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**Policy Analysis of the Imtihan Wathani and Its Implications for the
National Education System in Indonesia**

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ABSTRAK

Pendidikan Diniyah Formal (PDF) memiliki peran strategis dalam mencetak ulama dan intelektual Islam, namun integrasinya ke dalam Sistem Pendidikan Nasional masih menghadapi tantangan, terutama terkait standardisasi hasil belajar dan pengakuan ijazah. Studi ini menganalisis secara mendalam proses perumusan dan implementasi kebijakan Imtihan Wathani (IW) sebagai Ujian Akhir Berstandar Nasional bagi PDF, serta menyoroti kontribusi spesifik IW sebagai instrumen strategis untuk mengatasi dualisme pendidikan nasional. Dengan pendekatan kualitatif studi kasus melalui wawancara, observasi, dan analisis dokumen pada Kementerian Agama, penelitian ini menemukan bahwa IW tidak hanya memperkuat legalitas ijazah PDF, tetapi juga menjadi mekanisme harmonisasi antara kurikulum keagamaan berbasis turats dan standar pendidikan nasional. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa, meskipun IW meningkatkan legitimasi dan kualitas tata kelola PDF, implementasinya masih terhambat oleh kesiapan infrastruktur, kompetensi SDM, serta ketimpangan sosialisasi antardaerah. Studi ini memberikan kontribusi empiris bagi pengembangan kebijakan dengan merekomendasikan perlunya penyempurnaan regulasi, pemerataan dukungan infrastruktur, dan penguatan kapasitas pelaksana sebagai arah kebijakan masa depan untuk memastikan IW lebih adaptif, inklusif, dan berkelanjutan.

Kata Kunci: Kebijakan Pendidikan, Imtihan Wathani, Pendidikan Diniyah Formal, Sistem Pendidikan Nasional

ABSTRACT :

Formal Islamic Education (PDF) plays a strategic role in producing Islamic scholars and intellectuals, but its integration into the National Education System still faces challenges, particularly in relation to the standardization of learning outcomes and the recognition of certificates. This study provides an in-depth analysis of the formulation and implementation of the Imtihan Wathani (IW) policy as a National Standardized Final Examination for PDF, highlighting the specific contribution of IW as a strategic instrument to overcome the dualism of national education. Using a qualitative case study approach through interviews, observations, and document analysis at the Ministry of Religious Affairs, this study found that IW not only strengthens the legality of PDF diplomas but also serves as a mechanism for harmonizing the turats-based religious curriculum and national education standards. The results of the study show that, although the IW improves the legitimacy and quality of PDF governance, its implementation is still hampered by infrastructure readiness, human resource competencies, and regional disparities in socialization. This study provides empirical contributions to policy development by recommending the need for regulatory improvements, equitable infrastructure support, and capacity building for implementers as future policy directions to ensure that IW is more adaptive, inclusive, and sustainable.

Key words: *Education Policy, Imtihan Wathani, Formal Diniyah Education, National Education System.*

INTRODUCTION

Education is a key pillar in determining the progress of a nation. In the context of Indonesia, the national education system (Sisdiknas) was developed through three channels:

informal, formal, and non-formal, which aim to expand access and guarantee freedom of choice in education for every citizen. However, this system has its own complexities, especially in integrating traditional-based educational institutions, such as Islamic boarding schools (pondok pesantren)¹. Pesantren, through Formal Diniyah Education (PDF), function as indigenous institutions whose main focus is the deepening of religious knowledge (tafaquh fiddin) and the preservation of classical Islamic scholarship (turats). This highly distinctive and autonomous curriculum, although fundamental to the formation of the character of scholars, often creates a prolonged dualism in the education system². In practice, PDF graduates often face serious obstacles related to the recognition of their diplomas at the national level, both in continuing to formal higher education and in meeting the requirements of the world of work, which requires state standardization. This dualism is essentially a policy issue that must be resolved to guarantee the rights and legality of pesantren graduates³. The core issue that arises is the absence of a national standard evaluation mechanism that can guarantee the legal and academic equality of PDF graduates in the national education system.

This transformative effort is manifested as an attempt to strengthen Islamic boarding school education standards so that they remain relevant to the times without having to abandon their traditional identity⁴. This effort is in line with the view of the Director of PD Pontren, Basnang Said, who emphasizes the importance of transforming Islamic boarding school education in order to increase competitiveness at the national and global levels. Therefore, amid the challenges of standardization and recognition, the government, through the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, has taken significant policy steps. In line with the mandate of Law Number 18 of 2019 concerning Islamic Boarding Schools and further regulated through Minister of Religious Affairs Regulation (PMA) Number 31 of 2020, the Directorate of Diniyah and Islamic Boarding School Education has implemented the National Standardized Formal Diniyah Education Final Examination (Imtihan Wathani / IW). This policy is a strategic instrument explicitly designed to measure the specific competencies of santri—particularly their mastery of classical Islamic texts—while also providing legal recognition of diplomas equivalent to those of graduates of other formal education systems, thereby serving as a crucial solution in bridging the dualism of Indonesia's education system.

¹ Ahmad Darlis, "Islam Sebagai Paradigma Ilmu Pendidikan," *Jurnal Tarbiyah* XXIV, no. 1 (2017): 91–93.

² Ahmad Syukron, "Kurikulum Pendidikan Diniyah Formal Dalam Pondok Pesantren," 2020, 8.

³ Suhela Yanti, "Analisis Kebijakan Pendidikan," *Lentera: Indonesian Journal of Multidisciplinary Islamic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2020): 11–26, <https://doi.org/10.32505/lentera.v1i1.1662>.

⁴ Abdul Wahid, "Pendidikan Diniyah Formal Wajah Baru Pendidikan Pesantren Untuk Kaderisasi Ulama'," *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pranata Islam - SYAIKHUNA* 7, no. 2 (2016): 292 – 302, <http://ejournal.kopertais4.or.id/madura/index.php/syaikhuna/article/view/3078>.

Table 1 Increase in Participants and Institutions of the National Examination (IW) 2018–2025

No.	Year of Implementation	Number of Institutions	Number of Participants
1.	2018	14	827
2.	2019	36	2185
3.	2020	49	3500
4.	2021	77	5044
5.	2022	86	6219
6.	2023	101	6727
7.	2024	113	8226
8.	2025	138	11077

Source: Compiled from official data from the Directorate of Diniyah Education and Islamic Boarding Schools of the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, updated to 2025.

The urgency and acceptance of the *Imtihan Wathani* policy can be observed through the continuous participation trend since the policy was first implemented. As presented in Table 1, the number of participants and Formal Diniyah Education institutions participating in this national standardized final exam has continued to increase significantly each year. Starting in 2018 with 827 students from 14 institutions, this number has skyrocketed to 11.077 students from 138 institutions in 2025.⁵ This phenomenon shows a positive response and a real need from diniyah education institutions to obtain formal recognition at the national level. The trend shows a strong indication that the *Imtihan Wathani* policy has transformed into an important instrument in the standardization of pesantren-based education. Therefore, an in-depth analysis of the formulation and implications of this policy, which has been in place for more than five years, is very relevant.

The implementation of public policy is a dynamic process. Although this policy has been introduced, in its development after this research was conducted, regulations continue to be adjusted at the Ministry of Religious Affairs level. For example, the implementation of *Imtihan Wathani* for formal diniyah education, which was held on January 28, 2025, featured a number of new innovations, including the use of computer-based tests and the strengthening of competency

⁵ Ahmad Syukron, Samsudi Samsudi, and Kustiono Kustiono, "Pendidikan Diniyah Formal : A Formal Curriculum for Pesantren in Indonesia," *Innovative Journal of Curriculum and Educational Technology* 9, no. 2 (2020): 63–71, <https://doi.org/10.15294/ijcet.v9i2.36645>.

standards for pesantren graduates in the form of religious curriculum alignment and examination model adjustments to ensure that Imtihan Wathani truly tests the competence of santri. Continuous evaluation efforts are also being made to overcome obstacles such as socialization and infrastructure readiness, so that the findings of the 2022 implementation in this study remain highly relevant and important to evaluate in the context of the latest regulations⁶. The relevance of the 2022 research findings lies in policy continuity, the persistence of implementation challenges such as socialization and infrastructure readiness, and the function of the data as a basis for comparison with the direction of current policy transformation. Therefore, the results of this study remain important as material for evaluation and reflection in the context of increasingly adaptive Imtihan Wathani regulations until 2025.

Several previous studies have discussed the issue of standardization and policy in Islamic education, although they did not directly address Imtihan Wathani. Studies by Husnul Yaqin and Norlaila focused on the implementation of PDF policy in general in South Kalimantan, examining the areas of curriculum, educators, and financing⁷. Although these studies provide important insights into the implementation of PDF and the dynamics of learning management, there has been no study that specifically examines the formulation, implementation, and macro implications of the Imtihan Wathani policy as an instrument for integrating diniyah education into the National Education System. This study provides an in-depth understanding of the operational challenges of PDF in the field, such as infrastructure constraints that can affect students' readiness to face national standardised evaluations. Meanwhile, research by Suroso, which focuses on PDF learning management at the micro level of certain Islamic boarding schools, highlights how the curriculum is managed to maintain the uniqueness of turats⁸. The results of this study implicitly touch on the potential conflict between the pesantren's unique curriculum and the demands of national standardization.

On the macro education policy side, research by Yulia Indahri, which analyzes the National Assessment as an evaluation option for the National Education System⁹, shows a paradigm shift in evaluation from output-based examinations to input- and process-based assessments. Although the focus is on AN/UN, this comparison is important to show that Imtihan Wathani occupies a

⁶ Direktur Jenderal Pendidikan Islam, "Petunjuk Teknis Ujian Akhir Pendidikan Diniyah Formal," Pub. L. No. 4412 (2022).

⁷ Norlaila Yaqin Husnul, "Impementasi Kebijakan Pendidikan Diniyah Formal (PDF) Di Kalimantan" 6, no. 1 (2022): 163–75.

⁸ Suroso Suroso, "Manajemen Pembelajaran Pendidikan Diniyah Formal (PDF) Tingkat Wustho Pondok Pesantren Assalafi Al Fitrah Surabaya," *Adabiyah: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 2, no. 1 (2018): 63, <https://doi.org/10.21070/ja.v1i3.1237>.

⁹ Yulia Indahri et al., "Asesmen Nasional Sebagai Pilihan Evaluasi Sistem Pendidikan Nasional National Assessment as a Choice of Evaluation to National Education System," *Jurnal Masalah-Masalah Sosial* | 12, no. 2 (2021): 2614–5863, <https://doi.org/10.46807/aspirasi.v12i2.2364>.

unique position as a national standardised test that still maintains an output competency-based evaluation model, unlike the prevailing evaluation trends in general education. The research gap is clear: previous studies have only touched on aspects of management, general implementation, or comparisons of general examinations, without specifically and deeply analyzing the *Imtihan Wathani* Policy Analysis from the dimensions of formulation, implementation, and consequences at the macro level of the National Education System.

Therefore, the novelty of this research lies in its sharp focus on the *Imtihan Wathani* Policy Analysis. Using a public policy analysis framework, this research not only describes the processes regulated in the regulations but also examines the behind-the-scenes dynamics, including problem formulation, implementation constraints, and policy consequences at the macro level of the national education system. This article aims to analyze the process of formulating the IW policy at the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs and to unravel its implications and consequences, both in the context of diploma recognition and curriculum synchronization, in order to contribute to the improvement of the religious education standardization policy in the National Education System, taking into account policy developments up to the latest year.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study. This approach was chosen because the study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the complex phenomenon of public policy implementation, namely the National Standardized Formal Diniyah Education Final Examination (*Imtihan Wathani*), in the specific context of the National Education System. The qualitative approach allows researchers to explore policy processes and dynamics in a contextual and interpretive manner, while paying attention to the meanings constructed by policy actors in the field. Meanwhile, the case study model provides space to explore rich and in-depth empirical data on the process of formulation, implementation, and consequences of policies comprehensively in an integrated system. The member checking procedure is carried out by submitting a summary of the interview results and initial interpretations to key informants to obtain confirmation, corrections, or additional information. This process is carried out gradually after each main interview session to ensure consistency of meaning.

This research focuses on analyzing the *Imtihan Wathani* (IW) policy, which is based on Law Number 18 of 2019 concerning Islamic Boarding Schools and Minister of Religious Affairs Regulation Number 31 of 2020 concerning Islamic Boarding School Education. These two regulations serve as the normative basis for the implementation of a national standard evaluation system for Formal Diniyah Education (PDF) units. The research is focused on the Sub-Directorate of Diniyah and Ma'had Aly Education, Directorate of Diniyah and Islamic Boarding School

Education (PD Pontren) of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, which acts as both policy maker and policy implementer. Through this focus, the study is expected to provide a complete picture of how IW policies are formulated, implemented, and evaluated at the national level, including the extent to which these policies influence the improvement of the quality and accountability of diniyah education.

The data sources in this study are divided into two categories: primary data and secondary data :

1. Primary data was obtained through structured in-depth interviews with key informants selected using purposive sampling. The main informants consisted of structural officials within the Directorate of PD Pontren, such as the heads of sub-directorates and sections in charge of curriculum, evaluation, and PDF institutions. Informants were selected based on their position, experience, and direct involvement in the IW policy process. The interviews aimed to explore their perceptions, experiences, and views on the process of formulating and evaluating the implementation of the IW policy.
2. Secondary data was obtained through a documentation study of official policy documents such as the Minister of Religious Affairs Regulation, the Director General of Islamic Education Decree, technical guidelines for the implementation of IW, as well as activity reports and statistical data on IW participants from 2018 to the latest data in 2024. This secondary data was used to triangulate the interview results and trace trends in policy implementation from year to year.

The data collection techniques used included three main instruments, namely in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews were conducted to obtain descriptive data on the subjective experiences and rationality of policy makers. Participatory and non-participatory observations were conducted to directly observe the dynamics of policy implementation, interactions between actors, and the decision-making process that took place within the Directorate General of Islamic Education. Meanwhile, documentation was used to collect formal and administrative data that supported the validity of the information, such as meeting minutes, decrees, technical guidelines, and data from the national *Imtihan Wathani* (National Examination).

The data analysis technique followed the Miles and Huberman (1994) model, which consists of three interactive stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. The data reduction stage was carried out by selecting and focusing on data relevant to the research objectives, especially those related to the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of the IW policy. The data presentation stage was carried out in the form of

narratives, matrices, and policy analysis tables to facilitate interpretation. Meanwhile, the conclusion drawing stage was carried out through an inductive process, namely constructing patterns and categories of meaning based on empirical data found in the field.¹⁰

To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, source, method, and document triangulation techniques were used, as well as member checking with several key informants to ensure that the researchers' interpretations remained consistent with empirical reality. In addition, an audit trail was conducted by storing field notes, interview transcripts, and activity documentation so that the research process could be transparently retraced. The results of the analysis were then interpreted using the Public Policy Analysis framework as proposed by¹¹, which emphasizes the stages of policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation of policy consequences. Using this framework, the study seeks to interpret the extent to which the IW policy contributes to improving quality, standardizing evaluation, and integrating Formal Diniyah Education into the National Education System. This approach also allows researchers to assess the effectiveness of policies from both empirical and normative perspectives, as well as provide recommendations for future policy improvements.

Result

1. The Formulation of Imtihan Wathani Policy

A. Landasan Hukum dan Perumusan Masalah

The findings of the documentation show that the Imtihan Wathani (IW) policy has a strong legal basis, which also reflects the process of policy formulation by the state in the context of formal diniyah education. The main basis for this policy is contained in Law -Law Number 18 of 2019 concerning Islamic Boarding Schools, specifically Article 21 Paragraph (1), which explicitly mandates that the graduation of students in Formal Diniyah Education (PDF) units must go through an assessment by educators and a National Standardized Formal Diniyah Education Final Examination (Imtihan Wathani) organized by the Minister of Religious Affairs. This provision marks an important transformation, whereby the IW, which was previously an internal examination, has now become a mandatory national standard evaluation instrument. The mandate of the law was then operationalized through the Minister of Religious Affairs Regulation (PMA) Number 31 of 2020 concerning Formal Diniyah Education, which stipulates the objectives, implementation mechanisms, and competency standards for graduation in the implementation of the IW.

¹⁰ Huberman Michael A B.Miles Matthew, *Qualitative Data Analysis*, n.d.

¹¹ William N. Dunn, *William-N.-Dunn-Pengantar-Analisis-Kebijakan-Publik-Gadjah-Mada-University-Press-2003_compressed-1.Pdf*, 2003.

The main issue that this policy seeks to address is the legal inequality of PDF graduates' diplomas with general education. Before the implementation of the IW, graduates of formal diniyah education faced practical difficulties in obtaining recognition of their diplomas as equivalent to senior high school (SMA/MA) education, thus encountering obstacles when continuing their studies at state universities or entering the workforce. This condition was confirmed by informants who stated that “This effort was triggered by the need for PDF graduates to obtain educational validation, good career opportunities, and proof of abilities and skills relevant to the field of religious studies. In this case, the diploma obtained can provide confidence to compete in the world of work”.¹²

This statement reinforces the finding that the Imtihan Wathani policy was formulated not only to fulfill regulatory mandates, but also as a response to the real needs of the pesantren community in obtaining equal and nationally recognized educational legitimacy.

B. Key Actors and Substance of Exam Material

The policy formulation process involves key actors at the decision-making level. The main actor in this formulation is the Directorate of Diniyah Education and Islamic Boarding Schools of the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, which acts as the initiator and drafter of technical regulations. The Imtihan Wathani (IW) policy formulation process involves various key actors at the decision-making level. The main actor in this policy formulation is the Directorate of Diniyah Education and Islamic Boarding Schools of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, which acts as the initiator and drafter of technical regulations for the implementation of the examination. The findings show that although the formulation of this policy is top-down in nature because it stems from the mandate of Law Number 18 of 2019 concerning Islamic Boarding Schools, the process of determining the exam material is actually carried out collaboratively by involving elements from the bottom up. The Directorate of Islamic Boarding School Education collaborated with the Council of Masyayikh and representatives of the Islamic Boarding School Association in determining the outline and substance of the exam material. This step aims to ensure that the subjects tested, such as Fiqh, Tafsir, Hadith, and Arabic, remain rooted in the authenticity of turats (classical Islamic boarding school heritage) and are not influenced by the general education curriculum.

The collaboration resulted in the formulation of IW material that focuses on diniyah sciences and classical Islamic texts as characteristic of pesantren education. This effort reflects the government's seriousness in maintaining a balance between national standardization and

¹² Nurul Huda, “Hasil Wawancara Dengan Kasubdit Pendidikan Diniyah Dan Ma’had Aly,” *Di Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Dan Pondok Pesantren Kementerian Agama RI* (Pada Tanggal 23 Februari Pukul 16.30, 2023).

the uniqueness of the pesantren tradition. This was emphasized by Prof. Dr. H. Muhammad Ali Ramdhani, STP., MT., Director General of Islamic Education at the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, who stated that “We involve the kiai to ensure that the IW remains an authentic exam, measuring competency and mastery of the classical texts-based curriculum by referring to the established Basic Framework and Curriculum Structure, so that pesantren do not feel forced to change their distinctive curriculum.”

Thus, these findings show that the formulation of the Imtihan Wathani policy has succeeded in building a strong legal foundation to resolve the issue of legal recognition of formal diniyah education certificates, while maintaining the epistemological authenticity of the pesantren tradition through harmonious collaboration between the government and the pesantren community.

2. Results of the IW Policy Implementation Stage

A. Implementation Process and Trends in Participation in the Imtihan Wathani

The implementation of IW is coordinated by the Directorate of Diniyah Education and Islamic Boarding Schools of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia and technically carried out by the Provincial Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs down to the implementation level in Formal Diniyah Education (PDF). Technically, the implementation of IW covers several main stages, including policy dissemination activities, participant selection, and the simultaneous administration of exams throughout Indonesia. This examination is held once a year in the even semester. Since 2018, it has been conducted using two methods, namely Computer-Based Test (CBT) and Paper-Based Test (PBT). However, for the past two years, only Computer-Based Test (CBT) has been used, which is adjusted to the infrastructure readiness of each institution.¹³

Table 2 Implementation Models

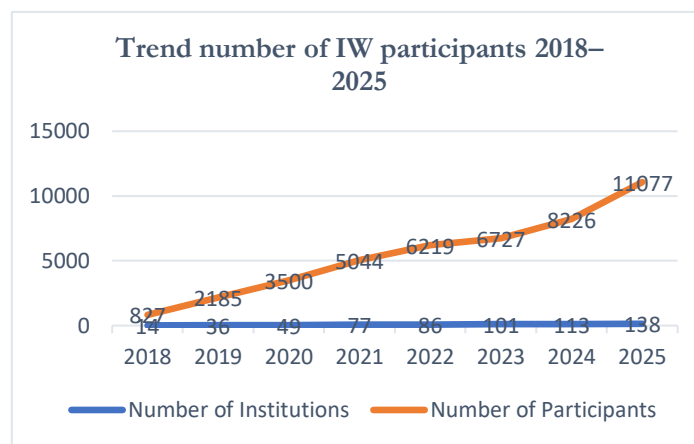
No.	Date of Implementation	Implementation Model
1.	March 10-12, 2018	PBT
2.	March 18-20, 2019	CBT & PBT
3.	March 14-16, 2020	CBT & PBT
4.	March 8-10, 2021	CBT & PBT
5.	February 26-28, 2022	CBT & PBT
6.	February 7-9, 2023	CBT

¹³ Subdit Pendidikan Diniyah dan M'had Aly, “Laporan Penyelenggaraan Ujian Akhir Pendidikan Diniyah Formal Berstandar Nasional/Imtihan Wahani Tahun 2022 M/1433 H,” *Di Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Dan Pondok Pesantren Kementerian Agama RI*, 2022.

7.	February 5-7, 2024	CBT
8.	January 28-February 2, 2025	CBT

In addition, documentation findings show that this policy has received a positive response from Islamic boarding school communities in various regions. This is reflected in the increasing trend in participation, both in terms of the number of participants and organizing institutions, since the first year of implementation. Based on national recapitulation data, the number of IW participants has increased significantly, from 827 students in 2018 to 11,077 students in 2025. This consistent upward trend shows that the IW policy has been well received by formal diniyah educational institutions and is proof of the government's success in institutionalizing a national standard-based education evaluation system in pesantren.

Figure 1. Trend in the Number of IW Participants (2018–2025)



B. Empirical Constraints in the Field

Despite increased participation, the implementation of IW policies at the field level encountered several practical obstacles, particularly those related to resource readiness and communication. These obstacles were identified through interviews and observations at PDF institutions and relevant Regional Offices of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Although the implementation of *Imtihan Wathani* (IW) shows a significant upward trend in participation from year to year, the results of the study also reveal a number of empirical obstacles in the field faced by the organizing institutions. These obstacles arise in various aspects, including technical, human resources, and supporting infrastructure.

- a. A number of Formal Diniyah Education (PDF) units in remote areas still face limitations in internet networks and computer facilities, so that the implementation of computer-based tests (CBT) cannot yet be optimally applied.
- b. Human resources (HR) factors are also a major challenge. Many exam supervisors and operators have not received adequate training on the national diniyah exam

administration system. This situation has resulted in delays in reporting and recapitulating scores in several regions.

- c. Limited operational budgets have caused the implementation of exams in several regions to depend on the self-reliance of institutions and the participation of the pesantren community.

Nevertheless, these various obstacles have not diminished the commitment of institutions and students to participate in the IW. The spirit of adaptation and support from the Regional Offices of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in various provinces has helped to maintain the smooth implementation of the exam nationwide. This shows that the implementation of the IW policy continues to undergo a process of refinement in line with the increasing readiness of infrastructure and resource capacity in the formal diniyah education environment.

C. Supporting Factors for Implementation

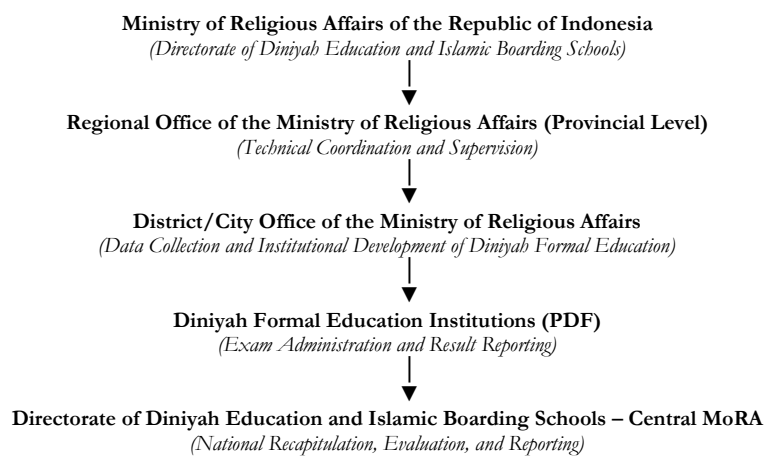
In addition to obstacles, this study also found various supporting factors that strengthened the successful implementation of IW. First, institutional support from the central and regional Ministry of Religious Affairs ensured effective coordination. Second, the active participation of Islamic boarding schools and the Council of Masyayikh in the process of developing and implementing the exam strengthened the academic legitimacy of this policy in the eyes of the Islamic boarding school community. Third, regular socialization activities, technical training, and exam simulations help improve human resource capacity and institutional readiness. In addition, pesantren values such as discipline, sincerity, and responsibility are also cultural factors that encourage consistent implementation of the policy.

D. Internal Evaluation of Implementation

As part of the implementation mechanism, the Directorate of PD Pontren routinely conducts annual evaluations through national coordination meetings and implementation reports from the Provincial Offices of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. This evaluation includes success indicators such as the level of institutional participation, the smooth running of examinations, the validity of results, and the effectiveness of coordination between implementing units. The evaluation results show a significant improvement in administrative aspects and infrastructure readiness from year to year. In addition, the evaluation results also form the basis for improvements to technical regulations, including refinements to implementation guidelines and updates to the CBT system to make it more efficient and adaptive to regional conditions.

In addition, the internal evaluation also highlights the need to strengthen the competencies of the human resources involved in implementing the National Examination for Formal Diniyah Education. Technical training for operators, supervisors, and examination coordinators continues to be enhanced to ensure a consistent understanding of implementation procedures and the use of computer-based systems. This capacity building has proven effective in minimizing technical errors in the field and accelerating the preparation of implementation reports. Consequently, the overall quality of the examination process can be maintained and continually improved in line with emerging needs.

Figure 1. Imtihan Wathani (IW) Policy Implementation Flow



Dessision

1. Analysis of the National Examination Policy Formulation

The results of the study show that the formulation of the Imtihan Wathani (IW) policy stems from a systemic need to end the dualism in education and the legal inequality of certificates awarded to Islamic boarding school graduates. Theoretically, this is in line with William N. Dunn's (2003) view, which places the problem formulation stage as the initial phase that determines the direction of public policy. In this context, the IW policy is a form of problem-solving policy, which is a policy formulated in response to the gap between general education and religious education regulations.¹⁴

Field findings showing the involvement of the Masyayikh Council and Islamic boarding school associations in the preparation of exam materials also confirm the participatory principle in policy formulation as described by Dunn, namely that the effectiveness of a policy is largely determined by the extent to which key actors are involved in the formulation process. The collaboration between the government and the pesantren community in determining the substance of the exam reflects a collaborative policy-making

¹⁴ William N. Dunn, *William-N.-Dunn-Pengantar-Analisis-Kebijakan-Publik-Gadjah-Mada-University-Press-2003_compressed-1.Pdf*.

model that is not only top-down but also takes into account local values and the needs of the beneficiary community.

2. Analysis of the Implementation of the Imtihan Wathani Policy

The implementation of the IW policy shows good coordination between the central and regional levels, as well as increased participation of institutions and students from year to year. These findings can be analyzed using George C. Edwards III's (1980) theory, which mentions four important variables in the successful implementation of policies : communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure.¹⁵

The results of the study show that communication and disposition are the main strengths of IW implementation. Intensive socialization by the Directorate of PD Pontren and the enthusiasm of Islamic boarding schools show commitment and a shared vision in implementing the policy. However, there are still obstacles in terms of human resources and infrastructure, especially in areas that do not yet have adequate infrastructure for computer-based examinations. This condition is in line with Edwards III's finding that a lack of resources is often the main cause of weak public policy implementation.

In addition, the tiered implementation pattern from the central Ministry of Religious Affairs to the regional offices and PDF institutions illustrates a functional and adaptive bureaucratic structure. This shows that the IW policy has been implemented systematically with a continuous internal evaluation mechanism.

3. Evaluation and Impact of the Imtihan Wathani Policy

Based on William N. Dunn's policy evaluation theory, the evaluation stage serves to assess the effectiveness and impact of policies on solving public problems. The results of the study show that the IW policy has had a substantive positive impact on improving the quality, legitimacy, and public trust in formal diniyah education. Santri now have legal recognition of their diplomas, which allows them to continue their education at state universities and compete in the world of work.¹⁶

Conceptually, this success marks the integration of the pesantren education system into the national education system, without eliminating the distinctive values of pesantren. The IW policy serves as a model of how national standardization can coexist with the authenticity of local traditions, a principle that is also emphasized in the theory of hybridity governance, where state regulations and community wisdom complement each other.

¹⁵ Chatarina Sitoresmi Triwiniastuti and Wahyu Sabatini, "Implementasi Program Ujian Nasional Di Sma Negeri," *Kelola: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan* 6, no. 1 (2019): 54–63, <https://doi.org/10.24246/j.jk.2019.v6.i1.p54-63>.

¹⁶ Elih Yuliah, "Implementasi Kebijakan Pendidikan The Implementation of Educational Policies Elih," *Jurnal At-Tadbir: Media Hukum Dan Pendidikan* 30, no. 1 (2020): 129–53.

However, several challenges remain, such as regional infrastructure disparities and uneven human resource capacity. This is an important consideration for future policy improvements to ensure that the implementation of IW becomes more effective, inclusive, and sustainable.

Conclusion

The *Imtihan Wathani* (IW) policy represents a significant milestone in the integration of Islamic boarding school-based education into Indonesia's National Education System. The policy formulation was driven by the need to overcome the long-standing dualism between general and religious education and to ensure the legal equality of diplomas awarded to Formal Diniyah Education (PDF) graduates. The involvement of both government institutions and the pesantren community in determining the examination substance demonstrates a participatory approach that balances national standardization with the preservation of pesantren authenticity.

In terms of implementation, the IW policy has shown continuous improvement through effective coordination, increasing participation, and adaptation to technological advances such as computer-based testing. However, challenges remain in the areas of infrastructure readiness, human resource capacity, and equitable access across regions. These issues highlight the need for ongoing support, training, and infrastructure development to ensure the sustainability and inclusivity of the program.

Overall, the IW policy has succeeded in enhancing institutional legitimacy, strengthening public trust, and providing broader educational opportunities for santri. It serves as an exemplary model of policy harmonization between state regulation and local religious traditions. Future policy development should focus on strengthening regulatory synchronization, increasing stakeholder capacity, and promoting innovation in exam administration to ensure that the *Imtihan Wathani* continues to serve as a bridge between religious education and the national education system.

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