

Dualism of Islamic Education Identities in Indonesia: Schools and Madrasah

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Abstract: Islamic education in Indonesia faces complex dynamics, one of which is the dualism of identity between public schools and madrasahs. This article examines the historical roots, government policies, and curriculum comparisons between these two educational institutions. This study aims to understand the dynamics of dualism in Islamic education in Indonesia and find solutions to achieve inclusive and sustainable national education quality. This study uses a library research approach and historical analysis. Data were collected from various sources, such as books, journals, news articles. The study found that this dualism causes challenges in the integration of the education system, especially related to management, quality of resources, and public perception. However, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, especially through P5 and P5RA, shows an effort to unite religious and national values in the education system. The study concludes that synergy between schools and madrasahs is very important to realize inclusive and sustainable national education quality.

Keywords: Education Dualism; Government Policy; Madrasah; School.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic education in Indonesia has experienced complex dynamics since the colonial period until today. One of the most striking dynamics is the emergence of identity dualism in an Islamic educational institution, which is reflected in the two main institutions, namely schools and madrasahs. Both have the same educational goals, namely to enlighten the nation's life as reflected in to 1945 Constitution and to shape the characteristics of students in a manner consistent with Islamic values, but in aspects of curriculum or institutional structure both show significant differences.

Islamic schools, such as madrasahs, often adopt the general education system regarding the implementation of institutions or curriculum, but madrasahs add religious lessons that tend to be more adaptive to the times. Conversely, the madrasa represents a tradition of Islamic education that upholds the essential features of learning, focusing on the exploration of classical Islam. The differences between schools and madrasahs not only affect the learning methods, but also affect the formation of students' identities and the social image of the two institutions in society (Anggraini, Nafiadi, et al., 2025).

The phenomenon of dualism in Islamic education is not something that appears suddenly. It began during the Dutch colonial period, when the formal education system was widely introduced and separated from the pesantren education system, which was more popular among the people at that time. The colonial government provided a fairly limited place for access to Islamic education, which caused Islamic leaders to aggressively establish madrasahs as a form of resistance to maintain the Islamic scientific tradition. And on the other hand, the western school model is growing with full support from the country, thus creating a high gap between general education and religious education (Rasmuin et al., 2024).

In the midst of increasing times with the demands of globalization, Islamic education faces great challenges to survive. Islamic schools are required to produce graduates who are competitive in the world of work, while madrasahs also strive to maintain the spiritual depth and scholarly traditions of Islam. this gap is also supported by the views of the public who consider madrasahs to be the second educational institution compared to public schools. this emphasizes the identity tension within the body of Islamic education itself, between modernity and traditionalism and the task between the

demands of the world and the call of religious conscience(Anggraini, Prabowo, et al., 2025).

This dualism will raise fundamental questions about the direction and integration of Islamic education in Indonesia, whether both are able to go hand in hand and complement each other, or it will create a dichotomy that will weaken the overall purpose of Islamic education. This paper intends to delve deeper into the history, as well as the implications of the dualism of the identity of Islamic education in Indonesia.

METHODS

This study uses a library research method with a historical analysis approach. Historical analysis was chosen to investigate the evolution of madrasahs as a representation of Islamic educational institutions and to relate this evolution to current conditions. Primary data were obtained from various reference materials, such as books, journals, and news articles that discuss the history of education and school management that are relevant to the research topic. Secondary data were collected through observations of several model institutions to strengthen the research findings(Sugiyono, 2016). By using this approach, this study aims to improve understanding of the development of madrasahs and their significance in relation to current school and madrasah conditions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Dualism in the Indonesian Education System

Educational dualism in Indonesia dates back to the Dutch and Japanese colonialism which was also supported by the political conditions in Indonesia. Educational dualism refers to the division between general education and religious education. In Indonesia, this dualism arises from various factors, including the political dynamics among the highest authorities(Ikwandi, 2022). Dualism that is a legacy of the Dutch government where the Dutch provide freedom of religion for the people they colonize but quite limit the freedom for education, because education is only intended for the children of aristocrats. In addition, after Indonesian independence, the dualism inherited by the Dutch is still rooted in the world of education which makes education in the present era still also applies the dualism system. Coupled with the Japanese occupation also applied a

dualism system in education, so the dualism system of education in Indonesia has been deeply rooted.

The dualism of the educational system in Indonesia refers to the presence of two parallel educational pathways: general education administered by the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud) and religious education managed by the Ministry of Islamic Education (Kemenag). This condition creates a separation between public schools and madrasahs, each of which has a different curriculum, standards and management system(Anggraini, 2024). The difference in management between schools and madrasahs leads to overlapping education policies and standards. Although madrasahs teach the national curriculum, they also add more intensive religious materials compared to public schools. This leads to diversity in educational outputs and student learning experiences(Parlan & Suryadi, 2024).

According to Ikwandi (2022), this dualism is deeply rooted in the Indonesian education system, making it difficult to integrate the management of educational institutions(Ikwandi, 2022). The overlapping policies between the Department of Education and Culture and the Department of Religious Affairs in managing educational institutions and education personnel cause complexity in implementing educational policies. This situation necessitates a thorough understanding of how to identify shared solutions for addressing the issues of dualism in Indonesia's education system. The presence of dualism also poses challenges for educational management, the existence of two different principles in the management of schools and madrasahs causes differences in the implementation of educational policies. Public schools tend to focus on science and technology-based education, while madrasahs emphasize religious education. This difference is one of the obstacles to integration and synergy between the two education systems in Indonesia.

Dynamics of Government Policies on Schools and Madrasah

Education is a necessity that must be seen as a major component for a nation if it is to progress. The implementation of education is determined by a clear vision and mission so that the process to be carried out can be systematized precisely and quickly, it is also inseparable from policy. Therefore, the implementation of

educational policies serves as a crucial foundation for enhancing the quality of education. The government has introduced various policies aimed at improving educational standards, with the expectation that these initiatives will lead to better educational outcomes (Majid, 2019).

When discussing educational quality, it's essential to consider the role of policy. The policies in place at both schools and madrasas are closely tied to the unique objectives of each institution. Madrasas aim to align with national educational goals, focusing on nurturing a generation characterized by faith, devotion, and strong moral values. Additionally, they strive to develop students' spiritual and intellectual capacities, preparing them to be competitive graduates ready for higher education (Masitho et al., 2023). As for schools, Ida Norlena argues that schools are places to produce the next generation who have knowledge. Schools are also educational institutions that aim to shape students to grow into humans who have good personalities, and form students' intellectuals in order to educate the nation (Norlena, 2015). Similarly, the objectives of schools are derived from the national education goals outlined in Education Law Number 20 of 2003, which emphasize educating the nation's citizens, developing students' potential, and fostering the character and culture of a respected nation.

Regarding policy management, primary schools, middle schools, and high schools or vocational institutions fall under the Ministry of Education and Culture, while madrasah ibtidaiyah, similar to primary school; madrasah tsanawiyah, comparable to middle school; and madrasah 'aliyah, equivalent to secondary school, are organized differently, all managed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Mardiana et al., 2021). Of course, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Culture also have different policies in managing their educational institutions. The school period between school and madrasah institutions, both have the same study period. Starting from elementary school which is equivalent to MI has a 6-year study period, junior high school which is equivalent to MTs has a 3-year study period, and high school which is equivalent to MA has a 3-year study period.

In terms of the purpose of the educational institution, the most prominent difference between school and madrasah institutions is the

implementation of religious learning/PAI. While religious education in public schools is overseen by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Culture, in school institutions, religious education is implemented for two hours a week. The Law on National Education System stipulates in Chapter VIII Article 47 Paragraph 2, that the characteristics of education units organized by the community are still carried out. Institutions that are characterized by the specificity of the institution can increase the weight of the lesson in accordance with the specificity of the characteristic (Abduh et al., 2024).

Policies related to religious learning began with the issuance of the National Education System Law Number 4 of 1959 article 20 concerning religious education, in paragraph 1 which discusses that every public school institution must hold religious lessons. This is then supported by the issuance of the The National Education System Law, specifically Law Number 20 of 2003, incorporates elements of Islamic religious education within its framework. The law highlights that national education seeks to develop individuals who have faith and devotion to God Almighty, demonstrate noble character, and are healthy, knowledgeable, skilled, creative, independent, and democratic citizens. Policies regarding Islamic Religious Education (PAI) content in public schools fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, while educational institutions are responsible for developing this material without introducing additional content.

Whereas in madrasas, the education policy combines the boarding school system with the system in modern schools. This is due to the influence of renewal ideas that developed in the world of Islam and education, so that general lessons are gradually included in the madrasah curriculum. The majority of madrasahs since their inception have been private schools established by the community with limited capabilities and in the condition they are. Of course, everything is very minimal when viewed in terms of madrasah facilities and infrastructure, learning facilities or learning media, and very limited educators who meet the standards, as stipulated in government regulation PP number 19 of 2005 concerning SNP (Madrasah et al., 2019). Most public madrasahs are still inadequate in terms of facilities, infrastructure and teaching staff as required by the national education standards

(SNP). Public madrasahs are different from public schools in that they were originally private madrasahs that were established and built by the community, while public schools are usually built by the government from the beginning, complete with infrastructure, teaching and education personnel.

The presence of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in addition to the Ministry of Education and Culture, has preserved dualism until now (Rasmuin et al., 2023). From a different perspective, the Ministry of Religious Affairs has played a crucial role in bridging the dualism in Indonesia's education system. This has been achieved by integrating religious lessons into the public school curriculum and incorporating general subjects into the curriculum of religious schools (madrasahs). This effort to find common ground aligns with Strenbrink's concept of convergence. As a consequence of this dualism policy, general teacher education is conducted through institutions managed by the Ministry of Education, while Islamic teacher education is provided through institutions overseen by the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

In this case, the author analyzes that what has happened is that madrasahs, which since their birth have been identical to Islamic educational institutions, are faced with a number of difficult choices, which on the one hand must maintain the quality of religious education that characterizes them, but on the other hand madrasahs are also required to be able to provide good quality general education so that they are equal to public schools. Some madrasahs follow the policies launched by the government and some continue to exist with their own curriculum.

Comparison of School and Madrasa Curriculum

In formal education, the curriculum serves as the primary framework for preparing and implementing the learning process in the classroom. It provides direction and guidelines for the educational process, particularly in formal institutions. Without a curriculum, the educational process would lack direction and coherence. From an extreme perspective, one could argue that without a curriculum, there would be no educational activities in schools. The curriculum determines the nature of learning activities, though it allows for various adaptations and variations to meet different needs.

In the educational environment, there are various kinds of educational institutions, including madrasah and public schools. Madrasahs are educational institutions that are specifically aimed at empowering students in the field of religion, while public schools emphasize the improvement of students' academic achievements in general. Although both organize formal education, there are several differences between the two, including: first, in the field of curriculum; the most striking difference between madrasah and public schools is the curriculum used. Madrasahs tend to use a curriculum that emphasizes Islamic religious education in the context of Islamic studies and Arabic, while public schools use a national curriculum that emphasizes the general curriculum in all subjects (Anggraini & Kawakib, 2025).

The implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in school and madrasah education units has significant similarities and links. However, the main difference lies in the emphasis on developing the values of religious moderation and nationalism in the madrasah educational culture. Schools have an education unit culture that includes norms, values, and basic assumptions adopted by members of the education unit, which then become guardians of togetherness and provide a unique identity for the education unit. Madrasahs have a unique and distinctive culture. Madrasahs have a strong religious culture and prioritize religious character without neglecting academic culture and nationalist character, and are adaptive to the conditions of society.

The school curriculum focuses on a formal learning program that includes various subjects and learning experiences inside and outside the classroom, with an approach that is oriented towards achieving competencies. The application of the Merdeka Curriculum in schools focuses on enhancing the Pancasila Learner Profile (P5) project, as initiated by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Basically, public schools provide a general curriculum that includes subjects such as math, science, languages, arts and more. But in contrast to madrasah schools, the learning methods used are religious-based by emphasizing religious learning and the experience of Islamic values.

In contrast, the madrasah curriculum prioritizes Islamic religious education while balancing general and religious sciences, ensuring that graduates possess a comprehensive

understanding of both areas. Rather than solely focusing on knowledge acquisition, the madrasah curriculum aims to prepare students with essential skills, values, and adaptive thinking to navigate an ever-changing world while also providing opportunities to develop character, embrace Pancasila values, encourage religious moderation, and cultivate critical, creative, and innovative thinking through initiatives like the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project and the Rahmatan Lil Alamin Student Profile (P5 PPRA).

In madrasahs, religious values must be integrated into all aspects of education, influencing how individuals think, behave, and act. The Ministry of Religious Affairs has developed this focus on religiosity through the concept of the Rahmatan Lil Alamin Student Profile, which is integrated with the Pancasila Student Profile in the madrasah curriculum. In implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, madrasahs concentrate on the Pancasila and Rahmatan Lil Alamin Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5RA), which guides every aspect of the learning process. This integration ensures that students not only acquire knowledge but also embody the values and attitudes essential for their personal and social development.

MAN Insan Cendekia (MAN IC) adapts the national curriculum to align with its vision and mission, ensuring that educational standards reflect the values and goals of the madrasah. This curriculum strengthens the mastery of science and technology and applicative Islamic religious education. Learning at MAN IC takes place from morning to night, with the daytime for general subjects and the evening for religious learning. This curriculum refers to the 2013 Curriculum and Merdeka Curriculum, as well as Minister of Religious Affairs Decree Number 184 of 2019. The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in schools and madrasahs shares similarities in strengthening character based on Pancasila and promoting religious moderation, although madrasahs place a greater emphasis on religious values. Competency development is carried out through co-curricular, extracurricular, and integrated learning. The difference lies in the emphasis on religious moderation and nationalism in madrasah, as well as the main focus on Strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile Project (P5) in schools.

CONCLUSION

Islamic education in Indonesia has experienced complex dynamics since the colonial period until today, one of which is characterized by the duality of identity between public schools and madrasah. This dualism arises from colonial policies that divided the public education system from Islamic boarding schools and has persisted into the independence era, with schools and madrasahs overseen by two separate ministries: the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Madrasahs are unique in combining general curriculum and religious education more intensively, while public schools emphasize mastery of science and technology with a limited portion of religious education. These differences not only affect the curriculum and management system, but also shape the identity of students as well as the social image of each educational institution in the eyes of the community. Integration efforts between schools and madrasahs have been initiated, notably through the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, which introduces the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) in schools and the P5RA (Rahmatan Lil Alamin) in madrasahs. However, challenges remain, especially in terms of equalizing quality, facilities, and human resources. In this context, madrasahs are required to maintain the spiritual depth and scholarly tradition of Islam, but must also be adaptive to the times and global needs. Therefore, an integrated policy is needed that is able to bridge differences without eliminating the characteristics of each institution, so that the main goal of national education is to produce a generation of faith, knowledge and character and can be achieved as a whole.

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