

Political Policies on Islamic Education in Indonesia

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ABSTRAK

This study explores the development of religious education policies in Indonesia before and after the year 2003, employing a library research method. By examining historical documents, including Education Laws No. 04/1950, No. 02/1989, and No. 20/2003, the study traces the evolution of educational policies, particularly focusing on the inclusion of religious education. The research investigates how political and social dynamics, including the interactions between nationalist and religious groups, influenced these policies over time. Content analysis and comparative analysis techniques are utilized to identify shifts in the integration of religious values into the national education system. The findings indicate that changes in the formulation of education laws are closely linked to socio-political changes in Indonesia, particularly during significant periods such as the New Order and the Reform Era. Each legislative shift reflects a deeper integration of religious aspects in response to public demands and political dynamics, from general principles to more specific rights for students to receive religious education aligned with their faith. This study provides insights into the evolving relationship between religion and state within the context of education policy-making, highlighting the role of reforms in promoting inclusivity and responsiveness to societal needs.

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1. PENDAHULUAN

Political policies on Islamic education in Indonesia are an integral part of the nation's historical and socio-political dynamics. From colonial times to the modern era, Islamic education policies have been shaped by various political factors that reflect the needs and aspirations of society (Ikasari, 2019). During the Dutch colonial period, educational politics were implemented through the Teacher Ordinance, which restricted the scope of Islamic education by requiring all religious teachers to obtain permits from the colonial government. This policy aimed to control teachings deemed capable of inciting resistance, ultimately marginalizing many pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) that did not meet the administrative requirements set by the colonial authorities. (Susilo, 2019)

Indonesia is a country with the largest Muslim population in the world (Saputri, 2020). Various theories suggest that the arrival of Islam in the archipelago took place through multiple approaches within society. One such approach used to spread Islam was through

education. Religious leaders employed various strategies in disseminating their teachings (Andhita, 2021). These strategies are referred to as politics, or in classical Islamic terminology, *siyasah*, which is a method used to achieve desired goals.

The history of political education development in Indonesia initially took place during the Dutch colonial era (Aly et.al, 2023). It is undeniable that the Dutch colonized Indonesia for more than 3.5 centuries, followed by the Japanese, who were equally oppressive. Politics and education are significant entities in the political system of every country. Although they may sometimes seem unrelated, in reality, they are closely connected, particularly in the character-building of the citizens of a country. Generally, educational institutions and the systems they establish help shape the character of the political elite. Conversely, political leaders, through their power, often formulate policies that significantly impact the field of education (Edward et.al, 2020).

Referring to Coleman's response, who argued that a state can be likened to a school—"as is the state, so is the school"—this statement portrays a country as a component that represents the educational process (Omachar 2018). Essentially, the educational process has a profound influence on determining the political direction and governance of a nation. The logic follows that the order within a country starts from the central point of education, which shapes it. Thus, the success or failure of policies in a country depends on the quality of education present within it.

Islamic education politics in Indonesia covers a broad scope when viewed from different perspectives. The issues related to the introduction mentioned above pertain to policies, particularly those related to religion in the archipelago. This includes the colonial government's policies towards religious education in the Dutch East Indies, the position of the state and religion in Indonesia, the development of religious policies before 2003, and the development of religious policies after 2003. Therefore, these issues are very interesting and relevant to re-examine in this paper. The discourse presented in this paper aims to provide information related to the politics of religious education in Indonesia, specifically focusing on the policies enacted by the political elites concerning Islamic education in the country.

2. METODE

The research employs a library research method to examine the development of religious education policies in Indonesia before and after 2003. This approach relies on the systematic collection of data from secondary sources such as books, journals, legal texts, historical records, and academic articles. By utilizing historical documents like Education Laws No. 04/1950, No. 02/1989, and No. 20/2003, the research analyzes the evolution of policies, focusing on how socio-political dynamics and debates between nationalist and religious factions influenced the formulation of these laws. A combination of content analysis and comparative analysis is used to evaluate changes across different education laws, highlighting key shifts in the integration of religious values within Indonesia's educational system. The analysis emphasizes thematic elements such as the role of reform movements, the introduction of specific religious rights, and the influence of political contexts on education policy. By synthesizing these themes, the study aims to provide an understanding of the impact of historical and political factors on religious education policies. This approach ensures the reliability of findings by cross-referencing multiple sources to

maintain accuracy and a well-rounded view of the relationship between religion and state in Indonesian education policy.

3. HASIL DAN DISKUSI

3.1 Colonial Government Policies on Religious Education in the Dutch East Indies

From a political perspective, the colonial government took part in educational efforts for the people, particularly with the establishment of the Ethical Policy (*ethische politiek*) (Aji & Hermawan, 2018). However, this policy led to several issues. The division of the Muslim community and the decline of local educational institutions such as *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) were among the effects, as many *pesantren* refused to receive government subsidies. This was partly due to the remote locations of the *pesantren* and their stance of resistance towards colonial authority. As a result, *pesantren* lagged far behind compared to modern schools and educational institutions.

The policies on religious practices included exerting pressure on existing educational frameworks. Colonial policies to oversee the operations of educational institutions were implemented through the Teacher Ordinance and Wild School Ordinance (Private Schools) (Suratminto, 2013). These policies required teachers, particularly religious instructors, to obtain permission from the government. This permit was mandatory, meaning that every religious teacher had to possess it. Consequently, those without a permit were not allowed to teach.

For the colonial government, the implementation of education, especially religious education, was not pedagogically cultural but rather pedagogically political. This was done to suppress actions that the government did not desire, thereby minimizing the possibility that religious education could be a reason for rebellion against the Dutch East Indies government.

The Colonial Government began implementing the Teacher Ordinance in various regions of the archipelago, such as Java and Madura, excluding Surakarta and Yogyakarta, on November 2, 1905 (Widjanarko et.al, 20233). The Teacher Ordinance, initiated by KF. Holle, aimed to oversee the progress of religious education in the archipelago (Fuadi, 2023). Holler also assigned local Regents the duty of recording and reporting on the number of religious teachers periodically. This suggestion received similar support from Snouck Hurgronje, who, in 1904, proposed the regulation of religious teachers in terms of administrative requirements, such as government permits, teacher attendance, and the number of students. Hurgronje also suggested the formation of a special committee to monitor the performance of religious teachers (Wahyuni, 2014).

According to Suminto in Miftahuddin (2023) the Teacher Ordinance contained five main points:

- a. A religious teacher could only teach if they obtained a permit from the regent.
- b. The permit was granted based on the teacher's qualifications and the teaching materials, which had to pose no risk to security and order.
- c. Religious teachers were required to maintain a journal of the taught materials and take student attendance.
- d. Government bodies or the regent had the right to verify data if violations of the set rules were suspected.
- e. The government could revoke a teaching permit if a religious teacher frequently violated regulations and was deemed unsuitable.

According to Deliar Noer, the Teacher Ordinance had a significant impact on the development of religious education. The number of religious teachers decreased due to administrative issues, including difficulties in obtaining teaching permits from the government. Reporting and data submission to the colonial authorities were also hindered since the reports were required to be written in Dutch and Latin script, which not all teachers were proficient in. Consequently, the number of religious teachers in pesantren diminished, leading to the closure of several pesantren by the colonial government. Teaching activities were hampered due to restricted learning scope, where the content taught was limited.

The implementation of the Teacher Ordinance was largely unsuccessful, as it failed to achieve its intended objectives (Salim et. al, 2024). Consequently, a second version of the Teacher Ordinance was introduced, which had more lenient policies, including:

- a. Religious teachers were required to show their teaching permits.
- b. Religious teachers had to maintain an accessible list of students and teaching materials for government review.
- c. The teaching permit would be revoked if a religious teacher was found to have numerous students with the purpose of making money.
- d. Religious teachers could face an 8-day penalty for teaching without a permit, falsifying reports, or failing to properly maintain records.
- e. Any religious teacher teaching without a valid permit could be sentenced to one month in prison and fined 200 guilders

Meanwhile, regarding the Wild School Ordinance (wild school ordonantie), the ordinance issued in October 1923 contained two main points:

- a. Schools established without full government funding were not permitted to operate.
- b. Only religious teachers from government institutions and subsidized private schools were allowed to teach.

3.2 The Position of State and Religion in Indonesia

The history of Islam outlines at least three types of relationships between state and religion. Din Syamsuddin categorizes them into three types:

- a. Integral Relationship. This view holds that the relationship between state and religion is integral, meaning there is no separation between the two. Religion and the state are seen as one cohesive entity with no dividing line.
- b. Dynamic-Dialectical Relationship. In this view, religion and the state coexist in a dynamic-dialectical manner, functioning alongside each other without a direct relationship. Each has its own domain and control. This understanding emerged to meet each other's needs. Religion needs the state as a tool for growth, while the state needs religion to build the spirituality of its citizens and create a just society.
- c. Separation Between State and Religion. This group believes that religion and the state are entirely separate entities, each with no correlation. They establish a clear divide between politics and religion, rejecting the formal implementation of religious norms in the system of governance or state law.

Meanwhile, looking back at Indonesia's historical context, the relationship between state and religion can be classified into four types:

- a. Indivisible Relationship: This group views the relationship between state and religion as inseparable. A concrete example is the Islamic kingdoms in Aceh and Samudera Pasai. In practice, religious and state laws were integrated and functioned harmoniously.
- b. Conflict Source. This group believes that the relationship between religion and state can be a source of problems. An example is the historical conflict between the Padri (local people) and the religious groups. The religious group desired the full implementation of Islamic teachings, which led to conflict with the Padri who opposed this, resulting in armed confrontations.
- c. Dynamic-Dialectical Relationship. The third group positions the relationship between religion and the state as dynamic and dialectical, where religious law was gradually incorporated into state law, as practiced by the Gowa-Tallo Kingdom.
- d. Secular-Ritualistic Relationship. This group positions religion in a secular-ritualistic manner, where religious rituals were established by the government as a form of attention to society. An example is the Javanese kings, who allowed their people to follow the religion of their choice, provided they remained loyal to the king. (Mokodensoho, 2020)

In the current era, the relationship between religion and state in Indonesia, in accordance with the 1945 Constitution (UUD 1945), tends to be aspirational and inclusive (Ahyar & Huda, 2021). Its implementation no longer refers to the State Guidelines (GBHN) but rather to medium and long-term plans, while maintaining fairness and upholding human rights. In the state system, a dynamic-dialectical relationship is very effective and aligned with the norms of religion. This is reflected in the preamble of the 1945 Constitution, which shares similar goals: believing in the Oneness of the Creator, achieving justice, fostering civilized humanity, strengthening national unity, and formulating policies through consultation. (Annava et.al, 2023)

In the context of religion, this aligns with the principles of *ushul fiqh*, particularly the concept of public welfare (*al-maslahahul 'ammah*), which should be prioritized in Islamic teachings. Public welfare should be prioritized when creating state policies, as state policy aims to promote the welfare of its citizens, in line with the principle (*tasharruf al-imam*).

3.3 Development of Religious Education Policies Pre and Post-2003

The development of religious education policies began with the enactment of the 1950 Education Law. This legislation originated from a clash between two elite factions: the nationalist and religious (Islamic) groups. It is undeniable that these policies were born out of the political dynamics between these two groups. For example, the BPUPKI (Committee for the Preparation of Indonesian Independence) consisted of both nationalist and Islamic representatives. (Rohman, 2019)

The 1950 Law was later revised with new legislation, as leaders at that time believed that its content was no longer relevant to the prevailing conditions. This revision was partly influenced by the rivalry between the two significant factions. Then came the 1989 Education Law, enacted during the New Order period, aligned with the political objectives of that time. The 1989 Law was characterized by four main features of governance: militarization, development priority, political stabilization, and the diversity of factions/parties. (Akhiyat, 2016)

Following the crisis of 1998, which ended the New Order era under President Suharto, a new public space emerged, providing the opportunity to voice aspirations, opinions, and freedom in democracy. This movement, known as the Reform Era, demanded changes in various aspects, including the principles of democracy, equality in human rights, and the upholding of justice. Education was one of the sectors scrutinized by the reform movement, which called for changes, including the overhaul of national legislation.

The reform movement highlighted the need to reassess Indonesia's legal framework, particularly UUSPN No. 02/1989, which was deemed outdated. A revision was therefore necessary to regulate the educational system, including Islamic education in Indonesia. This change occurred with the introduction of Law No. 20 of 2003 (National Education System), specifically Article 12, paragraph 1a: "Every student at any educational institution has the right to receive religious education according to the religion they adhere to, taught by an educator of the same faith." Additionally, the 2003 education law brought forth two significant aspects that influenced national education: religious values and responsiveness to future demands.

From 1950 to 2003, several significant changes were made to the educational legislation in Indonesia, particularly concerning religious education policies. (khunaifi & Matiani, 2019) These changes specifically referenced different aspects, most notably changes in the laws regarding religious education. A comparison of the provisions from different periods highlights the differences in the wording of these laws:

Table 1
A comparison of the provisions from different periods

Law No. 04/1950	"To form ethical, capable individuals and responsible citizens who contribute to the welfare of society and the country."
Law No. 02/1989	"To enlighten the nation's life and develop a complete Indonesian individual, namely a person who believes and is devoted to the Almighty God, has noble character, possesses knowledge and skills, physical and mental health, a strong and independent personality, as well as a sense of social and national responsibility."
Law No. 20/2003	"To develop the potential of students to become individuals who believe and are devoted to the Almighty God, have noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and responsible democratic citizens."

From the wording above, it is clear that the goals of education in Indonesia, particularly religious education, have gradually become more ambitious over time. The wording of Law No. 04/1950 was very general and did not explicitly mention religion, reflecting the circumstances of the time. This was only five years after Indonesia's independence, and the formulation of religious matters had not been narrowed down due to the presence of two major factions: the nationalist and religious groups.

Significant changes occurred in 1989, with the introduction of terms related to faith and devotion to the Almighty God. This was further refined in the 2003 Education Law, with the addition of "noble character." The transition in the concept of education, especially religious education within Indonesia's educational system, was driven by the need to adapt to societal and temporal developments. It is undeniable that social changes and dominant political policies, which sought to adapt to these conditions, were factors that fostered a harmonious relationship between religion and state governance.

4. KESIMPULAN

The development of religious education policies in Indonesia reflects the dynamic relationship between religion, politics, and education over different historical periods. From the initial 1950 Education Law, which provided a general framework without explicitly

addressing religious aspects, to the 1989 and 2003 Education Laws, which progressively integrated more explicit provisions for religious education, it is evident that socio-political changes and the demands of various societal groups have significantly shaped these policies. The influence of nationalist and religious factions during the formulation of these laws highlights the complexities of balancing religious values with national interests in a diverse society. The 2003 Education Law marked a critical point in Indonesia's educational policy, emphasizing the rights of students to receive religious education according to their beliefs, reflecting a more inclusive and aspirational approach (Setiawan & Abrianto, 2021). This evolution illustrates how education policy serves as a means to accommodate the needs of a majority-Muslim population while promoting fairness and adherence to human rights. Overall, the changes in religious education policies reveal an increasing acknowledgment of the importance of religious education in nation-building, and the role of reforms in addressing the evolving needs of Indonesian society.

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