**MA'ARIF EDUCATION INSTITUTE NAHDLATUL ULAMA**

**AS TOLERANCE EDUCATION AGENCY 1959-1988**

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**Abstract**

Indonesia is a pluralistic nation, ethnically, culturally and religiously. Tolerant behaviour becomes an important factor of value in order to maintain the integrity of the nation. Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) is an organization since its birth strives to remain tolerant of the pluralism. This attitude is demonstrated between the establishments of Ma'arif Educational Institutions aimed at dealing with formal education within the NU, which still respects the old tradition, which is considered not against Islam.Steenbrink judged this attitude in response to the modern educational system developed by reformist Islamists who often proclaimed religious practices of pre-Islamic tradition.This paper will fill the vacuum that Steenbrink and other scholars have not yet filled in, on what NU rejects in the modern education system as a characteristic of NU education through the LP Ma’arif (*Lembaga Pendidikan Ma’arif* or Ma'arif Educational Institute). The methods used in this study are document studies, literature studies, interviews with Ma'arif Educational Institute figures, and observations to various schools and / or madrasah under the Ma'arif Educational Institute.The results of this study prove that NU is an organization capable of being a national tolerance agency that Steenbrink has not explained this. The role of LP Ma'arif NU is to provide additional curriculum in every school that is affiliated with NU starting from elementary, middle, to university level about the importance of tolerance, pluralism, and spirit *ukhuwah wathaniyah* (national solidarity) in order to maintain the unity of NKRI in the teaching frame -NU's and *Ahlusunnah wal Jama'ah* (Aswaja)

Key words: *Education, Tolerance, Nahdlatul Ulama, LP Ma'arif NU, Nationalism*

**Introduction**

Intolerant acts since late 2016 became a trending topic in various print and electronic mass media. Intolerant action in the form of religious violence, blasphemy, and spreading hate speech between groups that began religious sentiments, then evolved into aspects of race, and culture. In the nation's history, intolerant acts in the name of religion occurred in the early 20th century marked by the entry of reformist/modernist Islamists. The reformers spread their teachings through modern educational channels, as did the Dutch East Indies colonial government. Thus, the presence of reformist groups influenced the change of Islamic education system in Indonesia with the birth of several Islamic educational institutions such as Adabiah School (1909), Surau Jembatan Besi (1916), Thawalib School (1914), Madrasah Al-Diniyah (1915) Jami'at al-Khair (1905), Muhammadiyah (1921) (Subhan. 2012: 50-104). At that time reformist Muslims considered the traditional institution of Islamic Education, the *pesantren*, as an institution that failed to increase religious knowledge in Indonesian Muslim society. The reformist Muslims then established their own educational institution with the following characteristics: *First*, individual teaching becomes a mass teaching. *Second*, the learning time is not continuous, but there has been a list of teachings. *Third*, the learning period is arranged in stages. *Fourth*, sitting on benches, tables, and blackboards changes studying with cross legs. *Fifth*, the use of curriculum and students are given a certificate.

Basically, the change of the Islamic Education system from free system without curriculum and spelling is not so disturbing to traditional Islam, because almost at the same time traditional Islam also makes changes by applying the classical system and curriculum (Deliar Noer, 1984 and Iskandar, 2001). What troubles the traditional people was the lawsuit and blasphemy against some of the traditional practices of traditionalism, which are sued and called heresy of Islam by reformist Muslims. The birth of reformist organizations and institutions strengthened the pressure on the traditionalists. On idea of KH Wahad Hasbullah and the approval of KH Hasyim Asy’ari then formed organization under the name *Jam’iyah Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU) on 31 Januari 1926 (Marijan.1992: 14-17). This organization has just received official recognition (*Rechpersoon*) from the Dutch East Indies government on February 6, 1930. NU is determined to uphold the teachings of Islam brought by Walisongo with all tolerance such as *tahlilan*, *slametan*, *selapan*, *tingkeban*, *tedaksiten*, *surtanah*. These rituals as a form of tolerance built between religions with other religions. Including educational institutions used by traditional Muslims in the form of *pesantren*.

NU formed a division that specifically handles the issue of formal education under the name of Ma'arif Institute of Education (LP Ma'arif). In addition to improving the quality of education of *nahdliyyin*, this institution also maintains *khittah An Nahdliyyah* in social life with the principles of *tasamuh* (tolerance), *tawazun* (balanced), *tawasuth* and *I'tidal* (moderate and fair) and *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*. This paper intends to fill the vacuum that has not been described by Karel Steenbrink (1994). Steenbrink considers that LP Maarif is an institution that "rejects and imitates" the reformist Islamic education system, regardless of the forms of rejection, and the things exemplified by the traditionalists in NU.

Steenbrink did not clearly explain what aspects of the rejected and imitated by NU. He only explains the NU's emulated aspects of the reformers is the classical system (madrasah and school) with its curriculum system (Steenbrink.1994:65-72). The educational material in this institution is a form of rejection to the reformists, *Jam'iyah Nahdlatul Ulama*, by deepening Islamic teachings with the culture and civilization of the archipelago in the pillars of *Ukhuwah Wathaniyah* or national solidarity without the dichotomy of religion, race, ethnicity, nation, culture and class, dynamically and flexibly.

The scope of this research began in 1959, because in that year, LP Ma'arif had the status of the NU Autonomous Agency (Banom) that has been increasingly focused on NU education so that many changes and policies are issued by educational institutions in the NU environment. The scope of the study was ended in 1988 because LP Ma'arif officially returned to NU as the beginning of its formation.

**Theoretical Framework**

This study applies structuration theory of Anthony Giddens of the agent, agency, structure, structuration, and the duality of structure. In this case, LP Ma'arif NU acts as an agent of change, because this institution clearly has the ability to make changes based on the authority given by the NU leadership. In addition, this institution also has a strong willingness to run or make changes reflected in the vision and mission of this institution. The structure, according to Giddens, (2009: 121) is not only constraining but also enabling.

**Method**

This study uses historical method. Data obtained through document search, literature study, interviews with Ma'arif LP figures and observations to some Ma'arif educational institutions.

**Ma'arif Educational Institution Nahdlatul Ulama'**

Islam brought by *Walisongo* precisely tend to maintain the forms including ways of da’wah and the media spread of Islam with cultural approaches such as preserving the *pesantren* system. According to Steenbrink (1994: 11), the most perfect Islamic education is to study the Qur'an by gathering in a single mosque or the house of teachers with an individual system. Children chant and read verses of the Qur'an in front of teachers one by one. When one student faces the teacher then the other learns the previous material or the material to come, in a loud voice so that a variety of sounds are mixed together. However, children can still concentrate on learning and the teacher can also concentrate on teaching because they are used to concentrate in the middle of the noise.

They introduced non-violent Islam to accommodate Islamic teachings with previous traditions. So that emerged typical Indonesian Islam with various religious rituals inspired by tradition before Islam. According to Geertz, religion is part of the cultural system and as a pattern for behaviour because religion is a guideline, which is used as a framework of interpretation of human actions (Geertz.1970:12). The flexibility of *pesantren* in the process of its formation and mode of learning, elicits a dynamism that is adaptive to its external progress (Wahid 1995: 42-43). The way to learn the *pesantren* system by studying the yellow book is still preserved by *pesantren* and madrasah and schools owned by NU or affiliated with NU in the control of Ma'arif Institute of Education (LP Ma'arif NU).

If so, the presence of pesantren as an educational institution, is a form of tolerance built by Islamic preachers in Indonesia in the early period by exploiting the system of Hindu education without changing the form, only changing the material being taught. *Santri* from the word *castri* is a student who studies the book of *castra* / religious book in particular the Hindu era. While *pesantren* from *castri* get affixed "*pe-castri-an*" or "*pecastrian*" which by Javanese tongue become *pesantren* or place of *santri* / *castri* which specially study book of religion (Kasdi 2008: 58).

Therefore, Abdurrahman Wahid (1995: 39) gives a predicate of subculture in *pesantren* because *pesantren* is considered to have fulfilled minimal requirement that is having uniqueness like life pattern, internal power, which is adhered to values, and life view followed by teaching method. Due to the influence of Dutch education and reformist Islam, there were stages in the composition of education in Indonesia between 1890 and 1908. The basic part, middle section, upper middle section, and higher education (*Dunia Madrasah* first year No. 5 December 1954: 10-12).

Beginning of the 20th century, The Islamic reformist movement came to Indonesia sought to transform Islam into Arabian Islam with a purifying package of Islam. The arrival of the reformists in Indonesia has resulted in traditional Islam being disturbed by its calmness in living the religious life that has been lived. The traditionalists were very permissive of local traditions or cultures, so influential in their religious practices while fundamentalist reformers fought for the spirit of religious puritanization.

*Jam'iyah Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU) birth for preserving the teachings of the *Ahlusunnah wal Jama'ah* and preserving good religious traditions and not contradicting Islamic sharia. The NU organization has an open mind, including the values of tradition, even from outside Islam, especially the problem of modernity by considering the historical value and the situation (the context of the times) (Kholil. 2009:101). The birth of NU was the reaction of the reformist attacks against the traditionalists. Therefore, NU directs its struggle through education as reformists do. In fact, NU always put the education agenda in every discussion of the *muktamar* (big meeting) or congress.

At the 1st NU congress in 1926, they discussed the main work program consisting of da'wah, social, and education. In 1927, the 2nd NU Congress was addressing social issues including marriage and religious education. After the 3rd congress of 1928 the nahdliyyin established schools and madrasah that received great attention and were 100% financed by Muslims. The fourth congress on 17-20 September 1929 in Semarang decided that there was a special body in the body of *Hoof Bestur Nahdlatul Oelama* (HBNO) formed part *pergoeroean / Onderwijs* (Ma'arif) chaired by Abdullah Ubaid (Swara Nahdlatoel Oelama, No. 9 Th 2 (Ramadan 1347): 178-179).

At the 7th congress in Bandung on August 9, 1932, they produced a series of policies in the field of education to improve the condition of NU madrasah. At the 8th *muktamar* Conference in Jakarta from 5 to 7 May 1933, NU recommended the establishment of a teacher school (*Kweekschool / Muallimin*) in Surabaya and efforts to control the implementation of *madrasah*, including its level problems. At the 9th congress in Surabaya in 1934, established the Manbaul Ulum school to educate the *penghulu* and religious officers (Mastuhu.1980: 15). At the 10th NU conference in Solo 13-18 April 1935, the NU teaching section recommended the need for uniformity in learning activities the NU madrasah, In the NU Java regional conference that took place in 1937, emphasized the need to standardize the use of curriculum and organizing NU colleges Ma'arif Section, at the 13th congress in Menes Banten 11-16 June 1938 with the chairman of KH. Abdul Wahid Hasyim (*Berita Nahdlatoel Oelama* No.11 Th.7 (1 April 1938), also *Berita Nahdlatoel Oelama*, No. 9-10 Th.7 (1-15 March 1938). NU have capablity of interpreting religious teachings in context, peacefully without causing chaos and rejection. LP Ma’arif ran the principle in developing educational institutions as an effort to transform value from generation to generation between *nahdliyyin* (el Mawa.2015: 59-64).

**The Role of LP Ma'arif Maintains Religious Tolerance**

In the early period, LP Ma'arif only took care of madrasas under the control of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. However, in its development, there began a kindergarten / Roudlatul Athfal (TK / RA) as it was in Ponorogo in 1946 whose establishment was the result of cooperation between Muslimat NU and LP Ma'arif NU. Since the 1960s, NU's educational model began to follow the model of the Department of Education and Culture both general and vocational. This means the institutional arrangement of NU education, including two lines of religious education and general education, managed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Culture.

The purpose of NU's education is to keep NU's *khittah*. LP Ma'arif performs the educational duties as the designer, executor, supervisor, and create additional curriculum for NU's schools to stick to the *khittah an-nahdliyyah* in the form of *tasamuh* (tolerant), *i'tidal* and *tawasuth* (moderate / middle attitude and Fair), *tawazun* (balanced), and *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*. It is expected that NU members will be able to implement the principles of moderation, tolerance, flexibility, respect for diversity, plurality, culture, and ethnicity in the society. According to Steenbrink, the relationship between the NU educational unit and NU has its own distinct characteristics and patterns with other educational organizations such as Muhammadiyah, PERSIS, etc. If Muhammadiyah makes management as the goal of education, on the other hand, NU makes the system of values as its control. (Burhanuddin.2009.1-6).

Since the establishment of Ma'arif until 1950-1951, KH Fathurrahman as chairman of the NU has not been able to uniform and equate the curriculum applied in NU schools/*madrasah*, although in that year, there were many NU-affiliated educational institutions as well as those affiliated with NU. It is not strange that these educational institutions belong to "NU people" not "NU's" as their *jam'iyah*. Unlike other organizations, for example Muhammadiyah, at any level belongs to the Muhammadiyah organization run by the Muhammadiyah cadres, so it can be easily managed and controlled.

Ma'arif's function was emphasized in the Ma'arif Working Meeting on May 4-6, 1978 in Jakarta, as an educational organization within the NU to color the process of forming the character and personality of future generations of Nahdlatul Ulama in the future. LP Ma'arif as NU educator acts through formal education in nurturing and building society for NU's task to be done. NU's tasks include: *first*, forming the personality and character of society (character building); *second,* nation building; *Third*, build criticism. Therefore Ma'arif plays a role through the establishment of the nation's character to be proud of the history of the nation, *man laisa lahul ardl laisa lahut tarih, wa man laisa lahut tarih laisa lahudz dzakirah* (anyone who does not land and does not love the homeland, hence has no history, anyone who has no history then has no memory). (Siraj.2015: 62).

Ma'arif NU experienced some structural changes and status within the organization. At the beginning of his birth (1938), Ma'arif became part of the NU until 1959. After NU changed its status as a political party, based on the results of the NU congress in May 1952 in Palembang, NU gave Ma'arif status in the 22nd congress in Jakarta on 3-18 December 1959 as Autonomous Agency. On 23-26 February 1954 in Semarang, Ma'arif held to make lesson, plans for Madrasah Ibtida'iyah (MI), to form the organization of Nadlatul Ulama Student Association (IPNU), and Teacher Organization within Ma'arif NU with Name of Pergunu (Union of NU Teachers) (Tim. 1976:138).

After having autonomous status, Ma'arif named himself the Ma'arif Nahdlatul Ulama Educational Institution (LP Ma'arif NU). In that period, LP Ma'arif increasingly concentrated and focused on NU education. This proved on 9-15 September 1968, LP Ma'arif and Pergunu held a curriculum seminar in Cianjur West Java to deliver the curriculum, ranging from *Raudlatul Athfal* (RA), *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* (MI), *Madrasah Tsanawiyah* (MTs), *Madrasah Aliyah* (MA), Junior High School / *Madrasah Mu'allimin / Muallimat*. In 1968, LP Ma'arif expanded its wings to all provinces in Indonesia (Tim 1976: 181-184). Therefore, LP Ma'arif formed the curriculum of LP Ma'arif NU in 1980 as a result of the limited meeting of 18-20 May 1979. The expected achievement in this curriculum is that the value of *Aswaja* and NU become the discipline of the embedded and conserve values and traditions that exist in NU. (Syarif.2014:47).

After NU ceased to be a political party, the status of LP Ma'arif because according to the new Constitution of NU the status of LP Ma'arif has been transformed into a part of NU, and the management of NU's education, which has been handled by LP Ma'arif, must move to NU Ma'arif section starting from 1975. In fact, what happened was the dualism between the Ma'arif NU LP and the Ma'arif NU. It was only after the 28th congress in Yogyakarta 1988, the abolition of NU Ma'arif section and at the same time make LP Ma'arif as an institution under NU that serves as executor of NU's policy in education and teaching as it was the first time until today (2017) under the name of LP Ma'arif NU.

Curriculum created by LP Ma'arif, starting from MI / SD, MTs / SMP, MA / SMA / SMK even up to Higher Education always teach tolerance in religion and nation. For MI / SD level starting from class IV-VI, there is material about the history of *Walisongo* by way of *da'wah* which is very tolerant with local culture / tradition without erasing the culture that existed before Islam came to Indonesia, but the culture was used as a means of spreading the teachings of Islam in Indonesia. This is done in the hope of being able to bear the nation's children who are able to follow Walisongo's footsteps in addressing the existing culture with full tolerance. There is also material about *Mabadi 'Khoiru Ummah*, that teaches children to always do social action regardless of religious, ethnic, racial differences.Initiation of understanding of NU *khittah* is also taught as a form of recognition of attitude that must be practiced as adherents of good religion and nation with tolerant attitude, moderate, fair, and *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* in everyday interaction. In addition, the attitude of brotherhood is also taught, consisting of *Ukhuwah Nahdliyyah, Islamiyah, Wathoniyah* (nationality), and *Basyariah* (humanity). This means that in association must regard anyone as a brother, a brotherhood based on the same identity as NU citizens, Muslims, fellow Indonesian people, even fellow human beings with full tolerance.

At MTs / junior level taught also *pesantren* education with its uniqueness, as well as some materials equal to MI / SD level with more in-depth discussion. MA / SMA / SMK levels are also taught various materials on the spread of Islam in Indonesia with various channels brought by *Walisongo* using local culture media as a form of accommodation between religion and culture, Nahdliyyin philosophy, NU nationalism, to the nationalism of Republic of Indonesia. Plurality also becomes a very important teaching in developing the character of religious tolerance and nation in overcoming *Ukhuwah* *Wathoniyah* (brotherhood on the basis of equality in nationality) in SMA Ma'arif Ma'arif NU / SMA / MA.

LP Ma'arif not only develops primary and secondary education but also handles higher education. NU Higher Education was established to actualize the ideological values of the NU-an and the teachings of *ahlusunnah wal jamaah* in order to provide peace for all Indonesians begining 1950’s (Zayadi.2009: 25). Especially in running traditions and religious rituals until now. This college was founded by Ma'arif NU Educational Institution (LP Ma'arif NU).The university opened three faculties and one academy, namely the Faculty of Qadla (Islamic Law) in Surakarta Central Java (now UNU Surakarta), Faculty of Law and Faculty of Economics, both in Bandung (Now Universitas Islam Nusantara / Uninus) A year later, on January 1, 1959 The Islamic Education and Education Academy (APIA) is now the Islamic University of Malang (Unisma) which is directly under the supervision and the flag of Ma'arif. Until now, there are approximately 240 universities under NU. Each NU Higher Education should provide Aswaja and NU principles such as those at school and madrasah level starting with SD / MI, SMP / MTs, and SMA / SMK / MA with different achievement levels.

Higher Education owned by NU, must teach about *aswaja* and NU principle as stock to face life in society to become a tolerant person. This is evidenced by the material obtained in the course of the principles of organization, which characterizes the basis of thinking according *khittah nahdliyyah*. Learning in college is more on its implementation in daily life. In addition, there is also material about the teachings *aswaja an nahdliyah* which became the foundation of charity, acting in running the life of nation and religion.

Thus, Islam developed by NU is a tolerant and peaceful religion without violence, oppression, and radicalism. Through educational institutions under LP Ma'arif, the curriculum has been included as a subject to be conveyed. The practice is characteristic of NU education by applying *al-muhafadhatu ‘ala al Qodim al sholih wa al-akhdzu bi al jadid al ashlah* (keeping the old tradition still good and always looking for a new, better tradition) that is actually practiced(el Mawa. 2015:59-64).

**Conclusion**

The establishment of Ma'arif Educational Institutions for dealing with formal education (with classical and tiered systems) among the Nahdlatul Ulama is a model of the modern education system developed by reformist Islamists. In addition to modelling traditionalists also rejected the modern educational system of material aspects and objectives. Therefore, Karel Steenbrink called NU, being imitating and rejecting. The reformists who taught learning materials in the spirit of purification of Islam often clashed with the practice of religion that already existed in Indonesia taught by Walisongo. NU is an organization that upholds the teachings of Walisongo in terms of teachings and ways of *da'wah*. By doing an accommodative attitude and being tolerant of the existing culture makes the growing religious practices in Indonesia adjust the existing culture. At the beginning of the twentieth century there was a conflict between traditionalists and reformers in education, so that traditional Muslims established Ma'arif Institute to handle formal education within the NU.

The way in which LP Ma'arif maintains national and religious tolerance is to form an additional curriculum applied to NU-owned schools or affiliated with NU. The essence of the curriculum created by NU is to keep *khittah an nahdyiyyah* especially related to worship and social community. These principles, especially the national tolerance, become the content of NU educational institutions and curriculum from the basic level to universities in the control of LP Ma'arif. Schools affiliated with NU under the Ma'arif NU Foundation starting from the basic level have been taught. *First*, examples of tolerance made by Walisongo in religious life in the hope of forming a new generation capable of addressing the culture with tolerance. *Secondly*, *Mabadi 'Khoiro Ummah* is doing social action regardless of religious, ethnic, and racial differences. *Third*, to instill a brotherly attitude of *ukhuwah Islamiyah* (brotherhood of Islam), *Ukhuwah Wathoniyah* (national fraternity), and *ukhuwah Basyariyah* (brotherhood of humanity). At the intermediate level it is taught the principle of the unity of the NKRI in plurality of nation in realizing *ukhuwah wathaniyah* (national solidarity) without segregating religion, race, tribe, nation, culture, and class dynamically and flexibly. Then at the level of higher education is already on the stage of actualization of the ideological values of NU and *Aswaja's* teachings in order to bring peace for the whole nation of Indonesia.

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