



Government Policy and Islamic Education Quality Advancement in Indonesia

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Abstract

This study analyzes Indonesian government policies on improving national education quality and their implications for the advancement of Islamic education. Over the past two decades, education quality has become a central issue in the national education system, particularly following the implementation of the National Education Standards, the Education Quality Assurance System, teacher certification, the Teacher Professional Education program, and the Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka initiative. Employing a descriptive qualitative method with a library research approach, this study examines regulatory documents, ministry reports, books, and scholarly articles published between 2019 and 2025. The findings indicate that government policies have significantly strengthened Islamic education in both public schools and madrasahs. Curriculum reform, teacher professional development, and madrasah digitalization are identified as key drivers of progress. Nonetheless, challenges persist, including regional disparities in quality, limited human resources, and uneven institutional capacities. Therefore, synergy between the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology and the Ministry of Religious Affairs is essential to establish an integrated quality assurance system that aligns with Islamic values and supports sustainable educational advancement.

Article Information:

Received February 10, 2026

Revised March 22, 2026

Accepted April 28, 2026

Keywords: *Education policy, quality assurance, curriculum reform, teacher professional development*

INTRODUCTION

Education is a strategic sector that plays a major role in determining the direction of a nation's progress. In the context of national development, the quality of education is a key indicator of the success of developing human resources that are competitive, of good character, and of noble moral character. As stipulated in Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, the national education system serves to develop abilities and shape the character and civilization of a dignified nation in order to enlighten the nation's life (Akbar et al., 2025; Jamal, 2025).

However, despite the implementation of various policies, the quality of education in Indonesia still faces significant challenges. The World Bank's Education Review (2023) notes that Indonesia's 2022 results from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) still show literacy

How to cite:

Musthofa, I., Helmiati, H., Hasyim, H. (2026). Government Policy and Islamic Education Quality Advancement in Indonesia. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary of Higher Education (IJMURHICA)*, 9(2), 659-671.

E-ISSN:

2622-741x

Published by:

Islamic Studies and Development Center Universitas Negeri Padang

and numeracy scores below the OECD average. This situation indicates that efforts to improve the quality of education still require comprehensive improvements at all levels, in both general and religious education.

The quality of education in Indonesia is regulated through the National Education Standards (SNP), which consist of eight standards, namely: content standards, process standards, graduate competency standards, standards for educators and educational support staff, facilities and infrastructure standards, management standards, financing standards, and educational assessment standards (Badrudin et al., 2024; Darwin et al., 2023; Ikbali et al., 2024; Ulum, 2020). Through these eight standards, the government seeks to build a measurable and sustainable education system. However, their implementation is not always effective across all educational institutions. According to (Babatunde et al., 2025), there are significant disparities between schools in urban and rural areas, particularly regarding the availability of professional educators and learning support facilities.

In this context, government policy is aimed not only at expanding access to education but also at improving its quality. The educational reforms introduced through the *Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) policy since 2019 have been a crucial step in improving the quality of education based on the autonomy and creativity of educational institutions (Darwin et al., 2023; Kemdikbudristek, 2022). This program grants educational institutions the flexibility to develop curricula relevant to local and global needs and emphasizes character-based learning.

In addition, policies on Teacher Professional Education and teacher certification have become milestones in the professionalization of educators in Indonesia (Amelia & Rozak, 2025; Ati & Rosdiana, 2025; Loeneto et al., 2022; Syaekhan et al., 2025). The government views teachers as the spearhead of improving educational quality. According to Engkizar et al., (2026), teacher professionalism is directly proportional to the quality of the learning process and outcomes. Therefore, efforts to enhance teachers' competencies and well-being continue to be strengthened through training programs, professional allowances, and career development. The Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag) also plays a crucial role in improving the quality of Islamic education. The Madrasah Reform Program, implemented since 2020, is one of the policy innovations aimed at improving the quality of governance, the accreditation system, and the digitization of learning in madrasahs (Kemenag, 2023). This program reflects the government's commitment to making Islamic educational institutions an integral part of a high-quality and competitive national education system.

According to Pandika & Zaini, (2026), Islamic education plays a strategic role in shaping students' personalities to achieve a balance between knowledge and religious values. Therefore, improving the quality of Islamic education is not merely a technical matter but also an ideological and moral one. The quality of Islamic education will directly influence the development of a nation with strong moral character and integrity.

However, there are several obstacles that hinder the optimization of education quality policies in the context of Islamic education. First, there remains a gap between national policies and their implementation at the regional level. Second, professional training for Islamic Religious Education teachers is not yet evenly distributed. Third, limited information technology resources in madrasahs hinder the implementation of digital learning (Alatise & Akinfolarin, 2025; Binti Fauzi et al., 2026).

Therefore, there is a need for policy synchronization between the

Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology and the Ministry of Religious Affairs in establishing an integrated quality assurance system that aligns with Islamic values. The quality of Islamic education is not measured solely by academic aspects but also by the ability of educational institutions to instill spiritual and moral character in students.

As stated by [Kurnaengsih et al., \(2024\)](#); [Sanjani, \(2024\)](#); [Zhu & Liu, \(2023\)](#), improving the quality of education must be based on the principle of continuous improvement. This principle aligns with the Islamic value of *itqan* that is, working earnestly and perfectly as enshrined in the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him):

"Indeed, Allah loves a person who, when performing a task, does so with itqan (perfection)." (Narrated by *al-Baihaqi*). Therefore, the quality of Islamic education is not only the responsibility of the bureaucracy but is also part of a religious mandate to uphold the values of goodness and perfection in learning. Based on the background described above, this study focuses on government policies related to improving the quality of education and their impact on the advancement of Islamic education in Indonesia.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using a descriptive-analytical research design through a literature review ([Bingham, 2023](#); [Iphofen & Tolich, 2018](#); [Padil et al., 2025](#)). The data sources consist of primary and secondary data obtained from academic books, journal articles indexed in SINTA and Scopus, government policy documents, and official reports related to the quality of education and Islamic education in Indonesia. Data collection was conducted through a documentary study by examining, identifying, and critically reviewing various literature relevant to the research focus ([Kasmar et al., 2019](#)). Data analysis was conducted systematically through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions using content analysis techniques. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation and the researcher's diligence in reviewing references, ensuring that the research results are valid and scientifically accountable ([Arar et al., 2023](#); [Bengtsson, 2016](#); [Kara, 2023](#); [Neuendorf, 2019](#)).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Government Policy on Educational Quality in Indonesia

Educational quality is a fundamental component of national education policy. The Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, emphasizes that educational quality must be achieved through the implementation of the National Education Standards (SNP), which serve as guidelines for the delivery of education at all levels and in all types of educational institutions. These standards were first established in Government Regulation No. 19 of 2005 and updated through Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Regulation No. 28 of 2016 ([Darwin et al., 2023](#)).

The SNP consists of eight components that serve as benchmarks for educational success: content standards, process standards, graduate competency standards, educator and educational staff standards, facilities and infrastructure standards, management standards, funding standards, and educational assessment standards. Each of these components is interrelated, forming a comprehensive quality system. With these standards in place, educational institutions are expected to carry out teaching and learning activities that are efficient, effective, and focused on improving the quality of learning outcomes.

According to [Jamal, \(2025\)](#), educational quality policy reflects the

government's efforts to ensure that all students receive appropriate and high-quality educational services, regardless of their social, economic, or geographic background. Therefore, strengthening the quality assurance system has become a top priority in national education development.

The government has developed two main mechanisms for quality assurance: the Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI) and the External Quality Assurance System (SPME).

SPMI is implemented by educational institutions (schools and madrasahs) to independently monitor and improve the quality of education. SPME is carried out by external agencies such as the National Accreditation Board for Schools/Madrasahs (BAN-S/M) and BAN-PT to evaluate the performance of educational institutions based on specific criteria. The following table illustrates the structure of the educational quality assurance system in Indonesia.

Table 1. Educational Quality Assurance System in Indonesia

No	System Type	Implementer	Main Objective	Impact on Islamic Educational Institutions
1	SPMI (Internal)	Schools/Madrasahs	Ensuring quality through self-evaluation and continuous improvement	Developing a quality culture in madrasahs
2	SPME (External)	BAN-S/M, BAN-PT	Providing accreditation and quality certification for institutions	Enhancing reputation and Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTAIN)
3	Monitoring and Evaluation	Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology; Ministry of Religious Affairs	Ensuring effective implementation of policies	Synchronizing quality between schools and madrasahs

In addition to the quality assurance system, the government has also introduced the *Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) policy as a new paradigm for national education. This program emphasizes curricular flexibility, school autonomy, and student-centered learning.

This policy was created in response to global challenges and the need for an education system relevant to the times. In the context of madrasahs and Islamic educational institutions, the Merdeka Belajar concept is implemented as *Merdeka Belajar Madrasah Indonesia* (MBMI), which encourages creativity among teachers and madrasah principals in developing contextual curricula based on Islamic values (Kemenag, 2023). The following figure illustrates the shift in the national education paradigm before and after the implementation of the *Merdeka Belajar* policy.

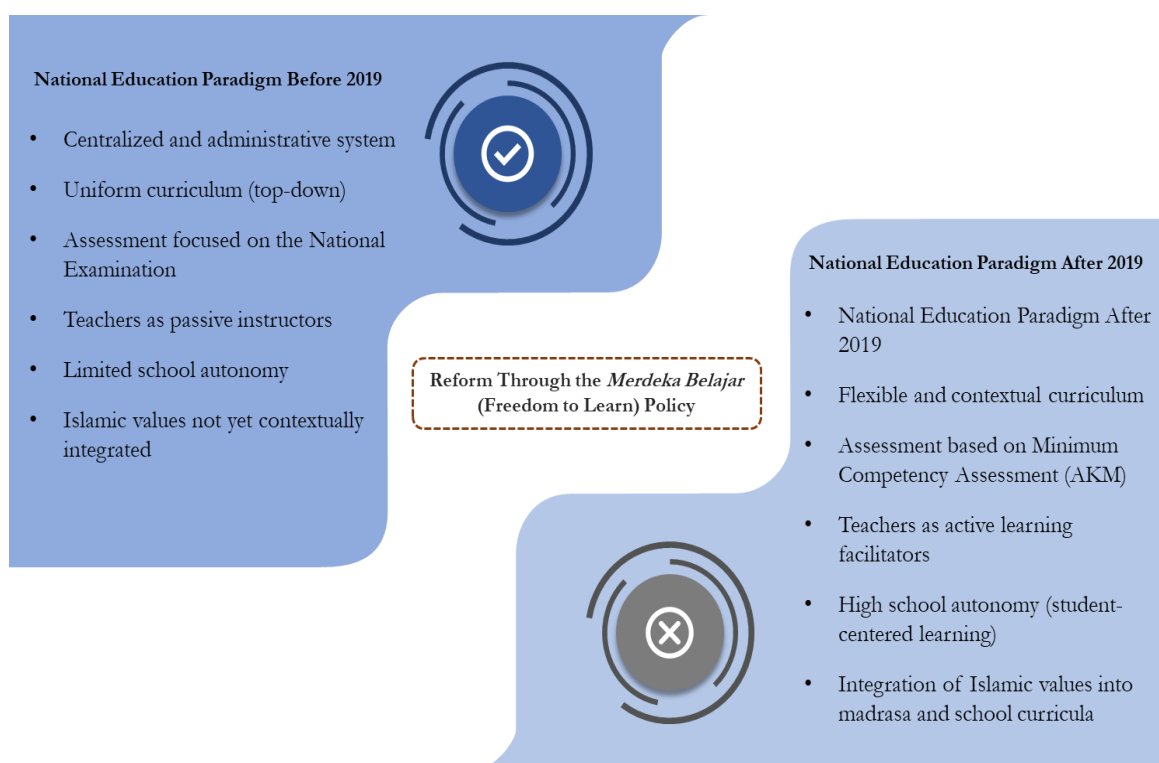


Fig 1. The Shift in the Paradigm of Education Quality Policy in Indonesia

The figure above illustrates the transition of national education policy from the old, administrative, and uniform paradigm toward the new “Merdeka Belajar” paradigm, which emphasizes flexibility, character, and the contextualization of Islamic values in education.

The “Merdeka Belajar” program reflects a shift in the educational paradigm from mere administrative compliance to an effort to foster a culture of learning that is reflective, contextual, and relevant to societal developments. This principle aligns with the concept of Islamic education, which emphasizes freedom of thought (*hurriyah al-fikr*) and the balanced development of individual potential (Pandika & Zaini, 2026).

Implementation of Education Quality Policies in Islamic Education

The Ministry of Religious Affairs, as the agency overseeing Islamic education, plays an active role in adapting national quality policies to the madrasah system and Islamic higher religious education. Through the Madrasah Reform program, the Ministry of Religious Affairs focuses on three main aspects, namely: i) improving madrasah governance, ii) professionalizing teachers and educational staff, and iii) integrating digital technology into learning (Kemenag, 2024).

The implementation of this policy has led to significant progress in Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia. According to data from the Directorate General of Islamic Education (Mardhiyah et al., 2023), 87% of madrasahs in Indonesia have gradually implemented an internal quality assurance system (SPMI), and 63% of them have received at least a B accreditation from BAN-S/M.

This improvement in quality is also evident in the competencies of Islamic Religious Education teachers. Through certification policies and the Teacher Professional Education program, more than 70,000 Islamic Religious Education teachers have obtained teaching certificates as of 2024 (Kemenag, 2024). This demonstrates the government’s commitment to ensuring the professionalism of educators as a key factor in educational quality.

According to [Jaafar et al., \(2025\)](#), Islamic education in Indonesia is currently undergoing a phase of transformation toward the integration of general knowledge and religious knowledge. Curriculum reforms implemented in madrasahs no longer separate rational and spiritual knowledge but instead emphasize a balance between the two to produce a generation of *ulul albab* who are intellectually, spiritually, and emotionally intelligent.

In addition to academic aspects, the implementation of quality policies has also contributed to improving organizational culture in madrasahs. Islamic educational institutions have begun adopting a Total Quality Management (TQM) approach that emphasizes continuous planning, implementation, evaluation, and follow-up ([Abishev et al., 2025](#)).

Table 2. The Impact of Quality Policy Implementation on Islamic Education

Aspect	Positive Impact	Negative/Positive Impact
Curriculum	Madrasah curricula become more adaptive and relevant	Not all madrasahs are able to design independent curricula
Teachers & Human Resources	Improvement in professionalism and welfare	Limited quota for Teacher Professional Education (PPG) for Islamic Education teachers
Infrastructure	Digitalization of learning and madrasah e-learning	Still lacking in remote and underdeveloped (3T) areas
Management	Quality culture begins to develop in Islamic institutions	Not yet evenly distributed in smaller madrasahs

The government's education quality policies have brought about various positive implications for the advancement of Islamic education in Indonesia. Some important implications include an increase in the professionalism of Islamic religious education teachers. The Teacher Professional Education Program and teacher certification enhance the pedagogical, social, and professional competencies of Islamic religious education teachers. Teachers are now expected not only to master religious subject matter but also to be able to integrate Islamic values into general education subjects. Strengthening the Integrated Islamic Curriculum. The “*Merdeka Belajar*” (Freedom to Learn) curriculum policy provides madrasahs and Islamic schools with the flexibility to develop contextual curricula. This strengthens the integration of academic knowledge, moral values, and religious character.

Digitalization and Innovation in Islamic Education. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of digital learning in madrasahs. Through the Madrasah e-learning platform ([Kemenag, 2023](#)), Islamic education is now more adaptable to technology and distance learning. Improved Accreditation of Islamic Educational Institutions. Since 2020, the number of madrasahs accredited at Level A has increased by 23%, indicating significant improvements in the quality of management and the learning process ([Kemenag, 2024](#)). However, challenges remain, such as disparities in facilities and a lack of financial support, particularly for small private madrasahs in rural areas. These conditions have created a quality gap that needs to be addressed immediately through affirmative policies.

Challenges and Strategies for Strengthening the Quality of Islamic Education

Challenges in Implementing Islamic Education Quality Policies. Although

government policies in the field of education quality have had many positive impacts, the reality on the ground shows that their implementation has not yet been fully optimal, especially in the context of Islamic education. Some of the main challenges faced include human resources, infrastructure, policy bureaucracy, and regional disparities.

Teacher Quality and Availability. Teachers are at the forefront of delivering quality education. However, the quality and distribution of teachers in Indonesia remain uneven. According to data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (Kemenag, 2023), there are more than 700,000 madrasah teachers in Indonesia, but only about 56% of them are professionally certified. This situation has led to a significant competency gap between regions, particularly between madrasahs in urban areas and those in rural areas.

Mahmud et al., (2025); Wyananda et al., (2022) assert that one of the main factors hindering improvements in the quality of Islamic education is the low level of teacher participation in continuous professional development (CPD) programs. Many Islamic Education teachers at small or private madrasahs struggle to access training due to financial constraints and geographical limitations. As a result, technology-based instructional innovations, curriculum digitization, and the integration of Islamic values into instruction have not been fully realized.

Limitations in Educational Facilities and Infrastructure. Facilities and infrastructure are key indicators in assessing educational quality. The World Bank Education Review (2023) reports that 38% of schools and madrasahs in Indonesia still lack computer labs, while 41% lack adequate internet access. This situation leads to disparities in the quality of learning between one institution and another. In fact, the *Merdeka Belajar* policy requires technological infrastructure to be in place as the primary support for implementing digital-based learning.

According to Rahman, (2023), the main challenge in the digitization of Islamic education lies in the weak management capacity of madrasahs to manage information technology. Many small private madrasahs still operate conventionally and are not yet able to optimally utilize online learning management systems (LMS) such as E-Learning Madrasah or Simpati Kemenag. Bureaucracy and Policy Coordination. Another obstacle that frequently arises is policy overlap between the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) and the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag). The two ministries have different regulatory and quality assurance systems, even though their objectives are the same: to improve the quality of national education. Jamal, (2025) notes that policy synergy between the two institutions remains weak, particularly regarding accreditation, curriculum, and human resource development. Consequently, implementation on the ground is often inconsistent between public schools and madrasahs.

Engkizar et al., (2025); Hasan et al., (2025) argue that the decentralization of education implemented since the reform era should have provided an opportunity for madrasahs to become more autonomous. However, in practice, many madrasahs still rely on technical guidelines from the central government, so policy flexibility has not been fully realized. Layered bureaucracy often slows down policy implementation. Regional Disparities and Access to Education. Quality gaps between regions also pose a serious challenge. Data from the Central Statistics Agency Ummah, (2024) show that the Education Development Index in western Indonesia is higher than in the eastern regions, particularly Papua, Maluku, and East Nusa Tenggara. This is directly correlated

with shortages of teachers, facilities, and internet access. These disparities affect madrasahs in remote areas, which often lag behind in terms of both academic quality and management.

Furthermore, the socioeconomic conditions of communities also influence educational participation. According to [Engkizar et al., \(2025\)](#); [Kassymova et al., \(2025\)](#), poverty levels and family economic constraints force some madrasah students to take on part-time jobs, which disrupts the learning process. These conditions demonstrate that educational quality policies cannot be separated from the social and economic context of society.

Ideological and Value-Based Challenges. In the context of Islamic education, another common challenge is how to balance Islamic values with the demands of global progress. [Pandika & Zaini, \(2026\)](#) emphasizes that the integration of religious studies and general education remains a fundamental issue in many Islamic educational institutions. Some still view religious education as a supplement rather than the core of character development. In fact, the quality of Islamic education should truly be measured by its ability to produce students who are knowledgeable and of good moral character.

Strategies for Strengthening the Quality of Islamic Education in Indonesia. In the face of these various challenges, a comprehensive strategy is needed that involves all educational stakeholders: the government, madrasahs, teachers, the community, and the business sector. Strategies for strengthening the quality of Islamic education can be implemented through the following five main approaches: First, strengthening human resource capacity. One of the key strategies for improving quality is through strengthening educators' competencies. The government needs to expand access to the Teacher Professional Education (PPG) program and teacher certification for madrasah and Islamic Education teachers, including through online channels and 3T regional scholarships. Additionally, information technology-based training, such as Digital Madrasah Training, must become a routine program so that teachers can adapt to developments in modern learning ([Kemenag, 2023](#)).

In addition to teachers, madrasah principals must also have their managerial capacities strengthened. [Awasthi & Walumbwa, \(2022\)](#); [Sliwka et al., \(2024\)](#) suggests that madrasah principals be provided with quality-based leadership training (Instructional Leadership) to foster a culture of quality within the school environment. This type of leadership has proven effective in increasing teacher participation and student learning outcomes.

Second, the integration of national and religious quality assurance systems. Coordination between the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology and the Ministry of Religious Affairs needs to be strengthened through the establishment of an integrated quality assurance system. For example, madrasah accreditation policies can be aligned with the National Accreditation Board for Islamic Schools (BAN-S/M) to avoid duplication and accelerate quality improvement in Islamic educational institutions. [Abdillah \(2025\)](#) proposes the establishment of the National Islamic Education Quality Assurance Agency (LPM-PIN), which would serve as a coordination body between the two ministries.

In addition, madrasahs need to be encouraged to independently implement the principles of Total Quality Management (TQM), including quality planning, implementation, evaluation, and continuous improvement. This system is in line with Islamic values of *itqan* (thoroughness and perfection in work) and *amanah* (moral responsibility).

Third, strengthening infrastructure and digitizing learning. Modernizing educational facilities is a necessity in the digital age. The government needs to

expand the Digital Madrasah program by providing computer equipment, internet access, and training in the use of Learning Management Systems (LMS) for teachers and students. In this way, madrasahs can be better prepared for distance learning, digital assessments, and technology-based curriculum innovations. According to [Hasan et al., \(2025\)](#), the digitization of learning not only improves efficiency but also opens up opportunities for collaboration between Islamic educational institutions and technology research institutions. For example, the development of the Madrasah E-Learning platform which is now used by more than 35,000 madrasahs throughout Indonesia serves as concrete evidence of a digital-based transformation in quality.

Fourth, the reorientation of the character-based Islamic curriculum. The Islamic education curriculum needs to be directed toward character development and the integration of spiritual values into academic knowledge. The “*Merdeka Belajar*” (Freedom to Learn)-based curriculum allows madrasahs to adapt learning content to local needs and universal Islamic values such as honesty, hard work, and tolerance ([Darwin et al., 2023](#)). This curricular reorientation aligns with the Islamic concept of *insan kamil* a person who possesses a balance of intellectual, spiritual, and emotional intelligence. Character-oriented Islamic education will produce students who are not only academically competent but also possess strong moral integrity.

Fifth, multi-stakeholder collaboration and sustainable funding. Improving the quality of Islamic education cannot rely solely on the government. Collaboration with the private sector, zakat institutions, and religious social organizations must be expanded. For example, corporate social responsibility (CSR) education programs from state-owned enterprises and private companies can be directed toward supporting the development of madrasahs in underdeveloped areas. Zakat institutions such as *Baznas* and *dompot dbuafa* also have the potential to become strategic partners in providing educational funding for underprivileged students.

Sustainable funding can also be obtained through economic innovations in madrasahs, such as the madrasah entrepreneurship program, which is now being implemented in several regions ([Sari et al., 2025](#)). This program encourages madrasahs to develop productive business units, the proceeds from which are used to improve educational facilities.

CONCLUSION

Government policies on educational quality through the implementation of the National Education Standards (SNP), quality assurance systems (SPMI and SPME), teacher certification, and the Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka program serve as strategic instruments in building an excellent and inclusive national education system. In the context of Islamic education, these policies promote the advancement of madrasahs through enhancing the professionalism of Islamic Religious Education teachers, digitizing learning, and integrating Islamic values into the curriculum, although they still face challenges such as regional disparities, infrastructure limitations, and suboptimal coordination between the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology and the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Therefore, improving the quality of Islamic education requires a comprehensive and collaborative strategy that involves all stakeholders and is grounded in the principle of *itqan* as a moral value in achieving sustainable educational quality.

The government needs to strengthen synergy between the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology and the Ministry of Religious Affairs in synchronizing educational quality assurance, expand online-based

training and certification for Islamic Religious Education teachers to reach 3T regions, and encourage madrasahs to develop character-based curricula integrated with the digitization of learning. In addition, funding support through the role of zakat institutions, state-owned enterprises, and the private sector needs to be optimized through educational CSR programs, and the establishment of the National Islamic Education Quality Assurance Agency (LPM-PIN) is needed to strengthen the coordination of the Islamic education quality system nationwide.

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International Journal of Multidisciplinary of Higher Education (IJMURHICA)

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