



## A Century of Nadhlatul Ulama's Contribution to Modernizing Islamic Education in Indonesia

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### ABSTRAK

Nadhlatul Ulama (NU) telah lama mengangkat isu pendidikan sebagai prioritas utama, mengakui pentingnya pendidikan sebagai kunci membuka pintu menuju masa depan yang lebih baik. Dengan berpegang pada nilai-nilai agama dan memanfaatkan perkembangan ilmu pengetahuan dan teknologi, NU secara konsisten merancang transformasi dalam lembaga-lembaga pendidikannya untuk menghadapi dinamika masa depan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menggali peran dan sumbangan penting NU dalam upaya modernisasi pendidikan Islam serta mendalaminya sebagai entitas yang berkontribusi dalam perkembangan pendidikan di Indonesia selama satu abad. Metode Library Research digunakan dalam penelitian ini untuk mengumpulkan dan menganalisis berbagai sumber data, termasuk buku, jurnal, dan literatur lainnya, yang kemudian diolah menjadi sebuah artikel ilmiah. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa NU telah berupaya menerapkan modernisasi pendidikan melalui pendirian ribuan lembaga pendidikan, terutama pesantren, di seluruh Indonesia. Integrasi pendidikan modern dengan perangkat pembelajaran digital adalah salah satu upaya konkrit yang diambil NU untuk menghadapi perubahan zaman. Selain memberikan pendidikan agama, NU juga berkomitmen untuk melahirkan generasi yang memiliki pemahaman dalam ilmu pengetahuan dan teknologi, sehingga mampu berkompetisi dalam era globalisasi.

### ABSTRACT

Nadhlatul Ulama (NU) has long prioritized the issue of education, recognizing its importance as the key to unlocking a better future. Holding onto religious values and harnessing the advancements in knowledge and technology, NU consistently designs transformations within its educational institutions to meet the challenges of the future. This study aims to explore NU's role and significant contributions in the effort to modernize Islamic education and delve into its one-century existence as an entity contributing to the development of education in Indonesia. The Library Research method is employed in this study to gather and analyze various data sources, including books, journals, and other literature, which are then synthesized into a scholarly article. The research findings indicate that NU has endeavored to implement educational modernization through the establishment of thousands of educational institutions, especially pesantren, across Indonesia. The integration of modern education with digital learning tools is one concrete effort undertaken by NU to adapt to changing times. In addition to providing religious education, NU is committed to nurturing a generation that possesses a grasp of knowledge and technology, enabling them to compete in the era of globalization.

### KATA KUNCI

Modernisasi; Pendidikan Islam; Satu Abad Nadhlatul Ulama.

### KEYWORDS

Modernization; Islamic Education; One-Century of Nadhlatul Ulama.

## A. Introduction

Nadhlatul Ulama is the largest Islamic community organization in Indonesia, which since the beginning of its existence has not been separated from reforms, especially in the field of education.<sup>1</sup> Officially established in 1334 H, Nadhlatul Ulama is now 100 years old. Given Nadhlatul Ulama's long journey in trying to improve the quality of Islamic education in Indonesia. Entering the second century, Nadhlatul Ulama is trying to respond to changes in people's behavior that are influenced by various long-term challenges faced by mankind, especially in the field of education.

Nadhlatul Ulama's idea of modernizing Islamic education was carried out as an effort to save the *Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama'ah* from the deviant things done by Wahabi reformers, as well as an effort to purify the teachings of Islam as conveyed by the Prophets and Messengers. As one of the religious and community organizations that developed rapidly in Indonesia and had a major contribution towards the development of Islamic education in Indonesia, Nadhlatul Ulama spearheaded by Hasyim Asyari and Abdul Wahab Hasbullah, became an Indonesian cleric who began his contribution to the field of education with the establishment of salaf pesantren in Indonesia.<sup>2</sup>

Some of the activities carried out in the early phase of the establishment of Nadhlatul Ulama in the field of education was to establish pesantren. Through the cultivation of religious education and the provision of knowledge horizons for the natives during Dutch colonialism, it became the first step in responding to the times that required Nadhlatul Ulama to form a formal education system. Nadhlatul Ulama, which has been considered a traditional pesantren based organization, is now increasingly showing a passion for progressive thinking. Its enormous contribution and influence in efforts to modernize Islamic education in Indonesia are now undoubted.<sup>3</sup>

Education is the most effective medium in building student character. although in essence the environment also has a major influence on the formation of student character, schools have a major contribution in educating the nation while shaping the personality of students, so that they can become civilized human beings. Through education, progress can be achieved by humans, so educational institutions become the initial foothold in developing a nation. Education is likened to saving for the future, both socially, financially, intellectually and culturally. So that through education students can optimally develop the potential that exists within them armed with broad insights, knowledge and experience that can be used as capital in life.<sup>4</sup> So, until now Nadhlatul Ulama has been massive in establishing various educational institutions.

Based on the data presented by Rahim in Daulay (2021), it is known that currently there are around 12,092 Islamic education institutions ranging from primary level, secondary level, upper level, to university level under the auspices of Nadhlatul Ulama with a learning system that has been adapted to the challenges of the times.<sup>5</sup> This is proof that since its inception, Nadhlatul Ulama has always tried to contribute in spreading Islamic teachings while grounding Islam with the *Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama'ah* Ideology. Nadhlatul Ulama has manifested itself since the beginning in the field of education by forming

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<sup>1</sup> As'ad Mahrus, "Pembaruan Pendidikan Islam Nadhatul Ulama," *Nizham: Jurnal Studi Keislaman*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (2014): 51.

<sup>2</sup> Solihah Titin Sumanti, Hasan Asari, and Al Rasyidin, "Modernization of Education Contents of Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama, and Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah 1900-1942 in North Sumatera," *SSRG: International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (2015): 27–33.

<sup>3</sup> Hartati and Hambali, "Transformasi NU Di Indonesia: Upaya Menghilangkan Polemik Di Tengah Perubahan Politik," *Substantia: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (2018): 35–47.

<sup>4</sup> Ari Kartiko et al., "Aswaja Ke-NU-an Based Islamic Moderate Education As a Radicalism Strategy," *al-Afkar: Journal for Islamic Studies* Vol. 3, no. 2 (2020): 93.

<sup>5</sup> Saripuddin Daulay and Rasyid Anwar Dalimunthe, "Modernisasi Pendidikan Islam Di Indonesia: Komparasi Pengalaman Organisasi Muhammadiyah Dan Nadhlatul Ulama," *Fitrah: Journal of Islamic Education*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (2021): 125–140.

boarding schools based on Islamic education as an effort to create a society that is pious, virtuous, broad-minded and has the skills to survive in facing the challenges of the times.<sup>6</sup>

Entering the First Century of Nadhlatul Ulama, Ajie Najmuddin in his book entitled "Welcoming the First Century of NU: History and Reflection of the Struggle of Nadhlatul Ulama Surakarta and Its Surroundings", highlights the progress of the Islamic education system, especially in Surakarta. He mentions that the presence of Nadhlatul Ulama and the advancement of the Islamic education system in Indonesia go hand in hand and are continuous with the history of Islamic education pioneered by the Wali Songo.<sup>7</sup> Nadhlatul Ulama always strives to always respect local culture and traditions that develop dynamically. Likewise, what was developed by the wali songo when spreading Islamic teachings to the people of Indonesia, especially on the island of Java replaced the Hindu-Buddhist forces around the XVI and XVII centuries.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, in writing this article, the author tries to explain the history of Islamic education in Indonesia and the existence of Nadhlatul Ulama in efforts to modernize Islamic education in Indonesia, to the challenges that Nadhlatul Ulama will face entering the second century of Nadhlatul Ulama, especially in the field of Islamic education in Indonesia.

## B. Nadhlatul Ulama and The Spread of Islamic Education in The Archipelago

We need to know that the spread of Islam in Indonesia cannot be separated from the role of the Wali Songo, the carriers of Islamic teachings to the archipelago. Thus, it can be said that Nadhlatul Ulama was born in the spirit of upholding the religion of Allah SWT in the archipelago and continuing the struggle of Walisongo. Considering that one of the reasons for the birth of Nadhlatul Ulama was motivated by the spread of the Christian-Catholic religion that was intensively carried out by the Dutch-Portuguese when colonizing the archipelago. Besides, the birth of Nadhlatul Ulama was also an effort to maintain the understanding of Ahlu Sunnah Wa Al-Jama'ah (Followers of the Sunnah of the Prophet, Companions and Ulama Salaf Followers of the Prophet-Sahabat) which was expected to fortify Muslims from the influence of new teachings (*Bid'ah*).<sup>9</sup>

Indonesia is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-lingual country, so the guardians brought Islam to the archipelago without disturbing the traditions, religions and beliefs of the peoples. In fact, Islam is present to maintain, enrich, and strengthen the culture of the archipelago, so that it can stand on an equal footing with other world civilizations.<sup>10</sup> This is also what Nadhlatul Ulama later did. Since its birth, Nadhlatul Ulama has made itself a forum for struggle against all forms of colonialism and seized the independence of the Indonesian republic from the Dutch and Japanese colonists, while actively preaching Islam throughout the country, continuing the struggle of the Wali Songo without disturbing the traditions and beliefs of the people.

Talking about the entry of Islamic education in Indonesia, it is closely related to the arrival of Islam itself, Yunus in Dahlan (2018) states that the history of Islamic education is as old as the history of the entry of Islam into Indonesia. Although Islamic education began when Islam first entered the archipelago, it cannot be known exactly how education in the early days of Islam was carried out. Such

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<sup>6</sup> Mohammad Akmal Haris et al., "Religious Moderation among the Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah," *International Journal of Social Science And Human Research* Vol.06, No. 01 (2023): 481.

<sup>7</sup> Ajie Najmuddin, *Menyambut Satu Abad NU: Sejarah Dan Refleksi Perjuangan Nadhlatul Ulama* (Surakarta: Buku Revolusi, 2020).

<sup>8</sup> Haris et al., "Religious Moderation among the Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah", 483.

<sup>9</sup> Amin Farih, "Nadhlatul Ulama (NU) Dan Kontribusinya Dalam Memperjuangkan Kemerdekaan Dan Mempertahankan Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia (NKRI)," *Walisongo: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (2016): 251–284.

<sup>10</sup> Agus Sunyoto, *Atlas Wali Songo* (Tangerang: Pustaka IIMaN dan LESBUMI PBNU, 2017).

as the books used, the education system and its management. Because at that time, the materials used to convey knowledge were still very limited, so it can be ascertained that Islamic education at that time already existed even though in a very simple form.<sup>11</sup> This is where the development of Islamic education in Indonesia began.

The development of Islamic education in Indonesia is characterized by the emergence of various educational institutions that develop gradually from simple to modern stages, as we see today. One example of the development of Islamic education in Indonesia is the presence of Islamic pesantren education as one of the strategic educational institutions in the development of Islam in Indonesia. The lessons obtained by students in a boarding school are not only about religious material, but also about lessons about daily life. Nadhlatul Ulama is one of the Islamic organizations that is not only engaged in religion, but also in education through the establishment of pesantren.<sup>12</sup> Nadhlatul Ulama's work in education was prioritized through the establishment of salaf pesantren in its early days.<sup>13</sup>

The establishment of Nadhlatul Ulama is a long series of struggles. Nadhlatul Ulama is here to answer the various problems that have occurred to date. Like Nadhlatul Ulama, Islam Nusantara also puts forward compassion which is soothing, moderate, protects and accepts local culture (as long as it does not conflict with Islamic teachings), emphasizes dialogue or harmonizes syar'i texts and reality, so that it is not just a ritual but also as a manifestation of the teachings of *Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama'ah* (Aswaja) which are practiced and taught by Nadhlatul Ulama and other organizations that agree with Nadhlatul Ulama.<sup>14</sup> Founded by famous clerics from East Java, namely: KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, KH. Abdul Wahab Chasbullah and KH. Hasan Bisri Syansuri.<sup>15</sup> Now Nadhlatul Ulama has grown so rapidly that it has become one of the largest organizations not only in Indonesia but also in the world. In addition, Nadhlatul Ulama has also contributed greatly to the spread of Islamic teachings and the establishment of various educational institutions to universities to various parts of the country.

But not only contributing to the fields of education and da'wah, Nadhlatul Ulama also has a very important role in social life. Nadhlatul Ulama had been present and played a role in maintaining the socio-political conditions in Indonesia long before the colonial period. As one example of the role of Nadhlatul Ulama was during the Japanese occupation in Indonesia. Japan once required the Indonesian people to bow every 07.00 in the morning towards the city of Tokyo. This was done as a symbol of respect for the emperor Hirohito and submission to the sun god Amateration Omikami. At that time, KH Hasyim Asy'ari was willing to go to jail, because he was not willing to comply with the order for the sake of upholding the Islamic Aqidah which only submits and obediently worships Allah SWT.<sup>16</sup>

### C. Modernization of Islamic Education under Nadhlatul Ulama

Modernization linguistically comes from the word modern which means the latest (way of thinking and attitudes in accordance with the times) which is then given the suffix *sasi*, becoming modernization. Thus, it can be interpreted that modernization is a process of shifting attitudes,

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<sup>11</sup> Zaini Dahlan, *Sejarah Pendidikan Islam: Signifikansi Jejak Pendidikan Islam Bagi Perkembangan Pendidikan Islam Masa Kini Dan Masa Depan*, ed. Muaz Tanjung (Medan: Widya Puspita, 2018), 83-84.

<sup>12</sup> Ali Rahim, "Nadhlatul Ulama: Peran Dan Sistem Pendidikannya," *Jurnal Al-Hikmah* Vol. XIV, No. 2 (2013): 174-175.

<sup>13</sup> Sumanti, Asari, and Rasyidin, "Modernization of Education Contents of Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama, and Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah 1900-1942 in North Sumatera", 29.

<sup>14</sup> Tuti Munfaridah, "Islam Nusantara Sebagai Manifestasi Nadhlatul Ulama (NU) Dalam Mewujudkan Perdamaian," *Wahana Akademika*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (2017): 33.

<sup>15</sup> Moh Muslih, "The Role of Nahdlatul Ulama ( NU ) in Fighting for Religious Moderation In Indonesia," *International Seminar " Islam, Multiculturalism And Radicalism' In The Mobility Program Held Indonesia Higher Institution under The Supervision of the Minister of Religious Affairs of Indonesia*. (Malaysia: International Islamic University College Selango, 2019): 2.

<sup>16</sup> Munfaridah, "Islam Nusantara Sebagai Manifestasi Nadhlatul Ulama (NU) Dalam Mewujudkan Perdamaian", 28.

mentality, ways of thinking and acting as a society in accordance with the demands and developments of the times. Modernization can also be interpreted as a change as an effort to improve conditions that have been considered bad or still use old traditions towards a better direction by implementing something new. Thus, modernization can be understood as an effort to improve the situation, both in terms of concepts, ways, and a series of methods that can be applied in order to change the current situation for the better.

Nurcholish Madjid said that modernization is a process of overhauling the old (irrational) mindset and work system into a new (rational) mindset and work system.<sup>17</sup> Muhadjir in Dahlan (2018) states that the word modern is not secular westernization, but the opposite of traditional and conventional words whose main characters are rational, efficient, and integrate the insights of science and revelation. So that the word Modernization can be referred to as reform, namely reshaping or making changes for the better. Modernization can also be interpreted as improvement, because in Arabic it is interpreted as *Tajdid*, which means renewal. While the culprit is referred to as Mujadid, which means the person who does the renewal.<sup>18</sup>

Modernization is an era of achieving a scientific and technological progress that must be appreciated by all human beings without exception Muslims themselves. The construction of one's thinking which is often a reference in providing ideas is also a determining factor in order to give birth to renewal accompanied by a rational, dynamic and progressive way of thinking. In the Islamic world, modernization means efforts or activities to change the lives of mankind from the current situation to a new situation and to be realized in order to achieve the benefit of mankind, especially Muslims who are always guided by the Qur'an and Hadith as well as teachings that have been agreed upon by the scholars.<sup>19</sup>

The modernization of Islamic education in Indonesia has emerged since the 19th century. Indirectly, the modernization of Islamic education has a great influence on the development of Islamic education. Since its first appearance, there have been many changes in the world of Islamic education, ranging from the education system, management management, institutional institutions to a variety of government policies that have also changed as a result of the flow of modernization. Although, the reality in the field that changes do not always have a positive impact, but at least it can add to the color of Islamic education in Indonesia. Because it is known that the essence of modernization itself is a change that is based on a goal towards a better direction.<sup>20</sup>

The idea of an educational modernization program comes from the idea of modernism, Islamic thought and institutions as a whole. Thus, the modernism of Islamic education as a whole is a prerequisite for the revival of Muslims in modern times, therefore Islamic institutions, thought and also education must be modernized immediately, simply updated according to the framework of modernity. Thus, the renewal of Islamic education can be interpreted as an effort to reform the methods, methodology, curriculum, and situation of traditional Islamic education (orthodox) towards a more professional and rational direction that has been adapted to the current situation.<sup>21</sup>

In the beginning of the development of Islam in Indonesia, formal education has not been organized systematically or is still informal. Given that the development of Islam began with the

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<sup>17</sup> Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam Kemodernan Dan Ke-Indonesiaan* (Bandung: Mizan, 2013), 207.

<sup>18</sup> Dahlan, *Sejarah Pendidikan Islam: Signifikansi Jejak Pendidikan Islam Bagi Perkembangan Pendidikan Islam Masa Kini Dan Masa Depan*, 35.

<sup>19</sup> Azyumardi Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi Dan Modernisasi Menuju Milenium Baru* (Jakarta: Logos Wacana Ilmu, 2000), 31.

<sup>20</sup> Daulay and Dalimunthe, "Modernisasi Pendidikan Islam Di Indonesia: Komparasi Pengalaman Organisasi Muhammadiyah Dan Nadhlatul Ulama", 126.

<sup>21</sup> Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi Dan Modernisasi Menuju Milenium Baru*, 31.

cultivation of basic beliefs, education was carried out simultaneously with the spread of Islamic teachings through the mosque. The educational process in homes and mosques was carried out in the form of halaqah or study circles. After that, formal Islamic education emerged which began with the establishment of a madrassah. Indonesia is a country where the majority of the people are Muslims, so it is natural that Indonesia has become a fertile ground for the growth of Islamic organizations that have a significant influence, not only on religious matters, but also on the economic, social and educational sides.<sup>22</sup>

One of the Islamic organizations that is currently flourishing is Nadhlatul Ulama. Nadhlatul Ulama is one of the community organizations that, since its inception, has witnessed and continues to follow the modernization of Islamic education in Indonesia. Nadhlatul Ulama's role in education cannot be doubted, even if we look further, Nadhlatul Ulama's work in education has occurred since pre-independence. In addition to giving birth to many educational institutions, Nadhlatul Ulama also gave birth to many ideas for reform in the world of Islamic education.

Since its inception, Nadhlatul Ulama has been recognized through the establishment of its boarding schools, which are often considered traditional and classical institutions. However, at present, several pesantren under the auspices of Nadhlatul Ulama have transformed into modern pesantren by improving the quality of Islamic education that is considered outdated. Actually, it is not only from the institutional side that the thought of renewal appears, but from various sides, such as: Human resources, Facilities and infrastructure, Status and position, and many more. This is what then gives a new color in the world of Islamic education in Indonesia.<sup>23</sup>

As an effort to modernize (renewal) in the field of education, Nadhlatul Ulama continues to make improvements to enhance the quality of its services, so as to produce better output in the years to come. The modernization of Nadhlatul Ulama education is a concrete manifestation of its openness to change and the importance of progress, which is expected to be a driving force for improving the living conditions of the people and society as a whole.<sup>24</sup> In the field of education, the approach shown by Nadhlatul Ulama in its efforts to reform its education system and institutions is through the use of madrasah learning as a subsystem of its pesantren education by developing traditional education with modern education by adopting digital technology devices.

Nadhlatul Ulama modernizes its educational institutions by not abolishing existing traditions, but improving elements that are considered weak and replacing or complementing them with new, better elements. Rahardjo in As'ad (2014) explained that Nadhlatul Ulama was born as a renewal step for the aspirations and social reality of the Muslim community. Thus, although Nadhlatul Ulama is often accused of being conservative, anti-change (anti-modernism) and even Traditionalist. However, this does not mean that Nadhlatul Ulama is anti-renewal (modernization), but rather encourages it to grow not only in the field of education, socio-culture but also in other religious matters.<sup>25</sup>

Since the 1930s Nadhlatul Ulama has begun its educational renewal efforts through its Ma'arif section while maintaining the continuity of tradition. Substantial aspects received attention without neglecting technical-methodical aspects.<sup>26</sup> The most fundamental reform is related to the theology of education, which emphasizes the use of the concept of "dynamic human" to replace Al-Asy'ari's concept of "fatalist human". Dynamic human is defined as a human being who has a rational attitude, is responsible, always initiates and makes efforts, changes, moves forward and develops towards a more

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<sup>22</sup> Zuhairini, dkk. *Sejarah Pendidikan Islam* (Jakarta: Bumi Aksara, 2008), 109-110.

<sup>23</sup> Daulay and Dalimunthe, "Modernisasi Pendidikan Islam Di Indonesia: Komparasi Pengalaman Organisasi Muhammadiyah Dan Nadhlatul Ulama", 127.

<sup>24</sup> As'ad Mahrus, "Pembaruan Pendidikan Islam Nadhatul Ulama", 68.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 70.

<sup>26</sup> Mahrus As'ad, "Pembaruan Pendidikan Nahdlatul Ulama" (Disertasi--UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 2007), 234.

perfect level (kamil). Thus, the image of a dynamic human being is characterized by his meaningful and useful achievements, both for himself and others around him from time to time while heading towards the kamil process. Thus, dynamic human beings are synonymous with progress in the sense that they cannot accept stagnant and stuck conditions (jumud), and are always forward-oriented (optimism).<sup>27</sup>

Referring to this, Tilaar explains that the renewal is continued by conducting reactualization and reposition. Reactualization is an effort to be able to revive and encourage positive values that have long been owned by educational institutions that are considered suitable if applied in modern conditions, while fixing the weaknesses that exist in it by following optimal community participation in its implementation. Meanwhile, repositioning is interpreted as an effort to organize or reformulate the position of Islamic educational institutions. Not just as an institution for teaching religious knowledge (*tafaqquh fi al-din*), but also as teaching general science and skills (technology) and as an indigenous (Islamic) educational institution that is concerned with upholding the values of democracy, pluralism, tolerance, morals, character, strengthening faith and piety, and fostering cooperation and mutual help among others.<sup>28</sup> These are the components that must be fulfilled by the nation in the competition to face the demands of modern life. So that Islamic educational institutions can carry out their functions optimally in achieving the stated objectives of Islamic education.

Thus, Nadhatul Ulama must organize a paradigm shift in the implementation of education that is more quality-oriented, without having to leave its quantity. Given that most of its supporters are in rural areas, which at that time had not been reached by government education services as a whole. Therefore, the implication is that it is necessary to seek a more organized and complete educational institutional system, so that educational institutions are not only in the form of madrassah, but also schools as organized by the government which are arranged in stages, starting from low levels (kindergarten / RA) to higher levels (University). Not only that, educational institutions must also be open to women in a co-educational system, while still reviving pesantren as the main umbrella.<sup>29</sup>

Considering the reality of educational institutions under the auspices of Nadhatul Ulama today, in various rural areas that have not been reached by government education services, it has been much better when compared to previous years. The establishment of schools in rural areas has been carried out by many Nadhatul Ulama youth, which can indirectly increase public awareness of the importance of education. One of them is the establishment of MTS-MA Ma'arif Kalonding as an educational oasis in rural areas carried out by Nadhatul Ulama youth in 2009. By adopting the "semi pesantren" system by combining traditional elements and modernization as its learning model, this educational institution has now succeeded in making various achievements up to the district level. However, there are still many obstacles in using technology in the implementation of learning, especially in adjusting learning as the implementation of online learning during the pandemic.<sup>30</sup>

The style of educational renewal (modernization) is what explicitly distinguishes itself from educational renewal from Reformist Muslims which causes the erosion of local traditions, because of the tendency to adopt excessive educational institutional systems from outside. The modernization of Nadhatul Ulama-style education is a mirror of the modernity of pesantren educators who try to adopt the concept of modernization without getting rid of the traditional values that have dominated the

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<sup>27</sup> Mahrus As'ad, "Pembaruan Pendidikan Islam Nadhatul Ulama", 73.

<sup>28</sup> H. A. R Tilaar, *Paradigma Baru Pendidikan Nasional* (Jakarta: Rineka Cipta, 2004).

<sup>29</sup> As'ad Mahrus, "Pembaruan Pendidikan Islam Nadhatul Ulama", 74.

<sup>30</sup> Mahbib Khoirin, MTS-MA Ma'arif Klonding, Oase Pendidikan di Daerah Pedalaman, Dalam <https://www.nu.or.id/amp/pendidikan-islam/mts-ma-marsquoarif-kalonding-oase-pendidikan-di-daerah-pedalaman-1luqp>, diakses pada 15 Februari 2023.

Islamic education system.<sup>31</sup> The educators succeeded in bringing their citizens to a new perspective on the field of education as a means of maximizing Islamic education and teaching activities in the modern period, in order to complement the existing traditional educational institutional system or pesantren, because it had experienced weathering due to age. This is what later became evidence of improving the quality of the implementation of lower community education in order to enter progress and participate in filling and enriching the national education system.

#### D. Reflection on One-Century of Nadhatul Ulama and Its Challenges

Nadhatul Ulama is one of the largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia, which since its inception has played a major role in maintaining the integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI).<sup>32</sup> It is proven by the real role of Nadhatul Ulama for the birth of a thought, idea and notion which is certainly inseparable from the socio-historical context that surrounds it. So that its presence plays an important role in maintaining the integrity of the Republic of Indonesia and the life of the community in religion. Given that almost 50 percent of Muslims in Indonesia are dominated by members of Nadhatul Ulama, since the time of its birth until the millennial era, Nadhatul Ulama has continued to exist along with its contributions not only in religion but also in the nation and state.<sup>33</sup>

The 1st century of Nadhatul Ulama's journey is not a short time, as a community organization that thrives in Indonesia, Nadhatul Ulama is one of the few community organizations that remains resilient for a long time by following the current of modernization and showing its existence in Indonesia. Many community organizations have risen and fallen during its century-long journey, and Nadhatul Ulama has lived its dynamics in the socio-political setting of the community in Indonesia. Quoted from the speech delivered by the President of Indonesia, Ir. Joko Widodo in the "Reception of One Century of Nadhatul Ulama" he explained that:

*"As an organization that is deeply rooted in society, NU has maintained community resilience in the face of challenges, in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, and in the face of the blows of radical movements including guarding against identity politics and political extremism. NU must be at the forefront in reading the movement of the times, reading technological developments and economic transformation and maintaining a just and civilized social order. It is expected that educational institutions in NU prepare young nahdliyin-nahdliyin who master the latest science and technology, master the rapidly developing digital technology, and be able to become superior professionals".<sup>34</sup>*

Thus, from the speech delivered, he hopes that as the largest Islamic organization in the world, which in 2021 will have 95 million members, Nadhatul Ulama can embrace and pay serious attention to the younger generation so that they remain firmly rooted in tradition while mastering science and technology (IPTEK) and upholding Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah manners. In addition, as a reflection and evaluation as well as his hope in welcoming the second century with challenges that will be increasingly difficult. The meaningful speech was delivered not only as a reflection or hope, but also as a response to the fading of tradition in society along with modernization, especially in the field of education. Thus, the meaning of a century of "Empowering NU" must be understood that NU exists and is great because

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<sup>31</sup> Moh Muslih, "The Role of Nahdlatul Ulama ( NU ) in Fighting for Religious Moderation In Indonesia," International Seminar " Islam, Multiculturalism And Radicalism' In The Mobility Program Held Indonesia Higher Institution under The Supervision of the Minister of Religious Affairs of Indonesia. (Malaysia: International Islamic University College Selango, 2019): 2–3.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

<sup>33</sup> Farih, "Nadhatul Ulama (NU) dan Kontribusinya dalam Memperjuangkan Kemerdekaan dan Mempertahankan Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia (NKRI)."

<sup>34</sup> Joko Widodo, "Resepsi Satu Abad Nadhatul Ulama", Pidato pada acara Resepsi Satu Abad Nadhatul Ulama pada 7 Februari 2023.



people believe that NU brings *karomah* and blessings. So that entering the second century Nadhlatul Ulama can be more empowered and rise.<sup>35</sup>

Entering the second century, Nadhlatul Ulama is no longer faced with the challenge of fighting the colonizers, nor is it reflecting on what Nadhlatul Ulama has achieved, but looking at what challenges it will face in the second century. One of the most prominent challenges is in the field of education. Education is faced with a much bigger invisible enemy, namely the unequal quality of education in Indonesia. Fighting educational backwardness needs to be a priority in welcoming the second century of Nadhlatul Ulama. Given the many gaps that occur in the world of education, even many of the universities whose main focus is on improving ranking (accreditation) instead of improving the quality of higher education. Therefore, the number of universities, even in remote areas of the country, does not prove that education under the umbrella of Nadhlatul Ulama as a whole is of good quality. So that in facing the demands of the times, improving the quality of education by utilizing information technology must be a provision for *santri* in facing the industrial revolution that is running very fast.<sup>36</sup>

Given that this is an era where digital technology has become excellent, it is a necessity for Nadhlatul Ulama to empower its people in this area. *pesantrens* that still exist today are still thick with the assumption that they only produce scholars who master the yellow book and are prepared to become leaders in religious rituals. Entering the second century, Nadhlatul Ulama must start thinking about a curriculum that is oriented towards mastering information technology for its students. Not only in the field of education, but there will also be many other challenges that Nadhlatul Ulama will face entering this second century. However, if you look at the resources that Nadhlatul Ulama has, the challenges of the second century can be faced more easily if the structure and culture of Nadhlatul Ulama can run in harmony and will be much more effective if it runs together with the big board and the administrators under it.

## E. Conclusion

Nadhlatul Ulama has reached the remarkable milestone of 100 years, signifying that a century's span carries with it a wealth of experience and wisdom. The initial century of Nadhlatul Ulama's journey has traversed diverse historical epochs, marked by upheavals and fluidity. Its inception coincided with the Dutch colonial era, the Japanese occupation, the period of Allies, the fight for independence, transitions between old and new orders, and reform movements. Upon introspection, the narrative of Islamic education's evolution in Indonesia intertwines inseparably with Nadhlatul Ulama's pivotal role in its modernization, all while cherishing the cultural heritage of the nation.

Nadhlatul Ulama has adeptly merged contemporary education with the essence of *pesantren*, preserving its core identity. In its centenary existence, Nadhlatul Ulama has left an indelible mark on the rapid development of Islamic education in Indonesia. As we step into its second century, Nadhlatul Ulama faces a new landscape replete with more intricate challenges than before. The realm of education now commands focus on modernization, where digital tools are integrated into pedagogy across its institutions, aiming to cultivate an exceptional generation deeply rooted in Islamic values and technology proficiency—an indispensable asset in the digital age.

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<sup>35</sup> Sugiyono, Pengajian Umum dan Nadhlatul Ulama Sebagai Refleksi 1 Abad NU, Dalam <https://banten.nu.or.id/opini/pengajian-umum-dan-nahdlatul-ulama-sebagai-refleksi-1-abad-nu-3zmG8>, diakses pada 15 Februari 2023.

<sup>36</sup> Ahmad Suaedy, LPTNU: Belum Meratanya Kualitas Pendidikan Jadi Tantangan NU Sambut Abad Kedua, dalam <https://www.nu.or.id/amp/nasional/lptnu-belum-meratanya-kualitas-pendidikan-jadi-tantangan-nu-sambut-abad-kedua-gfIBV>, diakses pada 10 Februari 2023.

Consequently, the emphasis shifts from mere rankings to the elevation of education's quality, particularly in tertiary institutions. As Nadhlatul Ulama continues its journey, its commitment to shaping an enlightened and empowered future generation remains unwavering, casting a beacon of hope amidst the complexities of the 21st century.

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