

Reconciling Educational Dualism in Indonesia: A Study of Islamic Education Integration into the National Education System (1945–Reform Era)

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to comprehensively examine the dynamics and milestones in the development of Islamic education in Indonesia during the post-independence period. This study is a literature review (library research) originating from library materials using a qualitative-historical approach. Data exploration was conducted through the identification, in-depth analysis, and synthesis of historical documents, books, and scientific journals relevant to post-independence Islamic education policies and institutions. The results indicate that in the post-independence era, Islamic education received serious attention and formal recognition from the government, encompassing both public and private sectors. This was marked by the strategic repositioning of religion within the national education system and efforts toward the curricular integration of Islamic and general education. This integration led to the transformation of madrasahs and pesantren, which functioned not only as moral-religious strongholds but were also legally recognized as co-equal educational institutions capable of producing high-quality national human resources.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji secara komprehensif dinamika dan milestone perkembangan pendidikan Islam di Indonesia pada masa pasca-kemerdekaan. Penelitian ini merupakan studi pustaka (library research) yang bersumber dari bahan kepustakaan dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif-historis. Eksplorasi data dilakukan melalui identifikasi, telaah mendalam, dan sintesis terhadap dokumen historis, buku, serta jurnal ilmiah yang relevan dengan kebijakan dan institusi pendidikan Islam pasca-kemerdekaan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa setelah kemerdekaan, pendidikan Islam mendapatkan perhatian serius dan rekognisi formal dari pemerintah, baik untuk lembaga negeri maupun swasta. Hal ini ditandai dengan reposisi strategis agama dalam sistem pendidikan nasional, serta upaya integrasi kurikulum antara pendidikan Islam dan pendidikan umum. Integrasi ini bermuara pada transformasi madrasah dan pesantren, yang tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai benteng moral-keagamaan tetapi juga diakui secara yuridis-formal sebagai lembaga pendidikan yang setara dalam melahirkan sumber daya manusia nasional yang unggul.

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic education in Indonesia has deep historical roots and has been an integral part of the nation's struggle long before the proclamation of independence was declared. In the pre-independence era, traditional institutions such as *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) and *madrasahs* did not only function as centers for transmitting religious knowledge but also played an active role as bases of resistance against colonialism. The presence of these institutions successfully maintained morality and strengthened the national identity of the indigenous people amidst the Western cultural hegemony brought by the colonizers ([Ariza, 2023](#); [Rohmah et al., 2023](#)). However, the fall of colonial rule and the birth of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) in 1945 brought a new chapter filled with both challenges and opportunities for the existence of Islamic education. The newly formed Indonesian government was faced with the monumental task of formulating a national education system capable of unifying diversity and accommodating the aspirations of Muslims as the majority population ([Huda, 2020](#)). Therefore, the early post-independence phase became a crucial turning point where the foundation for integrating religious values into the government structure began to be formally established.

Sociologically and politically, the dynamics of post-independence Islamic education cannot be separated from the strenuous efforts of Muslim figures in fighting for state recognition of Islamic educational institutions. The establishment of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in early 1946 became one of the greatest political milestones that provided juridical legitimacy for the management of *madrasahs* and *pondok pesantren* ([Musadad, 2021](#)). Through this institution, the Muslim community had an official channel to propose regulations that favored the sustainability of the faith-based education system. The government's early policies at that time were initially focused on reintroducing religious education as an official subject in public schools to safeguard the morality of the newly independent nation. Nevertheless, the educational dualism between the secular system inherited from the Dutch colonizers and the traditional religious system remained a complex structural obstacle ([Latief et al., 2021](#)). The tug-of-war of interests between secular nationalists and religious nationalists in determining the direction of the national curriculum also colored the formulation of education laws in the early days of Indonesian sovereignty.

Entering the Old Order era under the leadership of President Sukarno, the position of Islamic education began to undergo a more organized institutionalization despite the highly unstable national political situation. The government began to realize that arranging *madrasahs* on a national scale was vital to support the agenda of enlightening the nation's life with character. Through the Working Committee of the Central Indonesian National Committee (BP-KNIP), important recommendations regarding the formulation of a uniform *madrasah* curriculum began to be issued gradually ([Suwahyu & Nurhilalayah, 2020](#)). During this period, Law Number 4 of 1950 concerning the Foundations of Education and Teaching in Schools was enacted, becoming the first legal umbrella to recognize the existence of religious education in public schools. This political step marked the state's initial acknowledgment that religious morality is an essential pillar in shaping the character of independent citizens ([Mursal, 2024](#)). Although its implementation on the ground was still frequently hindered by budget and facility constraints, this period successfully laid a strong ideological foundation for the development of Islamic education in the subsequent decades.

A more massive conceptual and structural change occurred when Indonesia's political constellation shifted to the New Order government. At the beginning of this era, the government tightened control over all religious institutions, including *madrasahs* and *pesantren*, under the pretext of political stability and the consolidation of the Pancasila ideology. This condition forced Islamic education administrators to adapt their curricula to avoid being labeled as exclusive or anti-government institutions ([Mustafida et al., 2023](#)). One of the most monumental turning points in the history of structuring these institutions was the issuance of the 1975 Joint Decree (SKB) of 3 Ministers, signed by the Minister of Religious Affairs, the Minister of Education and Culture, and the Minister of Home Affairs. This formal policy revolutionarily set the *madrasah* curriculum standard with a composition of 70 percent general subjects and 30 percent religious subjects ([Mahyerni, 2023](#)). This regulation not only changed the face of the *madrasah* curriculum, but also granted *madrasah* graduates the right to obtain certificates equivalent to general schools and to continue their studies at state universities. This policy became an important milestone in the process of integrating Islamic education into the modern Indonesian national education system ([Marhamah et al., 2024](#); [Rizqi, 2024](#)).

Over time, the curriculum transformation triggered by the 3-Minister Joint Decree became an inevitability for Islamic educational institutions to avoid being continuously marginalized from the mainstream of national development. Conceptual efforts to integrate religious and general sciences began to be promoted in order to erode the scholarly dichotomy that had long been attached to traditional *madrasahs* and *pesantren* ([Rohman et al., 2023](#)). This curricular reorientation was considered highly urgent so that graduates of Islamic educational institutions were not only proficient in eschatological-religious fields, but also competent in science, technology, and public administration. This integrative step, in turn, stimulated a comprehensive institutional modernization that changed public perception regarding the quality of Islamic education ([Kosim et al., 2023](#)). Institutions that were once considered run-down and lagging behind began to improve by adopting modern management systems, structured teacher training, and the provision of laboratory facilities. Through this long adaptation process, *madrasahs* slowly transformed from traditional religious institutions into modern institutions holding an equivalent bargaining position within the national education system ([Latifah, 2024](#)).

No less important than *madrasahs*, *pondok pesantren* institutions also experienced highly fascinating developmental dynamics post-independence. *Pesantren*, which initially focused purely on the *wetonan* and *sorogan* systems to study *kitab kuning* (classical Islamic texts), began opening up to the classical or *madrasah* system within their internal environments ([Isbah, 2020](#)). Many *kyai* (Islamic scholars/leaders) began to realize that their *santri* (students) needed to be equipped with life skills and general knowledge to survive amidst rapid socio-economic changes. Consequently, there emerged a typology of modern or comprehensive *pesantren* that combined traditional nurturing patterns with general schools such as junior high schools (SMP), senior high schools (SMA), or vocational high schools (SMK) ([Nurtawab & Wahyudi, 2022](#)). This adaptation proved highly effective in maintaining the appeal of *pesantren* in the eyes of urban communities who desired their children to excel spiritually while remaining academically professional. The state also showed appreciation for this contribution by continuously expanding access to assistance and recognition of *pesantren* diplomas through the *muadalah* (equivalence) system ([Sumanti et al., 2024](#)).

The Reformation phase, which began in 1998, brought its own blessings to the democratization and strengthening of the legal position of Islamic education in Indonesia. Demands for justice and equal rights in education stimulated the birth of Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System (UU Sisdiknas). This National Education System Law became a highly significant historical milestone because it explicitly states that a *madrasah* is a general school characterized by the Islamic religion, thereby placing its position on par with general schools under the auspices of the Ministry of Education ([Sumanti et al., 2024](#)). This policy eliminated the budget and facility discrimination that private and public Islamic educational institutions had experienced for decades. Furthermore, this law mandates every school, including non-Muslim public schools, to provide religious education in accordance with the religion adhered to by the students ([Kasiono et al., 2023](#)). The juridical implications of this regulation reinforced the integration of the Islamic education system into a unified, holistic, and inclusive national education system ([Asiah et al., 2023](#)).

In the contemporary era, the challenges of globalization and digital disruption have forced Islamic education in Indonesia to enter an advanced stage of modernization. *Madrasahs* and *pesantren* are now required not only to maintain traditional moral values, but also to be adaptive toward information technology-based learning, artificial intelligence, and digital literacy. The government, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, has launched various strategic programs such as "Digital *Madrasah*" and "*Pesantren* Preneur" to equip young Muslim generations with entrepreneurial skills and technological innovation ([Mubadilah, 2024](#)). This phenomenon has triggered a new wave of integrated Islamic schools offering international curricula synchronized with *pesantren* values. However, this modernization also brings new concerns regarding the potential erosion of the authentic Islamic identity, which emphasizes the aspects of exemplary character (*keteladanan*), sincerity, and simplicity. Therefore, the balance between achieving global competence and preserving spiritual traditions has become the main agenda in the current management of Islamic education ([Latief et al., 2021](#)).

Although the theme concerning the historical development of post-independence Islamic education has been extensively studied by historians and education experts, most prior literature tends to have a limited focus. Many past studies only emphasized abstract philosophical-pedagogical aspects or merely captured political policies during a specific government phase in isolation. Consequently, there is a research gap in mapping a comprehensive chronological thread that connects regulatory shifts from the early days of independence to contemporary institutional modernization. This library research is specifically presented to fill that gap by offering a multidimensional analysis linking political, curricular, and institutional development aspects ([Kosim et al., 2023](#)). The urgency of this study lies in its ability to present a complete portrait of dynamic changes in order to provide fresh conceptual contributions to the development of historical theories of Islamic education.

Overall, this article is designed to answer fundamental questions regarding how government policies have shaped the face of Islamic education and how these institutions have responded to changing times from the independence era to the reformation era. The qualitative-historical approach applied in this study will guide the analysis through careful heuristic, verification, interpretation, and historiographical steps based on credible literature. This study is not only of significant value to the academic treasury, but also provides valuable lessons

learned for current education policymakers in designing quality development strategies for *madrasahs* and *pesantren*. A profound understanding of the ups and downs of curriculum integration in the past will serve as a valuable compass in facing the challenges of educational dualism in the future. Through this systematic framework of thought, this manuscript is expected to present a sharp, factual historical reading that offers tangible contributions to the future of Islamic education in the country.

METHOD

This study utilizes a qualitative-historical approach with a library research design to map the development of Islamic education chronologically. This library research is applied by collecting, selecting, and critically analyzing various written sources that have direct relevance to the object of study regarding the history of post-independence Islamic education ([Latifah, 2024](#)). The qualitative-historical approach was chosen because it is highly effective for reconstructing past events through the analysis of documents, formal government policies, and the thoughts of educational figures during that specific periodization. Through this method, the researcher does not merely describe surface-level facts, but rather seeks to understand the socio-political context underpinning the birth of each curriculum integration policy ([Kosim et al., 2023](#)). The data analyzed in this study are sourced from primary literature materials, such as national education laws, as well as secondary sources in the form of history textbooks, scientific journal articles, and credible prior research reports ([Mubadilah, 2024](#)).

The operational procedures for data collection and analysis in this library research are carried out through four main historical stages: heuristics, verification (source criticism), interpretation, and historiography. In the initial stage, the researcher conducts searches and inventories of both digital and printed manuscripts related to the transformation of *madrasahs* and *pesantren* since 1945. Next, data verification is conducted to test the authenticity and credibility of the collected literature sources in order to avoid subjective bias in historical writing. Once the data are declared valid, a deep interpretation or analysis phase is performed by connecting the chronological thread between government regulations—such as the 1975 Joint Decree (SKB) of 3 Ministers and the 2003 National Education System Law (UU Sisdiknas)—with the reality of institutional developments on the ground ([Masnuah et al., 2022](#)). Finally, the results of this synthesis and critical analysis are organized descriptively and analytically into a holistic and systematic historiography concerning the journey of post-independence Islamic education ([Nilawati et al., 2023](#)).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Islamic Education Policy in the Early Independence Era (1945–1950)

The early post-independence phase of Indonesia became a crucial momentum for laying the juridical foundation of Islamic education within the structure of a modern state. The first strategic step began with the establishment of the Ministry of Religious Affairs on January 3, 1946, which immediately took over the responsibility of managing and developing *madrasahs* and *pesantren* from the remnants of the colonial system ([Latief et al., 2021](#)). The presence of this ministry was a direct response to the socio-political demands of the Muslim community, who desired the accommodation of religious values within the governmental system. The new government realized that ignoring long-rooted religious institutions would

trigger instability at the grassroots level. Therefore, formal recognition of the existence of these institutions was sought as early as possible so that the initial wheels of government could run harmoniously. This early institutionalization proved that the state regarded religion as an inseparable moral pillar of national sovereignty ([Mubadilah, 2024](#)).

Through the Working Committee of the Central Indonesian National Committee (BP-KNIP), the government issued important recommendations regarding the future of religious teaching in late 1946. The recommendations stated that religious education must be officially provided in public schools and traditional *madrasahs* were entitled to receive material assistance. This political-pedagogical step was taken to bridge the aspirations of religious nationalists who wanted the nation's post-colonial morality to be preserved. Financial and administrative support from the state began to be allocated gradually, although the state's financial condition at that time was highly limited due to military aggressions. This policy slowly fostered the trust of Islamic institution administrators toward the national government's commitment. This marked the beginning of a new era where Islamic education no longer operated on the periphery, but entered the formal bureaucratic system ([Hasnahwati, 2024](#)).

The state's formal recognition of the existence of Islamic education was further reinforced by the enactment of Law Number 4 of 1950 concerning the Foundations of Education and Teaching in Schools. This law was the first legal product to explicitly legitimize the inclusion of religious subjects in the public-school curriculum. The articles in this law provided freedom for students to attend religious instruction in accordance with their respective beliefs. Although this regulation initially focused on public schools, its legal implications breathed fresh air into the formulation of competence standards within the *madrasah* environment. This law successfully eroded the systemic discrimination previously imposed by the Dutch East Indies government against Islamic teaching. The birth of this law laid a highly solid ideological foundation for strengthening the legal position of Islamic education in the subsequent decade ([Kosim et al., 2023](#)).

Institutional and Curricular Dynamics in the Old Order Era (1950–1965)

The curriculum dynamics during the Old Order era were characterized by efforts to equalize the quality of instruction between religious and general sciences in *madrasahs*. The Ministry of Religious Affairs began taking bold steps by formulating a nationwide standardization of *madrasah* educational levels. This structural organization resulted in the division of institutions into *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* (MI) for the elementary level, *Madrasah Tsanawiyah* (MTs) for the junior high level, and *Madrasah Aliyah* (MA) for the senior high level. This step was taken to respond to the urgent need for scientific integration so that *madrasah* graduates could compete in public administration selection processes. This hierarchical division also facilitated the oversight and distribution of textbook assistance from the central government. Through this structured ordering, *madrasahs* began to shed their image as poorly organized, traditional institutions ([Rovi'i et al., 2023](#)).

To support the implementation of this standardized curriculum, the government established *Pendidikan Guru Agama* (PGA/Religious Teacher Education) institutions in various regions of Indonesia. PGA institutions were specifically designed to produce educators who were competent in teaching both religious and scientific materials in a balanced manner. The presence of PGA graduates was expected to elevate the bargaining position of *madrasahs* in the eyes of a public that was increasingly favoring public schools. However, the

implementation of this scientific integration on the ground still encountered many complex structural obstacles, particularly the lack of classroom facilities and the limitation of reference materials. Consequently, many *madrasahs* in reality still dominantly maintained the *kitab kuning* instructional style to safeguard their Islamic identity. The tension between the demands of curriculum modernization and the preservation of religious tradition became an inseparable hallmark of this Old Order era ([Ihsan et al., 2021](#)).

The unstable national political situation in the late 1950s also influenced the direction of Islamic education development policies. The ideological tug-of-war between secular, nationalist, and religious groups resulted in the stagnation of derivative regulations from the 1950 Education Law. Many private *madrasahs* in the regions were forced to survive independently without adequate budget assistance from the central government. The deteriorating economic conditions made the provision of science laboratory infrastructure in *madrasahs* a highly luxurious and difficult goal to realize. Nonetheless, the spirit of self-reliance among the Muslim community in establishing new *madrasahs* at the village level actually experienced a significant increase. This phenomenon proved that the sociological attachment of the community to Islamic education was far stronger than their dependence on state bureaucratic stimuli ([Sismawati et al., 2024](#)).

Curriculum Unification and the 3-Minister Joint Decree Policy in the New Order Era (1966–1998)

Entering the New Order era, the government's approach to Islamic education shifted toward unification, standardization, and strict bureaucratic control. The government aimed to align the entire national education system to support the agendas of political stability and national economic development. The pinnacle of formal policy during this period was marked by the issuance of the 1975 Joint Decree (SKB) of 3 Ministers. This monumental regulation was signed simultaneously by the Minister of Religious Affairs, the Minister of Education and Culture, and the Minister of Home Affairs. This Joint Decree mandated all *madrasahs* in Indonesia to implement a curriculum composition consisting of 70 percent general subjects and 30 percent religious subjects ([Alfarisi & Bakar, 2022](#)). This step was taken to standardize the basic competence levels of *madrasah* students with public school students nationwide.

Through this 3-Minister Joint Decree, the state provided full recognition that *madrasah* diplomas held equal legal value and standing to public school diplomas. This policy revolutionarily opened doors for *madrasah* graduates to pursue higher education at public state universities without administrative barriers. In addition, *madrasah* students were granted the right to transfer to public schools (SD, SMP, SMA) at equivalent grade levels. This political-pedagogical step successfully transformed the image of *madrasahs*—which were previously considered second-class institutions—into a part of the mainstream national education system. This curriculum integration served as a solution to the educational dualism between secular and religious tracks that had persisted since colonial times ([Sitorus et al., 2024](#)). The impact of this regulation was massive in changing both the physical and curricular face of *madrasahs* throughout all corners of the nation ([Salim et al., 2024](#)).

Although the 3-Minister Joint Decree provided juridical advantages in terms of equal status, the policy also triggered highly challenging academic demands. *Madrasah* administrators and students were forced to master all general subject matter equivalent to regular schools within a limited timeframe. On the other hand, they could not compromise the religious competence standards that formed the

foundational identity and *raison d'être* of the institutions. This double burden frequently led to psychological burnout among students and triggered a decline in the depth of mastery in Sharia sciences. The limited number of competent general teachers available to teach in *madrasahs* also slowed down the achievement of the quality targets intended by the decree. This phenomenon sparked criticism from several traditional Islamic scholars (*ulama*) who feared that *madrasahs* would lose their spiritual soul by over-pursuing mundane, general matters ([Hakiemah & Sudirman, 2020](#)).

New Order Institutional Innovation: The Birth of MAPK

Responding to the decline in the quality of religious teaching due to the burden of the general curriculum post-the 1975 Joint Decree (SKB), the government launched the *Madrasah Aliyah Program Khusus* (MAPK/Special Program Madrasah Aliyah) project in the late 1980s. This project was initiated directly by the Minister of Religious Affairs, Munawir Sjadzali, who observed a scarcity of qualified cadres in Tafsir (exegesis) and Hadith scholars. MAPK was specifically designed as an elite religious institution that recruited the finest students from various regions to be educated intensively. The learning system at MAPK implemented a full boarding school model that adopted the discipline and scholarly traditions of top-tier *pondok pesantren*. The primary focus of its curriculum was directed toward active Arabic language mastery, the study of *mu'tabarah* (authoritative classical) texts, Tafsir, Hadith, and *ushul fiqh* (principles of Islamic jurisprudence). The presence of MAPK proved highly successful in producing a new cluster of Muslim intellectuals who were fluent in classical treasures while remaining adaptive to modern sciences ([Asari, 2019](#)).

The success of the MAPK experiment provided a new theoretical contribution to the curriculum integration model of Islamic education in Indonesia. This model proved that the depth of religious teaching and the mastery of modern science do not have to negate each other if managed with appropriate boarding system administration. Many MAPK graduates subsequently received scholarships to pursue higher education at leading universities in both the Middle East and the West. This phenomenon elevated the academic reputation of Indonesian Islamic education at the international level as a moderate and progressive model of Islamic schooling. This success prompted many private institutions to replicate the MAPK concept in the form of science *madrasahs* or integrated Islamic schools ([Rohman et al., 2023](#)). Ultimately, this innovation solidified the position of *madrasahs* as incubators for broad-minded future national leaders.

Pesantren Dynamics and Responses to Modernization

Di sisi lain, institusi *pondok pesantren* menunjukkan daya tahan sosiologis dan agilitas yang luar biasa dalam merespons arus modernisasi negara. *Pesantren* yang semula mengandalkan metode pengajaran individual tradisional seperti *sorogan* dan *wetonan*, secara perlahan mulai membuka diri terhadap sistem. On the other hand, *pondok pesantren* institutions demonstrated remarkable sociological resilience and agility in responding to the state's modernization currents. *Pesantren*, which originally relied on traditional individual teaching methods such as *sorogan* and *wetonan*, slowly began opening up to the classical system. The *kyais* began to realize that their *santri* required not only eschatological piety, but also life skills to survive amidst industrialization. Consequently, there emerged a typology of modern or comprehensive *pesantren* that integrated general schools (SMP/SMA/SMK) into the *pesantren* complex. This accommodative step was taken without sacrificing the instruction of *kitab kuning*, which remained the primary soul of evening recitation

activities. This transformation allowed *pesantren* to remain relevant and sought after by the emerging urban middle class ([Samsudin & Haniefa, 2022](#)).

The state demonstrated appreciation for the sociological contribution of *pesantren* in enlightening the nation's life by expanding the recognition of their diplomas. Through the *muadalah* (equivalence) scheme, the government began recognizing diplomas from traditional *pondok pesantren* that consistently studied classical texts as documents equivalent to formal certificates. This equalization policy eliminated decades of discrimination that had made it difficult for *santri* from *salaf* (traditional) *pesantren* to pursue higher education at state universities. This support was also realized through operational assistance and vocational skills training for *santri* through multi-sectoral collaborations. The internal modernization carried out by *pesantren* successfully proved that the preservation of spiritual traditions and the achievement of professional competence can go hand in hand. *Pesantren* act as both a moral fortress and a driving engine for human resource development in rural areas.

The Reformation Era and Strengthening of Regulations via the 2003 National Education System Law

The collapse of the New Order regime in 1998 paved the way for widespread democratization and the elimination of discriminatory barriers within the national education system. The pinnacle of strengthening the legal umbrella for Islamic education in the Reformation era was marked by the enactment of Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System (UU Sisdiknas). This National Education System Law became a highly monumental historical milestone because it explicitly affirmed the status of *madrasahs* as general schools characterized by the Islamic religion. This juridical policy eradicated the budgetary dichotomy and bureaucratic treatment that had previously separated schools under the Ministry of National Education (Depdiknas) and *madrasahs* under the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Depag). *Madrasahs* now possess fully equal rights and standing in terms of receiving operational assistance, accreditation, and teacher certification programs. This regulation provides an exceptionally strong guarantee of legal certainty for the sustainability of Islamic educational institutions ([Kasiono et al., 2023](#); [Masnuah et al., 2022](#)).

In addition to strengthening the status of *madrasahs*, the 2003 National Education System Law also mandates every educational unit to provide religious instruction in accordance with the religion adhered to by the student. This regulation is legally binding for all levels of schooling, including public and private general schools that are non-Muslim based. This policy represents an extraordinary political-religious achievement for the Muslim community in ensuring the fulfillment of the spiritual rights of the younger generation. The sociological implications of this law accelerated the integration of the Islamic curriculum into the mainstream of national development. This juridical recognition triggered a massive growth of integrated Islamic schools (SIT) offering holistic curriculum integration across various major cities. The 2003 National Education System Law successfully unified educational dualism into a single, cohesive, and inclusive national education system.

A Critical Analysis of Scholarly Dichotomy and Modern Management

Conceptual efforts to integrate general and religious sciences post-independence were rooted in a deep awareness to erode the scholarly dichotomy inherited from colonialism. Islamic education figures realized that the rigid separation between science and spirituality had caused the decline of Muslim civilization. The institutional modernization promoted by the government

successfully shifted the public paradigm, which previously viewed *madrasahs* as a second-class alternative. Many elite *madrasahs* are now capable of competing fiercely in national science olympiads and entrance examinations for favorite universities. The restructuring of instructional management, upgrading of teachers' academic qualifications, and the provision of modern laboratory facilities have been the primary keys to this success. Curriculum integration has proven effective in enhancing the intellectual competence of graduates without discarding their moral identity ([Haddade et al., 2024](#)).

However, this process of modernization and curriculum integration has not escaped sociological criticism regarding the risk of desecularizing or desacralizing Islamic educational institutions. Some observers worry that an excessive emphasis on accreditation targets and materialistic standardization could erode noble values such as sincerity (*keikhlasan*), exemplary character (*keteladanan*), and simplicity. The orientation of *madrasahs* sometimes shifts from being centers of afterlife-based character building to merely becoming factories for industrial labor. The competition to achieve high academic grades in schools often sacrifices the time that was once used for deepening spiritual morality. Therefore, the greatest conceptual challenge for current Islamic education administrators is how to maintain the original Islamic soul amidst the demands of modern management professionalism. The balance between functional-professional aspects and spiritual-character aspects must be carefully maintained ([Sahin, 2018](#)).

Contemporary Era Challenges: Digital Disruption and Religious Moderation

Entering the contemporary era, the challenges of post-independence Islamic education have shifted toward issues of digital disruption, global competence, and the strengthening of religious moderation values. *Madrasahs* and *pesantren* are now required to be adaptive to developments in artificial intelligence, digital literacy, and information technology-based learning. The Ministry of Religious Affairs has responded to this phenomenon by launching various strategic programs such as "Digital *Madrasah*" and providing mass computer laboratories in *pesantren*. Technological integration in this era is no longer merely a complement, but a primary instrument to ensure that Islamic graduates are not left behind in facing 21st-century global competition. However, this digitalization process also brings new challenges in the form of a widespread influx of negative information that has the potential to damage the morality of the *santri*. Therefore, character-based religious oversight must be tightened within the school's digital environment ([Amalia et al., 2025](#)).

On the other hand, the rise of global radicalism and intolerance phenomena demands that Islamic education in Indonesia strengthen its religious moderation curriculum (*Wasatiyyah*). *Madrasahs* and *pesantren* hold a pivotal role as the primary line of defense in disseminating a friendly, peaceful, and inclusive understanding of Islam. The values of *hubbul wathan* (love for the homeland) handed down by the *ulama* who fought for independence are reintegrated into civic and religious teaching materials. Islamic education graduates are groomed to become peace agents capable of bridging the diversity of ethnicities, races, and religions in Indonesia. This step is vital to safeguarding the integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) amidst global political dynamics fraught with division. Through the consolidation of this moderation, Islamic education proves its tangible contribution to nurturing the national consensus based on Pancasila.

Overall, the historical journey of Islamic education since the proclamation of independence in 1945 demonstrates an extraordinary level of agility and resilience. *Madrasah* and *pesantren* institutions have successfully transformed themselves

from traditional religious institutions into modern pillars that are formally and legally recognized within the national education system. The successful integration of religious and general science curricula has proven to be the primary key to producing a generation of Indonesian Muslims who are broad-minded, tolerant, and highly competitive. This long history provides valuable lessons learned that modernization does not have to sacrifice authentic Islamic identity and values. Strengthening academic quality alongside preserving spiritual traditions will remain a valuable asset for Islamic education in guiding the future of the nation's civilization. Islamic education has proven to be an inseparable part of the pulse of progress in the Republic of Indonesia.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the results of the literature review and deep historical analysis, it can be concluded that the development of post-independence Islamic education in Indonesia underwent a highly dynamic structural transformation marked by several crucial policy milestones. During the early independence and Old Order era (1945–1965), this development was characterized by the state's initial recognition through the establishment of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the ratification of Education Law Number 4 of 1950, which positioned religion as the nation's moral pillar. Subsequently, during the New Order era, a massive curriculum unification took place through the formal policy of the 1975 Joint Decree (SKB) of 3 Ministers, which mandated a proportion of 70% general material and 30% religious material, which was later balanced by institutional innovation through the MAPK program in the late 1980s. Entering the Reformation era, the juridical position of Islamic education reached its peak through the National Education System Law Number 20 of 2003, which affirmed full equality between *madrasahs* and public schools within a single, unified national education system. This chronological trajectory proves that Islamic education in Indonesia possesses high sociological agility to maintain traditional spiritual values while remaining adaptive to the modernization demands of the times.

As a policy implication of these historical findings, it is recommended that the Ministry of Religious Affairs and contemporary education policymakers continuously monitor curriculum integration to prevent it from falling into the trap of "institutional desacralization." Strengthening quality in science and technology within *madrasahs* and *pesantren* during this digital disruption era must not sacrifice original Islamic values, such as sincerity, exemplary character, and spiritual morality. The integrated boarding model, exemplified by the past success of MAPK, can be readapted to cultivate a generation of Muslims who master cutting-edge technological literacy while remaining fluent in classical texts. Furthermore, multi-sector collaborations with the industrial world and the reinforcement of the religious moderation curriculum must be continuously promoted to ensure that graduates possess global competence alongside a strong commitment to preserving the national consensus of Pancasila and NKRI. History proves that the balance between professional-functional aspects and spiritual-character aspects is the primary key to the sustainability of Islamic education quality in the country.

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