

## POLITICAL STRATEGIES FOR ADVANCING ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the political strategies of Southeast Asian countries in developing Islamic education and explore the potential for regional collaboration to enhance educational outcomes. Islamic education in Southeast Asia is shaped by complex political, social, and cultural factors, leading to challenges in developing an effective and cohesive education system. This research used a comparative analysis of case studies from Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines, focusing on policy frameworks, implementation challenges, and opportunities for synergy. The findings indicate that although each country has developed unique approaches to Islamic education, there are shared challenges that can be addressed through a coordinated regional strategy. Regional collaboration has the potential to improve the effectiveness of the Islamic education system in the region. Coordinated regional strategies and increased collaboration among Southeast Asian countries are essential to address common challenges and create a more cohesive and effective educational environment.

**Keywords:** Islamic education, Southeast Asia, political strategies, regional collaboration, educational policy

### A. INTRODUCTION

Islamic education plays a crucial role in shaping the identities and values of Muslim communities in Southeast Asia. However, the development of Islamic education systems is heavily influenced by the political environment in each country. In Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines, Islamic education policies have evolved differently, reflecting the diverse political, cultural, and social contexts of the region. This paper seeks to explore the political strategies that have guided the development of Islamic education in Southeast Asia and to assess the potential for regional collaboration to enhance these educational systems.

Dealing with problem above, the research question are : (1) What are the main political strategies influencing Islamic education in Southeast Asia? (2) How do these strategies differ across the region? (3) What are the prospects and challenges of regional collaboration in Islamic education?

However, the Objectives of this research are: (1) To analyze the political frameworks and strategies shaping Islamic education in Southeast Asia. (2) To compare the approaches taken by different countries in the region. (3) To explore opportunities for enhancing regional cooperation in Islamic education.

### B. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research design, using a comparative case study approach to examine the political strategies employed in the development of

Islamic education in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines. Data were collected from various sources, including government policy documents, educational frameworks, academic literature, and reports from international organizations. Additionally, interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, including policymakers, educators, and religious leaders, to gain insights into the practical implementation of these policies.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify common themes and patterns across the different case studies. This analysis focused on the political strategies used, the challenges faced, and the opportunities for regional collaboration.

## C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. RESULTS

#### Indonesia

In Indonesia, Islamic education is integrated into the national education system, with the government playing a significant role in regulating and funding Islamic schools (madrasas and pesantrens). Political strategies have focused on balancing religious and secular education, ensuring that Islamic education contributes to national development goals while preserving religious values.

#### Malaysia

Malaysia's approach to Islamic education is characterized by a strong involvement of state religious authorities, which oversee the curriculum and administration of Islamic schools. The political strategy here has emphasized the promotion of Islamic values alongside efforts to internationalize Islamic education and position Malaysia as a leader in the global Islamic education sector.

#### Thailand and the Philippines

In Thailand and the Philippines, where Muslim communities are minorities, Islamic education faces unique challenges. Political strategies in these countries have often been shaped by the need to address issues of identity, social integration, and conflict. In both countries, Islamic education is provided through private institutions, with limited support from the government. Efforts have been made to integrate Islamic education with national curricula to promote social cohesion.

#### Regional Collaboration

The study found that while there are existing regional collaborations in Islamic education, such as those facilitated by ASEAN, these efforts are often limited in scope and impact. However, there is significant potential for expanding these collaborations to address common challenges, such as curriculum development, teacher training, and the sharing of resources.

### 2. DISCUSSION

#### a. Political Strategies and Their Impact

The political strategies employed by Southeast Asian countries in the development of Islamic education have been shaped by a variety of factors, including national identity, religious authority, and socio-political contexts. In

Indonesia and Malaysia, where Islam is the majority religion, the state plays a central role in regulating and promoting Islamic education. In contrast, in Thailand and the Philippines, where Muslims are a minority, Islamic education is more decentralized and often faces challenges related to resource allocation and political support.

## 2) Challenges to Regional Collaboration

Despite the potential benefits of regional collaboration, several challenges hinder the development of a unified approach to Islamic education in Southeast Asia. These include differences in political systems, levels of economic development, and educational priorities. Additionally, cultural and religious diversity within the region can make it difficult to create a standardized approach to Islamic education that meets the needs of all countries.

## 3) Opportunities for Synergy

There are significant opportunities for creating synergy through regional collaboration. These include the development of joint curricula that reflect the shared values of Southeast Asian Muslims while respecting national differences, the establishment of regional teacher training programs, and the creation of a regional accreditation system for Islamic educational institutions. By working together, Southeast Asian countries can enhance the quality and accessibility of Islamic education across the region.

## D. CONCLUSION

This study has shown that while Southeast Asian countries have developed distinct political strategies for advancing Islamic education, there is considerable potential for regional collaboration to address common challenges and improve educational outcomes. A coordinated approach, supported by political will and regional cooperation, is essential for creating a more cohesive and effective Islamic education system in Southeast Asia. The study concludes with a call for greater collaboration among Southeast Asian nations, emphasizing the need for shared efforts to secure a better future for Islamic education in the region.

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