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Comparative Study of Education: Islamic Education System of Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam

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ABSTRACT

This study presents the differences between the Islamic education systems of Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam. These two Southeast Asian countries have unique characteristics in their approach to Islamic education. The research method used is descriptive qualitative with literature data collection techniques (library research). The results of the study show that this measurement provides rich insight into the dynamics of Islamic education and can be a reference for both countries in efforts to improve the quality of Islamic education. The fundamental difference lies in the emphasis given to religious studies in Islamic countries such as Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam. Religious studies are highly emphasized to form people who are moral, ethical, and have noble personalities. This reflects Islamic values that are an integral part of education and daily life in the country. However, both have similarities in including religious education in the curriculum as part of an effort to build students' character and morals. The main goal is to create a young generation that has strong moral values and good personalities, so that they can make a positive contribution to society and the nation in the future.

1. Introduction

In today's contemporary era, education faces a number of complex challenges that cannot be avoided as a consequence of the dynamics of the times (Ridwan & Maryati, 2024). According to the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the number of internet users in Indonesia in 2022 reached more than 200 million people, which shows a significant increase compared to previous years (Maulidi & Badriyah, 2024). A worrying trend is the rise of social media platforms that can endanger public morality. Education is one of the main pillars in the development of a country, because it is the foundation for the development of society and the progress of the nation.

Education has an important role in creating quality and highly competitive human resources (Amirudin, 2019). Each country has a different education system, tailored to the needs, culture, and national policies of each. Education is all the

effectiveness that an institution strives to provide to students with the hope that they have good competence and a soul of full awareness of a bond and its social problems (Pristiwanti et al., 2022).

Education is so important that a nation can be measured whether it is progressing or regressing. Education can produce quality human resources in terms of spirituality, intelligence and skills, and education is the process of producing the next generation of the nation (Razaqna & Putra, 2024). Islamic education plays a vital role in shaping and maintaining Muslim identity in the contemporary era. Through education, Islamic values and teachings can be instilled early on in the younger generation, helping them understand and internalize their religious identity (Fikri, 2024). Islamic education also serves as a fortress that protects Muslims from the negative influence of globalization that can erode Islamic values and traditions. This will help in designing a more innovative, inclusive, and competitive Islamic education system, so that it can produce a generation that is not only superior in science, but also has a strong understanding of religion and is able to contribute positively to the global community (Husna et al., 2024).

Islamic education in the modern era does not only focus on religious aspects but must also be able to form students who have broad insight, critical thinking skills, and readiness to face social, economic and cultural changes (Wartoyo, 2022). Therefore, the integration of Islamic values with science and technology becomes an important aspect in the development of a contemporary Islamic education system. Islamic education must be dynamic, flexible, and inclusive in adapting to the development of the times without leaving the essence of Islamic values.

Indonesia, as the most populous country in Southeast Asia, faces major challenges in providing equitable and quality education. With its cultural, linguistic, and geographical diversity, the education system in Indonesia must be able to meet the needs of various community groups spread across thousands of islands. On the other hand, Brunei Darussalam, with a smaller population and more consolidated infrastructure, is developing an education system that also reflects the national aspiration to become an education hub in the Southeast Asian region.

Comparative education becomes increasingly relevant because it brings together perspectives from different cultural contexts. This allows for a broader understanding of how education can serve as a tool for building more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable societies. This comparative study is expected to provide useful insights for policy makers, educators, and the general public in an effort to improve the quality of education in both countries. As the party that organizes education, the government must establish proactive education policies and be able to solve problems in order to overcome obstacles to achieving educational goals (Elwijaya et al., 2022). Through a deeper understanding of how each country addresses education challenges, it is hoped that innovative ideas can be applied to improve education systems in the future.

2. Methodology

This research approach uses qualitative methods using literature review methodology. Literature study strategy is a systematic approach used by researchers to collect data and information related to discourse, including data collection, analysis, management, and interpretation (Adlini et al., 2022). Data collection methods include library research, where researchers collect information by reviewing various sources, including scientific publications, library books, and other related materials related to the relevant research theme, namely the comparison of education in Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam. These data and information sources include various types of literature such as books, articles, magazines, mendeley websites, google scholar, and publish or perish that are relevant to the research theme. In processing data from literature sources, researchers carry out several stages including selecting topics, collecting information and data sources from books and articles, reading literature for new ideas, making summaries, and analyzing data for conclusions. Finally, the research results are compiled according to procedures, checked with the latest literature, and analyzed for relevance to provide an in-depth understanding of the urgency of understanding characteristics in learning.

3. Results and Discussion

Education System in Indonesia

Currently, Indonesia is a country with low quality of education. According to PISA, developing countries, namely Indonesia, are currently ranked 72 out of 77 countries, this is because the qualifications of teachers and the system in Indonesia are still low. (Hewi & Shaleh, 2020). Indonesia is a developing country and the basic education system still needs to be improved. Government support in some periods has begun to increase in the development of basic education in Indonesia. In the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia it is explained that every citizen has the right to receive education. In the opening of the 1945 Constitution it is explained that the goal of Indonesian development is in an effort to educate the life of the nation and state to guarantee every citizen in getting an education. However, in reality, the problem that is still often faced in the world of education is the high dropout rate among students (Khairani et al., 2025).

This means that education in Indonesia is not evenly distributed. The implementation of education in Indonesia has not gone as expected and the use of education funds has not been carried out comprehensively. Education problems in Indonesia can be solved by increasing support for the provision of free education. Government assistance in the form of BOS funds (School Operational Assistance) needs to be increased again and monitored so that this assistance can be used to improve school facility needs. The history of the curriculum records that Indonesia has experienced 12 curriculum changes. Since independence in 1945, the curriculum has changed in 1947, 1952, 1964, 1968, 1975, 1984, 1994, 2004, 2006, 2013, 2020, and 2022 (Manalu et al., 2022). Independent curriculum is a

new paradigm in education that aims to answer the challenges of the 21st century (Vhalery et al., 2022) The current independent learning curriculum emphasizes empowering students to organize their learning process so that students can develop their interests, talents, and skills according to their abilities. In this curriculum, students are required to be active in deepening their knowledge and skills, and applying them in real situations.

In Indonesia, all residents are required to follow a nine-year compulsory basic education program, six years in elementary school and three years in junior high school. This education system applies to all levels of education, from elementary to higher education. Previously, compulsory education for Indonesian people was set for 9 years, including 6 years for elementary school and 3 years for high school. However, it has now been increased to 12 years, including 6 years for elementary education, 3 years for junior high school, and 3 years for high school (Herawati & Mutiawati, 2019).

The levels of education in Indonesia start from the earliest level, namely Early Childhood Education PAUD, this PAUD education is intended for children aged 0-6 years, PAUD education is intended for children to develop, grow both physically and spiritually. Furthermore, after PAUD, it will be continued with basic education, this level is from grade one to grade six, so the total time is six years and continued with three years in junior high school. Furthermore, it is continued with secondary education, this is known or called SMA for 3 years of time taken. This higher education is broader, because in it there are D3, S1, S2, S3, and specialists. Meanwhile, school hours in Indonesia generally start from 07.15 to 15.15 (Halawa et al., 2023).

Talking about the ideal format of Islamic education, it cannot be separated from referring to the Qur'an and Hadith, because both are the great foundations in determining the good and bad of the life system. If so far we have always been confused by the many offerings of methods offered in order to improve the education system, then the smart step is to return to the greatest and most correct reference, namely the Qur'an and Hadith. Islamic education in Indonesia has been widely known since Islam entered Indonesia in the 7th century H or 13 AD, brought by Muslim traders. The education system used is informal, namely in the form of ta'lim and halaqoh institutions (Faizin, 2022).

Islamic religious education in Indonesia is organized by public schools, madrasahs and Islamic boarding schools. Islamic boarding schools provide education to students called santri and practice a system centered on the kyai. Kyai are local clerics who are involved in the establishment and teaching of knowledge and as leaders of the Muslim community. Islamic boarding schools are educational institutions that spread and broadcast the Islamic religion, a place for teaching and learning and as a center for developing a better society (Muali et al., 2020).

The age of Islamic Education in Indonesia has run in line with the age of independence of the Republic of Indonesia, because historical facts state that the

"seed" of Islamic education is the emergence of the spirit of independence. The seeds of nationalism at that time were sown by Islamic educational institutions, Islamic boarding schools, surau and mosques, so it is very logical that colonialism greatly limited the existence of Islamic educational institutions at that time (Dani & Pane, 2023).

In 1989, the National Education System Law No. 2 of 1989 was enacted. Based on this law, national education no longer relies on schools as before. National education thus includes school and out-of-school pathways, and includes academic, professional, vocational, and religious education. Islamic education itself, based on this, is divided into two groups, namely Islamic boarding schools, majlis ta'lim, and madrasah diniyah which are classified as out-of-school education. While madrasahs are included in the type of religious education such as elementary, middle, and high schools with Islamic characteristics. What distinguishes madrasahs from other public schools is the number of religious subjects which are formally between two and four hours per week (Hanipudin, 2019).

Currently, education in Indonesia is regulated by Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System. Education in Indonesia is divided into three main paths, namely formal, non-formal, and informal. Education is also divided into four levels, namely early childhood, elementary, middle, and high. Unlike education in general, Islamic education has its own characteristics so that it has a special meaning for the people and what is characteristic is that Islamic education emphasizes the search for knowledge, mastery and development, recognizing the potential and abilities of the individual in the individual's personality in experiencing the knowledge as a responsibility to Allah SWT.

So it can be concluded that Islamic education in Indonesia in public schools, madrasahs or Islamic boarding schools, namely students are taught about honesty, discipline and tolerance so that they can produce a generation that is not only intelligent but also has noble morals according to the teachings of Islam. In Indonesia, an open education system is also adopted, here it means that students are asked to compete with each other, develop their creativity as widely as possible and do something more innovative.

Islamic Education in Brunei Darussalam

Brunei comes from the Sanskrit word "Varunai", taken from the word "Varunadvipa" which means Kalimantan Island, and the Brunei area is in the Kalimantan Island area. Brunei is located in the Southwest of Borneo Island or Sabah. The number of people in Brunei is around 66,000 and 59% are mixed. The largest tribe in Brunei is the Muslim Malay, 90%, 1/5 ethnic Chinese and the rest are ethnic Indians. The main language used in Brunei is Malay. Brunei is also known as a rich country in one of the Southeast Asian countries, whose greatest wealth is petroleum (Septemiarti & Hairunnas, 2023). Brunei has a predominantly Muslim population with the largest ethnic group being the Malays. Therefore, the

Islamic religion in Brunei cannot be separated from the history of Islam entering Brunei.

In the 1950s, the Sultan of Brunei also carried out educational reforms by issuing several policies, including (1) forming the Sharia Deliberative Council in 1954, (2) forming the Department of Religious Affairs, Customs and Virtue, and (3) implementing Total Islamic Religious Education. In 1956, new classes for Islamic religious education were opened in 7 madrasas in Brunei. In 1966, a Malay secondary school was opened in Belait. In 1979, kindergarten education (TK) began to be implemented in Brunei (Aslan & Suhari, 2019). In 2009, launched a new education system, namely the 21st Century National Education System (SPN21) which implemented several changes to the education system, namely the structure of education, curriculum and assessment and technical education. SPN21 allows high-ability students to complete their secondary education in four years instead of five years. It serves the needs of students, by providing various pathways for students to choose programs that suit their abilities, interests, tendencies, growth and development. The Kingdom of Brunei has also promoted education, by providing dormitories and transportation for students free of charge without any charge. The enthusiasm of the King of Brunei to provide education to his people is very enthusiastic, where education is provided free of charge without discrimination, both those with high and low intellectual abilities have the same services in terms of education (Fadil et al., 2023).

The Brunei government has set three main areas in education, namely: a bilingual system in schools, the concept of Malay Islam Beraja in the school curriculum and the development of human resources including vocational and technical education. The general education system in Brunei Darussalam has many similarities with other commonwealth countries, such as England, Malaysia and Singapore. This system uses the A7-3-2-2 pattern which symbolizes the length of study for each level of education, such as 7 years of primary school, 3 years of junior secondary school, 2 years of senior secondary school, and 2 years of pre-university. For primary and junior secondary school levels, the Brunei education system is not much different from Indonesia. Basic education aims to provide basic skills for students in writing, reading, and arithmetic in addition to fostering and developing personal character. Every child aged 5 years is required to attend kindergarten for one year before being accepted into grade 1 of elementary school. The increase from kindergarten to elementary school is done automatically. At the elementary school level, from grade 1 onwards every student will take the end of year exam and only students who excel can continue to the next class (Abdurrahmansyah, 2021).

In formulating the aims and principles of the Islamic education curriculum in Brunei, there is Mohd Athiyah's view, he said: "Today's modern education requires Islamic education, namely idealistic education that is spiritual, moral and religious in nature. This makes us learn for knowledge and scientific delights. In this way we escape from ruin, crime and poverty, colonialism and chaos, as well as wars with all the disasters they cause. In order to get together to enjoy an eternal life, live together by helping each other and in a democratic and happy

atmosphere.” Specifically for Islamic Religious Education (PAI), the government/kingdom continues to prioritize it for the people to appreciate Islam as a complete way of life. With such a direction, the kingdom can hope that the Islamic state of Brunei will continue to exist and the Malay nation will be loyal and continue to reign supreme brilliantly, in line with the substance of the State's philosophy, namely the concept of MIB (Malay Islamic Rule) in Brunei (Wasiah & Fitri, 2022).

This means that religious education is seriously managed by the government, outlined in a clear curriculum, and meets the public interest. In the education sector, the Brunei Darussalam government prioritizes the formation of Human Resources (HR) who have morals, are religious, and are able to master technology. PAI learning is the same as general education, PAI is even prioritized. In primary and secondary education it is hoped that it will strengthen the basics of religion. In higher education, the kingdom hopes that its curriculum can produce ulama and scholars who have charisma. In the Titatah Association (2006), it is believed that "it is a historical fact that wherever religious education is weak, what happens is that the nation becomes weak or even paralyzed. Returning to the school/madrasah curriculum, including in the Higher Education Certificate, religious studies are included in higher education, briefly as follows

- a. Religious High School Certificate for Religious Studies (SAIII) Curriculum. Hasanah Bolkiah in three collections (concentrations): a) Sharia Collection: al-Qur'an followed by three subjects (1) fiqh/ushul fiqh, (2) tafsir/ulum al-Qur'an, (3) Islamic tarekh/tasyri'; b) Ushuluddin Collection: al-Qur'an is supported by three subjects (1) tauhid/mantiq, (2) tafsir/ulum al-Qur'an, (3) Islamic tarekh/tasyri'; c) Collection of Loghat: three subjects (1) Arabic qawa'id, (2) Malay, (3) English.
- b. Curriculum of the Raja Isteri Pengiran Anak Damit Intermediate Arab Religious School for Girls in three groups: a) Oral Subjects: Al-Qur'an followed by Arabic; b) Compulsory subjects: (1) Malay (2) Islamic fiqh, (2) monotheism, (3) tafsir/hadith; c) Elective subjects: (1) history, (2) languages, (3) natural sciences, (4) arithmetic, etc.
- c. ITQ Curriculum (Tahfiz al-Qur'an Institute) Hasanah Bolkiah: a) Oral Subjects: (1) al-Qur'an, (2) Arabic; b) Compulsory Subjects: (1) Arabic, (2) Malay, (3) Islamic Fiqh, (4) Tafsir/Hadith; c) Elective Subjects: (1) History, (2) Natural Sciences, (3) Hisab Science, etc.
- d. The curriculum of the Brunei Islamic School in Tutong is the same as ITQ: a) Oral Subjects: (1) Al-Quran, (2) Arabic; b) Compulsory Subjects: (1) Arabic, (2) Malay, (3) Islamic Fiqh, (4) Tafsir/Hadith; c) Elective Subjects: (1) History, (2) Natural Sciences, (3) Hisab, etc.

Realizing the importance of teaching religion for the strength of the state, Brunei combines science education with religious education. In higher education such as

the Technical College Brunei as well as in other vocational schools, in addition to offering science content such as electricity and electronics, Islamic Studies is also developing. Of course, Islamic teaching is stronger in religious and Arabic schools as well as in higher education that specializes in religion such as KUPU and the Al-Quran School which are directly under the kingdom and receive promising funding facilities and institutional infrastructure from the palace. (Wasiah & Fitri, 2022).

Thus, the government of Brunei Darussalam formulated an objective education model, where education is considered as a vehicle to produce religious people, with the correct understanding and principles, namely in accordance with the teachings of Islam. In this direction, the government of Brunei Darussalam also hopes that individuals who are planned and will be born will become citizens who are knowledgeable, skilled and do good deeds. Thus, special services for special intellectuals are given a kind of test to continue to a higher level without completing school at a predetermined time, but are given relief in the form of a special program, while those who do not meet the standards determined by the King of Brunei will continue again according to the previously determined school level time.

Comparison of Islamic Education in Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam

Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam have a strong commitment to Islamic education, but their approaches and challenges are different. Indonesia faces challenges in integration and quality, while Brunei focuses on preserving traditional values while facing modernization. Success factors include government policy support and the integration of Islamic values in education. Failure factors include limited resources, challenges in modernizing the curriculum, and dualism in the education system. National culture and policies greatly influence the form and effectiveness of Islamic education. Regional competition in ASEAN also encourages innovation and improving education standards, but also poses challenges in terms of regional collaboration (Listiani et al., 2024).

Islamic religious education in Brunei and Indonesia, the strong existence of Islamic education in Brunei Darussalam is supported by the position of Islam as the official state religion supported by the philosophy of "Malay-Islam-king". Strengthening Islam as the state religion and the king as the head of the religious house assisted by the Minister of Religious Affairs and strengthened by the consensus of the MIB philosophy (Malay Islam King) based on SPN-21 Brunei, substantially influences the vision, mission and objectives of the curriculum presenting PAI as important material in the Islamic State Education of Brunei. Unlike Indonesia based on "Pancasila", Islam is not co-opted, PAI is included in SPN (UU20/2003), only the implementation has an impression of discrimination, general education (it seems that this is national education) while religious schools with PAI dominance are public schools that are characterized by religion. Religious lessons in Brunei are more emphasized so that education forms humans who are moral, ethical and have noble personalities. This is in line with the educational goals of Brunei Darussalam, which are to form people who are moral

and religious and master high technology. The PAI curriculum in primary and secondary education is expected by the kingdom to strengthen the foundations of religion and direct graduates to be able to go to PTU and PTA. At the level of higher education, the kingdom hopes that its curriculum can produce charismatic scholars and intellectuals. On the other hand, the material or content of the curriculum is in accordance with the kingdom's policy of putting religion and science in second place. Several subjects such as mathematics and geography are taught by teachers using English (Pitriyati et al., 2023).

Education in Brunei Darussalam and Indonesia is an important aspect of the development of both countries. Brunei Darussalam has implemented the 21st Century National Education System (SPN21) since 2009, which emphasizes skills-based learning and abilities. In contrast, Indonesia implements the 2013 Curriculum, which aims to improve the quality of learning and assessment with a focus on developing students' character and skills. However, both countries face unique challenges in the education sector. Brunei Darussalam struggles to integrate religious education with general education and ensure a deep understanding of Islam among teachers and education staff (Zuraidah et al., 2024).

In addition, Indonesia is faced with an education gap between urban and rural areas, as well as a lack of quality human resources. The difference in education standards between public and private schools is also a challenge for Indonesia. However, both Brunei Darussalam and Indonesia have a strong commitment to improving the quality and accessibility of education. Continuous efforts are made to overcome challenges and improve education standards in both countries. Brunei Darussalam, with its SPN21, strives to prepare students with skills relevant to the needs of the 21st century. This system allows students to complete secondary education in four years, which is a significant innovation in the education structure. On the other hand, Indonesia continues to strive to improve the quality of education by introducing new curricula and various professional development programs for teachers. This comparison shows that, although the two countries have different approaches to education, both have similar goals to improve the quality of human resources and achieve the maximum potential of students. With continuous efforts and strong commitment, both countries can continue to overcome challenges in education and achieve the vision of quality education for a better future.

However, with this, Brunei Darussalam and Indonesia have similarities in the field of education, namely education in the State of Brunei Darussalam and in the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia has significant similarities, especially in junior high school education and curriculum regarding Religious Education. In both countries, junior high school education lasts for 3 years. In addition, both also include Religious subjects in their curriculum. Religious material is considered important and must be taught at every level of education (Yulianti et al., 2022).

The fundamental difference lies in the emphasis given to religious studies in Islamic countries such as Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam. Religious studies are

strongly emphasized to form people who are moral, ethical, and have noble personalities. This reflects Islamic values that are an integral part of education and daily life in these countries. However, both have similarities in including religious education in the curriculum as part of an effort to build students' character and morals. The main goal is to create a young generation that has strong moral values and good personalities, so that they can contribute positively to society and the nation in the future.

4. Conclusion

The education system in Indonesia focuses more on students' cognitive levels, such as memorization, academic grades, test scores and others. The education system in Indonesia does not understand that every child has different intelligence and expertise so that in the end, many children still do not focus on continuing their expertise in one field, this needs to be fixed in the education system in Indonesia to be more advanced and developed. The Islamic education system in Brunei Darussalam is a superior education system because it can be an example where the education system prioritizes a balanced set of knowledge and skills such as helping students make better career choices regarding the various educational paths offered in the future. And it is very important for both countries to continue to learn, innovate, and adapt by seeing the uniqueness of each in order to improve the goals of quality and sustainable education in the future. So that from the comparison and good practices of learning, it is hoped that it can improve the quality of education in each country for the progress of the nation and state in the future. By comparing education, it is hoped that it can create a perfect Muslim human being (*insan kamil*), which is the main goal of Islamic education, namely achieving worldly and afterlife life, so that it not only produces a generation that is intelligent in knowledge but also has ethics and noble morals.

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