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The Historical Development of Primary and Islamic Education in Indonesia: From Empire to Reform Era

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Abstract

The phrase "Never Leave History" (Jasmerah) from Soekarno emphasized the importance of historical awareness. This article examines the evolution of basic education and basic Islamic education in Indonesia from the Islamic kingdom to the Reform era with a qualitative approach based on a literature review. Key findings reveal a significant shift in the Islamic basic education curriculum, transforming from a traditional Islamic boarding school-based approach to a formal school model that integrates modern science and technology. In addition, a dynamic pattern of education policy was found, seeking to balance the preservation of local-religious values with the demands of modernization and national development. This study also confirms that Islamic education functions not only as a transmission of knowledge but as a process of forming character, social identity, and cultural resilience according to Islamic teachings. The implications of this research are very important for the development of education policies that are inclusive, holistic, and responsive to social and cultural change. The unique contribution of this research can be seen from the cross-era analysis that provides a comprehensive picture of the resilience and adaptability of Islamic education in the face of socio-political challenges, while strengthening the historical foundations and Islamic values in the national education system.

Keywords: Educational History, Islamic Education, Primary Education

Perkembangan Sejarah Pendidikan Dasar dan Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia: Dari Masa Kerajaan ke Era Reformasi

Abstrak

Frasa "Jangan Sekali-kali Meninggalkan Sejarah" (Jasmerah) dari Soekarno menegaskan pentingnya kesadaran sejarah. Artikel ini mengkaji evolusi pendidikan dasar dan pendidikan dasar Islam di Indonesia dari masa kerajaan Islam hingga era Reformasi dengan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis tinjauan literatur. Temuan utama mengungkap perubahan signifikan kurikulum pendidikan dasar Islam, yang bertransformasi dari pendekatan pesantren tradisional berbasis kitab klasik ke model sekolah formal yang mengintegrasikan ilmu pengetahuan modern dan teknologi. Selain itu, ditemukan pola kebijakan pendidikan yang dinamis, berupaya menyeimbangkan pelestarian nilai-nilai lokal-religius dengan tuntutan modernisasi dan pembangunan nasional. Studi ini juga menegaskan bahwa pendidikan Islam berfungsi tidak hanya sebagai transmisi pengetahuan, tetapi sebagai proses pembentukan karakter, identitas sosial, dan ketahanan budaya sesuai ajaran Islam. Implikasi dari penelitian ini sangat penting untuk pengembangan kebijakan pendidikan yang inklusif, holistik, serta responsif terhadap perubahan sosial dan budaya. Kontribusi unik penelitian ini terlihat dari analisis lintas zaman yang memberikan gambaran menyeluruh tentang ketahanan dan adaptabilitas pendidikan Islam dalam menghadapi tantangan sosial-politik, sekaligus memperkuat fondasi historis dan nilai-nilai Islam dalam sistem pendidikan nasional.

Kata kunci: Sejarah Pendidikan, Pendidikan Islam, Pendidikan Dasar

INTRODUCTION

Superior human resources are the main indicator of a nation's prosperity, encouraging governments around the world, including Indonesia, to continue to strive to improve its quality. In Indonesia, education policy has undergone a significant transformation from the colonial era to the Reform Era, reflecting the dynamics of the struggle and aspirations of the Indonesian people throughout history (Suharno, Pambudi, & Harjanto, 2020).

A deep understanding of this trajectory requires reflection on the "history" itself. Derived from the Latin *word historia* and the Arabic *word tārīkh*, history refers to the chronicle of human existence and the provisions of time, as well as, according to Ibn Khaldun, an evolutionary record of society and civilization that summarizes the changes in human character over time (Daulay & Pasa, 2016). Thus, the essence of history lies in the collective experience of humanity that is based on verifiable evidence of the past, making it a crucial lens for understanding the development of a nation.

The contemporary Indonesian educational landscape is inseparable from its long and rich historical roots. Although National Education Day every May 2 is celebrated in honor of Ki Hadjar Dewantara and the establishment of Taman Siswa in 1921 as important milestones, it is important to remember that education, especially Islamic education, had developed considerably long before that. Since the arrival of Indian, Tunisian, and Arab traders on the coast of Sumatra in the 7th century, these interactions facilitated not only trade but also the spread of Islamic educational teachings and practices, which later catalyzed significant educational advances in the archipelago (Aletheiani, 2021). Over time, colonial powers (Portuguese, Dutch, and Japanese) also imposed their educational paradigms, which profoundly influenced the structure and content of Indonesian education, although the revival of educational awareness was also spearheaded by nationalist intellectuals (Roqib, 2021).

Although the historical significance of Indonesian education has been recognized and researched, there is still a substantial gap in the existing literature regarding a comprehensive analysis of the philosophy, paradigm, and historical evolution of basic Islamic education policy in Indonesia across eras (Wu, 2024) Previous studies, while valuable, tend to have limited scope or focus on specific periods. For example, the research of Qolbi Khoiri (Khoiri, 2017) and Afiful Ikhwan (Afiful Ikhwan, 2017) does discuss Islamic education and education policies, but the focus is limited to the post-Reform era. Similarly, the work of Djulaiha Gaus (Gaus, 2017) which reviews the challenges of Indonesian Islamic education adopts a socio-historical perspective but has not integrated the big picture of all relevant historical periods. Meanwhile, Tatang Hidayat and Toto Suryana's exploration centers on a conceptual discussion of the paradigm of Islamic education, and Yadi Kusmayadi's historical record of the development of education in Priangan from 1900 to 1942, although detailed, is still regional and does not cover a broad national spectrum (Hidayat & Suryana, 2018; Kusmayadi, 2018).

The absence of a study that holistically traces the development of basic education and basic Islamic education from the era of the Islamic kingdom to the Reformation is a significant research gap. Existing studies tend to be sectoral, both in terms of time and scope of discussion (for example, focusing only on the modern era, sociological aspects, or specific regions). Therefore, this research is indispensable because it will provide a comprehensive analysis that has not existed before. This approach allows for the identification of patterns, continuities, and discontinuities in educational policies and practices, as well as how Islamic educational philosophies have interacted and adapted to various changes of the times and external influences. By tracing the evolution from the era of Islamic sultanate, through colonialism (Portuguese, Dutch, and Japanese), the era of independence, the Old Order, the New Order, to the Reform Era, this research will not only fill in the methodological gaps, but also improve our understanding of the essence of basic education in the context of Indonesia as a whole, as well as how Islamic education has become an important pillar in the formation of the nation's character and civilization.

METHODS

This study identified 22 relevant scientific articles and academic sources for the literature review. The article selection process was based on strict criteria that included the topic's relevance to the history and development of primary and Islamic elementary education in Indonesia; the source's reputation through publication in indexed journals and books with ISBNs; the clarity of bibliographic data such as volume, number, year of publication, and DOI (if available); and the recency of publications to provide a chronological overview of developments. Literature identification was conducted thoroughly using the Publish or Perish application, which accesses various major databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and other sources accessible through journal subscription accounts at universities.

All references used were ensured to come from credible and trusted sources to ensure the integrity and quality of the study. A multi-layered screening process ensured that only valid and relevant literature was analyzed in this review. This approach strengthened the scope and depth of the literature review, providing comprehensive insights into the evolution of primary Islamic education policy and practice in Indonesia.

After collecting the literature data, analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, systematic data presentation, drawing conclusions, and cross-verification between sources. These stages are crucial for maintaining the validity, reliability, and accuracy of interpretation, resulting in a deep and accountable understanding of the development of basic education and Islamic education in Indonesia (Miles & Huberman, 2009).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Philosophy and Paradigm of Educational Sciences

The term "philosophy" is derived from the Greek words *philosophia*, where *philo* signifies love and *sophia* denotes wisdom. Philosophy is fundamentally concerned with understanding the essence of existence to attain truth or knowledge. The methodologies employed to achieve this understanding vary significantly among philosophers, each exhibiting distinct characteristics and approaches. Consequently, the subject matter of study is often influenced by the philosophical perspective adopted by the researcher (North, 2021).

A "paradigm" can be defined as an individual's framework for interpreting fundamental issues, which serves as a lens through which knowledge or beliefs are understood. Paradigms encompass foundational assumptions that necessitate supporting arguments to validate their correctness. In this context, a paradigm represents a coherent worldview that guides a scientist's approach to a particular subject within their respective discipline. Paradigms are instrumental in formulating research questions requiring resolution and determining the appropriate theories and methodologies to address these inquiries (Lim, 2023).

Knowledge, derived from the Arabic root *alima - ya'lamu - ilman*, signifies clarity and understanding. The realm of science is typically categorized into two distinct branches: theoretical and applied. Theoretical science pertains to complete knowledge, requiring no further practical application for its validation. In contrast, applied science necessitates practical engagement to achieve mastery, exemplified by disciplines such as the science of worship (Al-Hasyimi, 2024).

Education is a deliberate and systematic endeavor to foster an environment conducive to learning and facilitating learning. This process actively cultivates the potential of individuals, enabling them to develop religious and spiritual strength, self-regulation, character, intelligence, ethical values, and the skills necessary for personal and societal advancement (Masnuah, Khodijah, & Suryana, 2022).

Moreover, education can be viewed as a process of habituation that nurtures human capabilities through artistic and creative means, thereby assisting individuals in achieving moral excellence. The overarching objective of education is to optimize the diverse abilities and talents inherent in individuals, which are cultivated through continuous practice and habituation, ultimately striving to produce well-rounded and exemplary human beings.

Education can also be understood as a very human act. Education arises from the interaction between adults and children in the experience of living together. Adults engage in educational actions in a conscious and planned manner to instill human values in minors, guiding them towards maturity following a predetermined theoretical framework. This educational process is characterized as a form of guidance or assistance provided by adults to children, which allows them to develop the necessary competencies to navigate their life tasks independently (Patel, 2022).

The essence of education is rooted in the concept of humanization. This idea emphasizes the importance of nurturing individuals to realize their full potential as human beings, which not only encourages intellectual growth but also moral and ethical development. Education is not just about knowledge transfer; Education is a transformative process that shapes an individual's character, instills values, and prepares them to contribute meaningfully to society. In this context, the philosophy of education encompasses a diverse range of paradigms that underlie educational practices and policies (Baker et al., 2021).

These paradigms reflect different beliefs about the nature of science, the role of educators, and the purpose of education. By critically examining these philosophical foundations, we can gain a deeper insight into how the education system in Indonesia, especially Islamic education, has been shaped by historical,

cultural, and social influences throughout various eras. This understanding of philosophies and paradigms will be the analytical common thread that connects each period, allowing the identification of patterns of continuity and discontinuity in policy and practice. For example, how the legacy of pre-colonial Islamic education, with its philosophy of humanization and character development, was able to survive and adapt in a discriminatory colonial era, or how different philosophies triggered clear comparisons and contrasts in the goals and implementation of education in each era. This will help explain how one era influences the next, both through the inheritance of value and through resistance and change.

Islamic Education: An Academic Perspective

Islamic education constitutes a systematic process to guide individuals towards a more fulfilling existence under Islamic teachings. This educational paradigm seeks to elevate the human condition by nurturing innate capabilities and fostering intellectual growth. Through the lens of Islam, individuals are equipped to discern between right and wrong, thereby enabling them to pursue knowledge while eschewing malevolent actions. Consequently, Islamic education serves as a conduit for individuals to navigate the path of righteousness.

A more nuanced definition of Islamic education posits it as a deliberate and conscious endeavor by educators to facilitate the holistic development of students—both physically and spiritually—ultimately shaping them into exemplary individuals. This educational approach emphasizes the importance of health, enabling individuals to harness and enhance the potential bestowed upon them by Allah in their earthly existence. It encompasses considerations regarding dietary practices, precisely the distinction between halal (permissible) and haram (forbidden) foods (Hussain, Ahmad, & Ali, 2024).

In the realm of Islamic education, there is a pronounced focus on the cultivation of beliefs, comprehension, and the instillation of Islamic values across all facets of life. This comprehensive and integrated educational framework aspires to establish individual and societal order in alignment with Islamic teachings. The objectives of Islamic education can be delineated into several key functions concerning humanity. Firstly, as individuals, humans are tasked with fulfilling the roles delineated by Allah SWT in the Qur'an, specifically as *Khalifah* (stewards) on Earth. This role necessitates a profound understanding of one's responsibilities and duties (Hendawi et al., 2024).

Secondly, from the perspective of servitude, individuals must orient their actions towards the service of Allah. This perspective underscores the belief that all human endeavors are ultimately contingent upon Allah's grace, which sustains life and facilitates daily activities. Lastly, as social beings, the Islamic framework emphasizes fostering positive interactions within the social sphere. Consequently, Islamic teachings advocate for cooperation, equality, and brotherhood, essential for harmonious coexistence.

The objectives of Islamic education can be categorized into two primary domains: general and specific goals. The overarching aim is to cultivate individuals who are devout servants of Allah. This encompasses a holistic approach to human conduct, where all thoughts, actions, and intentions are directed towards Allah SWT. Specific goals include the pursuit of knowledge, the fulfillment of obligations towards parents, the charitable expenditure of wealth in the service of Allah, the avoidance of arrogance, the practice of justice, the rejection of hostility, and the commitment to keeping promises. The attainment of these specific goals is anticipated to foster harmony within both religious and societal contexts.

Islamic Elementary Education: An Academic Perspective

Islamic elementary education represents a conscious and structured learning process primarily facilitated by informal educational institutions such as madrasahs and schools. This educational paradigm is characterized by its foundational role in shaping individuals' cognitive and moral development, embedding essential Islamic values and teachings within the learning framework. The essence of education transcends mere physical or non-physical activities; it embodies a more profound significance that underpins and sustains various educational endeavors (Malik, Maslahah, Maulida, Nikmah, & Hashinuddin, 2025).

The term *Islam*, derived from the Arabic root *aslama-yuslimu-Islaman*, signifies submission. This linguistic understanding aligns with the overarching objectives of Islamic teachings, which advocate for obedience and submission to Allah SWT. Such adherence is believed to foster safety, peace, security, and prosperity, thereby fulfilling the mission of Islam to cultivate harmony on Earth (Nata, 2016, p. 32). Consequently, the science of primary Islamic education emerges as a fundamental learning process, serving as the bedrock for subsequent educational and life experiences, all while instilling Islamic values

and principles. The aim is to cultivate an individual's character, guiding them toward an ideal destination from an Islamic perspective.

Islam was introduced to Indonesia through traders from Gujarat, India, which led to the religion's gradual development within the archipelago. This religious diffusion was accompanied by establishing of Islamic educational frameworks, which laid the groundwork for the Islamic basic education system during the era of Islamic kingdoms in Indonesia. The historical evolution of this educational system can be categorized into three primary models:

1. The *langgar* education system

    The *langgar* serves as a communal place of worship, typically found in rural villages. It is managed by individuals such as amil, Modin, and ustadz, who impart religious knowledge, including reciting the Qur'an and Arabic language instruction. The educational approach is predominantly individualized, with students engaging in face-to-face learning with their teachers. Notably, this system operates voluntarily, where students are not subjected to formal fees but are encouraged to contribute based on personal awareness. The rapport between teachers and students is often intimate, fostering a close-knit educational environment.

2. The Islamic boarding school education system (*Pesantren*)

    In this model, students reside in dormitories or cottages adjacent to their teachers' residences, immersing themselves in studying religious sciences and jurisprudence. The pedagogical approach is characterised by a collaborative ethos, where students assist teachers in agricultural endeavors, such as farming, with the collective benefits being shared among the community. This system emphasizes communal living and cooperative learning, reinforcing the values of solidarity and mutual support.

3. The madrasah education system

    Distinct from the *pesantren*, madrasahs incorporate a broader curriculum that includes worldly sciences, such as astronomy and medicine, alongside religious studies. Over time, madrasahs have evolved to offer educational levels equivalent to primary and secondary education. Despite the encroachment of modern educational paradigms, these three traditional systems have persisted since the arrival of Islam in the 13th century. Contemporary practices often witness a synthesis of the *pesantren* model with modern educational methodologies, resulting in innovative approaches that address the evolving needs of society while remaining anchored in Islamic values (Thosimah, Khair, Umar, & Muslikhin, 2024).

The Historical Development of Basic Education Policies and Islamic Education in Indonesia

The evolution of educational policies in Indonesia is intricately linked to the nation's historical trajectory, encompassing influences from various cultural and religious traditions. This discourse aims to elucidate the development of educational frameworks before and after Indonesia's independence, focusing on Islamic education and its integration into the broader context of primary education.

1. **Education in the era of the Islamic kingdom**

    The genesis of Islamic education in Indonesia can be traced back to the arrival of Muslim traders from Gujarat, India, during the 13th century. In the pre-colonial epoch, Islamic religious education predominantly manifested through reciting the Qur'an and studying religious texts within domestic settings, prayer rooms, mosques, and Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). The pedagogical approach during this period was largely informal, with the transmission of knowledge as a metric for assessing an individual's religious acumen (Zaini & Pasaribu, 2020).

    As Islamic education evolved, it underwent significant transformations in curriculum, instructional methodologies, and organizational structures, culminating in the establishment of a more formalized madrasah system. Initially, the Islamic educational framework flourished, garnering substantial community support. Mosques were not only centers for religious observance but also served as venues for academic activities, leading to the construction of *langgar* (prayer houses) and surau (small mosques) dedicated to studying religious texts and the Qur'an. This rudimentary and traditional Islamic educational paradigm starkly contrasted with the colonial educational systems that emerged in 17th-century Indonesia (Sabarudin, 2015).

2. **Education in the colonial era**

Indonesia's colonial history is marked by various foreign powers, including the Portuguese, English, Dutch, and Japanese, each implementing distinct educational policies reflective of their imperial interests.

a. Primary education during the Portuguese era

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to establish a foothold in Indonesia, primarily motivated by the pursuit of spices and the propagation of Catholicism. Consequently, they initiated the establishment of educational institutions, predominantly through the efforts of missionaries, aimed at training prospective clergy. These institutions included seminaries that provided instruction in spiritual matters and foundational skills in writing and arithmetic. Notably, these schools were accessible to indigenous populations, thereby contributing to the advancement of the Moluccan society.

The subsequent arrival of the Dutch marked a significant shift in the educational landscape. Having expelled the Portuguese from the region, the Dutch sought to consolidate their control over the archipelago, including its academic institutions. Their approach to education was characterised by a discriminatory system delineating access based on ethnicity and social class, thereby fostering a compartmentalized educational framework that primarily benefited Dutch nationals and the local elite (Muhammad Rifa'i, 2011, pp. 54-55).

b. Basic education during the Dutch era

Initially, Dutch educational initiatives were predominantly focused on imparting Protestant Christian teachings, with limited outreach to the broader Indonesian populace. Over time, the Dutch established schools specifically for the children of the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC) employees, thereby perpetuating a system that prioritized the training of future colonial administrators.

As the VOC faced operational challenges, the Dutch government assumed direct control, transforming Indonesia into the Dutch East Indies. During this period, the educational conditions for the indigenous population remained subpar, prompting Governor Daendels to address the pressing issue of widespread illiteracy among Indonesians. Following the Dutch recapture of Indonesia from British control, a dedicated budget for education was allocated, leading to the establishment of low or elementary schools to prepare individuals for roles as subordinate clerks within government offices. (Ary Gunawan, 1986, p. 59).

During the Dutch period, the primary education types were as follows: Basic School for the native people, Elementary School for Dutch children, Elementary School for Chinese children, and Elementary School for Arab children. The elementary school for the native people is divided into 2, namely: Class I school with the characteristics of a three-year education period, using the Malay language, intended for children of leaders and community leaders, government employees, and honorable natives, and implemented in residencies, regencies, districts or a trading center city. Class II schools with the characteristics of a 5-year education period use regional languages and Malay, are intended for native children in general and are implemented in advanced sub-districts and villages (Muhammad Rifa'i, 2011, pp. 60–62).

This discriminatory policy was strategically maintained by the Dutch for several crucial reasons: first, it maintained social and racial hierarchies, ensuring that the Dutch elite remained at the top and the natives were confined to subordinate roles; second, creating cheap and compliant labor for the colonial bureaucracy and plantations without providing education that can trigger political awareness; and third, implicitly preventing a comprehensive intellectual awakening that could threaten colonial domination. The education provided by the Dutch was basically not aimed at educating the natives holistically, but only to prepare them as prospective employees who could be paid for the sake of the colonial administration alone.

Meanwhile, the Islamic basic education system has existed independently since the time of the kingdom, and its existence is a serious concern for the Dutch. Every Islamic educational institution was obliged to report its activities to the colonial government, based on the Dutch fear that Muslims could develop and become a force that threatened their dominance. This policy reflects the Netherlands' efforts to control and limit the potential resistance that may arise from religion-based education. The education provided in Islamic boarding schools has a different orientation and content of material from the colonial curriculum. If Dutch schools teach secular science, *pesantren* still adhere to the classics of religious science. Religious knowledge is explicitly not allowed to enter formal educational institutions formed by the Netherlands, and can only be

studied outside of school, namely in traditional Islamic boarding schools or madrasas. This was a clear form of segregation of knowledge, but at the same time, Islamic education became a bastion of cultural and identity defenses, as well as an indirect center of intellectual and spiritual resistance to colonial hegemony, although often not in the form of direct physical resistance, but through the maintenance of a different scientific and religious tradition than that offered by the colonizers.

c. Japanese-era primary education

During the Japanese occupation of Indonesia, Japan harbored significant ambitions to establish itself as the preeminent power in Greater East Asia. This aspiration was manifested through its military conquests, notably the subjugation of the Dutch colonial forces that had long governed Indonesia. In this context, the Japanese administration sought to overhaul the Dutch educational framework, instituting a new system that eschewed the segmentation prevalent under Dutch rule.

The Japanese regime restructured primary education into a unified system known as the *People's School*, which was designed to be accessible to all societal groups. This educational model emphasized practical training and labor-oriented activities, including tasks such as the collection of stones and sand, the maintenance of military facilities, and agricultural endeavors like the cultivation of jatropha trees for use as lubricants. Furthermore, the curriculum mandated the recitation of an oath of allegiance to the Emperor of Japan, the singing of the Japanese national anthem, and the study of the Japanese language, ideology, and culture (Fadhli, Prasetyo, Siregar, Pasaribu, & Sari, 2024).

The main purpose of this education policy was to foster the forced labor known as the Romusha, which was crucial to Japan's war effort. Systematic restrictions on opportunities to advance have become a hallmark of the inhumane education policies imposed by the colonizers. Although there are pathways to higher education, including high schools and universities, graduates often do not have suitable jobs, leading to widespread disillusionment with the effectiveness of the education system.

This Japanese education policy, with its emphasis on loyalty, physical work, and restrictions on social mobility, psychologically fuels frustration and dehumanization among Indonesian people. Education became a powerful propaganda tool to instill the doctrine of Hakko Ichiu (Eight Corners of the World under one roof) and brainwash the younger generation into obedience to the Japanese imperial agenda. Ironically, however, this experience also became a catalyst for the resistance movement. This widespread dissatisfaction triggered a collective awareness to utilize education to achieve Indonesian independence. Prominent educational organizations such as Budi Utomo and Muhammadiyah emerged along with influential educational figures, including R.A. Kartini, Dewi Sartika, and Ki Hajar Dewantara. These entities and individuals played an important role in advocating for a more equitable and nationally oriented educational framework, far from colonial interests (Muhammad Rifa'i, 2011, pp. 99-102).

In contrast to the Dutch, who tended to restrict and be suspicious of Islamic education, the Japanese government showed a high interest in Islamic education during its occupation. This focus is closely linked to the concept of Nippon Cahaya Asia, in which the regime seeks to grow a Muslim population that can support its wartime goals in Greater East Asia. This was Japan's strategy to gain the support of Indonesia's Muslim community, which is the majority, while taking advantage of existing anti-Western (including anti-Dutch) sentiment. In return, the Muslim community harbored aspirations for independence, which had been promised by the Japanese authorities. The Japanese government made concerted efforts to provide resources and support to the Islamic education system, facilitating the operation of various madrassas under strict supervision. This difference in approach arose because Japan saw Islam as a potential strategic ally in their war against the Allied Powers, while the Dutch saw Islam as a threat to their dominance. The initiative underscores the regime's recognition of the importance of Islamic education in fostering loyalty and mobilizing support among the Muslim population during a turbulent period in Indonesia's history, although strict surveillance remains in place to ensure adherence to Japan's agenda.

3. **Primary education during the independence era**

During Indonesian independence, which spanned from 1945 to 1950, the nation underwent significant transformations in its educational landscape, primarily because of its heroes' relentless efforts and sacrifices. This period marked the establishment of a new educational system that aligned with the ideological framework of the Indonesian populace, culminating in the formation of the Ministry of Education, Teaching, and Culture. The foundational principles of basic education were meticulously articulated, encompassing the educational foundation, objectives, school systems, and the overarching ideology of Indonesian education.

A pivotal aspect of this educational evolution is encapsulated in the aspirations of the Indonesian people as enshrined in the 1945 Constitution, specifically in Chapter XIII, Article 31. This article asserts, in Paragraph 1, that every citizen possesses the right to access education, while Paragraph 2 mandates the government to endeavor to implement a national educational system regulated by law. Furthermore, Ki Hajar Dewantara, a prominent figure in Indonesian education, played a crucial role in instilling national consciousness among students. He advocated for the ceremonial raising of the red and white flag, the singing of the national anthem, "Indonesia Raya," and the cessation of Japanese cultural practices, fostering a sense of national identity and spirit within the educational framework.

In addition, the National Education and Teaching Agency (BPKNIP) plays an important role in guiding the Ministry of Education towards rapid education reform. The initiative aims to implement a cohesive educational strategy that covers different walks of life, promoting inclusive methodologies to facilitate broad community engagement. In the context of the integration of religious education, especially Islam, the independence period marked a significant fundamental change compared to the colonial era. If in the Dutch era Islamic education tended to be closely supervised and separated from the formal system, and in the Japanese period it was used for propaganda purposes, then in the era of independence, there was a serious effort to integrate religious education into the national education framework. Madrassas and Islamic boarding schools, which were previously often underestimated by the colonial government, now receive substantial government support, including subsidies for education fees for students (Assegaf, 2005, p. 60).

This integration shows a strong adaptation of the new government to embrace and accommodate the aspirations of the Muslim community, who are the majority, while also recognizing the historical role of Islamic education in the struggle for independence. This assistance significantly refreshed the Islamic education sector, allowing it to develop and adapt in the post-independence context in the absence of systematic resistance from the government. Instead, this support is a form of reconciliation and recognition. Thus, the government's commitment to improving educational opportunities and integrating religious education during this formative period has laid the foundation for a more equitable and comprehensive Indonesian education system (A. Mustafa dan Abdullah Aly, 1998, p. 111).

4. Primary education in the old era

The Old Order period in Indonesia was marked by significant advancements in the educational sector, notably with the enactment of Law Number 4 of 1950, which established the foundational principles of national education and teaching. This legislation articulated several key components that shaped the nation's educational landscape.

Firstly, Chapter II, Article 3 delineated the objectives of national education, emphasizing the development of morally capable individuals who are responsible citizens in a democratic society committed to the welfare of the homeland. This vision underscored the importance of cultivating a citizenry that is not only educated but also ethically grounded and socially responsible.

Secondly, Chapter III, Article 4 outlined the foundational principles of education and national planning, asserting that these should be rooted in the tenets of Pancasila, the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, and the nation's rich cultural heritage. Integrating national ideology and cultural identity into the educational framework was pivotal in fostering a sense of unity and purpose among the Indonesian populace.

Moreover, Chapter IV, Article 5 mandated using Indonesian as the primary language of instruction in the educational system. It established Indonesian as the language of unity, which can be utilized in schools across the Republic while allowing for regional languages to be employed in the early stages

of education, specifically in kindergartens and the lower grades of primary schools. This policy aimed to promote linguistic cohesion while respecting the diverse linguistic landscape of Indonesia.

Chapter V, Article 6 categorized the types and levels of education, which included kindergarten, primary, secondary, and higher education. This classification was designed to ensure a structured educational pathway, with provisions for exceptional teaching and support for needy students, promoting inclusivity within the educational system.

In addition, Article 7 provided a comprehensive explanation of primary education, emphasizing its role in guiding children's spiritual and physical development. It aimed to create opportunities for students to explore their talents and preferences while laying the groundwork for essential knowledge, skills, and competencies, both physical and mental.

Furthermore, Chapter XIV addressed the regulations concerning educational funding, stipulating that primary and special schools would not impose tuition fees or equipment costs, which would be determined based on parents' financial capabilities (Article 22). However, for junior and special schools, tuition fees would be applicable according to parents' financial means in all public schools (Article 23). This approach was intended to alleviate financial barriers to education and promote equitable access for all students.

During this era, the government implemented a six-year compulsory education program to eradicate illiteracy on a large scale, thereby elevating the educational standards and overall quality of life so that the Indonesian populace would be on par with other nations. The government recognized the potential of religion as a central pillar in national development, mainly through promoting Islamic education. This commitment was further evidenced by assisting various educational and training institutions, reflecting a holistic approach to educational reform and development during the Old Order period (Muhammad Rifa'i, 2011, pp. 163-167).

5. **Primary education of the New Order era**

The New Order era in Indonesia, characterised by relative stability compared to its predecessors, marked a significant development period across various sectors, including social, political, economic, and educational domains. During this time, the government implemented policies to enhance primary education, which can be summarised as follows.

Firstly, the New Order administration expanded access to essential education by issuing Presidential Instruction No. 10 of 1973, establishing a primary school development assistance program. This initiative facilitated the establishment of thousands of schools and educational facilities, thereby broadening opportunities for children aged 7 to 12 to receive primary education. Additionally, the government sought to enhance educational access by pioneering the Must Learning initiative for junior high schools, further promoting educational attainment (Assegaf, 2005, p. 88).

Moreover, the government mandated the incorporation of religious education across all levels of the educational system, from elementary to university, thereby reinforcing the role of religious instruction within the national curriculum. Concurrently, the teaching of the Indonesian language was systematically improved across various educational types and levels, both within and outside formal school settings. A significant milestone was the proclamation of nine-year compulsory education in 1994, which aimed to ensure that all children received a minimum level of education (Afiful Ikhwan, 2017, p. 7).

In conjunction with these policies, the primary education curriculum underwent substantial renewal. The revised curriculum was designed to encompass various study materials and lessons to achieve fundamental objectives in basic education. It integrated lessons on Pancasila and religious education while introducing essential concepts of science and technology, preparing students for the challenges of the industrialisation era in the 21st century (Malik & Sukiman, 2021).

Furthermore, basic education assessments were instituted to gather critical information regarding the teaching and learning processes and evaluate the effectiveness of efforts to achieve primary education objectives. These assessments also played a crucial role in determining the accreditation status of the respective basic education units (Muhammad Rifa'i, 2011, p. 246).

Despite these advancements, madrasas continued to be regarded as autonomous educational institutions under the Ministry of Religion rather than as national institutions. In 1970, the government initiated several measures to bolster the status of madrasas, guided by TAPMPS No. XXVII of 1966 emphasised the alignment of madrasa education with the overarching goals and ideals of national education. This period thus reflects a concerted effort to enhance the educational framework

in Indonesia, balancing the promotion of secular and religious education within a unified national policy.

6. Primary education in the reform era

The Reform era in Indonesia commenced following the fall of the New Order government in 1998, marking a significant transition in the nation's political and educational landscape. This period has been characterised by a concerted effort among leaders of Islamic organisations to advocate for the equality of Islamic education alongside formal education systems. A pivotal development during this era was the enactment of Law Number 20 of 2003, which established the National Education System and recognised Islamic Religious Education as having an equal status to general education. The overarching objective of this law is to cultivate individuals who possess faith in and obedience to God Almighty while also embodying noble morals.

Islamic education has seen substantial improvements in the Reform era compared to the educational framework during the New Order. The policy to strengthen Islamic education as an integral component of the national education system has been realised by including various academic institutions, such as Islamic boarding schools, Ma'had Ali, and Raudhatul Athfal (kindergartens), into the national framework. This inclusion marks a significant advancement from the previous era, where only madrasas were recognised within the national education system.

Furthermore, the government's commitment to increasing the education budget has facilitated remarkable growth, development, and progress within the educational sector, including Islamic education. This financial support has enabled a more robust educational infrastructure and enhanced student learning opportunities. Additionally, the implementation of the nine-year compulsory education program, which encompasses both elementary and junior high school levels (Madrasah Tsanawiyah), has been made accessible to children from underprivileged families at no cost. These students are exempt from educational, operational fees, as the costs associated with school activities are covered by a funding initiative known as Bantuan Operasional Sekolah (BOS) (Afiful Ikhwan, 2017, p. 11).

CONCLUSION

Based on a comprehensive analysis of the historical evolution of basic education and basic Islamic education in Indonesia, it can be concluded that several key findings answer the purpose of this study. The philosophy of Islamic education proved to be an essential framework for understanding the true nature and purpose of Islamic educational practices, shaping the moral and intellectual development of individuals according to religious teachings. The Islamic educational paradigm, on the other hand, represents an individual's perspective on educational processes and methodologies, which is crucial in identifying areas for further improvement and development in the context of Islamic education. The importance of Islamic basic education lies in its role as the ultimate foundation that equips students with fundamental knowledge, skills, and values, preparing them for further learning and a life based on Islamic principles.

This analysis shows that the trajectory of the history of education in Indonesia, both general and Islamic, is not linear. Our findings highlight how the Portuguese, Dutch, and Japanese colonial education policies, although different in their approaches (from evangelization, segregation, to propaganda), consistently sought to control and shape indigenous peoples for the benefit of colonizers. It was also revealed how Islamic education, especially Islamic boarding schools and madrasas, managed to maintain its identity and autonomy under colonial pressure, even becoming a fortress of cultural resistance and a base for adaptation. In contrast to the colonial era, the independence period showed the government's commitment to integrating Islamic education into the national system, recognizing its important role in shaping the nation's character. The unique contribution of this research lies in the provision of in-depth and comprehensive cross-era analysis, filling gaps in the literature that were previously sectorally inclined. This understanding is particularly relevant for policymakers and education practitioners in designing curricula that are inclusive and responsive to local values and contemporary challenges, while also understanding the historical roots of adaptation and resistance in education systems.

This study, as a qualitative literature review, has limitations in terms of the depth of primary empirical data. The analysis is based solely on interpretations of the published literature. For further research, it is recommended to conduct field studies involving interviews with educational history actors or a more in-depth analysis of primary archives to gain a more nuanced perspective. In addition, comparative exploration with other countries that have similar colonial experiences and different developments in Islamic education can provide additional insights.

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