

# STUDIA ISLAMIKA

INDONESIAN JOURNAL FOR ISLAMIC STUDIES

Volume 7, Number 2, 2000



---

Cultural Presentation of the Muslim  
Middle Class in Contemporary Indonesia  
**Moeflich Hasbullah**

---

Redefining "Political Islam" in Indonesia:  
Nahdlatul Ulama and Khittah '26  
**Robin Bush**

---

Islamic Reform in Contest:  
Ahmad Hassan and His Traditionalist Opponents  
**Akh. Minhaji**

# STUDIA ISLAMIKA

Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies

Vol. 7, no. 2, 2000

---

## EDITORIAL BOARD:

*M. Quraish Shihab (IAIN Jakarta)*

*Taufik Abdullah (LIPI Jakarta)*

*Nur M. Fadhil Lubis (IAIN Sumatra Utara)*

*M.C. Ricklefs (Melbourne University)*

*Martin van Bruinessen (Utrecht University)*

*John R. Bowen (Washington University, St. Louis)*

*M. Atho Mudzhar (IAIN Yogyakarta)*

*M. Kamal Hasan (International Islamic University, Kuala Lumpur)*

## EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

*Azyumardi Azra*

## EDITORS

*Johan H. Meuleman*

*Jajat Burhanuddin*

*Fuad Jabali*

*Jamhari*

*Oman Fathurahman*

## ASSISTANT TO THE EDITORS

*Heni Nuroni*

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE ADVISOR

*Richard G. Kraince*

## ARABIC LANGUAGE ADVISORS

*Nursamad*

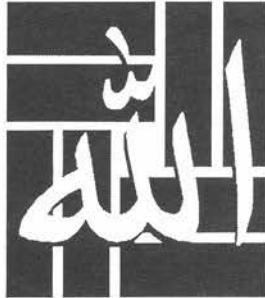
## COVER DESIGNER

*S. Prinka*

STUDIA ISLAMIKA (ISSN 0215-0492) is a journal published quarterly by the Center for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM), IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta (STT DEPPEN No. 129/SK/DITJEN/PPG/STT/1976) and sponsored by the Department of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. It specializes in Indonesian Islamic studies, and is intended to communicate original researches and current issues on the subject. This journal warmly welcomes contributions from scholars of related disciplines.

All articles published do not necessarily represent the views of the journal, or other institutions to which it is affiliated. They are solely the views of the authors. The articles contained in this journal have been refereed by the Board of Editors.

STUDIA ISLAMIKA has been accredited by The Ministry of National Education, Republic of Indonesia as an academic journal.



## Accelerating the Empowerment of Madrasah: The Policy of Islamic Education in Indonesia

**T**he empowerment of madrasah (Islamic schools) is an important agenda item for the Indonesia Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA). As the formal body overseeing madrasah education, MORA has taken many strategic steps to improve the quality of madrasah schooling. These steps have been taken in response to demand for the improvement of madrasah education aiming to produce graduates who can compete with graduates of other institutions, particularly public schools under the management of the Ministry of Education.

In recent years, MORA has been able to intensify its efforts to improve the quality of madrasah as a result of loans made available by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) specifically for this purpose. The ADB loans, as a component the Basic Education Project, aims to improve the quality of basic education in madrasah in 16 districts (*kapupaten*) within 5 provinces (*propinsi*): (1) Lampung Selatan in Lampung Province, (2) Lebak, (3) Serang, and (4) Pandeglang in West Java Province, (5) Tegal, (6) Brebes, and (7) Kebumen in Central Java Province, (11) Lombok Barat, (12) Lombok Tengah, and (13) Lombok Timur in West Nusa Tenggara Province, (14) Banjarmasin and (15) Hulu Sungai Utara in South Kalimantan Province.

---

The decision to improve *madrasah* through the Basic Education Project is based on a number of important facts. Although *madrasah* remains under the management of MORA, it has already been integrated into the system of national education. The process of this integration has been fostered by the introduction of laws governing the national system of education (Undang-Undang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional (UUSPN) No. 2 year 1989), which changed the definition of *madrasah*, from "religious school" (*sekolah agama*) to "public school with Islamic characteristics" (*sekolah umum bercirikan Islam*). The change of definition is significant, as *madrasah* has been designated as a "modern" educational institution and its status has been fully legitimized as part of national education system. Under the umbrella of this UUSPN, Islamic primary schools (*madrasah ibtidaiyah*) are treated the same as "primary schools with Islamic characteristics". *Madrasah Tsanawiyah* (Islamic secondary schools) are the same as "secondary schools with Islamic characteristics." Both MI and MTs are thus included in the education project. Additionally, *Madrasah Aliyah* (Islamic high schools) are categorized as "high schools with Islamic characteristics."

These changes necessitated several adjustments in the *madrasah* curriculum. Since *madrasahs* are no longer considered religious schools, they are required to use the national curriculum designed for use in public schools by the Ministry of Education. At the same time, however, they are expected to continue to teach religious subjects. Additionally, UUSPN 1989 has required *madrasah* to transform their institutional structures, curricula, and even their teachers and support staffs so that they are compatible with the national education system. From an institutional perspective, *madrasahs* are now public schools with the same position as other public schools; from a curricular perspective, *madrasah* teaches the same subjects as public schools; from the teaching perspective, *madrasah* is expected to employ teachers with the same qualification as other teachers in public schools.

The effort to integrate *madrasah* with the national education system did not stop at the UUSPN. The government also fought to align *madrasah* with public schools by introducing a new national curriculum in 1994. At a glance, it seems that the 1994 national curriculum abolished the religious subjects that comprised 30% of the courses taught in *madrasah*, as was recommended by the 1975 curriculum. However, if closely observed, the idea of "abolishment" was not taken to mean removing the subject of religion from *madrasah*, but to mean "reformulating" the teaching of religious subjects in *madrasah*. Islamic teaching is now not presented in the form of formal religious subjects, but it has been fully integrated into general studies. (*pelajaran umum*).

---

---

*On the basis of this compliance madrasah is felt to have been integrated fully into the national education system, yet it has also managed to retain its unique character, it has thus become an inseparable part of the national program providing 6 to 9 years of compulsory education for the general public. Madrasah is now expected to absorb 16,7% of the population aged 7 to 15 years. Thus, programs aiming to improve the quality of madrasah education and widen peoples access to both primary and secondary schools are intended to help prepare the madrasah sector to absorb at least 6 million new students at the secondary level (MTs).*

*The Process of Madrasah integration as described above, however, does not solve fundamental problems that have been facing by madrasah for a long time. Madrasahs are still far behind public schools. The following are some of the fundamental problems that have been identified.*

*Financing madrasah has proven problematic. The budget for madrasah education is very little compared to the public schools. Madrasahs generally do not receive funds from the Ministry of Education as their development funding remains under the Mora. Thus, funds to develop madrasahs buildings, to support the development of teaching materials, and to improve teachers' quality is limited. Moreover, as the majority of madrasah are owned privately, it can be assured that most of their sources of funding come directly from the people.*

*The politics of Islamic education have played a significant role in reducing the capacity of madrasah to provide general education. Early improvement policies favored religious teaching so that 90% of resources were channelled toward training for religious teachers. As a result, although madrasah has adopted all national curriculum materials, the capability of teachers is still low. 75% of all madrasah teachers have training only in religious disciplines and are not qualified to teach academic subjects. Even for the level of schoolmasters, in all madrasah levels, nearly 100% come from religious education backgrounds. This problem contributes to the low achievement of madrasah students in national evaluations particularly in non-religious subjects. Thus, the number of madrasah teachers (primary and secondary schools) who are mismatched and underqualified is quite large. Data from EMIS (Education Management and Information System) reveals that of teachers of MI (primary) and MTs (secondary) in 1998/1999 and 1999/2000 only 25% fall into the category of "qualified teacher," whereas 32% are categorised as "mismatched," and 43% are categorised as "underqualified."*

*The problem of teacher qualification is worsened by the fact that the majority of madrasahs are private schools, or were formerly private. Except regarding curriculum and national evaluation, in general, private madrasahs*

---

---

have their own independent policies concerning the instalment of teachers and schoolmasters as well as many other aspects of the schooling process. Therefore, the efforts toward standardizing education staffs in *madrasah* have been difficult to achieve.

Another problem is that the majority of *madrasahs* are located in rural areas that are economically weak. People who chose *madrasah* are often practically motivated. Apart from the fact that they are often inexpensive, *madrasahs* can meet the basic needs of people in terms of teaching knowledge and practical skills in religious affairs. In this context, *madrasah* is one of the best alternatives for rural Muslims to get access to an education. This is because basic knowledge such as reading, writing, and numerology—even if rather low in quality—can be attained while a basic religious education is also pursued. Problematically, however, students from such areas usually cannot afford the increases in fees that *madrasah* would need to demand if significant upgrade were pursued.

On the basis of those fundamental problems the *madrasah* as an institution has long suffered. The Basic Education Project (BEP) is designed to improve many aspects of *madrasah*: Such as learning facilities, teacher and staff development, and studies to better understand the needs and capabilities of Islamic education in Indonesia in general. In short the BEP project has three main objectives: (1) strengthening the institutional framework of MORA, (2) supporting the implementation of the national curriculum in *madrasah*, and (3) enlarging access to basic education.

Concerning teacher and staff development, it is important to explain here that MORA has sent a number of *madrasah* teachers and MORA staff to undertake post-graduate (s2) and other courses in overseas universities: such as the university of Sydney and Curtin University of Technology in Australia, and University Sains Malaysia (USM) in Malaysia. In these Australian universities, MORA students registered in the Faculty of Education take courses and conduct research on educational management. This two year pro-graduate program is designed to provide students with managerial skill in education—one of the crucial needs of *madrasahs* and also MORA in general.

At the University Sains Malaysia, 52 students from MORA recruited from various *madrasahs* in a BEP pilot project have been taking courses on non-religious subjects; namely mathematics, physics, biology, statistics, and other related subject matters. Thus, different from post-graduate programs at the universities in Australia that are concerned with management education, this one-year program in Malaysia is intended to prepare for mastery of non-religious subjects taught in *madrasahs*.

---