
State Policy on Islamic Education During the New Order Era and Its Implications for SDGs

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Abstract

Objective: This study aims to understand the Islamic education policy implemented during the New Order period, the challenges faced in its implementation, and its long-term impact on the development of Islamic education in Indonesia to date. By evaluating these policies within the broader context of national development, the study also examines their relevance to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4: Quality Education. **Theoretical framework:** This research is grounded in the theoretical framework of education policy and state–education relations, focusing on how political regimes exert control over religious education and integrate it into the national education system. The study also draws on theories related to educational equity and sustainable development to bridge the historical analysis with contemporary global goals. **Literature review:** The literature review includes a wide range of sources focusing on the New Order regime's political control, state-Islamic education relations, and the evolution of madrasahs and pesantren. It also considers studies on the global movement towards inclusive and equitable education as framed in the SDGs. **Methods:** This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach. Data were collected through literature review and analysis of government policy documents, academic journals, and historical records. The data were analyzed descriptively to understand the policy shifts, ideological motivations, and socio-political dynamics surrounding Islamic education during the New Order era. **Results:** The findings reveal that the New Order's Islamic education policy marked a shift toward formal recognition of madrasahs and religious education. Nevertheless, this came with centralized political control, suppression of academic freedom, and the influence of developmentalist and capitalistic ideologies. Over time, Islamic education has shown resilience and adaptability, increasingly aligning with the general education system and the inclusive goals set forth in the SDGs. **Implications:** The study underscores the importance of designing inclusive education policies that respect religious identity and academic autonomy in order to achieve SDG 4 and promote long-term educational equity. **Novelty:** This research provides a fresh perspective on the intersection between authoritarian politics and religious education and its implications for achieving sustainable educational development in Indonesia.

Keywords: new order, state policy, islamic education, education policy, sdgs.

INTRODUCTION

The development of Islamic education in Indonesia has been shaped by complex historical, political, and ideological forces. One of the most critical periods influencing this trajectory was the New Order era (1966–1998) under President Suharto's regime. Characterized by centralized governance, political authoritarianism, and economic modernization, the New Order government sought to regulate and integrate Islamic education within the broader framework of national development. While the regime formally recognized Islamic educational institutions such as *madrassas* and *pesantren*, this recognition often came with strict state control, limited curricular freedom, and policies influenced by political motives rather than educational equity [1].

Understanding the nature of Islamic education policies during this period is crucial, particularly in light of global efforts to achieve inclusive and equitable quality education as outlined in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4). Despite the repressive political climate, Islamic education in Indonesia managed to evolve and adapt, paving the way for its more prominent role in the national education system today. This research is significant for several reasons. First, it offers a historical lens to evaluate how state policies under authoritarian regimes shape religious education. Second, it provides valuable insights into the resilience and transformation of Islamic education despite political constraints. Finally, it highlights the relevance of past education policies to current efforts in achieving the SDGs, especially in ensuring access to quality, inclusive, and contextually appropriate education [2].

By critically analyzing the intersection of politics, religion, and education during the New Order, this study contributes to scholarly discourse on education policy in post-colonial Muslim societies and reinforces the need for policy frameworks that uphold academic freedom, religious pluralism, and sustainable development. The New Order was a period of government in Indonesia that lasted from March 11, 1966, until the change of leadership from President Soeharto to President Habibie on May 21, 1998. The transition from the Old Order to the New Order brought significant changes in national political and policy strategies. In general, the New Order was a total reaction to the Old Order, which was dominated by the PKI and was considered to have deviated from the values of Pancasila. This era is also known as the Constitutional Order and the Development Order, to build the whole human being and create a balance between spiritual and material aspects for a better life. In 1973-1978 and 1983, in the MPR session, the State Direction Outlines (GBHN) was prepared as a guideline for national development [3].

The government under the leadership of President Suharto implemented policies that emphasized political stability and economic development. Government policies related to religious education are greatly influenced by political dynamics [4]. Towards the end of Sukarno's rule, there were tensions between the PKI and the army, which encouraged religious groups, especially Islam and Christianity, to ally with the military. In the period from 1961 until the end of Sukarno's administration, the Ministry of Education and Culture was led by two ministers, namely Prijono a Murba figure who was close to the PKI as the Minister of Basic Education, and Sjarief Tajeb, a military figure who served as the Minister of Higher Education. Thanks to the support of religious groups, Sjarief Tajeb finally succeeded in making religious education compulsory in various universities in Indonesia, even though the 1950 Education Law did not regulate this obligation [5].

Furthermore, on May 23, 1988, the PN Bill appeared which was considered secular by Muslims because religious lessons were not included in the curriculum, but only as informal education in the family. After negotiations with Islamic leaders, the bill was passed into the National Education Law No. 2 of 1989 in March 1989 [6]. In the 1980s-1990s, the New Order began to recognize *madrassas* as part of the National Education System, thus implementing a national curriculum such as public schools. However, the implementation of religious education is still less than optimal due to limited class hours, differences in

student understanding, lack of attention from leaders and teachers, and weak inculcation of values and manners [7].

Several Islamic education policies in the New Order era brought transformation to the Islamic education system. One of the important policies is the issuance of the Decree of the Three Ministers, which regulates that madrasah graduates have the opportunity to continue their education in public schools [8]. Therefore, the madrasah curriculum needs to be adjusted to be in line with the public school curriculum. At this time, religious education was also designated as a compulsory subject at all levels of education, from elementary school (SD) to higher education [9].

The New Order government implemented an education system with very strict control (centralistic). In this case, although education and politics are two different fields, they are still interrelated [10]. The New Order has full power to determine various policies. As a result, various policies regarding madrasahs were born, both beneficial and detrimental. This condition is greatly influenced by the political will of the government and the efforts of Muslims in fighting for the interests and progress of madrasah education [11].

Responding to the various dynamics above, the state's policy on Islamic education in the New Order era is an interesting topic to study. Understanding this policy is not only important in looking at the history of Islamic education in Indonesia but also in evaluating its impact on the development of Islamic education to date [12]. Therefore, this paper will discuss the various policies implemented, the challenges that have arisen, and the impact on the development of Islamic education in Indonesia during the New Order era [13].

Based on the above background, the purpose of this paper is to: 1) describe the policies of the New Order government in integrating Islamic education into the national education system; 2) describe the challenges and impacts posed by the New Order policy on Islamic education in Indonesia; and 3) describe the extent to which Islamic education policies in the New Order era contributed to the development of Islamic education in Indonesia to date.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of Islamic education in Indonesia during the New Order era offers significant insights into the complex interaction between state authority, religious identity, and national development. The New Order regime, under Suharto's leadership, prioritized political stability and economic development, often at the expense of civil liberties and educational autonomy. Within this centralized framework, Islamic education was initially marginalized, seen as traditional and incompatible with the government's vision of modernization. However, over time, a pragmatic shift occurred, where Islamic educational institutions such as madrasahs were formally integrated into the national education system. This integration was not merely administrative but ideological, serving the dual purpose of state control and nation-building [13].

The relationship between Islamic education and the state during this period reflects broader theoretical concerns about the state's role in shaping educational discourse and practice. Scholars have long debated the extent to which the state uses education to assert political control, cultural uniformity, and ideological conformity. In the case of the New Order, Islamic education was both suppressed and utilized strategically—tolerated when it aligned with national objectives and restricted when it challenged the regime's authority. This dual approach contributed to the gradual transformation of Islamic schools, especially in curriculum design, teacher certification, and institutional regulation, aligning them more closely with general public education [13].

In parallel, the development of pesantren, traditional Islamic boarding schools, also underwent significant changes. While historically autonomous, many pesantren were

co-opted into the national agenda through the introduction of general subjects and bureaucratic oversight. This dualism in Islamic education—balancing religious instruction with secular standards—laid the groundwork for future reforms and positioned Islamic schools to play a larger role in achieving contemporary global goals like the SDGs [14].

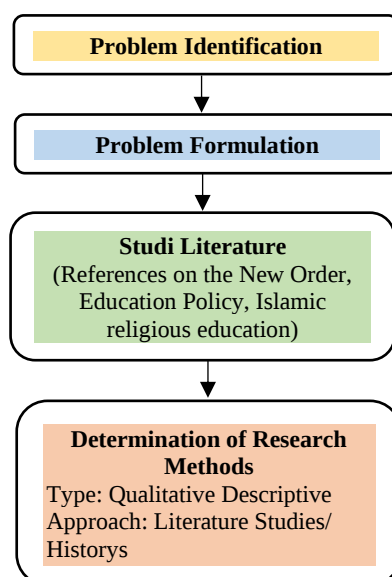
From a policy analysis perspective, the New Order's education strategy can be viewed as a precursor to today's challenges in harmonizing faith-based education with international development frameworks. As the world moves toward achieving SDG 4, which emphasizes inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all, the historical experiences of Islamic education in Indonesia reveal both progress and persistent gaps. The emphasis on quality, equity, and relevance remains central, particularly for Islamic schools striving to meet global standards without sacrificing religious values [14].

Furthermore, the literature highlights the role of Islamic education as a social movement for empowerment, particularly in marginalized communities. Despite the constraints imposed by the New Order regime, Islamic educational institutions managed to create space for community engagement, social mobility, and identity formation. These achievements, though often understated in policy discourse, are essential to understanding how Islamic education continues to contribute to sustainable development. In conclusion, the existing body of literature on Islamic education under the New Order emphasizes themes of control, adaptation, and resilience. These themes are vital for contemporary educational policymakers aiming to align religious education with the inclusive and transformative vision of the SDGs. Understanding the historical context is not only academically valuable but also practically important for shaping future policies that bridge tradition and modernity in educational development [14].

METHODOLOGY

The research method used in this study is qualitative descriptive with a literature study approach. This approach aims to analyze and explain in depth a certain phenomenon or topic based on a qualitative study of available literature sources [15]. The main focus of this research is to analyze various literature relevant to the research topic, including journal articles, books, theses, dissertations, as well as other sources that discuss the policies of the New Order government in integrating Islamic education into the national education system. In addition, this study also explores the challenges and impacts of these policies and their contribution to the development of Islamic education in Indonesia to date [16].

More details of the writing methodology can be seen in the following diagram:



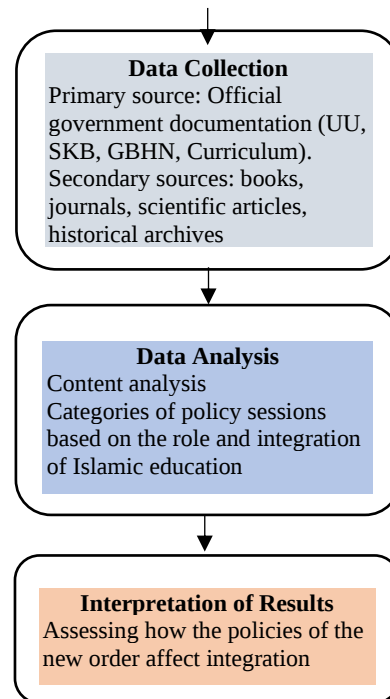


Figure 1. Research Methodology Diagram

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of a writing that focuses on the analysis of the policies of the New Order government in integrating Islamic education into the national education system. The discussion included a description of the policies implemented, the challenges that arose, and the impact on the development of Islamic education in Indonesia [17]. In addition, this paper also explores the extent to which these policies have contributed to the development of Islamic education to date. By understanding the dynamics of Islamic education policies in the New Order era, it is hoped that a deeper insight can be obtained about the role of these policies in shaping the Islamic education system in Indonesia [18].

New Order Government Policy in Integrating Islamic Education into the National Education System

Policy is generally used to determine and highlight key decisions to strengthen lives, both within the scope of government organizations and the private sector. Policies must be free from the impression or meaning associated with politics, which is often considered to reflect partiality due to certain interests. As an applicable provision, a policy is characterized by consistency and a repetitive pattern of behavior, both from the enacter and those who follow it [19].

According to Harold Laswell and Abraham Kaplan, public policy is a design program that is directed to achieve a specific goal, based on specific values, and applied through certain practices [20]. In addition, public policy also refers to a series of processes and decisions set by the government or public institutions to realize certain goals in people's lives [21].

Problems in Islamic education cannot be separated from the context of social and political history in Indonesia. Historically, after the G30S/PKI suppression on October 1, 1965, the Indonesian nation entered a new era known as the New Order. The change from

the Old Order to the New Order occurred through close collaboration between the ABRI or the military and various youth movements known as the Class of 1966. Since 1966, youth and students have held demonstrations in the streets, either spontaneously or at the direction of certain parties, which initially highlighted various forms of abuse of power until finally led to criticism of Soekarno's leadership [22].

During the New Order period, government policies regarding education, especially Islamic education, experienced gradual development. The government began to pay more attention to Islamic education, which can be seen in the increase in the number of Islamic boarding schools and madrasas. Islamic boarding schools began to establish madrasas with Ibtidaiyah, Tsanawiyah, and Aliyah education levels. In 1958/1959, madrasas were also required to carry out compulsory learning programs that had rights and obligations equivalent to public schools. Furthermore, in 1965, based on the results of the Seminar of Islamic Boarding Schools in Yogyakarta, it was decided that Islamic boarding schools needed to include skill subjects such as agriculture and carpentry. This prompted Islamic leaders to demand that madrasas and religious education be included in the national education system [23]. However, the government's policy has also reaped controversy. Presidential Decree No. 34 of 1972 and Presidential Instruction No. 15 of 1974 are considered to weaken the position of madrasas in the national education system. Some Muslims consider the policy to be an attempt to ignore the role of madrasas that have long contributed to Islamic education. In response to the strong reaction of Muslims, the government issued a Joint Decree (SKB) of the Three Ministers on March 24, 1975. This decree recognizes the existence of madrasah in the national education system and equates madrasah diplomas with public schools [24].

The policy of the national education system refers to the MPRS Tap No. 27, Article 1 dated July 5, 1966, which stipulates religious education as a compulsory subject for every student and student according to his religion. Article 4 of the MPRS TAP states that the objectives of education include improving morals, ethics, and religious beliefs, increasing intelligence and skills, and strong and healthy physical development [25].

Awareness of Islamic education only emerged at the end of the Old Order, in 1965, with the issuance of a new policy by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. This policy includes the development of various types of Islamic education such as Islamic boarding schools, madrasas, and State Islamic Religious Institutes (IAIN). In the New Order era, the development of madrasas was strengthened through the Decree of the Three Ministers on March 24, 1974, which was then supported by presidential schools and government subsidies. However, more affordable presidential schools became competitors to madrasas, causing some madrasas to change their status to state. In 1978, the Ramadan holiday, which was originally one month, was reduced to 10 days. The 1988 PN Bill, which removed religious lessons from the formal curriculum, triggered protests among Muslims until it was finally amended into the National Education Law No. 2 of 1989. Full recognition of madrasas as part of the national education system occurred in the 1980s and 1990s, with the implementation of the national curriculum [26].

During the New Order regime, Islamic religious education did not have a strong legal guarantee. The government does not provide a clear legal framework for the teaching of Islam, either in the form of regulations, work guidelines, or uniform standards of application (Diniyah). As a result, the support and participation of Muslims in the field of education has become limited. Meanwhile, in Pancasila education, religious education, and civic education, Law Number 2 of 1989 explicitly requires a standard curriculum for all levels and types of education. However, only a small portion of the approximately two hours per week of study time is allocated specifically to religious subjects [27].

The New Order government implemented a very centralized education system. Although education and politics are two different fields, they are interrelated, with the government having full control over policies, including those related to madrasas. Islamic education

remains more independent than public schools because the majority of Islamic boarding schools and madrasas are managed privately. Full recognition of madrasas only occurred in the late 1980s to 1990s. The New Order did not separate religious education from the national system, making madrasas autonomous institutions under the Ministry of Religious Affairs. This autonomy is realized through the formalization and structuring of madrasas. At its peak, the National Education System Act of 1989 incorporated madrasas into the national education system, allowing the use of the national curriculum such as public schools [28].

During the New Order period, Islamic education policies experienced revitalization in the learning system and methodology in madrasas and Islamic boarding schools. This policy was constructive, especially in the late 1980s to the 1990s, although it was inseparable from its weaknesses. At the beginning of the New Order, madrasas were not considered part of the national education system and were still under the Ministry of Religion. Reform efforts began in 1967 in response to the MPRS Decree No. XXVII/1966 by establishing organizational standards and structures. Presidential Decree No. 34 of 1972 divides the responsibilities of education and training: the Minister of Education and Culture handles general education, the Minister of Manpower manages skills training, and the Chairman of the State Administration Institution is responsible for the education of civil servants. This policy caused controversy because it transferred the management of madrasas from the Ministry of Religion to the Ministry of Education and Culture, which was considered an attempt to secularize. Furthermore, Presidential Instruction No. 15 of 1974 was issued to regulate education and training operations, strengthening the one-stop education policy. Some people support it to improve the quality of madrasas, while others consider it to weaken the existence of madrasas. MP3A then consulted with various parties, including pesantren caregivers. The obligation of religious education in higher education was also influenced by the political situation at that time. Tensions between the PKI and the military prompted religious groups to form alliances with the army. Finally, the Minister of Higher Education, Sjarief Tadjeb, made religious education compulsory in universities even though it was not regulated in the 1950 Education Law. This obligation was strengthened by the 1966 MPRS TAP. In 1975, the Decree of the Three Ministers stipulated that the management of madrasas remained under the Ministry of Religion, canceling the previous policy that handed it over to the Ministry of Education and Culture. This policy aims to improve the quality of madrasah education so that it is on par with public schools. Finally, Law No. 2 of 1989 emphasizes that the compulsory primary and secondary education curriculum includes Pancasila, religion, and citizenship education. This policy strengthens the position of religious education in the national education system and signifies its strategic role in Indonesia [29].

Based on the description above, it is stated that the New Order government's policy in integrating Islamic education into the national education system has undergone a gradual development with various challenges and controversies. Initially, the government began to pay more attention to Islamic education by increasing the number of Islamic boarding schools and madrasas as well as the implementation of compulsory learning policies that equated madrasas with public schools. However, some policies, such as Presidential Decree No. 34 of 1972 and Presidential Instruction No. 15 of 1974, caused resistance from Muslims because they were considered to weaken the position of madrasas. The response to the demands of the community eventually resulted in the 1975 Decree of the Three Ministers, which recognized madrasas as part of the national education system. At its peak, Law No. 2 of 1989 officially incorporated madrasas into the national education system, allowing the use of the national curriculum and strengthening the position of Islamic education in Indonesia [30]. The following table shows changes in government policy towards Islamic religious education in the New Order era.

Table 1. New Order Government Policy in Integrating Islamic Religious Education

No	Aspects	Old Order	New Order
1	Main focus	National unity, revolutionary ideology	Stability, development, and ideology of Pancasila
2	The Status of Education	Not compulsory in public schools	Compulsory in all schools
3	Status of madrasah	Not yet fully recognized	Integrated into the national education system
4	State support	Limited	Bigger, although not even
5	Ideological goals	Maintaining the secularism of the state	Directing Islam to be in harmony with Pancasila

Challenges and Impacts of the New Order Policy on Islamic Education in Indonesia

The New Order government which has been in power for more than three decades has brought major changes in various aspects of life in Indonesia, including in the field of Islamic education. The policies implemented during this period are based on the principles of political stability and economic development, which indirectly and directly impact the Islamic education system in Indonesia [31].

The New Order government has several characteristics that are less supportive or challenging to the development of Islamic education. This government is strong and dominates various aspects of state life. His leadership is supported by a military force that works with technocrats and civilian bureaucrats in carrying out his policies. In addition, the New Order also strengthened its power by forming a repressive security apparatus and political-ideological apparatus to maintain its dominance. Since its inception, this regime has received support from global capitalism which has also influenced the direction of its government's policies. When experiencing instability, it is not due to the increasing political role of the community, but rather due to internal dynamics in the state body and external factors from the international environment [32].

According to the author's analysis as stated by Muzammil (2016), four points are characteristic of Islamic education during the New Order period, including: (1) State domination and Islamic education, a centralistic and militaristic government tends to provide less space for Islamic education to develop independently. Islamic education is often positioned as part of state policies that must be in harmony with the ideology of the New Order. The developing education system emphasizes more on technocratic and economic aspects, while Islamic education tends to be marginalized or directed according to the political interests of the rulers; (2) Political repression and academic freedom, with strict control over freedom of opinion, the world of education, including Islamic education, faces challenges in developing critical and independent thinking. The Islamic education curriculum is often directed so as not to conflict with state policies, so that the space for academic innovation is limited; (3) The influence of global capitalism, the support of global capitalism for the New Order has implications for education policies that are more market-oriented and economic development. As a result, Islamic education is not a top priority, especially if it is considered irrelevant to the labor market needs desired by the government; and (4) Political instability, when the New Order experienced instability, it was more influenced by internal conflicts within the government and global factors, such as economic crises or international pressure on the regime. This shows that Islamic education was not the main factor influencing political stability at the time, but rather part of a system affected by broader political dynamics [33].

During the New Order period, education policies aimed to form Indonesian people who had faith, personality, intelligence, skills, and a national spirit. However, this goal is not fully realized due to internal and external factors. Internal factors include weak education and ineffective management systems, as well as centralistic policies based on Law No. 5 of 1975 which limits the initiatives and creativity of local governments. All decisions are determined by the center, so the regions have difficulty handling their problems, including in the development of education and human resource development. Education is also considered more of a responsibility of the government than the community. External factors were related to the government's focus on security stability, especially at the beginning of the Suharto administration. Repressive approaches were applied to suppress communist forces and pro-Soekarno groups, as well as to limit the democratic movement. This policy gave birth to an authoritarian system of government and limited the development of Islamic education, which tended to be transferred from the Ministry of Religion to the Ministry of Education and Culture, as reflected in various regulations of the time [34].

Education policies during the New Order period had the ideal goal of forming Indonesian people who were faithful, intelligent, and personality-driven, but in practice, this goal was not fully achieved due to various internal and external factors. Internally, weak education systems and ineffective management hinder the achievement of this vision. The centralistic policy based on Law No. 5 of 1975 limits the creativity and initiative of local governments, so all decisions must depend on the central government. This causes regions to experience difficulties in handling education problems to their local needs, including in terms of educational infrastructure development and human resource development. In addition, education is seen more as a government responsibility than as a collaboration with the community, which makes public participation in education management minimal. Externally, the government's main focus on security stability, especially in suppressing communist forces and pro-Soekarno groups, had an impact on the implementation of a repressive approach. This policy strengthened the authoritarian system of government so that academic freedom and the development of Islamic education were limited. Islamic education even tended to be transferred from the Ministry of Religion to the Ministry of Education and Culture, as reflected in various regulations at that time. As a result, Islamic education experienced structural constraints that limited its role in the national education system, so its development was not in line with the initial ideals of the government [35].

The main problem in Islamic Education that is often highlighted by experts during the New Order period is the existence of a dichotomy in the education system. This problem should not arise in the national education system, considering that the dualism comes from Western education which was then adapted with some modifications. The dichotomy in education is not only a challenge in Indonesia but also in various countries with a Muslim majority. Therefore, Islamic education experts from various parts of the world are trying to find solutions to this problem, one of which is through international meetings that give birth to new ideas. One of the approaches that is currently being developed is the Islamization of knowledge, which aims to align education with Islamic values [36].

The dichotomy in the Islamic education system during the New Order period is one of the problems that are highlighted by many experts because it reflects the separation between religious education and general education. This problem should not occur in the national education system, considering that the dualism of education is the result of the adoption of the Western education system that has undergone modifications to suit the local context. This phenomenon does not only occur in Indonesia but also in various other Muslim countries, which also face challenges in integrating religious education with the modern education system. In the face of this problem, Islamic education experts in various parts of the world are trying to find solutions by holding various international meetings to discuss the best approach. One of the concepts that continues to develop is the Islamization of knowledge, which is an effort to integrate science with Islamic values so that education not only produces intellectually intelligent individuals but also has a strong moral and spiritual

foundation. Thus, this approach is expected to overcome the dichotomy in the Islamic education system and create an education system that is more holistic and in line with the needs of Muslims in the modern era [37].

The Extent to Which Islamic Education Policy in the New Order Era Contributes to the Development of Islamic Education in Indonesia Until Now

Some of the characteristics of the New Order Government that are not conducive to the development of Islamic education include: First, the New Order Government is strong and dominant; second, the New Order Government is a government led and supported by military forces in collaboration with technocrats and civilian bureaucrats; third, the New Order Government equips itself with repressive security apparatus and political-ideological apparatus to justify and produce its power; fourth, the New Order Government from the beginning of its revival received support from international capitalism; and fifth, if at some point the New Order Government experiences instability, then this happens not because of the strengthening of the political position of the people, but rather due to factors from within the state itself and international factors [38].

Islamic education policies implemented during the New Order period that have contributed to the development of Islamic education in Indonesia to date include:

- 1). Carry out updates to learning systems and methods in Islamic educational institutions such as madrasas, Islamic boarding schools, and others. The policies of the New Order government related to Islamic education, especially in the context of madrasas in Indonesia, have had a positive and constructive impact, especially during the last two decades, namely the 1980s to the 1990s. However, this policy is by no means perfect or without flaws. At the beginning of the New Order government, the policy of madrasas was still a continuation and development of policies from the Old Order era, because at that time madrasas were not recognized as part of the national education system and were still under the auspices of the Ministry of Religion. To overcome this problem, the first step taken was reform through the issuance of policies in 1967 in response to the MPRS TAP No. XXVII of 1966, by taking standardized steps in assignments, positions in the organization, and the formation of institutional structures [39].
- 2). Presidential Decree No. 34 issued on April 18, 1972, discusses functional responsibilities in the field of education and training. The content of the decree includes several main points, namely: (1) The Minister of Education and Culture is in charge and responsible for the development of general education and education policies; (2) The Minister of Manpower has duties and obligations in the development and training of the workforce; (3) the development of workforce expertise and skills, including civil servants; and (4) Chairman of the State Administration Institution responsible for special education and training for civil servants [40]. The Ministry of Religious Affairs, which since the beginning of independence has played a role in managing religious education such as Islamic boarding schools, madrasas, and religious-based schools, has changed with a policy that transfers the responsibility for the development of madrasas and religious schools from the Ministry of Religion to the Ministry of Education and Culture. This policy caused controversy and concern among Islamic figures because it was seen as a step towards secularization in public education and religious schools. If the Ministry of Religious Affairs maintains its stance, then it will argue that religious education remains under its authority, as stipulated in the local government law which states that religious education remains the responsibility of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and is not autonomous.
- 3). The ratification of Law No. 2 of 1989 concerning the National Education System marked an important step in the development of education in Indonesia. In Chapter IX Article 39 Paragraph 1, it is emphasized that every type, path, and level of education is required to include Pancasila education, religious education, and civic education in its curriculum. The existence of this regulation further strengthens the position of religious

education in the national education system, so that religious education becomes an integral and mandatory part of the primary and secondary education curriculum. This reflects how crucial and strategic the role of religious education is in shaping the character and morals of students in Indonesia [41].

According to the author's analysis, Islamic education policies during the New Order period made a significant contribution to the development of Islamic education in Indonesia, although it was inseparable from various challenges and controversies. One of the main policies is the reform of learning systems and methods in Islamic educational institutions, such as madrassas and Islamic boarding schools. This reform aims to improve the quality of Islamic education, especially from the 1980s to the 1990s, with efforts to integrate madrassas into the national education system. However, in the early stages of the New Order government, madrassas were still under the auspices of the Ministry of Religion and were not considered part of the national education system, so reform steps were needed through the 1967 policy in response to the MPRS TAP No. XXVII of 1966.

In addition, the issuance of Presidential Decree No. 34 of 1972 concerning functional responsibility in the field of education and training caused controversy, especially in the transfer of madrasah development from the Ministry of Religion to the Ministry of Education and Culture. This raises concerns among Islamic leaders who see this policy as a step towards the secularization of education. However, on the other hand, these regulations also allow Islamic education to gain wider access to national educational resources. Meanwhile, the ratification of Law Number 2 of 1989 concerning the National Education System further clarifies the position of religious education in the Indonesian education system. This law requires religious education to be included in the primary and secondary education curriculum, emphasizing the importance of religious values in the formation of students' character. Thus, although the Islamic education policy during the New Order period faced various challenges, it still had a positive impact that has survived to this day, especially in strengthening religious education in the national education system [41].

Table 2. Islamic Education Policy in the New Order Era and Its Implications for SDGs

Aspect	Description	Implication for SDGs
Political Context	Centralized, authoritarian regime backed by military and technocrats.	Restricted academic freedom, limited policy innovation.
Policy Focus	Stability and economic development prioritized over educational equity.	Islamic education marginalized; not fully aligned with inclusive education goals.
Curriculum Integration	Gradual recognition of madrasas (e.g., 1975 Joint Decree, Law No. 2/1989).	Increased access and formal recognition (supports SDG 4).
Institutional Shift	Transfer of madrasah oversight from Ministry of Religious Affairs to Ministry of Education (1972 Decree).	Seen as secularization threat; reduced autonomy of religious education.
Global Capitalism Influence	Economic-driven education aligned with market needs.	Islamic education deprioritized due to misalignment with labor market focus.
Academic Freedom	Politically repressed; curriculum adjusted to regime ideology.	Limited space for critical thinking and innovation (contrary to SDG 4).
Education System Dichotomy	Separation of religious and secular education; dualism inherited from colonial systems.	Obstructs holistic learning; undermines integration called for in SDG 4.
Positive Contributions	Institutional reforms in the 1980s–1990s; inclusion of religion in national curriculum.	Strengthened Islamic education infrastructure; partially meets SDG 4 goals.
Challenges	Limited local government authority; repressive policies; centralized control.	Education quality and inclusivity compromised in many regions.

Legacy and Future Direction	Resilient Islamic education system adapting in post-New Order era.	Strong foundation to realign with SDG 4 through inclusive, rights-based policies.
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Analysis

The state policy on Islamic education during the New Order era in Indonesia illustrates a multifaceted interaction between political power, religious identity, and educational development. Although initially marginalized, Islamic education—especially through madrasas and pesantren—gradually gained formal recognition within the national education system. This shift was marked by the issuance of critical policies such as the Joint Decree of the Three Ministers (1975) and Law No. 2 of 1989, which strengthened the legal standing of Islamic education. However, these advancements occurred under a highly centralized and authoritarian regime that limited academic freedom and placed education under tight political control.

The integration of Islamic education into the national curriculum was largely driven by the state's aim to promote national stability and ideological conformity. As a result, Islamic education institutions were often instrumentalized for political objectives rather than being supported as independent and community-based educational alternatives. This approach created significant tensions between state authority and religious autonomy, affecting curriculum development, institutional governance, and the scope of academic inquiry in Islamic institutions.

From the perspective of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4, which promotes inclusive, equitable, and quality education, the New Order's policies present both opportunities and limitations. On one hand, the formal inclusion of madrasas into the national education system improved access and recognition. On the other hand, the suppression of academic freedom, neglect of pedagogical innovation, and insufficient state support for religious education undermined the broader goals of quality and inclusivity. Moreover, the dichotomy between religious and secular education systems persisted during this era, reflecting structural challenges inherited from colonial legacies and Western educational models. This separation limited the holistic development of learners, contradicting the SDG 4 emphasis on integrated, relevant, and culturally sensitive education.

Nevertheless, the resilience and adaptability of Islamic education throughout the New Order period laid an essential foundation for future reforms. The experiences during this era underscore the need for inclusive education policies that not only recognize the value of religious education but also promote democratic governance, educational equity, and community engagement. Aligning future Islamic education policies with SDGs requires a shift toward participatory policy-making, academic freedom, and a recognition of the spiritual and moral contributions of Islamic institutions to national development.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussions, it can be concluded that Islamic education policy during the New Order era represents an evolutionary trajectory marked by both substantial challenges and critical milestones. Initially marginalized, Islamic education gradually gained formal recognition and was integrated into the national education system. This process significantly strengthened the institutional presence of Islamic schools such as madrasas and pesantren. However, the development of these institutions did not occur in a vacuum. The education sector during the New Order was deeply influenced by political agendas and ideological control. Education was utilized as an instrument for maintaining national stability and promoting state narratives, which often came at the cost of academic freedom and institutional autonomy. Secondly, the New Order's approach to Islamic education left a profound and lasting impact on policy, structure, and pedagogical orientation. While the integration of Islamic education into the national framework created

new opportunities for standardization and expansion, it also introduced significant constraints. Political pressures and a policy environment dominated by capitalistic and technocratic priorities limited the ability of Islamic educational institutions to innovate freely or to fully represent their values and aspirations. These challenges hindered the potential of Islamic education to flourish in a holistic and independent manner, particularly in fulfilling broader developmental goals. Nevertheless, the legacy of the New Order era has also served as a foundation for the transformation of Islamic education in the post-reform period. Islamic education institutions have increasingly adopted adaptive strategies—blending religious and secular curricula, modernizing management systems, and contributing meaningfully to national character-building. These ongoing developments demonstrate the sector's resilience and capacity to evolve in alignment with contemporary needs. Importantly, the trajectory of Islamic education from the New Order era to the present holds significant relevance to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4, which calls for inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all. The case of Islamic education in Indonesia illustrates how religious education can contribute to the broader vision of sustainable development, provided it is supported by inclusive policies, academic freedom, and recognition of its unique cultural and spiritual value. Future educational reforms must build on this historical foundation to promote a more just, inclusive, and sustainable education system for all.

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Author Contribution

Mohamad Muhsan: Prepare a research concept design map, formulate a theoretical framework, formulate a research method, analyze data, divide the work team, and write visualization and supervision. Faridi: Write the original manuscript, systematically compile the writing, collect field data, edit the writing, formally analyze the data, validate the data, and process the data so that it follows the research rules. Tobroni: Data collection is done using research methods, writing research results, and editing writing. Abdulhafiz Hile: Data collection is under research methods, including writing research results and editing writing. Usamarn Madami and Mahmudulhassan: Data collection is under research methods, including writing research results and editing writing.

Conflicts of Interest

In writing this research, starting from the beginning to the research results, there is no conflict of importance, so the research results are very objective, exist, and can be accounted for scientifically.

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