



The Policy of Islamic Basic and Secondary Education in Indonesia

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Abstract

Islam has long played a significant role in shaping the identity of the Indonesian nation. It is therefore unsurprising that Islam continues to contribute meaningfully to social, cultural, and educational spheres. The educational policy discussed in this article is rooted in the government's response to ongoing advancements in technology and communication, which have continually reshaped both industry and education. As a result, the education sector has inevitably been swept up in the wave of technological transformation, prompting policy shifts to keep pace with these changes.

This article reveals that Islamic education policy in Indonesia has evolved across different political eras from the Old Order and New Order to the Reform era up to the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum (Kurikulum 2013 or K-13). During the Old Order, students were mandated to attend eight years of school. This changed to nine years under the New Order, along with the establishment of numerous Islamic educational institutions such as PHIN, MANPK, and MAK, where Islamic subjects comprised up to 75% of the curriculum. In the Reform era, Islamic education was officially recognized as equivalent to general education, evidenced by the establishment of Islamic schools and higher education institutions (MDI/MI, MTs, MA, PTAIN, PTAIS, and Al-Jamiah) across various levels.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic education policy at the basic and secondary levels has existed since the Old Order, New Order, and Reform eras, and continues to evolve today. Policies regarding Islamic education have continuously shifted in response to changing times. Today, education must adapt to the demands of market competition. If education fails to provide pragmatic value in life, it risks becoming obsolete and marginalized. Thus, education especially Islamic education must constantly evolve.

Islamic education remains a compulsory subject in schools, from elementary to higher education. However, the implementation of Islamic education policies in schools and universities has faced criticism from society, particularly regarding its lack of relevance to the labor market. This reflects the dynamic and changing nature of educational policies.

Historically, the development of Islamic education in Indonesia is closely tied to the spread of Islam across the archipelago. Various historical analyses affirm that Islam has deep grassroots roots within Indonesian society. Cultural approaches have become a distinctive strength of Indonesian Islam, making it a “way of life” woven into the nation's traditions, language, and daily culture. This cultural integration has given Indonesian Islam a unique character compared to Islam in other countries.

However, on the other hand, the aspiration of Muslims to institutionalize Islam as a state doctrine or official national symbol has faced significant resistance. Although Islam has played a crucial role in the country's independence, its journey in the realm of education has not been smooth (Azra, 2007).

Islam's path in shaping education policy has been riddled with obstacles. For instance, the government's shift from a centralized to a decentralized governance system was driven by demands for comprehensive reform. One of the outcomes of these reforms was Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, which introduced changes such as democratization, improved education quality, the elimination of discrimination, and better management of the educational system (Soedijarto, 2008).

At the same time, the rapid development of science and technology also required reforms in the education system to meet global demands. To achieve this, strategies are needed to empower communities to participate in ensuring education quality (Muhaimin, 2013).

Nevertheless, a persistent dilemma remains in the management of Islamic religious education. Substantively, Islamic education is recognized as part of the national education system. However, administratively, its management remains under the Ministry of Religious Affairs and has not been decentralized. This has led to confusion at the regional level, as local governments consider Islamic education to be the responsibility of the central government. Hence, this article seeks to examine Islamic education policy at the basic and secondary levels in Indonesia.

METHOD

The method used in this article is library research, with a philosophical approach to examine the Islamic Basic and Secondary Education Policy in Indonesia. The data collection technique employed in this article is documentation, which involves gathering materials such as books, articles, and written works related to the research topic. These

sources are then compiled and synthesized to extract relevant content in accordance with the object of study (Sari & Asmendri, 2020).

Data analysis was conducted by reviewing various literature obtained through documentation related to the research object. The first step was to analyze and identify the nature and scope of the problems being studied. The second step involved a thorough review of relevant literature and documentary data to propose potential solutions to the identified problems. The final step was to draw conclusions from the issues discussed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Islamic Basic and Secondary Education Policy during the Old Order

With great effort, on August 17, 1945, the Indonesian nation succeeded in achieving independence, without relying on the benevolence of the Japanese government or other nations. After attaining independence, the Republic of Indonesia under the Old Order was likened to a newborn its structure still fragile. The Indonesian people had to defend their independence, especially as the Dutch tried to reoccupy Indonesia under the guise of the Allied forces of the United States. This independence struggle drained the nation's energy and time and demanded sacrifices in both life and spirit. These external threats only ceased once the world recognized Indonesia's sovereignty thanks to the persistence of Indonesian leaders in the international diplomatic arena, with Egypt being the first to acknowledge the independence of Indonesia (Nurfadhilah & Masyhudi, 2024).

Following independence, the country had to establish and organize governmental structures. To meet the needs of religion and religious education, the government formed the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Meanwhile, general education matters were handled by the Ministry of Education and Culture (Purna, 2011).

The subsequent policy concerned the Islamic Religious Education Plan for public schools from Grades 1 to 6 in the Republic of Indonesia, in accordance with the joint decree of the Minister of Education, Teaching, and Culture and the Minister of Religious Affairs: No. 17678/Kab.16/7/512/Education and No. K.1/9180.16/7/51/Religion). Among its components: The distribution of religious teaching hours for various classes in one year, with a total of 40 sessions, each lasting 4 hours, equals 160 hours, is:

No. Section	Class					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
4 Hours per Week						
a. Faith	-	-	-	40	40	40
b. Morals	80	80	80	40	40	40
c. Worship	-	-	-	40	40	40
d. Al-Qur'an	80	80	80	40	40	40
3 Hours per Week						
a. Faith	-	-	-	40	40	40
b. Morals	40	40	40	40	40	40
c. Worship	-	-	-	-	-	-
d. Al-Qur'an	80	80	80	40	40	40
3 Hours per Week						
a. Faith	-	-	-	20	20	20
b. Morals	40	40	40	20	20	20
c. Workshop	-	-	-	20	20	20
d. Al-Qur'an	40	40	40	20	20	20

Note:

- a. 80 hours = 2 hours per week
- b. 40 hours = 1 hour every 2 weeks
- c. 20 hours = 1 hour every 2 weeks

Religious Education Plan:

Grades I–VI included: Faith and Morals, Worship, and Qur'an.

Islamic Religious Education for Junior High School (SLTP):

- a. Grade 1 (2 hours per week): Faith, Worship, Islamic History, Qur'anic Verses and Hadith
- b. Grade 2 (2 hours per week): Faith, Worship, Islamic History, Islam and Society, Qur'an and Hadith
- c. Grade 3 (2 hours per week): Faith, Fiqh, Islamic History, Islam and Society, Qur'an and Hadith

Based on the plan dated August 31, 1951, approved by Minister of Religious Affairs Wahid Hasyim and submitted to the Ministry of Education and Culture for ratification (Wahab, 2003).

No	Subjects	Class							
		I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
1	Religious Education	6	6	10	10	10	10	10	10
2	Language	6	6	8	8	7	7	7	6
3	Arithmetic	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
4	Biology	-	-	-	-	2	2	2	2
5	Natural Science	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1
6	Geography	-	-	1	2	2	2	2	2
7	History	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	1
8	Drawing	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
9	Writing	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
10	Music	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
11	Handicrafts	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
12	Physical Education	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
13	Social Studies	2	2	5	5	6	6	6	6
	Total	28	28	35	37	40	40	40	40

The subject "Islamic Religion" included:

1. Faith/Morals, Qur'an, Fiqh/Worship, Tafsir/Hadith, and Islamic History
2. Arabic: Reading/Conversation, Grammar, Essay/Dictation

Therefore, students from Grade I to VIII received Islamic religious education. The eighth grade marked the completion of the mandatory 8-year education, a continuous system unlike the current SD-SMP separation.

A significant development during the Old Order was the establishment of Madrasah Pendidikan Guru Agama (PGA) and Pendidikan Hakim Islam Negeri (PHIN). These institutions aimed to train professional educators and religious experts. Although PGA had existed before independence, its formal institutionalization under the Ministry of Religious Affairs gave it national legitimacy (Yunus, 1991).

The development of PGA and PHIN began with programs initiated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, technically managed by Abdullah Sigit as head of the Education Division. In 1951, a ministerial decree renamed these schools:

SGAI became PGA and SGHAI became SGHA. PGA Negeri was established in multiple cities, with 25 schools in 1951 and growing to 30 by 1954. SGHA was established in Aceh, Bukittinggi, and Bandung (Purna, 2011; Wahab, 2003).

2. Islamic Basic and Secondary Education Policy during the New Order

The New Order was the period of government in Indonesia from March 11, 1966, until the transition of presidential power from President Suharto to President Habibie on May 21, 1998. The transition from the Old Order to the New Order resulted in significant changes to political strategies and national education policies. Fundamentally, the New Order was a complete antithesis of the Old Order, which was dominated by the PKI (Indonesian Communist Party) and considered to have deviated from the principles of Pancasila.

The New Order introduced a new paradigm for Islamic religious education policy by shifting from communist influences to a purified interpretation of Pancasila through a continuous national development plan. This period is also referred to as the Constitutional Order and the Development Order, aiming to build a well-rounded human being and balance spiritual and physical development for a better life (Nursyirwan, 2009).

Additionally, during the Fourth Five-Year Development Plan (*Pelita IV*), religious life and belief in the One Almighty God were further promoted. With the ongoing and expanding development process, religious life and belief had to be increasingly practiced both personally and socially. This included efforts to provide more facilities for religious life and the development of religious education, including Islamic education, which was integrated into the school curriculum from elementary schools to public universities (Natsir, 1980).

Islamic education during the New Order period gradually experienced significant development. For example, pesantren institutions began establishing madrasahs as part of their educational systems. This system divided education into three levels: *Ibtidaiyah* (elementary), *Tsanawiyah* (junior secondary), and *Aliyah* (senior secondary). This system helped accelerate the growth of pesantrens across Indonesia (Zuhairini, 2006).

In the 1958/1959 academic year, Madrasah Wajib Belajar (Compulsory Education Madrasahs) were established, which had the same rights and

responsibilities as public schools. Later, in 1965, the Yogyakarta Pesantren Seminar recommended that vocational skills such as agriculture and carpentry be integrated into pesantren education.

In line with this development, the “Education Section” of the Ministry of Religious Affairs evolved into the Religious Education Directorate. The regulations governing PGA (Islamic Teacher Education) and SGHA (Religious Judge Education) were revised. The five year PGA program was extended to six years, consisting of a four year Lower PGA and a two year Upper PGA. Short term PGA programs and SGHA were abolished.

To replace SGHAI section “d,” the government established PHIN (Islamic State Judge Education), with a three-year program for Lower PGA graduates. When PHIN ended, it was replaced by public high schools with Islamic characteristics. However, within them, there were programs such as MAPK (Madrasah Aliyah Program Khusus), later replaced by MAK (Madrasah Aliyah Kejuruan), and eventually transformed into religious study majors (*prodi keagamaan*). Due to perceived inadequate quality, the original MANPK (Madrasah Aliyah Program Khusus) was reinstated in the 2017/2018 academic year and referred to as MANPK Volume II (Yunus, 1991; Wahab, 2003; Purna, 2011).

Several Islamic education policies during the New Order brought significant changes. One such milestone was the Joint Decree of Three Ministers (SKB Tiga Menteri), which allowed madrasah graduates to continue their education in general public schools. As a result, the madrasah curriculum had to be aligned with that of public schools.

It was during the New Order era that Islamic religious education became a compulsory subject from elementary school to university level (Tilaar, 1998; Muhaimin, 2013; Soearni, 2003).

3. Islamic Basic and Secondary Education Policy during the Reform Era

The year 1998 marked a fundamental shift in the field of education at the beginning of the Reform Era. Simultaneously, Indonesia faced economic, social, and political crises. These crises consistently demanded efforts to improve multiple sectors of life and came to be known as reform efforts. Emil Salim emphasized that

reform involves change while considering future needs, while Din Syamsudin, as cited by Tilaar, underscored a return to foundational principles (Tilaar, 1998).

In this regard, reform refers to a comprehensive renewal of all life systems, including politics, the economy, law, and particularly education especially Islamic education. The various policies enacted by the government during the reform era regarding Islamic education were not entirely new; rather, they aimed to reinforce and continue previous governmental initiatives.

One such policy was the continuation of the 9 year compulsory education program, covering elementary and junior high school levels or their equivalents. During the Reform Era, Islamic religious education received greater attention and was granted equal status with general education. This was marked by the enactment of Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System (SISDIKNAS), which regulates all educational fields, including Islamic religious education, affirming its equal position with general education in terms of subject matter, institutions, and values (Soedijarto, 2008; Wahab, 2003).

As a subject, its status became increasingly solidified over time. Moreover, during the Reform Era, both the quantity and quality of teachers improved compared to the New Order and Old Order periods. This improvement was supported by the central government's efforts to ensure teacher distribution and to revise the curriculum based on Competency-Based Curriculum (KBK). The government also raised the education budget to 20% of the national budget (Chan et al., 2007; Muhaimin, 2013).

During this era, two curriculum models were introduced: the KBK in 2004 and the KTSP in 2006. In the KBK 2004, for example in the subject of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at the junior high school level, the standard competencies were simplified yet in-depth, reflecting a comprehensive approach to Islamic education. These included (Soearni, 2003):

1. Practicing teachings from the Qur'an and Hadith in daily life.
2. Applying Islamic faith in daily life.
3. Practicing noble character (*akhlak karimah*) and avoiding immoral behavior.
4. Applying Islamic law (*shariah*) in everyday contexts.
5. Gaining benefits from Islamic historical and civilizational development for personal and societal life.

Furthermore, in the Reform Era, Islamic religious education was further emphasized and equated with general education. One clear indication was the enactment of Law No. 20 of 2003 on SISDIKNAS, which regulated various aspects of education, including Islamic religious education.

Several policies were implemented to improve the Islamic education system (Muhaimin, 2013):

1. Establishment of Islamic religious schools from elementary to higher education levels (MDI/MI, MTs, MA, PTAIN, PTAIS, or Al-Jamiah).
2. Improvement of pesantren education through curriculum enhancement, teaching resources, library development, technical skills, and teacher subsidies. The integration of pesantren into formal education aimed not only to preserve traditions but also to introduce cultural innovations to help students and society adapt to ongoing changes.
3. Support for maintaining and improving Islamic schools in transition from elementary to tertiary levels.
4. Development of religious education in general schools, both public and private. The vision of producing comprehensively intelligent individuals includes spiritual, emotional, social, intellectual, and kinesthetic intelligence. These are manifestations of makarimal akhlaq (noble character):
 - a. *Spiritual intelligence*: being mindful of God's presence (faith).
 - b. *Emotional intelligence*: managing emotions, empathizing, and collaborating.
 - c. *Social intelligence*: enjoying communication, helping, and teamwork.
 - d. *Intellectual intelligence*: distinguishing right from wrong and setting beneficial priorities.
 - e. *Kinesthetic intelligence*: being medically healthy, weather-resistant, industrious, and sustained by halal livelihood.
5. Development of Islamic religious education in both public and private universities (PTAIS).
6. Design of an integrated curriculum that prevents contradictions among its components. This curriculum framework includes (Wahab, 2004):
 - a. Physical development: through physical education, health, and practical skills.

- b. Intellectual development: including mathematics, philosophy, logic, science, and technology.
- c. Emotional and spiritual development: through religious and art education.

CONCLUSION

Based on the data above, it is evident that throughout the Old Order, New Order, and Reform eras, there have been ongoing changes in government policy concerning Islamic education in Indonesia. During the Old Order period, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) was formally established as a subject taught in public schools beginning at the elementary level and gradually extending to junior and senior high schools, and even to universities. This development fulfilled what had long been merely an aspiration during the colonial era.

However, during the Old Order, the position of Islamic religious education as a school subject was not yet strong. Until the end of that era, religion was not a mandatory subject; rather, it was optional or elective. As an elective subject, its implementation depended on parental consent parents had the authority to decide whether or not their children would attend religious classes.

Following the collapse of the Old Order, the New Order government established Islamic religious education as a compulsory subject at all levels. It was not merely a subject but also institutionalized through the establishment of Islamic education institutions such as PHIN, MANPK, and MAK. This was later continued during the Reform Era, during which Islamic education was officially equalized with general education.

Graduates from Islamic educational institutions under the Ministry of Religious Affairs were granted equal status and authority as those from public schools under the Ministry of Education and Culture. This policy led to the establishment of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI), Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs), Madrasah Aliyah (MA), and Islamic Higher Education Institutions.

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