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Comparative Dialectics Of Islamic Religious Education Objectives In Schools And Madrasahs: A Philosophical And Juridical Perspective

Okki Dwi Cahya
Master of Islamic Education, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia
Fauzan
Master of Islamic Education, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia
Edy Kurniawan
Master of Islamic Education, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia
Jaya Perwira Damanik
Master of Islamic Education, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia
Fadhilah Husna Nurbaiti
Master of Islamic Education, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: *okkimakmur21@gmail.com*

Abstract

Discourse regarding Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in Indonesia is frequently constrained by a structural dichotomy between public schools, administered by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek), and madrasas, under the authority of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. This study aims to analyze the dialectics of IRE objectives through philosophical and juridical lenses to elucidate the divergences and convergences within national education policy paradigms. Employing a qualitative approach via library research and critical content analysis of primary regulations—including the National Education System Law, Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation (Permendikbudristek) No. 12 of 2024, and Minister of Religious Affairs Decree (KMA) No. 183 of 2019—this study dissects the tension between the civic morality mandates of the Pancasila Student Profile in schools and the deep theological traditions (tafakkuh fiddin) cultivated in madrasas. Findings indicate that despite administrative divergences and differences in instructional depth, both institutions converge on a shared philosophical foundation: the formation of the moderate Insan Kamil (perfect human). However, policy fragmentation generates an epistemological gap that impedes the integration of religious values and scientific knowledge. This research concludes that epistemological reintegration is imperative

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to dissolve the dichotomy between "religious" and "secular" sciences. Policy implications underscore the necessity of harmonizing competency standards rooted in religious moderation to produce graduates who are scientifically competent and spiritually mature, thereby serving as pillars of an inclusive and religious Indonesian civilization.

Keywords: Islamic Religious Education; Madrasahs; Public Schools; Epistemological Reintegration; Education Policy.

INTRODUCTION

The discourse regarding the role of religious education within modern state systems remains a critical debate in the global academic arena. Amidst the rapid currents of secularization and modernization, Islamic educational institutions face complex philosophical challenges in balancing the demands of cutting-edge scientific competence with the formation of robust spiritual integrity (Kosim et al., 2023). In various Muslim-majority nations, this dynamic has engendered a sharp structural dichotomy between state-managed public schools, characterized by an orientation toward civic morality, and madrasas, which emphasize the depth of theological literature. The fundamental challenge faced globally is how to integrate these two paradigms to cultivate individuals who are not only academically competent but also possess moral resilience and a moderate religious identity in this era of disruption (Akmaliah et al., 2024).

In the Indonesian context, this global dichotomy is explicitly manifested in a national "dual-track" education system administered separately by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) and the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag). Juridically, both institutions are grounded in the essential mandate of Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System. However, their operational regulations create a fundamental divergence in orientation. Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Regulation (Permendikbudristek) Number 12 of 2024 frames Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in public schools within an affective-functional approach, wherein PAI operates as a strategic instrument supporting the Pancasila Student Profile within highly restricted instructional time allocations (Suyatno et al., 2019). Conversely, Minister of Religious Affairs Decrees (KMA) Number 183 of 2019 and Number 450 of 2024 provide an exclusive mandate for madrasas to deconstruct the PAI curriculum into specific scientific disciplines (Quran-Hadith, Aqidah-Akhlaq, Fiqh, and Islamic Cultural History) to achieve the *tafakkuh fiddin* (deep religious understanding) qualification standards. This jurisdictional separation inevitably gives rise to epistemological clashes regarding

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the definition and achievement standards of students' religiosity in the field.

This disparity in approach between madrasa and public school curricula has sparked various recent academic studies. The majority of literature within the last five years has focused on sociological evaluations and the pedagogical implementation of curriculum policies within each institution independently. Studies by Zarkasyi (2020) and (Niam et al., 2025), for instance, highlight how Islamic educational institutions (madrasas and *pesantrens*) respond to modernization by strengthening humanistic pedagogy to maintain the transmission of religious knowledge in depth without losing contextual relevance. On the other hand, contemporary socio-political research emphasizes the criticality of inclusive Islamic education as a bulwark of religious moderation (*wasathiyah*) within Indonesia's pluralistic society (Hefner, 2021;Fauyan et al., 2026). In general, the research roadmap to date has been dominated by micro-practical evaluations of religious value integration, conducted separately within public school and madrasa spheres.

Although the literature regarding the implementation of religious education is extensive, a significant research gap remains in dissecting the juridical overlaps and epistemological clashes between schools and madrasas from a macro-comparative perspective. Previous research has tended to treat schools and madrasas as isolated entities or has been limited to measuring the sociological impact of curricula on student behavior. Very few studies have sharply analyzed how state regulations actively construct opposing philosophical orientations between these two systems. This article addresses this gap by offering a novelty in the form of a dialectical synthesis between the affective-functional paradigm of the Pancasila Student Profile and the *Rahmatan Lil Alamin* paradigm, which is grounded in cognitive specialization (*tafakkuh fiddin*).

Building upon these problematics and the identified research gap, this article comprehensively examines the comparative orientation of Islamic Religious Education objectives in public schools and madrasas through philosophical and juridical lenses. The primary argument constructed in this study is that although public schools and madrasas are constrained by cognitive burdens and diametrically different administrative regulatory designs, they ultimately converge upon a single supreme philosophical estuary: the formation of the *insan kamil* (perfect human being). Through a critical reading of recent regulations and educational philosophy, this study formulates an epistemological reintegration model to dismantle the secular-religious dichotomy rooted within the national education system. This synchronization is essential to position Islamic education as a driving instrument for a civilization that is scientifically intelligent and spiritually mature.

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METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative approach employing a descriptive-analytical library research design. This approach was selected to deeply dissect the dialectical complexity of religious education policies in public schools and madrasas, and to explore the epistemological tensions manifested within Indonesia's dual-track education system. The selection of this design is predicated on the necessity to deconstruct the regulatory frameworks and philosophical discourses underpinning the objectives of Islamic Religious Education (IRE), unconstrained by the limitations of rigid empirical-quantitative frameworks (Cohen et al., 2017).

Data collection was systematically conducted through the retrieval of primary and secondary documents. Primary documents encompass national legal instruments that serve as the operational foundation for education policy, including Law Number 20 of 2003 regarding the National Education System, Government Regulation Number 4 of 2022, and recent technical regulations such as Permendikbudristek Number 12 of 2024 for public schools, alongside Minister of Religious Affairs Decrees (KMA) Number 183 of 2019 and Number 450 of 2024 for madrasa institutions. Secondary documents comprise academic literature—including scientific journal articles, scholarly books, and relevant policy reports published within the last five years—to ensure the discussion is theoretically grounded and contextualized within discourses on religious moderation and global Islamic education policy dynamics.

The data analysis technique employed was critical content analysis, enhanced by a dialectical approach. The analytical procedure began with data reduction through regulatory classification to map the divergences and convergences in policy between the authorities of Kemendikbudristek and Kemenag. This was followed by a hermeneutic interpretation to unveil the philosophical implications of the curriculum dichotomy, involving a reading of regulatory texts against the backdrop of Indonesia's sociopolitical educational context. The primary analytical focus was directed toward identifying an epistemological common ground that facilitates the comprehensive integration of Islamic education by engaging regulatory findings with current academic debates on character education and knowledge integration. The validity of the entire process was ensured through literature triangulation, guaranteeing that the constructed arguments align with state-of-the-art standards in contemporary Islamic education literature.

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RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Education Policy Dualism: A Critical Analysis of the Juridical Construction of Islamic Religious Education in Schools and Madrasahs

The existence of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) within Indonesia's national education system is constructed paradoxically through regulations that are hierarchically centralized yet operationally bifurcated. Constitutionally, Article 31(3) of the 1945 Constitution and Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System (Sisdiknas) mandate the integration of faith, piety, and noble character as the primary foundation for enlightening the nation, without distinguishing between institutional nomenclatures (Ul Jannah et al., 2025). However, at the technical regulatory level, state legal instruments perpetuate a dichotomy through a dual-track system managed by two ministries with diametrically opposed policy paradigms. This dynamic reflects the complexity of education politics, where the state intervenes in the management of its citizens' religiosity through bureaucratic compartmentalization (Macfarlane, 2015;Suyadi et al., 2022;Hidayati et al., 2023;González-Villa & Gewerc, 2024).

Within the scope of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek), IRE policy is directed through a functional-instrumental approach. Through Permendikbudristek Number 12 of 2024, the state positions IRE not merely as a subject, but as a strategic instrument to support the Pancasila Student Profile. This regulation reflects an effort to integrate religious values to shield students from the challenges of modernity; however, in practice, this approach often reduces the depth of religious material due to constrained time allocations. This strategy aligns with findings by Suyatno et al. (2019), who assert that the integration of religious values in the national curriculum is often prioritized as a tool for strengthening public morality and social cohesion rather than as a deepening of theological scholarship.

Conversely, the authority of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag) through KMA Number 183 of 2019 and KMA Number 450 of 2024 offers a different paradigm through an exclusive mandate for madrasas. These regulations provide autonomous space for madrasas to deconstruct the curriculum into specific scientific clusters, such as Quran-Hadith, Aqidah-Akhlaq, Fiqh, and Islamic Cultural History. This policy does not merely accommodate classical Islamic intellectual traditions but also demonstrates the state's role in facilitating educational institutions capable of balancing modern scientific demands with the transmission of deep religious values, or *tafakkuh fiddin*.

The convergence of these two legal frameworks creates epistemological tension regarding

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how "religiosity" is defined and measured by the state. As noted by Kosim et al. (2023), the dynamics of Islamic education policy in Indonesia are often trapped in complex modernization currents, forcing institutions to balance global competency demands with spiritual integrity. Furthermore, the role of madrasas as "general schools with Islamic characteristics" places them in a unique position as a bastion of religious moderation, where state authority through Kemenag seeks to maintain a balance between religious freedom and national standardization. Hefner (2021) emphasizes that the institutionalization of religious education in Indonesia constitutes an active form of state involvement in managing pluralism and religious freedom, making madrasas a crucial element within the national education structure. Thus, the regulatory divergence between Kemendikbudristek and Kemenag is not merely an administrative technical difference, but a reflection of the state's philosophical struggle in formulating students' religious orientation in the era of disruption.

The Affective-Functional Paradigm: IRE as an Instrument of Civic Morality in the Public Education Ecosystem

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in Indonesian public schools operates within a heterogeneous national curriculum ecosystem, necessitating pedagogical adaptations significantly more complex than those required in more homogeneous, religiously affiliated institutions. In this context, IRE serves not merely as a medium for transferring theological knowledge; rather, it has transformed into a strategic state instrument for instilling values of civic morality (Maksudin, 2023). This paradigm centers on the affective dimension, where instructional success is evaluated not through the quantity of rote-memorized religious texts, but through the manifestation of religious values in students' social behavior. As asserted by Suyatno et al. (2019), value-based education strategies within Indonesia's national education system prioritize character formation as a primary foundation for responding to the challenges of modernity, which substantively positions IRE as a moral "filter" within public classrooms.

Within the *Kurikulum Merdeka* framework, regulated by Permendikbudristek No. 12 of 2024, the position of IRE has become increasingly integrated into the state's ideological framework: the Pancasila Student Profile. IRE is positioned as the foundation for the dimension of "Faith, Piety toward God Almighty, and Noble Character," which is projected to support other crucial dimensions such as global diversity and communal cooperation (*gotong royong*). This approach represents a conscious state effort to construct IRE as a bridge connecting scientific-technological competency requirements with students' spiritual identities, thereby strengthening

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religious moderation in public school spaces. Drawing on policy dynamics highlighted by Akmaliah et al. (2024), the strengthening of religious moderation (*wasathiyah*) via formal education is a crucial response to the threat of radicalism, wherein IRE in public schools serves as a primary agent for cultivating an inclusive, tolerant, and nationally committed Muslim identity.

Nevertheless, this integration is not without structural tensions. The most significant challenge faced is optimizing constrained instructional time allocations—often administratively limited—to ensure that this value transformation does not lose its substantive depth. Kosim et al. (2023) observe that the dynamics of Islamic education policy in Indonesia are frequently caught in a dilemma between the demands of a dense national curriculum and the necessity of transmitting religious values in depth. This tension sparks debate over whether limited time allocations constitute pedagogical efficiency or risk reducing IRE to a mere moral supplement rather than a comprehensive academic discipline. Thus, IRE in public schools fundamentally performs a dual function: acting as a spiritual bulwark for students facing the currents of globalization, while simultaneously serving as an agent for socializing moderate democratic values, ensuring that the process of student intellectualization remains grounded in the cultural roots and religiosity of Indonesia's pluralistic society.

Scientific Integration Strategies and Cognitive Specialization in Madrasahs

Madrasahs occupy a distinctive position within the Indonesian education ecosystem as institutions that integrate national education standards with the transmission of Islamic intellectual traditions. Within this paradigm, madrasahs do not merely function as partial religious education providers; rather, they position themselves as "General Schools with Islamic Characteristics" that carry the mission of eliminating the dichotomy between religious and secular knowledge. This construction requires madrasahs to balance the mastery of modern science and technology with a deepening of both classical and contemporary religious literature (Sinaga et al., 2024). Efforts toward the modernization of *pesantrens* and madrasahs, as noted by Zarkasyi (2020), demonstrate that these institutions have successfully reconciled Islamic intellectual traditions with the demands of modernity without compromising their foundational identities, thereby establishing madrasahs as laboratories for holistic knowledge integration within the national education landscape.

The madrasa curriculum structure reflects a comparative advantage in achieving *tafakkuh fiddin* (deep religious understanding) qualifications through the deconstruction of Islamic Religious Education materials into specific scientific disciplines. Unlike the thematic-integrative

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approach in public schools, the separation of disciplines in madrasahs—which encompasses jurisprudence (Fiqh), theology (Aqidah-Akhlaq), textual methodology (Quran-Hadith), and historical narratives (Islamic Cultural History)—serves to equip students with comprehensive epistemological tools. This approach enables students to develop critical reasoning when engaging with the complexities of religious literature, whether classical or modern. Niam et al. (2025) emphasize that these intellectualization dynamics within the Islamic education environment serve as a foundation for students' scientific independence, wherein deep religious understanding actually strengthens students' capacities to engage actively in contemporary scientific and technological discourse.

Furthermore, the orientation of madrasah objectives has currently transformed into a primary agent for religious moderation (*wasathiyah*) with a vision of *Rahmatan Lil Alamin* (mercy to all creation). Amidst the challenges of polarization and radicalism, madrasahs no longer position themselves as marginal institutions, but rather as competitive and inclusive providers of alternative education. Through the juridical mandates within KMA Number 183 of 2019 and KMA Number 450 of 2024, madrasahs have adopted innovative models such as *Madrasah Riset* (Research Madrasas) and *Madrasah Aliyah Kejuruan* (Vocational Islamic Senior High Schools), proving that academic excellence and spiritual integrity are not mutually exclusive variables. In line with the findings of Akmaliah et al. (2024), madrasahs' commitment to religious moderation establishes these institutions as bastions of moderate Islam, where the ultimate orientation is to form individuals who are scientifically intelligent and spiritually mature—often metaphorized as individuals possessing global competencies anchored by a solid ethical foundation.

Synthesis and Epistemological Dialogue: Towards the Reintegration of Islamic Education

A comparative analysis of the objectives of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in public schools and madrasas reveals deep structural tensions alongside philosophical convergences. Although these two institutions operate under different administrative umbrellas—the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) and the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag)—they teleologically move toward a single philosophical destination: the formation of the *Insan Kamil* (perfect human being). However, the manifestation of this idealism diverges due to the dualism of education policy, which separates the "Pancasila Student Profile" orientation in public schools from the *Rahmatan Lil Alamin* (mercy to all creation) orientation in madrasas. This tension is not merely an administrative technicality but a reflection of Indonesia's epistemological struggle in defining the relationship between religious identity and

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modern citizenship (Asri et al., 2025;Fahmi et al., 2025).

The concept of *Insan Kamil* in national education encompasses the holistic development of physical, spiritual, intellectual, and moral potential. In public schools, this concept is operationalized through the Pancasila Student Profile, which positions noble character as the foundational basis for responding to societal plurality. Conversely, madrasas expand this dimension through the *Rahmatan Lil Alamin* vision, which emphasizes not only individual piety but also a commitment to religious moderation (*wasathiyah*) amidst the challenges of global radicalism. This dialectic indicates that Islamic education in Indonesia is transforming from mere doctrinal transmission toward the formation of subjects possessing robust personal integrity while remaining open to global diversity. As noted by Akmaliah et al. (2024), the strengthening of religious moderation through formal education is a strategic response to social polarization, positioning madrasas as crucial bastions of moderate Islam.

However, the structural divergence in cognitive depth between these two institutions creates significant pedagogical challenges. Public schools, employing a functional-character approach, face the risk of theological substance reduction due to limited instructional time. Conversely, madrasas, with their structure of specific subjects (Quran-Hadith, Fiqh, Aqidah-Akhlaq, and Islamic Cultural History), offer more authoritative literary mastery but must grapple with the challenge of integrating general scientific knowledge. Kosim et al. (2023) affirm that these Islamic education policy dynamics are often caught in complex currents of modernization, where institutions are compelled to balance the demands of cutting-edge scientific competence with spiritual integrity. This imbalance in "learning load" risks producing fragmented graduates—those who are technologically proficient yet impoverished in religious ethics, or those who are religiously adept yet unable to navigate the realities of global disruption.

The fundamental challenge for the future of national education lies in the urgency of epistemological reintegration to eliminate the dichotomy between "religious" and "general" sciences. This integration demands a redefinition of revealed values—not as separate entities, but as an ethical basis for the development of all disciplines. From this perspective, public schools must position IRE as the spirit of the entire curriculum, while madrasas are challenged to demonstrate that *tafakkuh fiddin* (deep religious understanding) can coexist with excellence in research and technology. Hefner (2021) emphasizes that the management of Islamic educational institutions is an integral part of maintaining religious freedom and state involvement in forming a democratic, religious society.

Moving forward, the harmonization of policies between Kemendikbudristek and Kemenag

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is a fundamental prerequisite for broader epistemological integration. This harmonization cannot be achieved merely through administrative alignment; rather, it requires convergence on graduate competency standards rooted in moderate divine values. Consequently, religious education in Indonesia will be able to function as a robust instrument of national unity, where the orientation toward a religious and inclusive national character becomes the primary foundation for every curriculum transformation, ensuring that every learner—whether in school or madrasa—can serve as a representative of a civilization that is scientifically intelligent and spiritually mature.

CONCLUSION

Although administrative regulations differentiate Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in public schools and madrasas through distinct ministerial authorities, both institutions constitutionally converge on the fundamental objective of forming an *Insan Kamil* (perfect human being) with noble character. This analysis demonstrates that the differences in cognitive depth and curriculum structure—between the affective-functional approach in schools and theological specialization in madrasas—actually represent complementary strategies for fortifying students' spiritual identities in the era of disruption. However, the epistemological dichotomy between religious and general sciences remains a primary structural obstacle that fragments national educational outcomes and necessitates an urgent, more holistic reintegration of knowledge. Therefore, comprehensive policy harmonization between Kemendikbudristek and Kemenag is an absolute prerequisite for transforming IRE into a unifying instrument for the nation, capable of producing a generation that is scientifically intelligent and spiritually mature.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Future research must expand empirical investigations into the practical implementation of the reintegration model between schools and madrasas to validate the theoretical framework established in this study. Furthermore, longitudinal studies focusing on the long-term impact of specific curricula on students' spiritual and academic competencies are essential for addressing the persistent epistemological gaps between these two institutions. Policymakers should also explore opportunities for more flexible cross-institutional regulatory frameworks, which would enable a synergy of religious moderation values without compromising the distinct identities of either institution. Ultimately, these efforts must be directed toward formulating unified national education standards capable of transcending the secular-religious dichotomy, thereby ensuring

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that the vision of *Insan Kamil* remains the cohesive core of Indonesia's future human capital development.

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