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The political implications of post-reform education policy on the existence of madrasahs in Indonesia: a systematic literature review

Ahmad Fauzi Zakaria[1], Mochamad Naufal Fauzan[2], Rudi Sulaeman[3], Mahmud[4], Mohamad Erihadiana[5]
Program Doktor Pendidikan Islam UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia

Corresponding Author:
Ahmad Fauzi Zakaria, e-mail : fauzisss046@gmail.com

Abstract. This study aims to analyze the political implications of post-reform education policies on the existence and sustainability of madrasahs in Indonesia. Using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method with the PRISMA 2020 protocol, this research analyzes data from reputable databases (Google Scholar, SINTA, Dimensions) published between 2020 and 2025. The results reveal a paradoxical reality: while Law No. 20 of 2003 juridically grants madrasahs equal status to general schools, significant disparities persist in budgetary politics, particularly marginalizing private madrasahs. Additionally, the demand for curriculum integration creates a "double burden" for students while simultaneously sparking innovations that strengthen institutional identity. The study concludes that the existence of madrasahs is currently threatened not by legal legitimacy, but by financial dependence and standardization pressures, necessitating affirmative budgetary policies to support private madrasahs.
Keywords: *Education Politics, Madrasah Existence, Reform Era, Educational Policy, Islamic Education.*

Abstrak. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis implikasi politik pendidikan pasca reformasi terhadap eksistensi dan keberlangsungan madrasah di Indonesia. Menggunakan metode Systematic Literature Review (SLR) dengan protokol PRISMA 2020, penelitian ini menganalisis data dari database bereputasi (Google Scholar, SINTA, Dimensions) terbitan tahun 2020 hingga 2025. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan realitas paradoksal: meskipun UU No. 20 Tahun 2003 secara yuridis menyetarakan status madrasah dengan sekolah umum, ketimpangan signifikan masih terjadi dalam politik anggaran yang memarginalkan madrasah swasta. Selain itu, tuntutan integrasi kurikulum menciptakan "beban ganda" bagi siswa namun sekaligus memicu inovasi yang memperkuat identitas kelembagaan. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa eksistensi madrasah saat ini terancam bukan oleh legalitas, melainkan oleh ketergantungan finansial dan tekanan standardisasi, sehingga diperlukan kebijakan anggaran yang afirmatif untuk mendukung madrasah swasta.

Kata Kunci: *Politik Pendidikan, Eksistensi Madrasah, Era Reformasi, Kebijakan Pendidikan, Pendidikan Islam.*

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Introduction

The 1998 Reformation era marked a crucial turning point for the political landscape of education in Indonesia, shifting from the centralized paradigm of the New Order to a decentralized and democratic one. This shift culminated in the enactment of Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System (Sisdiknas), which juridically integrated Islamic education into the national education system. As noted by Maghfuri (2020), this policy was a political response to eliminate the dichotomy between general and religious education that had long marginalized madrasahs.

Historically, the dualism of the education system in Indonesia—between the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud) and the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag)—has structural roots that are difficult to disentangle. In the New Order era, madrasahs were often treated as "second-class" educational institutions, oriented solely toward the afterlife and disconnected from the demands of the modern industrial world. This historical stigma created a wide gap in infrastructure and human resource quality. Although the Reform era brought the spirit of democratization, the lingering effects of this historical marginalization cannot be erased instantly solely by regulatory changes. The political contestation to equate these two streams of education is not just a matter of legal text, but a struggle for resource distribution and social legitimacy in the public eye. However, post-reform political dynamics brought not only fresh air but also new challenges for the existence of Islamic educational institutions in adapting to rigorous national standards.

The spirit of this policy change is intrinsically aligned with Islamic principles that encourage continuous improvement (ishlah). The change in the fate of an institution or community depends heavily on the internal will to improve, as stated by Allah SWT in Surah Ar-Ra'd verse 11:

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا۟ مَا بِأَنفُسِهِمْ

It means:

"Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves."

This verse serves as a theological foundation implying that the existence of madrasahs in the modern political era cannot rely solely on historical legitimacy but requires active adaptation to regulations and the demands of the times.

In the academic realm, the discourse on the politics of Islamic education has been widely discussed. Azyumardi Azra (2012) in his study highlighted the need for the modernization of Islamic education amidst the challenges of the new millennium. Meanwhile, Wasehudin (2018) revealed that although regulatively the position of madrasahs has strengthened, the implementation of policies in the field often still places madrasahs as "second class" compared to general schools. Other research by Syaiful (2021) also dissects how budget politics and post-reform teacher certification policies affect the competitiveness of madrasah institutions.

Although many studies discuss education policy partially, existing literature remains scattered and has not been systematically mapped regarding its specific implications for the sustainability (existence) of madrasah institutions over the last two decades. Therefore, this study employs the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method to synthesize various findings regarding the impact of post-reform education politics. The objective is to map the policy opportunities and threats faced by madrasahs, thereby serving as a reference for policymakers in strengthening the existence of Islamic education in Indonesia.

Theoretical Framework

To analyze the complexity of education politics in Indonesia, this study employs two main theoretical lenses: Policy Sociology and Resource Dependence Theory.

First, Stephen Ball's (1993) concept of "policy as text and policy as discourse" is used to deconstruct the implementation of education reform. Ball argues that policy is not a closed, finished document, but a process of "becoming" that is interpreted differently by various actors. In this study, Law No. 20 of 2003 is viewed as the policy text that promises egalitarianism and inclusion. However, the policy enactment in the field is heavily influenced by power relations and material constraints. This perspective allows the researcher to understand why the legal recognition of madrasahs (text) does not automatically translate into equal treatment in reality (enactment).

Second, Resource Dependence Theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) is utilized to analyze the political economy of madrasahs. This theory posits that the survival of an organization depends on its ability to acquire and maintain resources from the environment. In the context of Indonesian education politics, private madrasahs—which rely heavily on government grants (BOS funds) and community donations—are in a position of high dependency. This vulnerability makes them susceptible to political fluctuations and bureaucratic control. By synthesizing these two theories, this study frames the existence of madrasahs not merely as an educational issue, but as a struggle for distributive justice within a resource-constrained political system.

Methods

This research employs a qualitative approach using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method. This method was chosen to comprehensively identify, evaluate, and interpret all available research relevant to the political implications of education on the existence of madrasahs in the post-reform era. The review protocol explicitly refers to the PRISMA 2020 (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines to ensure the validity, transparency, and reproducibility of the findings (Page et al., 2021).

Data Collection Strategy The literature search was conducted through reputable academic databases, specifically Google Scholar, SINTA (Science and Technology Index), and Dimensions. These databases were selected because they provide the most comprehensive coverage of Indonesian Islamic education literature. To ensure the novelty and relevance of the data, the search was strictly limited to articles published in the last five years (2020–2025).

The search strategy utilized specific keywords combined with Boolean operators: "Politik Pendidikan" (Education Politics) AND "Madrasah" AND "Reformasi" (Reform). The inclusion criteria established for this study were: (1) Articles published in peer-reviewed journals (SINTA accredited or International); (2) Explicitly discussing government policies affecting Islamic education institutions; (3) Full-text availability; and (4) Written in Indonesian or English. Meanwhile, proceedings, opinion pieces, book reviews, and articles outside the specified timeframe were excluded.

Data Analysis The collected data were analyzed using the interactive analysis model adapted from Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). This process involves three main stages: (1) Data Condensation, which involves selecting, focusing, and simplifying abstract data from the retrieved articles; (2) Data Display, presenting the findings in structured thematic categories regarding policy impacts; and (3) Conclusion Drawing/Verification, synthesizing the political implications for madrasah existence. This rigorous methodological framework allows the researcher to provide an objective depiction of the position of madrasahs within the national education policy constellation.

Results and Discussion

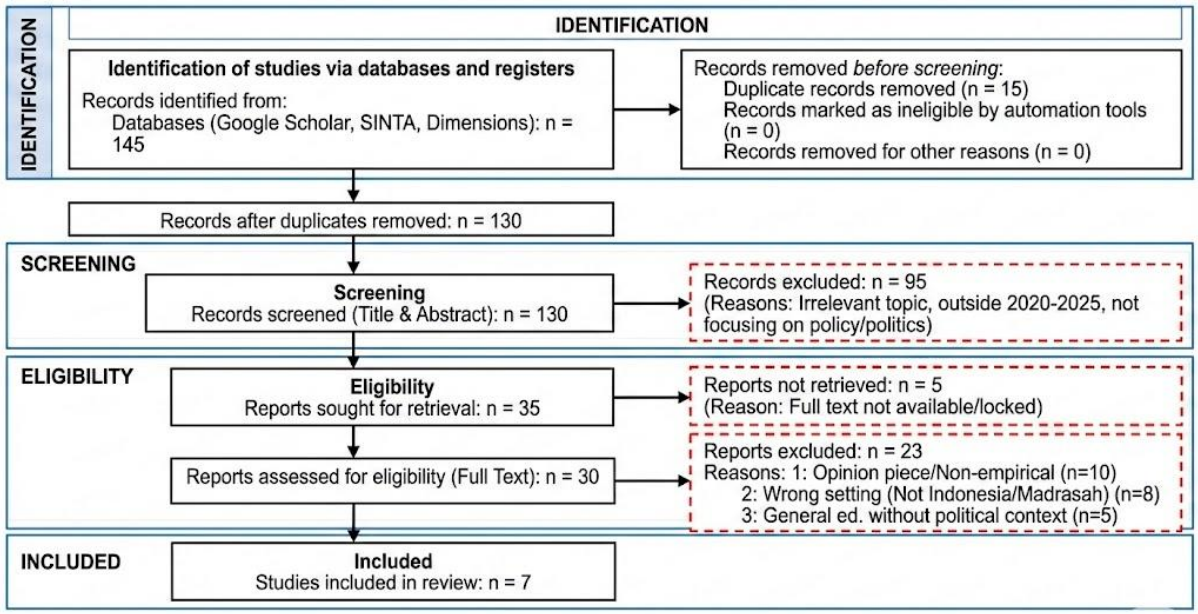

Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram

No	Author (Year)	Article Title	Key Findings / Theme
1	Maghfuri (2020)	Analisis Kebijakan Pendidikan Islam Pada Awal Era Reformasi (1998-2004)	Education policy in the reform era was a political response to eliminate the dichotomy between general and religious education.
2	Anjarsari (2022)	Dampak Kebijakan Sertifikasi Guru Terhadap Kualitas Pendidikan Dan Kesejahteraan Guru Madrasah	Teacher certification improves welfare and motivation but creates a heavy administrative burden that distracts from pedagogical duties.
3	Dasopang & Nasution (2024)	Eksistensi Madrasah di Indonesia Pasca Keluarnya Undang Undang No 20 Tahun 2003 Tentang Sisdiknas	Government recognition has strengthened madrasah institutional standing, encouraging modern management while retaining Islamic identity.
4	Selvia (2024)	Sistem Penyelenggaraan Pendidikan Islam pada Era Reformasi: Analisis Kebijakan Satu Atap	The "One Roof" policy allows madrasahs access to accreditation and standardization facilities equal to general schools.
5	Imanika & Huda (2024)	Implementasi Manajemen Anggaran Pendidikan Dalam Peningkatan Mutu Madrasah Swasta	There is a significant disparity in budget management; private madrasahs struggle with complex bureaucracy to access BOS funds compared to state madrasahs.
6	Rahmawati &	Lahirnya Madrasah dan	Curriculum integration creates a

No	Author (Year)	Article Title	Key Findings / Theme
	Azizah (2024)	Integrasi Kurikulum: Tantangan dan Peluang di Era Modern	"double burden" for students mastering both general sciences and religious studies.
7	Nasution (2025)	Pengembangan Kurikulum Pendidikan Islam di Madrasah Era 4.0: Pendekatan Integratif-Interkonektif	Successful implementation of the "Integrative-Interconnective" curriculum model increases madrasah competitiveness among the modern Muslim middle class.

Based on the systematic review of literature published between 2020 and 2025, the political implications of post-reform education policies on the existence of madrasahs are complex and multifaceted. The analysis reveals three dominant themes: (1) The dynamics of institutional recognition; (2) Budgetary politics and funding disparities; and (3) The challenge of curriculum integration and standardization.

Dynamics of Institutional Recognition and Legal Standing The primary finding indicates that the Reform Era, specifically through Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System (Sisdiknas), has succeeded in elevating the legal status of madrasahs. Recent studies confirm that this regulatory framework has shifted the paradigm of madrasahs from being "marginalized institutions" to becoming an integral part of the national education system equal to public schools. Dasopang et al. (2024) argue that government recognition is now more substantial, evidenced by the increasing number of madrasahs adopting modern management standards while maintaining their distinctive Islamic identity. Furthermore, Selvia (2024) emphasizes that the "One Roof" policy integration under the national education system has allowed madrasahs to access government accreditation and standardization facilities that were previously exclusive to general schools under the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud). This legal equality is the most significant political achievement for Islamic education in the post-reform era.

Budgetary Politics and Funding Disparities Despite enjoying legal equality, budgetary politics remains a critical issue affecting the existence of madrasahs. The allocation of 20% of the State Budget (APBN) for education has not been distributed evenly between institutions under Kemendikbud (schools) and the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag) (madrasahs). Imanika et al. (2024) highlight that while state madrasahs (Madrasah Negeri) receive adequate operational funding, the vast majority of private madrasahs still struggle with financial independence due to complex bureaucratic mechanisms for accessing School Operational Assistance (BOS) funds. This disparity creates a "quality gap" where elite state madrasahs thrive, while rural private madrasahs stagnate, heavily relying on community charity rather than state support. This funding disparity is further exacerbated by the bureaucratic complexity of the grant mechanism. Unlike public schools that receive direct and routine budget allocations from the local government (APBD), private madrasahs—which constitute nearly 90% of total madrasahs in Indonesia—must rely on the central government's budget (APBN) via the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The findings of Syaiful (2021) indicate that this vertical bureaucratic chain often leads to delays in the disbursement of School Operational Assistance (BOS) funds. Consequently, many madrasah heads are forced to seek "political patronage" or rely on unstable foundation funds to cover operational costs. This condition creates a vulnerability where the sustainability of Islamic education is highly dependent on the political lobbying power of local leaders rather than a established, merit-based system. This finding suggests that political will in budgeting has not fully aligned with the legal mandate of equality.

Curriculum Integration and Teacher Professionalism The political demand to meet national education standards has forced madrasahs to integrate the national curriculum with the religious curriculum (Pendidikan Agama Islam). Rahmawati and Azizah (2024) found that this integration poses a "double burden" on madrasah students, who must master general sciences alongside deep religious studies. However, this challenge has also sparked innovation; Nasution (2025) notes that many madrasahs have successfully developed an "Integrative-Interconnective" curriculum model that combines science and revelation, thereby increasing their appeal to the modern Muslim middle class.

Regarding human resources, the teacher certification policy has had a dual impact. Anjarsari (2022) reports that certification has significantly improved the welfare of madrasah teachers, which correlates with increased motivation and teaching performance. However, the administrative burden of certification often distracts teachers from their pedagogical duties, creating a new administrative hegemony in madrasah management.

The Challenge of Digital Transformation and Political Adaptability Beyond the classic issues of budget and curriculum, the review of literature from 2020 to 2025 reveals a new political challenge: the digital divide. The government's push for digitalization in education, such as the implementation of Computer-Based National Assessments (ANBK) and the Madrasah Reform project (Realizing Education's Promise/REP-MEQR), demands massive infrastructure readiness. However, literature shows that policy support for digital infrastructure in madrasahs is uneven. While state madrasahs (MAN Insan Cendekia or MAN PK) enjoy premium digital facilities comparable to elite international schools, rural madrasahs struggle with basic internet connectivity. This digital gap is a new form of political inequality; without affirmative intervention in technology procurement, madrasahs risk being left behind in the "Merdeka Belajar" era, which heavily relies on digital platforms.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the political trajectory of education in the post-reform era presents a paradoxical reality for the existence of madrasahs in Indonesia. On one hand, the Systematic Literature Review confirms that the regulatory framework, particularly Law No. 20 of 2003, has successfully dismantled the dichotomy between general and religious education, granting madrasahs equal legal standing within the national education system. This "One Roof" policy has strengthened institutional recognition and standardized quality assurance. However, on the other hand, the implementation of these policies reveals persistent disparities, particularly in budgetary politics where private madrasahs remain marginalized compared to state schools and state madrasahs.

The study concludes that the existence of madrasahs today is no longer threatened by legal legitimacy issues, but rather by the ability to adapt to standardization demands and financial independence. The integration of the national curriculum with Islamic values has proven to be a double-edged sword; it increases the academic burden but also serves as a unique selling point that elevates the competitiveness of madrasahs in the eyes of the modern Muslim middle class.

Therefore, this study recommends that future education policies must move beyond mere legal recognition toward "affirmative action" in budgeting, specifically for private madrasahs that handle the majority of Islamic education students. For madrasah managers, relying solely on state aid is no longer viable; strengthening institutional autonomy through creative financing and curriculum innovation is the key to survival. Future research is suggested to focus on the micro-political strategies of private madrasah leaders in navigating these structural constraints at the local level.

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