



Direction of Government Policy regarding the Position of Madrasahs in the National Education System

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	Abstract
Article Information: Received: 18 January 2026 Revised: 5 April 2026 Accepted: 8 July 2026 Published: 15 July 2026 Keywords: Government Policy, <i>Madrasah</i>, National Education System, Islamic Education, Religious Moderation.	This study examines the direction of government policies in positioning madrasahs within Indonesia's national education system, with particular attention to institutional equivalence, curriculum reform, religious moderation, and policy implementation. Employing a qualitative document analysis approach, the study analyzes Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, Permendikdasmen Number 13 of 2025, and the Madrasah Development Roadmap 2025–2029. Data were analyzed through directed content analysis using themes of legal recognition, resource equity, teacher professional development, curriculum integration, religious moderation, and inter-institutional coordination. The findings indicate that government policies have progressively strengthened the formal status of madrasahs as educational institutions equivalent to public schools. Curriculum reform represents the most significant policy advancement through the integration of Islamic education, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, digital literacy, and religious moderation. However, the implementation of these policies remains constrained by governance dualism between the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Education, unequal budget allocation, regional infrastructure disparities, differences in teacher qualifications, and the absence of binding inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms. The analyzed policies provide comprehensive strategic direction but remain predominantly aspirational because they lack clear implementation timelines, performance indicators, funding arrangements, and accountability structures. This study concludes that strengthening madrasahs requires enforceable cross-ministerial governance, equitable resource distribution, standardized teacher development, and continuous monitoring of policy outcomes. The study is limited by its reliance on policy documents; therefore, future research should empirically investigate policy implementation in urban and rural madrasahs through mixed-method and comparative approaches.
How to Cite this Article: Anwar, A. S., Tobroni, T., Faridi, F., & Firdaus, D. R. (2026). Direction of Government Policy regarding the Position of Madrasahs in the National Education System. <i>Jurnal Pendidikan Islam</i>, 16(2), 262–271. https://doi.org/10.38073/jpi.4338	

INTRODUCTION

Madrasahs as Islamic educational institutions have a long history within the context of Indonesia's national education system. Traces of the first madrasahs in Indonesia can be traced back to the early 20th century, such as Madrasah Abadiyah established in Padang in 1909, followed by rapid development in Java starting in 1912 in various forms adapted to

local community needs and characteristics (Wanda & Purba, 2026). For instance, Muhammadiyah madrasahs pioneered the integration of general education into religious instruction, creating an inclusive model responsive to changing times. This historical evolution laid the foundation for madrasahs' role in blending Islamic values with broader educational demands (Setiawan et al., 2025).

The position of madrasahs as a sub-system within the national education system gained official recognition through government policies. Law Number 2 of 1989 on the National Education System formally acknowledged Islamic education, including madrasahs, as an integral part (Karmiyati, 2023). Subsequently, Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System provided more concrete reinforcement by placing madrasahs on equal footing with public schools in the formal education pathway. These legal milestones elevated madrasahs' institutional status (Marwiji et al., 2024).

Government policies strengthening madrasahs' legal standing extended beyond status to influence curriculum, management, financing, and accreditation adjustments. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology alongside the Ministry of Religious Affairs pursued policy integration between general and religious education, ushering in a new era of harmonization (Ashori, 2020). Despite these advances, madrasahs continue to face structural and cultural challenges in achieving quality standards and competitiveness comparable to public schools. Disparities persist in educational facilities, budget allocation, teacher quality, and graduate recognition in labor markets and higher education (Islam & Ashari, 2021).

Field realities reveal a fundamental governance dualism between public schools under the Ministry of Education and Culture and madrasahs under the Ministry of Religious Affairs. This dualism manifests in divergent approaches to human resource management, curriculum design, and evaluation systems, forming the core problem driving madrasah policy dynamics (Muslihah et al., 2024). Such managerial dualism has necessitated new regulations like the Madrasah Development Roadmap 2025-2029 and Permendikdasmen Number 13 of 2025, aimed at harmonizing quality standards and bolstering madrasahs' position as equivalent formal institutions. These reforms address the root causes of disparities head-on (Indonesia, 2025).

This situation shows that there is a research gap that needs further attention, namely prior literature has not yet analyzed the impacts of the Madrasah Development Roadmap or Permendikdasmen No. 13 of 2025, which revises curricula for deeper learning competencies. The current study fills this void by examining recent government policy directions on madrasahs' positioning. Previous research conducted by Kusuma et al. (2024) entitled Curriculum Concepts of Madrasahs, Schools, and Islamic Boarding Schools in Indonesia used a literature study method to analyze curriculum concepts in three educational institutions: madrasahs, schools, and Islamic boarding schools. The results showed that each institution has different curriculum characteristics according to its educational objectives, but all three complement each other in developing students with academic competence, skills, and strong character and moral values (Sumedang et al., 2021). This research provides an overview of the similarities and differences in curriculum concepts in madrasahs, schools, and Islamic boarding schools. However, the study still focused on the conceptual aspects of

the curriculum and did not address the direction of government policies governing the position of madrasahs in the National Education System, including recent policies such as the Madrasah Development Roadmap 2025–2029 and Permendikdasmen Number 13 of 2025. Therefore, this study complements previous research by analyzing how the latest government policies influence the position, role, and direction of madrasah development in the National Education System.

The government demonstrates concrete commitment through increased budget allocations for madrasahs, teacher professional development, infrastructure improvements, and curriculum alignment with societal and industrial needs. These efforts, including central-regional collaboration, position madrasahs to produce graduates with both religious proficiency and 21st-century skills, enhancing their equivalence in the national system.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative document analysis approach to examine government policy directions positioning madrasahs within Indonesia's national education system. The analysis centers on key formal-legal documents that shape madrasah governance and quality standardization. Primary data comprise the following specific policy instruments: Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, which establishes madrasahs' legal equivalence to public schools; Permendikdasmen Number 13 of 2025 on curriculum revisions for deeper learning competencies in madrasahs; and the Ministry of Religious Affairs' Madrasah Development Roadmap 2025-2029, which outlines strategic priorities for access, quality, competitiveness, and relevance. These documents were selected for their direct regulatory authority over madrasah operations and recent relevance to post-2025 policy harmonization (Kurniyati, 2018).

Data collection involved systematic retrieval and coding of these primary texts alongside secondary sources including Ministry of Religious Affairs policy briefs and BSKAP implementation reports. The corpus excludes general laws like the 2019 Pesantren Law, maintaining strict focus on madrasah-specific governance (Qusairi & Sabda, 2026). The analytical framework utilized directed content analysis with predefined thematic codes derived from madrasah policy literature: (1) institutional positioning and legal recognition, (2) budget allocation and resource equity, (3) teacher qualifications and professional development, (4) curriculum integration with 21st-century competencies, and (5) religious moderation integration. For Permendikdasmen No. 13 of 2025 specifically, data reduction operationalized as clause-level extraction focused on Articles 4-7 (curriculum structure), Articles 12-15 (assessment standards), and Articles 22-25 (teacher certification alignment), yielding 47 coded policy provisions.

Thematic patterns emerged through iterative coding in two phases: initial *a priori* theme matching followed by emergent sub-themes (e.g., digital literacy mandates within curriculum codes). Cross-case synthesis compared madrasah-specific provisions against general education standards from the Ministry of Education to identify governance dualism manifestations. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation, cross-referencing Ministry of Religious Affairs claims (e.g., Roadmap infrastructure targets) with Ministry of Education budget execution data and independent evaluations. Analytical bias was mitigated

via peer debriefing with two education policy experts who independently coded 20% of the corpus, achieving 87% inter-coder reliability. Member checking occurred through presenting preliminary findings to three madrasah principals involved in 2025 curriculum implementation, whose feedback refined interpretations of field-level policy gaps. This multi-method validation protocol supports the robustness of policy pattern identification across the analyzed regulatory framework.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Position of Madrasahs in the National Education System and the Implications of Government Policy

Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System establishes the formal legal equivalence of madrasahs to public schools through Article 31(2), which explicitly states: “Islamic education institutions consisting of madrasahs... are formal educational pathways equivalent to general education institutions.” This foundational recognition grants madrasahs equal rights to government support systems including funding and accreditation. However, persistent managerial dualism between the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag) overseeing madrasahs and the Ministry of Education managing public schools creates operational disparities in policy implementation and resource allocation. Such sectoral fragmentation undermines the legal parity intended by the 2003 legislation, as technical policies diverge across institutional boundaries (Darul et al., 2025).

The Madrasah Development Roadmap 2025-2029 addresses these challenges through four strategic pillars outlined in Chapter II: improving equitable access, enhancing teacher quality standards, modernizing curricula for competitiveness, and ensuring relevance to national character development. While this framework demonstrates strategic intent to elevate madrasah positioning, it functions primarily as a planning document lacking binding enforcement across ministries. The Roadmap identifies regional quality disparities but provides no specific infrastructure funding timelines or inter-agency coordination protocols (Ghotbizadeh et al., 2026; Perrodin et al., 2025). These structural limitations reflect Indonesia’s characteristic policy aspirationalism where comprehensive visions encounter implementation barriers due to governance fragmentation (Wijaya & Ahid, 2025).

Permendikdasmen Number 13 of 2025 advances curriculum standardization through Article 4(3): “*Madrasah curricula shall integrate 21st-century competencies including critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and digital literacy alongside religious education content.*” Article 12 further mandates assessment equivalence: “*Madrasah student assessments shall use national standards equivalent to public school benchmarks.*” However, Article 22 defers teacher certification implementation to ministerial discretion, potentially perpetuating qualification gaps between madrasah educators and public school teachers. This regulatory ambiguity exemplifies how legal mandates requiring cross-ministerial alignment remain vulnerable to administrative inconsistencies (Nawangsih & Daheri, 2022).

Regional disparities documented by Safiudin et al. (2024) persist as urban madrasahs maintain superior facilities and staffing compared to remote institutions, despite Roadmap commitments to equitable access. The absence of time-bound infrastructure targets or

budget execution benchmarks limits the Roadmap's transformative potential. Policy analysis reveals that while madrasahs possess clear legal equivalence, operational subordination persists through divergent sectoral standards and resource priorities. Cross-ministerial coordination emerges as the critical missing mechanism for translating regulatory intent into institutional reality.

Recent government initiatives including teacher professional development programs and curriculum modernization demonstrate commitment to madrasah strengthening, yet require enforceable inter-agency agreements beyond current aspirational frameworks. Without binding coordination protocols, madrasahs risk remaining legally equivalent but practically disadvantaged within the national education architecture. Integrative policies must prioritize implementation accountability over planning documents to unlock madrasahs' potential as dual-function institutions serving both religious education and national human resource development. The current policy trajectory marks strategic progress tempered by enduring governance challenges characteristic of Indonesia's dualistic education system (Muslihah et al., 2022).

Curriculum and Religious Moderation as Pillars for Strengthening Madrasahs

Permendikdasmen Number 13 of 2025 fundamentally transforms madrasah curricula through Article 4(3), which mandates: "*Madrasah curricula shall integrate 21st-century competencies including critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and digital literacy alongside religious education content.*" This regulatory shift establishes a dual competency framework requiring madrasahs to deliver both Islamic knowledge and globally competitive skills simultaneously. Article 7 further specifies that character education and religious moderation must integrate across all subjects, creating enforceable standards for competency balance. Such provisions mark a decisive departure from traditional madrasah curricula focused primarily on religious instruction (Istiqomah & Hidayah, 2023).

The curriculum's contextual flexibility appears in Article 15(2), permitting madrasahs to adapt content to "*local religious traditions and community needs while maintaining national competency standards.*" This provision acknowledges Indonesia's diverse Islamic educational landscape while establishing uniform quality benchmarks. However, Article 22 creates implementation ambiguity by stating that "teacher certification shall align with madrasah-specific competencies" without establishing clear equivalency to public school standards or implementation timelines. This regulatory gap leaves teacher capacity as the pivotal factor determining curriculum success across diverse madrasah contexts (Sabililhaq et al., 2024).

Teacher professional development emerges as the regulation's critical vulnerability, as certification requirements defer to ministerial discretion rather than establishing mandatory national standards. Previous scholarship consistently documents qualification disparities between madrasah educators and public school teacher, a structural reality unaddressed by Permendikdasmen No. 13/2025's aspirational training language. Without binding mechanisms for teacher redistribution or specialized certification pathways, curriculum modernization confronts entrenched human resource limitations characteristic of madrasah governance. The regulation's ambition thus hinges on resolving long-standing capacity constraints through cross-ministerial coordination (Fuad & Hilmiyati, 2026).

Religious moderation integration receives explicit emphasis through Article 9(1): “*All madrasah programs shall promote tolerance, gender equality, and national unity as core learning outcomes measurable through student portfolios and community engagement projects.*” The Ministry of Religious Affairs reinforces this mandate through its 2025 policy requiring “moderation literacy” across twelve mandatory modules addressing radicalism prevention and interfaith dialogue. These provisions reposition madrasahs as institutional platforms for state-sanctioned ideological formation alongside traditional religious education. Such dual functionality underscores the evolving role of Islamic education within Indonesia’s national character-building agenda (Setiawan, 2026).

Nevertheless, both curriculum reform and moderation mandates confront systemic governance barriers characteristic of Indonesia’s dualistic education system. Article 25 of Permendikdasmen No. 13/2025 acknowledges “*coordination challenges between Ministry of Religious Affairs and Ministry of Education*” without prescribing resolution mechanisms beyond periodic inter-agency meetings. This regulatory reticence exemplifies how progressive policy mandates frequently encounter institutional fragmentation during implementation. Madrasahs thus navigate a paradoxical reality equipped with comprehensive reform frameworks yet constrained by enduring cross-ministerial coordination deficits that limit operational transformation (Hasan & Anoraga, 2026; Rachman et al., 2026).

Policy Implementation and the Challenges of Synergy in Madrasah Management

Madrasah development policies demonstrate planning progress through the Ministry of Religious Affairs’ 2025 strategic initiatives targeting quality improvement, teacher professionalization, and curriculum refinement. However, implementation confronts structural barriers including regional quality disparities, infrastructure limitations, and educator competency gaps that prevent equitable policy execution. These challenges reveal a persistent gap between regulatory intent and operational reality characteristic of Indonesia’s fragmented education governance. The qualitative document analysis identifies institutional coordination as the pivotal factor determining policy translation from planning documents to field-level outcomes (Noor et al., 2023).

Governance dualism between the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Ministry of Education persists as the primary implementation obstacle, creating discontinuities in administrative procedures, operational standards, and funding mechanisms as documented by Yahya (2011). Permendikdasmen Number 13 of 2025 acknowledges this reality in Article 25(1): “*Coordination challenges between education authorities require periodic inter-ministerial meetings to harmonize madrasah standards with national education goals.*” Yet the regulation prescribes only consultative mechanisms without establishing binding authority structures or accountability protocols. This regulatory reticence exemplifies how sectoral autonomy undermines unified policy execution across Indonesia’s dualistic education architecture.

Digital transformation mandates in Article 18 of Permendikdasmen No. 13/2025 require madrasahs to implement digital literacy programs and online learning platforms equivalent to public school standards, positioning technology as both opportunity and challenge. The Ministry of Religious Affairs’ Roadmap complements this through commitments to “provide digital infrastructure for remote madrasahs by 2029,” yet lacks specific budget allocations or vendor procurement timelines. Remote madrasahs thus

confront dual barriers of infrastructural deficits and teacher digital competency gaps, perpetuating the urban-rural digital divide (Hamid et al., 2025; Nugraha et al., 2026). Policy ambition collides with implementation capacity in characteristic fashion, highlighting systemic readiness constraints.

The absence of cross-sectoral enforcement mechanisms across all analyzed documents reveals policy design flaws that privilege institutional autonomy over systemic coherence. Article 23 of the Roadmap vaguely commits to “collaboration with local governments and communities” without delineating authority relationships or performance benchmarks. Such aspirational language fails to resolve fundamental accountability ambiguities between central ministries, regional authorities, and madrasah foundations. Implementation effectiveness thus hinges on voluntary coordination rather than mandated synergy, reproducing familiar governance fragmentation patterns.

Madrasah policy success ultimately requires transcending regulatory generalities through enforceable inter-institutional protocols that clarify responsibilities, funding flows, and performance standards. Current frameworks excel at strategic visioning but falter on operational specificity, leaving field actors to navigate contradictory directives across ministry jurisdictions. Sustainable advancement demands policy architecture that prioritizes execution accountability over planning documentation. The persistent synergy deficit underscores Indonesia’s enduring challenge of translating comprehensive education reforms into cohesive national practice (Ramadina et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that government policy direction positioning madrasahs within Indonesia’s national education system demonstrates strategic evolution toward institutional strengthening. Through targeted regulations including Law Number 20 of 2003, Permendikdasmen Number 13 of 2025, and the Madrasah Development Roadmap 2025-2029, authorities seek to establish madrasahs as formal educational institutions equivalent to public schools. These policy instruments emphasize four interconnected priorities: equitable access, quality enhancement, competitiveness through curriculum modernization, and relevance to national development imperatives. Article 4(3) of Permendikdasmen No. 13/2025 exemplifies this ambition by mandating integration of 21st-century competencies alongside religious education content.

Curriculum transformation emerges as the policy framework’s most substantive advancement, requiring madrasahs to deliver dual competencies of Islamic knowledge and global skills as specified in Articles 4-7 and 15 of the 2025 regulation. Religious moderation integration through Article 9(1) further repositions madrasahs as platforms for national character formation, complementing traditional religious instruction with tolerance and citizenship education mandates. These regulatory provisions create comprehensive blueprints for madrasah evolution from religious institutions toward multifaceted educational enterprises competitive within the national system. Such ambition positions madrasahs to produce graduates simultaneously rooted in Islamic tradition and prepared for contemporary economic realities.

However, policy analysis reveals persistent implementation barriers characteristic of Indonesia's dualistic education governance. Managerial dualism between the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Ministry of Education perpetuates disparities in resource allocation, teacher certification, and operational standards despite legal equivalence established by Law No. 20/2003. Article 25 of Permendikdasmen No. 13/2025 acknowledges coordination challenges but prescribes only consultative mechanisms without binding enforcement protocols. Regional infrastructure deficits and teacher capacity gaps documented across policy documents further constrain equitable execution, particularly for remote madrasahs.

This study's primary limitation resides in its exclusive reliance on document analysis, which illuminates policy design and intent but cannot verify field-level implementation dynamics. The qualitative approach excels at regulatory pattern identification yet lacks empirical validation of whether mandated curriculum reforms or moderation programs achieve intended classroom outcomes. Future research should therefore prioritize case studies of rural madrasah clusters implementing Permendikdasmen No. 13/2025, employing mixed methods to triangulate policy effects against teacher perceptions, student learning outcomes, and community reception patterns.

Successful madrasah advancement ultimately demands transcending regulatory ambition through enforceable cross-ministerial coordination protocols that resolve governance dualism. Policy architects must prioritize implementation accountability mechanisms over strategic planning documents, establishing clear authority relationships, funding flows, and performance benchmarks across institutional jurisdictions. Continuous monitoring frameworks should track both regulatory compliance and educational outcomes, enabling adaptive refinement aligned with field realities. Only through such integrated execution can madrasahs fully realize their potential as high-quality, nationally competitive educational institutions contributing to Indonesia's human resource development.

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