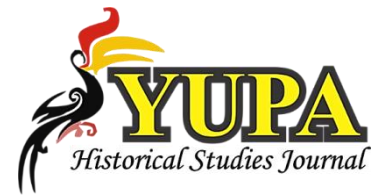


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The Role of Ma'arif Nahdlatul Ulama Educational Institutions in the Development of Islamic Education in Indonesia (1926-1959)

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Abstract This research aims to examine the role played by Ma'arif Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Educational Institutions in depicting the dynamics of Islamic education development in Indonesia. The focus of this research is to analyze the contribution of these educational institutions to the evolution of the Islamic education system, both in terms of curriculum, teaching methods, and their impact on student character formation. The research method includes historical analysis discussing the history and development of Ma'arif NU Educational Institutions since their establishment. The main data sources involve historical documents, archives, and interviews with key actors in these educational institutions, such as teachers, students, and administrators. The results of this research are expected to provide a comprehensive overview of how the role of Ma'arif NU Educational Institutions has shaped and influenced the context of Islamic education in Indonesia. Additionally, this research will also discuss the challenges and opportunities faced by these educational institutions in responding to the changing times and evolving educational demands.

Keywords: Role, Ma'arif NU Educational Institutions, Islamic Education

Abstrak Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji peranan yang dimainkan oleh Lembaga Pendidikan Ma'arif Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) dalam menggambarkan dinamika perkembangan pendidikan Islam di Indonesia. Fokus penelitian ini adalah menganalisis kontribusi lembaga pendidikan ini terhadap evolusi sistem pendidikan Islam, baik dari segi kurikulum, metode pengajaran, maupun dampaknya terhadap pembentukan karakter siswa. Metode penelitian ini mencakup analisis historis yang membahas sejarah dan perkembangan Lembaga Pendidikan Ma'arif NU sejak pendiriannya. Sumber data utama melibatkan dokumen-dokumen sejarah, arsip, serta wawancara dengan para pelaku utama dalam lembaga pendidikan tersebut, seperti guru, siswa, dan pengurus. Hasil penelitian ini diharapkan dapat memberikan gambaran yang mendalam tentang bagaimana peran LP Ma'arif NU telah membentuk dan memengaruhi konteks pendidikan Islam di Indonesia. Selain itu, penelitian ini juga akan membahas tantangan dan peluang yang dihadapi oleh lembaga pendidikan ini dalam menghadapi perkembangan zaman dan perubahan tuntutan pendidikan.

Kata kunci: Peranan, LP Ma'arif NU, Pendidikan Islam



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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, boasts a rich and diverse history of Islamic education. In the national context, where Islamic education is an integral part of identity and cultural values, Ma'arif Nahdlatul Ulama Educational Institutions (Ma'arif NU) emerge as a primary pillar in guiding the development of Islamic education. Among the many institutions contributing to the advancement of Islamic education in Indonesia, Ma'arif Nahdlatul Ulama Educational Institutions (NU) stand out as a significant entity.

Ma'arif NU is a leading educational institution established in 1959 and affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama, one of the largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia. This institution has played a crucial role in promoting Islamic education, not only in religious domains but also in academic and pedagogical realms (Afif, Zamzami, Mukhtarom, & Qowim, 2022). Aligned with the dynamics of time and societal changes, Ma'arif NU, as an Islamic educational institution, faces various challenges. Fundamental questions about its role in strengthening the Islamic education system in Indonesia become essential to elucidate (Ridwan, 2020).

By offering a comprehensive curriculum that integrates religious studies with sciences, mathematics, languages, and other subjects, Ma'arif NU has played a significant role in shaping individuals with broad knowledge grounded in Islamic principles and modern knowledge. Within its educational framework, Ma'arif NU has proactively promoted inclusion and tolerance. The institution has provided a platform for students from diverse backgrounds to come together, fostering an environment of mutual respect and understanding. Embracing Indonesia's diversity, Ma'arif NU has contributed to building a more peaceful and united society (Attabi', 2015).

Amidst the era of globalization and modernization, Ma'arif NU recognizes the importance of integrating technological advancements into its educational methods. The institution ensures that its students are equipped with the necessary skills to thrive in the digital age by incorporating digital learning tools, online resources, and modern teaching methodologies to adapt to the evolving educational landscape. With the demands for technological integration and changes in societal values, the role of Ma'arif NU as a frontline institution in shaping the next generation, capable not only in mastering religious knowledge but also in adapting to the changing times, becomes a focal point of attention (Syarif, 2014).

In this context, education is considered a means to shape character, morality, and a distinctive attitude towards diversity. Ma'arif NU Educational Institutions, enriched with humanistic values, are faced with the important task of not only imparting religious knowledge but also guiding learners in developing balanced and positively valued personalities. Despite making significant contributions, Ma'arif NU encounters challenges in maintaining the quality and relevance of Islamic education amidst globalization and rapid social changes. The

organization must find ways to strike a balance between preserving traditional Islamic teachings and embracing progressive educational approaches (Hasyim, 2019).

Looking ahead, this educational institution has the potential to enhance the impact of Islamic education in Indonesia by expanding its reach to underserved communities, forging collaborations with international educational institutions, and continually refining its curriculum to meet the evolving needs of students in a rapidly changing world. It is undeniable that this institution plays a crucial role in the development of Islamic education in Indonesia. Its commitment to holistic, inclusive, and flexible education is vital for the future of Islamic education (Kulap, 2017).

This research aims to detail and analyze the role played by Ma'arif NU Educational Institutions in the dynamics of Islamic education development in Indonesia, as well as the challenges and opportunities faced by Ma'arif NU in fulfilling its role in the advancement of Islamic education in Indonesia. The findings of this study are expected to provide a comprehensive overview of the dynamics of Islamic education development, as well as the contributions that Ma'arif NU can make to ensure that Islamic education remains relevant and empowers future generations.

METHOD

This research describes and analyzes past events, making the historical method highly appropriate. The data sources for this study include the officials of Ma'arif NU Educational Institutions, as well as relevant documents and books. Data from the officials of Ma'arif NU Educational Institutions and documents serve as the primary sources for this research, while secondary sources are derived from relevant books. These data are collected through observation, interviews, and documentary studies (DP, 2022). The authenticity of the sources is ensured through external criticism, while the validity of the sources is examined through internal criticism. Research data obtained from the aforementioned data collection techniques are processed from the outset to ensure that all information is integrated and interacts effectively. The collected data are filtered, organized, and interconnected. This process aids in drawing conclusions (Abdussamad, 2021; Yusuf, 2014).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Brief History of Ma'arif Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Institution

NU's primary objective is to enhance the quality of human resources within its community. Therefore, NU believes that education is a fundamental pillar that must be upheld to realize an independent society. The idea and movement of education have been present since the inception of the National Union of Indonesia. Nahdlatul Ulama was established on January 31, 1926 AD/16 Rajab 1334 H with three main pillars: (1) people's economy; (2) education; and

(3) nationalism. It began with Nadlatut Tujjar (1918), a movement in people's economy, and Tashwirul Afkar (1922) as a scholarly and cultural movement (Ulum & HS, 2019).

Ma'arif continuously fulfills NU's duty to enlighten the nation, in line with the dynamics of NU and the nation's development. Since 1935, Nahdlatul Ulama began opening madrasas outside of pesantren, which were conducted classically. The class system comprised General Madrasah and Vocational Madrasah (Ikhtishashiyah). The General Madrasah had 13 levels of classes, including Awwaliyah (2 years), Ibtida'iyah (3 years), Tsanawiyah (3 years), Mu'allimin Wustha (2 years), and Mu'allimin Ulya (3 years). Meanwhile, its vocational fields included Qudlat (law), Tijarah (trade), Nijarah (carpentry), Zira'ah (agriculture), Fuqara' (special school for the poor), and Special Vocational. In 1937, NU pioneered the establishment of al Majlis al Islami al A'la Indonesia (MIAI) to unify Islamic organizations in Indonesia. Wahid Hasyim served as the chairman with Faqih Usman from Muhammadiyah as its secretary (Rahim, 2013).

During the Japanese occupation, the government disbanded the nationalist organization (NU) in March 1942. The ulamas continued their movement in MIAI before forming the Majelis Syuro Muslimn Indonesia, or Masyumi. MIAI was dissolved after the establishment of Masyumi. NU continued to defend the interests of the Muslim community through Masyumi and the influence of kyais in Shumubu. They did so in an accommodative manner. In September 1943, at the request of Wahid Hasyim, the Japanese parliament allowed Muhammadiyah and NU to be reactivated and operate as they did during the Dutch colonial period. The brief Japanese occupation was a challenging period for the development of Indonesian education, including State Universities. However, Ma'arif continued its mission to inspire the spirit of the nation's youth despite facing many challenges and obstacles at that time (Imamah, 2015).

After the Proclamation of Independence of the Republic of Indonesia on August 17, 1945, Nahdlatul Ulama held the 16th NU Congress in Purwokerto from March 26 to 29, 1946. This was the first Congress of the National Union of Islamic Scholars (NU) since the 15th Congress held in 1940. Prior to this, NU had held Congresses annually from 1926 to 1940. Rais Akbar Hadratussyaikh KH. Hasyim Asy'ari emphasized the importance of education after the Indonesian nation and state became independent in his inaugural sermon at the opening of the Purwokerto Congress (Usman, 2018).

In terms of organization, NU convened the 22nd Congress, held in Jakarta from December 13 to 18, 1959, establishing Ma'arif as an Autonomous Body. This decision was made around two weeks after the Presidential Decree of the Republic of Indonesia Number 7 of 1959 Concerning Requirements and Simplification of Political Parties, issued on December 31, 1959. According to the Presidential Decree, political organizations were restricted from conducting activities in the fields of preaching and socio-cultural activities, including education. This was

because, although there was no article or paragraph prohibiting political organizations from engaging in these fields, including Education (Fawaid, 2022).

The Role of Ma'arif Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) in Islamic Education in Indonesia (1945 to Present)

Since its establishment, Ma'arif Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) has been a leading educational institution in Indonesia. The institution has played a significant role in shaping the country's educational landscape, particularly in Islamic education, and promoting religious tolerance. Ma'arif NU was founded in the early 20th century as part of the NU movement with the aim of revitalizing Islamic education and supporting social justice in Indonesia. It was established in response to the need for an advanced education system that integrates Islamic teachings with modern knowledge and skills.

By providing high-quality and easily accessible learning opportunities for students across Indonesia, Ma'arif NU has made significant contributions to education. To meet the diverse needs of students, the institution has built a network of schools ranging from elementary to tertiary levels. Additionally, Ma'arif NU has advanced the values of tolerance, inclusion, and community engagement through its educational programs (Nasrullah, Rama, & Achruh, 2023).

One of Ma'arif NU's core principles is its commitment to providing high-quality education that aligns with national education standards while incorporating Islamic values and principles. To ensure that students receive holistic and balanced education, the institution has invested funds in teacher training programs, curriculum development, and infrastructure. The institution is active in promoting religious tolerance and facilitating dialogue among people of various religions in Indonesian society. It has played a significant role in creating a harmonious and inclusive social environment by incorporating education that teaches tolerance and respect for diversity.

To achieve these pillars, Nahdlatul Ulama actively participates in socio-religious movements to empower the community. Here, the importance of creating effective organizational lines that can represent NU's ideals is felt, leading to the formation of institutions and committees such as Ma'arif Education Institution, Da'wah Institution, Mabarro Social Institution, Agricultural Development Institution, and others. LP Ma'arif NU was formed to empower the community through education, which has always been a concern of NU's founding scholars (Najib, 2020).

LP Ma'arif NU is part of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) that implements education policies at the level of the Central Board, Regional Boards, Branch Boards, and Council of Branch Representatives. According to the decision of the 33rd NU Congress in 2015 in Jombang, the position and function of LP Ma'arif NU are regulated in the NU Charter (AD) Chapter VI Articles

12 and 13, as well as ART Chapter V Article 16 concerning Structure and Organizational Devices. The institution is a departmental organization of NU, as stipulated in Chapter 17 paragraph (1), which functions as the implementer of policies related to specific community groups requiring special care. Furthermore, as stated in paragraph (6) b of the aforementioned chapter and article, the Ma'arif Nahdlatul Ulama Education Institution is entrusted with the responsibility of implementing Nahdlatul Ulama's policies in the field of formal education and teaching (Rosyid, 2015).

The LP Ma'arif NU Central program to disseminate Islamic education consists of three main components:

- a. Internalization Strategy of the *Ahlusunnah wal Jama'ah* Doctrine: conducted through workshops or seminars on understanding the *Ahlusunnah wal Jama'ah*. The aim is to cover societal issues related to the *Ahlusunnah wal Jama'ah* doctrine (Tohawi, 2020).
- b. School Deradicalization: LP Ma'arif has been teaching moderate Islam since early childhood, making school deradicalization efforts deemed feasible. *Wasathiyah* Islam is taught in every aspect of education in schools, focusing on preventing radicalization using moderate educational methods.
- c. Love for the Homeland: This value is instilled from a young age through the raising of the red and white flag ceremony every Monday, instilling nationalism. Furthermore, singing the Indonesian national anthem and the "*Syubanol Wathan*" song as part of patriotic spirit (Adhari & Suntara, 2020).

The provision of education is part of the public responsibility, thus quality assurance in the education system is necessary. All parties involved in education, including parents, communities, the workforce, and the government, have interests in ensuring quality education provision. They have these interests in their respective capacities and roles. Therefore, LP Ma'arif NU continues to strive to improve the quality of education. For example, LP Ma'arif held an education networking forum with the theme "Welcoming the Year of Education Quality 2005" in 2004. The event was attended by various stakeholders, including PBNU officials, LP Ma'arif NU PP officials, representatives from the Ministry of National Education (Depdiknas), Ministry of Religious Affairs (Depag), and others. The forum discussed the objective conditions of the education world, especially education within the State Universities (Asa'ari, 2017).

Throughout its journey, LP Ma'arif NU has dealt with all educational matters and actively participated in the development of education in Indonesia. Institutionally, this institution has also established educational institutions ranging from preschools to universities under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud). Meanwhile, madrasahs are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag). However, since the 32nd NU Congress in Makassar in 2010, this institution has only been allowed to

handle primary and secondary education affairs in accordance with the mandate of the NU Charter. Currently, there are 12,780 schools/madrasahs under LP Ma'arif NU scattered throughout Indonesia, consisting of 7,092 elementary schools/Islamic elementary schools (SD/MI), 3,929 junior high schools/Islamic junior high schools (SMP/MTs), and 1,759 senior high schools/vocational high schools/Islamic senior high schools (SMA/SMK/MA) (Ishak & W, 2022).

CONCLUSION

Ma'arif Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) institution has a long history and has played a significant role in the advancement of education in Indonesia. Its main objective is to enhance the quality of human resources through education. The institution continues to evolve and adapt to the developments within society and NU. During the Japanese occupation, Ma'arif NU remained committed to inspiring the nation's spirit through education despite facing challenges. After independence, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) continued to actively participate in the development of Islamic education in the country. Following the 22nd NU Congress in 1959, Ma'arif became an Autonomous Body in terms of organization. To implement NU policies in education, the institution has established various bodies such as Ma'arif Education to empower the community through education.

The role of Ma'arif NU in Islamic education in Indonesia is highly significant. The institution provides quality education opportunities from elementary to tertiary levels. Within its educational system, the institution promotes values of tolerance, inclusivity, and community engagement. Ma'arif NU is also active in ensuring that education is provided in line with national standards while integrating Islamic values. With many schools and madrasahs under its auspices throughout Indonesia, Ma'arif NU continues to strive for educational quality improvement through infrastructure, curriculum development, and teacher training programs. Additionally, the institution helps instil a sense of patriotism and nationalism in schools. Therefore, Ma'arif NU is not just an educational institution; it also plays a vital role in building an educated, tolerant, and characterful Indonesian society.

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