

Educational Autonomy and Its Implementation: An Analysis of Opportunities and Challenges for Islamic Education

Julian Dwi Putri^{a,1,*}, Yuliharti^{b,2}, Hariza Hasyim^{c,3}

^{a,b,c} 3Postgraduate Program, Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau State Islamic University 1 2 & 3, Indonesia 1 2 & 3.

^{*1} 22490124355@Students.uin-suska.ac.id 1; ² yuliharti@uin-siska.ac.id 2; ³ 3hariza.hasyim@uin-siska.ac.id 3.

*Corresponding Author 22490124355@Students.uin-suska.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

Educational autonomy is one of the consequences of the decentralisation policy in Indonesia. The implementation of autonomy provides space for educational institutions, including Islamic educational institutions, to develop curricula, management, and learning methods according to the needs and characteristics of learners. This article discusses the opportunities and challenges of educational autonomy for Islamic educational institutions. The method used is a literature review by examining various relevant sources. The results show that educational autonomy offers opportunities for strengthening Islamic identity, managerial independence, learning innovation, and knowledge integration. However, there are also challenges such as limited human resources, unequal facilities, the risk of radicalism, and weak quality standards. Therefore, synergy between the government, society, and Islamic educational institutions is needed so that educational autonomy can run as intended and produce Muslim generations with strong character and global competitiveness.

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Introduction

Education is a fundamental instrument in building a nation's civilisation. Through education, humans are shaped not only intellectually, but also morally, spiritually, and socially. In Indonesia, education is one of the sectors that continues to undergo change and renewal, in line with social, political, economic, and cultural dynamics. One of the major changes in the national education system is the implementation of decentralisation and educational autonomy policies. These policies emerged as a consequence of reforms that emphasised the importance of regional empowerment and improving the quality of public services, including in the field of education.



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Educational autonomy is essentially a form of independence for educational units in managing themselves, whether in terms of curriculum, learning, human resource management, or financing. This is confirmed in Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, which gives schools or madrasahs the freedom to develop their potential in accordance with the needs of students and the demands of the environment. With autonomy, educational units have greater opportunities to adapt to the times, while responding to the needs of the community in a contextual manner.

In the context of Islamic education, the issue of educational autonomy becomes even more important. Islamic education, which includes madrasahs, Islamic boarding schools, integrated Islamic schools, and Islamic universities, has specific characteristics that distinguish it from general educational institutions. Islamic education does not only focus on the mastery of knowledge, but also on the formation of faith, piety, and noble character. Therefore, educational autonomy is expected to provide greater flexibility for Islamic educational institutions to integrate religious values with modern knowledge, while also presenting a character-building and globally competitive educational model.

However, the implementation of educational autonomy is not without obstacles. On the one hand, autonomy provides great opportunities for strengthening Islamic identity, developing an integrative curriculum, and innovating technology-based learning methods. On the other hand, there are serious challenges, such as limited professional human resources, inequality in facilities between schools, weak quality standards, and the potential for abuse of freedom that can give rise to exclusive and radical ideologies. This situation requires systematic efforts to manage educational autonomy so that it truly contributes positively to the advancement of Islamic education in Indonesia.

In addition, the realities of globalisation, digital technology development, and the rapid flow of popular culture are external factors that also influence the face of Islamic education. If Islamic educational institutions are unable to take advantage of the opportunities offered by autonomy to adapt to the times, their existence could be marginalised. Conversely, if these opportunities are managed well, educational autonomy can become a gateway to the birth of a Muslim generation that is not only intellectually superior, but also spiritually and morally strong.

Based on this background, this article aims to examine in depth the opportunities and challenges of educational autonomy for Islamic educational institutions. The study was conducted through a literature review of various relevant sources, both from the perspective of national education policy and Islamic educational thought. Thus, it is hoped that this paper can contribute conceptually to understanding the implementation of educational autonomy, while also offering strategic ideas for strengthening the role of Islamic education in facing the challenges of the times.

Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a library research method. Library research was chosen because the focus of this study is to critically examine various relevant literature related to

educational autonomy and its implications for Islamic education, both in terms of opportunities and challenges. This approach allows researchers to obtain a comprehensive conceptual overview without having to conduct direct field research.

The data sources for this study consist of:

- Primary sources, namely laws and regulations related to education policy in Indonesia, such as Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, Government Regulations, and official documents from the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Religious Affairs.
- Secondary sources, in the form of books, scientific articles, research results, reports, and journals discussing issues of educational autonomy, educational decentralisation, Islamic education management, and global challenges faced by Islamic educational institutions.

Data was collected through documentation techniques, namely examining, identifying, and recording relevant information from various library sources. This process was carried out by thoroughly reading literature related to the research theme, then classifying the data according to the categories of "opportunities" and "challenges" of educational autonomy for Islamic education.

With this method, it is hoped that the article can provide a systematic theoretical overview of the opportunities and challenges of educational autonomy, as well as provide relevant strategic recommendations for the development of Islamic education in Indonesia.

Result

1. Results

Based on the literature review, there are two main aspects that are the findings of this study, namely the opportunities and challenges of educational autonomy for Islamic educational institutions.

1. Opportunities for Educational Autonomy

- Providing Islamic educational institutions with the freedom to develop contextual and integrative curricula.
- Encouraging innovation in learning methods, including the use of digital technology.
- Strengthening moderate Islamic identity through character education and religious values.
- Granting managerial autonomy in the management of human resources, infrastructure, and financing.
- Opening up opportunities for global cooperation with international educational institutions.

2. Challenges of Educational Autonomy

- Limitations in the quality and quantity of human resources, particularly teachers and educational staff.
- Disparities in facilities and infrastructure between Islamic educational institutions, especially between urban and rural areas.
- Weak quality standards that cause differences in quality between educational units.
- The risk of the development of exclusive or radical ideologies due to curriculum freedom that is not balanced with supervision.
- Limited funding, especially for private Islamic educational institutions that still rely on community donations.

2. Discussion

a. Opportunities for Educational Autonomy in Islamic Education

The implementation of educational autonomy provides ample space for Islamic educational institutions to be more independent in developing their educational vision, mission, and strategy. In the context of the curriculum, madrasas, Islamic boarding schools, and Islamic schools can integrate religious knowledge with modern knowledge so that there is no dichotomy of knowledge. This is in line with the idea of knowledge integration offered by many contemporary Islamic education experts.

In addition, educational autonomy also encourages learning innovation. Teachers can utilise information technology, e-learning, Al-Qur'an applications, and even artificial intelligence (AI) to improve the quality of the teaching and learning process. This is an important opportunity to prepare a generation of Muslims who are adaptive to the developments of the times, without losing their Islamic values.

Another opportunity is the strengthening of moderate Islamic identity. With autonomy, Islamic educational institutions can more freely emphasise the values of morality, tolerance, and rahmatan lil- 'alamin in learning. This is very relevant in facing the tide of globalisation and the moral crisis of the younger generation.

b. Challenges of Educational Autonomy for Islamic Education

Despite the great opportunities, the implementation of educational autonomy also presents complex challenges. First, limited human resources. Not all teachers and educational personnel have the managerial and pedagogical skills required for autonomy. This condition has implications for the difficulty of Islamic educational institutions to manage policies effectively.

Second, there is an imbalance in facilities and infrastructure. Islamic schools in urban areas tend to be more advanced and modern, while those in rural areas are still lagging behind. This can widen the gap in the quality of education between regions.

Third, weak quality standards. Autonomy provides freedom, but without clear standards, the quality of Islamic education can become inconsistent. Some institutions may develop rapidly, while others experience stagnation.

Fourth, the risk of radicalism. Autonomy that is not balanced with control from the government and society can be exploited by certain groups to spread narrow ideologies. Therefore, Islamic education must mainstream religious moderation as a bulwark against this challenge.

Fifth, limited funds. Many private Islamic educational institutions still depend on funds from the community. This situation often limits room for innovation, even though these institutions have managerial flexibility.

c. Implications of the Study Findings

These findings show that educational autonomy for Islamic educational institutions is ambivalent: on the one hand, it provides great opportunities for progress, but on the other hand, it has the potential to create new problems. Therefore, a comprehensive strategy is needed, such as:

- Strengthening the of and staff staff through continuous training.
- More equitable provision of funding and facilities.
- Establishment of clear and measurable quality standards.
- Integration of a curriculum that connects religious knowledge with 21st-century skills.
- The application of the principle of religious moderation in all educational activities.

With these strategies, educational autonomy is not merely an administrative policy, but also a strategic instrument for building an excellent, moderate, and globally relevant Islamic education system.

Conclusion

Educational autonomy as part of Indonesia's decentralisation policy provides ample opportunities for educational institutions, including Islamic education, to develop independently. Based on the results of a literature review, the main opportunities of educational autonomy for Islamic educational institutions include: freedom in developing an integrative curriculum, technology-based learning innovation, strengthening a moderate Islamic identity, and managerial independence. However, behind these opportunities lie major challenges, namely limited human resources, unequal facilities, weak quality standards, limited funds, and the risk of the development of exclusive and radical ideologies.

Thus, educational autonomy can serve as a strategic instrument to improve the quality of Islamic education if managed properly. Conversely, without proper planning and supervision, autonomy has the potential to widen the gap and create new problems in the world of Islamic education.

The government and Islamic educational institutions need to increase training for teachers, educational personnel, and school administrators so that they are more professional and ready to face the demands of autonomy.

1. Equitable Distribution of Facilities and Funding

There is a need for a more equitable distribution of education funding and infrastructure support, especially for Islamic educational institutions in remote areas.

2. Establishment of Quality Standards

The government and Islamic educational organisations need to establish clear quality standards so that freedom of management does not compromise the quality of education.

3. Promotion of Religious Moderation

All Islamic educational institutions must make religious moderation a key principle in their curricula and learning activities.

4. Curriculum and Technology Innovation

Islamic education needs to continue to adapt to developments in science and technology in order to produce graduates who are religious, intelligent, and globally competitive.

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