bonjol Padang State Islamic Institute as well as being its first rector from 1966 to 1970.

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