

Policy Analysis Of Islamic Religious Education In Public Schools And Universities

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Abstract. *This study analyzes the policy of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in Indonesian public schools and universities within the framework of national education. Using a qualitative library research approach, data were collected from constitutional documents, educational regulations, academic works, and scholarly discussions. The findings show that PAI is not only a curricular requirement but also a strategic instrument for shaping moral character, strengthening national identity, and fostering religious moderation in a pluralistic society. Despite strong legal foundations, the implementation of PAI faces challenges from globalization, secularization, and the spread of radical content through digital media. However, opportunities also emerge through technological integration and innovative pedagogical approaches that can enhance inclusiveness, tolerance, and critical engagement. The study concludes that strengthening PAI policies requires adaptive curricula, digitally competent educators, and collaborative efforts among stakeholders to ensure that Islamic education contributes meaningfully to the development of a faithful, moderate, and socially responsible generation.*

Keyword: *Islamic Religious Education, Education Policy, Globalization, Religious Moderation, Indonesia*

INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) occupies a central position in shaping the character of the nation's generation while maintaining social cohesion in Indonesia. As a country with the largest Muslim majority in the world, Islamic Religious Education does not only function as the fulfilment of curricular obligations, but also as a value fortress that creates noble, tolerant, and nationalistic-minded people. In the current context, the Ministry of Education and Culture (2021) affirms the

strategic role of PAI as a soft power to erode radicalism and instil religious moderation - a critical response amidst the swift flow of globalisation that erodes a friendly Islamic identity.

Legal support for PAI is built on a strong constitutional foundation. The 1945 Constitution Article 31 Paragraph (3) explicitly calls for the state's responsibility to promote an education system that strengthens faith, piety, and noble character. This mandate is clarified in Law No. 20/2003 on National Education System (Article 12 Paragraph 1a), which guarantees the right of every learner to obtain religious education in accordance with their beliefs.

At the operational level, Permendikbud No. 55/2014 regulates the PAI curriculum in public schools, while Permenristekdikti No. 55/2017 establishes PAI as a compulsory course in public universities. These regulations are not mere formalities, but rather the state's commitment to integrate intellectual intelligence with spirituality within the framework of the Republic of Indonesia. However, the implementation of PAI policy cannot be separated from various challenges, especially in the fast-paced and complex era of globalisation. The emergence of various currents of thought, new values, and digital technology has created an increasingly plural educational landscape. In this context, religious and cultural pluralism demands a more inclusive, open, and dialogical approach to PAI. On the other hand, the phenomenon of secularisation, which is the tendency to separate religion from the public sphere, can weaken the position of religious education in modern life if not addressed wisely. Another challenge arises from the penetration of extremist digital content in social media targeting the younger generation, thus demanding a more adaptive and critical PAI curricular response in counteracting narratives of religion-based violence.

Against this background, it is important to further examine how PAI policies are formulated and implemented in schools and public universities. This study will not only trace the regulatory framework that supports the existence of PAI, but also evaluate its response to the growing socio-religious dynamics. Through this approach, a deeper understanding of the strategic position of PAI is expected to emerge in shaping the nation's generation that is not only intellectually intelligent, but also spiritually and socially mature in a pluralistic Indonesian context.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with the type of library research. The qualitative approach was chosen because the focus of this research is to deeply understand the policy of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) through an examination of official documents, academic theories, as well as the thoughts of experts in the fields of education and Islam.

Data collection techniques were conducted by reviewing various relevant sources, such as scientific books, academic journals, research articles, legislative regulations (such as the 1945 Constitution, the National Education System Law, Permendikbud, and Permenristekdikti), and other related sources/references. The collected data were then analysed using the descriptive- analytical method, by describing the content of the data and critically examining its meaning to understand the dynamics of PAI policies in the context of national education and the challenges of globalisation.

With this method, the author attempts to systematically explore how PAI policies are formulated and implemented in public schools and universities, as well as how the policies respond to the evolving social, cultural, and religious dynamics.

FINDINGS

The study reveals that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) holds a dual role in Indonesia's national education system: as a constitutional mandate and as a strategic medium for character formation. Regulations such as the 1945 Constitution, Law No. 20/2003, and ministerial decrees (Permendikbud No. 55/2014 and Permenristekdikti No. 55/2017) firmly establish PAI as a compulsory subject in public schools and universities. However, its implementation faces several challenges, including the influence of secularism, shifting moral values, limited use of digital learning resources, and the penetration of radical content through social media. Despite these obstacles, the findings also indicate significant opportunities. The integration of technology, the adoption of interactive and project-based learning methods, and an inclusive-dialogical approach can strengthen the relevance of PAI in addressing contemporary socio-cultural dynamics. Overall, PAI policies demonstrate both resilience and adaptability, making them crucial in shaping a generation that is intellectually competent, spiritually grounded, and socially responsible.

DISCUSSION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is an integral part of Indonesia's national education system. Its existence not only has a pedagogical function, but also strategic in shaping the character of the nation. In the context of the Muslim-majority country of Indonesia, PAI cannot be positioned merely as a formal instrument in the curriculum, but also as an effort to form Indonesian people who are faithful, pious, noble, and able to coexist harmoniously in a pluralistic society. In line with this, Law No. 20/2003 on the National Education System affirms that national education aims to develop the potential of students to become human beings who are faithful and devoted to God Almighty, have noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens.¹

Historically, the implementation of PAI in Indonesia has experienced ups and downs depending on political policies and socio-cultural dynamics. However, since the issuance of Law No. 2 of 1989 and strengthened by the 2003 National Education System Law as well as various derivative regulations such as Permendikbud No. 55 of 2014 and Permenristekdikti No. 55 of 2017, the position of PAI has become stronger in the structure of national education. The regulation affirms that every learner at all levels of education has the right to receive religious education in accordance with their religion.² Thus, PAI has become a compulsory subject in schools and a compulsory course in public universities.

In this context, PAI learning cannot be separated from the notion of education in general, which according to Windra is a process consisting of people, facilities, infrastructure, and provisions that are interrelated and have a clear ultimate goal, namely the realisation of meaningful learning for students.³ PAI, as part of education that has a strong spiritual and moral dimension, must be delivered with a comprehensive pedagogical approach, both in terms of content, methods, and ultimate goals. In line with Ramayulis' opinion, religious education aims not merely to provide

¹ Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, Article 3

² Permendikbud No. 55 of 2014 and Permenristekdikti No. 55 of 2017.

³ Windra Windra, "Learning to Welcome the Era of Society 5.0," Proceedings of the National Seminar on Basic Education, 2022.

religious knowledge, but to form a religious person as a whole, including feelings, attitudes, and behaviour.⁴

In practice, the implementation of PAI in public schools includes several main aspects of the curriculum, such as the study of the Qur'an and Hadith, akidah akhlak, fiqh, and the history of Islamic culture. This curriculum is intended so that students not only understand the teachings of Islam theoretically, but are also able to practice them in their daily lives. The main objective of this approach is to form learners who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also spiritually pious and have noble character.⁵

However, the implementation of PAI policy is not free from challenges. In the era of globalisation and digitalisation, the emergence of new values such as secularism, individualism and hedonism pose a threat to the internalisation of Islamic values in the younger generation. This phenomenon not only shifts the orientation of spirituality in life, but also weakens the critical power of students towards a moderate and tolerant understanding of religion. The research conducted shows that one of the main challenges in the implementation of PAI is the influence of global culture that leads to secularism and shifting moral values, as well as limited technology-based learning facilities.⁶

However, globalisation also provides great opportunities for PAI to grow. Digital resources such as educational apps, learning video platforms, and social media can be very effective tools in the teaching process. Therefore, strengthening learning methods is very important. Interactive approaches, the use of case studies, project-based learning, and technology integration are very relevant innovations to answer the challenges of the times. As stated by Umam and Hamami, these learning models not only increase students' interest in PAI materials, but also foster a critical and participatory attitude in understanding Islamic values.⁷

The importance of an inclusive and dialogical approach in PAI in public schools is also affirmed by Muhaimin. He stated that Islamic religious education should be able to integrate Islamic values into

⁴ Ramayulis, *Methodology of Teaching Islamic Religion*, Third Edition (Jakarta: Kalam Mulia, 2001), pp. 3.

⁵ Umi Musya'Adah, "The Important Role of Islamic Religious Education in Primary Schools," *Aulada: Journal of Education and Child Development*, vol. 2, no. 1 (2020), pp. 9-27.

⁶ Rahman Wahid, Siti Purhasanah, and Neneng Jessi Asrina, "The Use of Technology-Based Media in Building Early Childhood Digital Literacy. Building Early Childhood Digital Literacy," *El-Audi Journal* 4, no. 2 (2023): 50-55.

⁷ M. Rizal Umam and Tasman Hamami, "Evaluation of the School and Madrasah Islamic Religious Education Curriculum," *AT-TA'DIB: Scientific Journal of Islamic Religious Education Study Programme*, 2023, pp. 1-16.

real life and not just stop at the theoretical level. According to him, PAI has two main dimensions, namely the scientific dimension and the practical dimension. The scientific dimension covers the understanding of Islamic teachings, while the practical dimension emphasises the ability of students to apply Islamic values in social and cultural life.⁸

Meanwhile, in public universities, PAI has a more complex role. The PAI curriculum is designed not only to equip students with the basics of religion, but also to instil values of integrity, tolerance, and social responsibility. According to the Consortium for Religious Studies, the main objective of PAI at PTU is to form scholars who are faithful, virtuous, think critically, and able to cooperate among religious communities in the context of developing science, technology, and art for the national interest.⁹ Thus, PAI in PTU has a double responsibility, namely as a medium for spiritual as well as moral development for the nation's intellectual candidates.

In its implementation, PAI learning in public universities not only uses conventional methods such as lectures or lectures, but also utilises technology and contextual approaches. PAI lecturers use group discussions, case-based learning, and research projects to enhance students' understanding of Islamic teachings more deeply and relevant to the context of modern life. The use of e-learning platforms and online discussions also provides space for students to learn independently and interactively.¹⁰

In terms of substance, PAI materials in higher education also include aspects of Islamic philosophy, history of civilisation, Islamic ethics and morality, and comparative religious studies. This is intended for students to have a broad and in-depth view of religion, so as to avoid exclusive and intolerant attitudes. With this provision, it is hoped that university graduates will not only become knowledgeable intellectuals, but also pious individuals who contribute positively to community life.

However, challenges remain, especially regarding resistance to the role of religion in the academic realm, which tends to be secular. Some consider that religious education is not relevant to the needs of the world of work or does not support scientific development in general. In fact, according to

⁸ Tasman Hamami, "Islamic Religious Education Curriculum Development in Era 4.0," *Islamika*, vol. 2, no. 2 (2020), pp. 251-75.

⁹ Mastuhu, *Empowering the Islamic Education System*, Cet. Second (Jakarta: Logos, 1999), pp. 65.

¹⁰ Noorzanah, "Curriculum in Islamic Education," *Ittihad Journal of Kopertais Region XI Kalimantan*, vol. 15, no. 28 (2019), pp. 68-74.

various studies, PAI actually contributes greatly to the formation of the character and personality of students who are resilient and have integrity. Therefore, the urgency to revitalise PAI learning in higher education becomes increasingly important.

In the framework of national policy, regulations such as Permenristekdikti No. 55/2017 that require PAI as a general course become an important basis for strengthening the function of PAI in higher education. This policy shows that the state sees the important role of religion in shaping a generation that is not only academically competent, but also has a strong moral and spiritual foundation. This is in line with the vision of national education that places faith, piety, and noble character as the main pillars in the formation of superior human resources.

Finally, the success of PAI policies, both in schools and in public universities, depends heavily on the joint commitment of the state, educational institutions, educators, and the community. Synergy is needed in creating a conducive learning environment for the formation of an inclusive, tolerant, and contextual Islamic character. Without support from all parties, a good policy on paper will not transform into an impactful reality.

Islamic Education must continue to be developed adaptively, integrating traditional values with contemporary approaches. The curriculum needs to be adapted to global challenges, teachers must be equipped with adequate pedagogical and digital competencies, and students need to be given the space to develop a reflective and applicative understanding of religion. Thus, Islamic religious education in Indonesia will be able to answer the challenges of the times while maintaining the identity of a religious and civilised nation.

CONCLUSION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a vital role in Indonesia's national education system, not only as a formal subject or course, but as a strategic instrument in shaping morality, character, and moderate religious insight amid the reality of a plural society. Amidst the rapid and complex challenges of globalisation, PAI in public schools and universities faces two sides of the coin: threats and opportunities. Global culture, unstoppable information flow, and foreign values that have the potential to erode the Islamic identity of the younger generation demand a renewal of religious education strategies. However, information and communication technology can actually be an

effective medium to convey Islamic values in a more relevant, interesting, and contextualised manner for today's learners.

Islamic Education in schools must be directed towards the preparation of a curriculum that is adaptive to the times without leaving the basic essence of Islamic teachings. The curriculum needs to integrate the values of tolerance, inclusiveness, and a friendly and peaceful understanding of Islam. It is not enough with conventional approaches, PAI must be able to utilise digital media, interactive videos, and online learning platforms to strengthen students' involvement in understanding Islamic teachings with a contemporary approach¹. Thus, religious education is not only a doctrinal tool, but a path towards the formation of religious and nationalist people, who understand the values of diversity in the life of society and the nation.

Meanwhile, PAI in public universities plays an important role in assisting students to grow as intellectuals with morals and culture. Unfortunately, in practice there are still many implementations of religious education that are trapped in formality and lose their moral transformation power. Therefore, Islamic religious education in higher education should not merely fulfil administrative obligations, but should be a forum for internalising Islamic ethical values in campus life and wider social life.

The diversity of Islamic learning approaches in schools, madrasah, pesantren, and universities shows the importance of strategic flexibility according to the characteristics of each institution. Public schools emphasise character and moral values, madrasahs explore Islamic studies academically, pesantren prioritise religious practices, and universities open space for critical thinking on contemporary issues. This diversity should be interpreted as methodological richness that allows PAI to contribute optimally in creating a generation that is not only strong in religious understanding, but also active in building a just, peaceful and civilised society.

By strengthening the quality of teaching, utilising technology, and promoting a tolerant and inclusive approach, PAI policies in public schools and universities can become a solid foundation for building the nation's character. Islamic religious education in Indonesia must always be a path that leads to the noble ideals of the nation: the realisation of a society that is faithful, pious, moderate, and able to live in harmony in diversity.

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