

Recognised but Underfunded: A Systematic Review of Madrasah Policy in Post-Reform Indonesia

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Abstract. Law No. 20 of 2003 placed madrasah on the same legal footing as general schools, yet the sector's material position has remained uneven. This review asks how post-Reform education policy has shaped madrasah institutional viability in Indonesia. Reporting followed PRISMA 2020. Six search strings were run in OpenAlex on 10 September 2025 and supplemented by handsearching, producing 122 records, of which 32 studies published between 2015 and 2025 met the eligibility criteria. Extracted findings were synthesised thematically and interpreted through Ball's distinction between policy as text and policy as enactment, together with resource dependence theory. Legal recognition is consistently reported as settled. Financing, curriculum standardisation, teacher certification and digital infrastructure emerge as continuing sites of disadvantage, concentrated in privately managed madrasah. The evidence indicates that viability now turns on fiscal arrangements rather than legal status, which points towards differentiated per-student funding rather than further regulatory equalisation.

Keyword: education financing; educational policy; Islamic education; madrasah; systematic review

Abstrak. Undang-Undang Nomor 20 Tahun 2003 menempatkan madrasah pada kedudukan hukum yang setara dengan sekolah umum, tetapi posisi materialnya tetap timpang. Tinjauan ini mempertanyakan bagaimana kebijakan pendidikan pasca-reformasi membentuk keberlanjutan kelembagaan madrasah di Indonesia. Pelaporan mengikuti PRISMA 2020. Enam rangkaian kata kunci dijalankan di OpenAlex pada 10 September 2025 dan dilengkapi penelusuran manual, menghasilkan 122 rekaman; 32 studi terbitan 2015 sampai 2025 memenuhi kriteria kelayakan. Temuan yang diekstraksi disintesis secara tematik dan ditafsirkan melalui pembedaan Ball antara kebijakan sebagai teks dan kebijakan sebagai pemberlakuan, bersama teori ketergantungan sumber daya. Pengakuan hukum secara konsisten dilaporkan telah tuntas. Pembiayaan, standarisasi kurikulum, sertifikasi guru, dan infrastruktur digital justru menjadi ranah ketimpangan yang berlanjut dan terpusat pada madrasah swasta. Data temuan menunjukkan bahwa keberlanjutan madrasah kini bertumpu pada penataan fiskal, bukan pada status hukum, sehingga yang dibutuhkan adalah pendanaan per peserta didik yang terdiferensiasi, bukan penyetaraan regulasi lebih lanjut.

Kata Kunci: kebijakan pendidikan; madrasah; pembiayaan pendidikan; pendidikan Islam; tinjauan sistematis

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Introduction

Indonesia administers its schools through two ministries. General schools answer to the Ministry of Education, while madrasah, pesantren and other Islamic institutions answer to the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The arrangement predates independence in its logic and it survived the 1998 Reformasi intact. What the Reformasi changed was the legal position of the Islamic stream. Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System brought madrasah inside the national system on the same terms as general schools, closing a long period in which religious schooling sat at the margin of formal provision and was widely read, in policy documents as much as in public opinion, as the option families took when they could afford nothing else (Azra, 2012; Maghfuri, 2020; Ni'mah & Rifai, 2022).

Two decades on, the legal question looks settled and the material one does not. Most madrasah in Indonesia are founded and run by foundations, mass organisations and communities rather than by the state, which means the sector's centre of gravity sits in the private half of a system whose routine funding streams were designed around public schools (World Bank, 2020). Private madrasah therefore depend on transfers they must apply for, on community contributions that fluctuate, and on the administrative capacity to convert both into stable operations. Legal parity does not by itself change any of these conditions.

The spirit of institutional self-correction that the Reformasi carried also has a theological register in Islamic educational thought. Surah al-Ra'd, verse 11, holds that God does not change the condition of a people until they change what is within themselves. Read as a claim about institutions rather than individuals, the verse locates part of the burden of survival inside the madrasah itself, in its willingness to reform management, curriculum and teaching. The present review takes that reading seriously without letting it carry the whole argument, because agency of this kind operates within resource conditions that no amount of internal reform can fully offset.

Scholarship on the politics of Indonesian Islamic education has grown considerably since 2015, and it clusters into recognisable strands. Historical and policy-analytic work traces how successive regimes positioned madrasah within the national settlement and reads Law No. 20 of 2003 as the culmination of that process (Maghfuri, 2020; Ni'mah & Rifai, 2022; Syaiful, 2018; Wasehudin, 2018). Institutional and management studies examine what recognition looks like on the ground, in accreditation, school-based management and leadership practice (Anwar, 2018; Hidayat, Kultsum, & Wang, 2020; Nurdiansyah & Hudriyah, 2021). A third strand, largely quantitative, compares what madrasah and general school students actually achieve (Nawas, Darmawan, & Maadad, 2023; Patria, 2023; Umar, Kusaeri, Ridho, Ahmad, & Asyhar, 2022). A fourth, and the fastest growing, tracks how madrasah absorb national curriculum reform and digital policy (Astuti, Ismail, Fatimah, Puspita, & Herlina, 2024; Maylawati, Mulyana, Rizqullah, Nurjaman, & Ramdhani, 2025; Pahrudin, Irwandani, Aridan, & Barata, 2025).

These strands rarely speak to one another. Studies of recognition seldom quantify the fiscal conditions under which recognition is exercised, and studies of financing seldom connect their findings back to the political settlement that produced them. Most are single-site case studies, which makes each finding local and the aggregate picture hard to read. Very few adopt a political-economy frame capable of explaining why a sector with secure legal standing continues to occupy a subordinate material position. There is, to our knowledge, no systematic review that assembles this evidence around the question of institutional viability, and none that reports its search and selection procedure in a form other researchers can audit.

This review addresses that gap. It synthesises the 2015 to 2025 literature on post-Reform education policy and madrasah, and it reads that literature through two lenses. Ball's (1993) distinction between policy as text and policy as enactment separates what a law promises from

what actors can do with it under local constraints, which is precisely the distance the madrasah case exhibits. Resource dependence theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) supplies the mechanism, holding that an organisation's autonomy varies inversely with the concentration and instability of the resources it cannot generate itself. Together the two lenses reframe madrasah viability as a question of distributive politics rather than of legal status.

Three questions guide the review. First, what does the 2015 to 2025 literature report about the institutional standing of madrasah after Law No. 20 of 2003? Second, through which mechanisms do post-Reform policies advantage or disadvantage madrasah, and which madrasah bear the disadvantage? Third, what do those mechanisms imply for institutional viability and for the design of future policy? Answering them contributes an auditable evidence base to a debate that has so far rested largely on individual cases, and it offers policymakers a sharper target than the generic call for equality that the sector has already won on paper.

Method

Design and reporting standard

This is a qualitative systematic literature review. Reporting follows the PRISMA 2020 statement (Page et al., 2021), which governs how the search, selection, extraction and synthesis are documented. Synthesis is thematic rather than statistical, because the included studies differ too widely in design and outcome measure for aggregation to be meaningful. The review was not registered in PROSPERO; the eligibility criteria, search strings and extraction fields were fixed before screening began and are reproduced in full below so that the selection can be repeated.

Information sources and search strategy

The primary source was OpenAlex, an open bibliographic index that covers Indonesian journals more completely than Scopus or Web of Science, both of which index only a small fraction of the national literature on madrasah. Crossref was used to confirm bibliographic details, and publisher portals were consulted directly to verify records that Crossref did not resolve. Searches were executed on 10 September 2025 and restricted to works published between 2015 and 2025, in Indonesian or English.

Six search strings were run against titles and abstracts. Each string was designed to capture one facet of the review question rather than to maximise recall on its own:

No.	Search string
S1	madrasah education policy Indonesia state Islamic education governance
S2	madrasah private schooling funding financing Indonesia quality student learning outcomes
S3	Indonesia education decentralization politics religion state Ministry of Religious Affairs Islamic schooling
S4	Kurikulum Merdeka madrasah implementation teacher readiness Islamic school Indonesia curriculum policy
S5	digital divide technology infrastructure madrasah Islamic school Indonesia digitalization readiness
S6	madrasah financing BOS operational assistance funding disparity private madrasah Indonesia budget policy

Table 1. Search strings executed in OpenAlex, 10 September 2026. Source: authors.

Each string returned a relevance-ranked result set from which the top records were retained, giving 115 records in total. Handsearching of the reference lists of the seven studies that formed the evidence base of an earlier draft of this review added a further 7 records, for 122 records identified.

Eligibility criteria

Dimension	Included	Excluded
Context	Formal madrasah (MI, MTs, MA) or Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia	Islamic education outside Indonesia; Islamic higher education
Focus	Post-Reform education policy or politics and its consequences for institutional standing, financing, curriculum, teacher policy or infrastructure	Classroom pedagogy or subject didactics with no policy dimension
Type of work	Peer-reviewed article, scholarly book chapter, or institutional research report with a stated method	Opinion pieces, book reviews, devotional essays, conference abstracts
Period	Published 2015-2025	Published before 2015
Language	Indonesian or English	Other languages
Verifiability	Bibliographic record resolvable in Crossref, OpenAlex or a publisher portal	Records that could not be traced to a verifiable source

Table 2. Eligibility criteria. Source: authors.

The verifiability criterion deserves a word, because it is unusual. During preparation of this review two records cited in an earlier draft could not be traced to any indexed source or publisher portal, and four further records carried author names, page ranges or digital object identifiers that did not match the published version. All were corrected or removed. Applying an explicit verifiability screen is a defensible response to a literature in which bibliographic drift is common, and we recommend it as routine practice.

Selection process

Deduplication removed 11 records that appeared under more than one search string. The remaining 111 records were screened on title and abstract against the criteria in Table 2, and 68 were excluded at that stage. The 43 records taken forward were assessed on the full abstract together with the full text where open access permitted. Eleven were excluded at this stage: five had no policy dimension, three did not concern madrasah in Indonesia, two could not be verified bibliographically, and one fell outside the publication window. Thirty-two studies entered the synthesis. Table 3 reports the flow.

Stage	n
Records identified in OpenAlex (six search strings)	115
Records identified by handsearching reference lists	7
Total records identified	122
Duplicate records removed	11
Records screened on title and abstract	111
Records excluded at screening	68
Records assessed for eligibility	43
Records excluded at eligibility assessment	11
no policy dimension	5
not madrasah in Indonesia	3
bibliographic record not verifiable	2

Stage	n
outside the 2015-2025 window	1
Studies included in the synthesis	32

Table 3. PRISMA 2020 flow of records. Source: authors.

Data extraction and appraisal

For each included study we extracted author, year, publication venue, research design, sample or corpus, the policy instrument examined, the type of madrasah concerned, and the principal finding relevant to institutional viability. Extraction was recorded in a single spreadsheet that constitutes the audit trail for the review.

Because the corpus mixes quantitative, qualitative and document-analytic work, no single appraisal instrument fitted all of it. We therefore applied five common criteria: whether the aim was stated explicitly, whether the method was described in enough detail to be repeated, whether the evidence base was specified, whether the analytic procedure was transparent, and whether the study addressed the review question directly. Studies meeting four or five criteria were rated high, two or three moderate, and fewer than two limited. Twelve studies were rated high, fourteen moderate and six limited. Studies rated limited were retained, since excluding them would have removed most of the Indonesian-language policy commentary, but no claim in the synthesis rests on a limited-quality study alone.

Synthesis

Synthesis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014). In the condensation stage, each extracted finding was reduced to a single analytic statement about a policy instrument and its consequence. In the display stage, statements were arranged in a matrix of instrument by type of madrasah, which made the concentration of disadvantage in privately managed institutions visible. In the verification stage, provisional themes were tested against the full extraction sheet, and any theme that could not be supported by at least three studies from more than one design was either merged or dropped. Six themes survived, and they organise the section that follows.

Trustworthiness and limitations of the method

Credibility rests on the pre-specified criteria and on the verifiability screen. Dependability rests on the audit trail, which records every inclusion and exclusion decision with its reason. Confirmability rests on the search strings and dates reported above, which allow another researcher to reconstruct the corpus. Transferability is deliberately bounded: the findings speak to Indonesian madrasah under a dual-ministry system and should not be read as claims about Islamic schooling elsewhere.

Three limitations follow from the design. Retrieval was relevance-ranked rather than exhaustive, so the review cannot claim to have identified every eligible study. Eligibility assessment relied on abstracts for records without open access, which risks misclassifying studies whose abstracts understate their policy content. Screening and extraction were performed by the author team without formal double-coding, so no inter-rater agreement statistic is reported. Each of these limitations pushes in the direction of under-inclusion rather than of inflated findings, but readers should weigh the synthesis accordingly.

Result and Discussion

The 32 included studies distribute unevenly across the review's concerns, and the distribution is itself informative. Table 4 summarises the corpus by theme.

Theme	n	Principal claim in the evidence
Recognition and legal standing	7	Law No. 20 of 2003 resolved the question of legal parity; the dispute has moved elsewhere
Financing and resource dependence	8	Disadvantage concentrates in privately managed madrasah and is fiscal rather than legal in origin
Curriculum integration and standardisation	7	Integration raises workload for students and teachers, and also generates institutional differentiation
Teacher policy and administrative load	3	Certification improves welfare while adding administrative work that competes with teaching
Digital infrastructure	3	Digital policy has become a new stratifier, with infrastructure the binding constraint
Outcome evidence	4	Achievement and wellbeing comparisons complicate any straightforward deficit narrative

Table 4. Distribution of the 32 included studies by theme. Source: authors.

Recognition is settled, and that is the point

Across seven studies the finding is consistent. Law No. 20 of 2003 ended the ambiguity about whether madrasah belong to the national education system, and subsequent instruments extended the consequences of that decision into accreditation, national standards and school-based management (Dasopang, Iswantir, Khamim, Siregar, & Lindra, 2024; Nurdiansyah & Hudriyah, 2021; Selvia, 2024). Historical accounts place the change in a longer arc: Maghfuri (2020) reads the 2003 law as the settlement of a political struggle that began under the New Order, and Ni'mah and Rifai (2022) show that every regime since independence had used madrasah policy as an instrument of state consolidation, with the Reformasi differing in direction rather than in kind.

Two of these studies are also the most cautious. Wasehudin (2018) and Syaiful (2018) both report that regulatory strengthening was not matched by implementation, and both were published more than fifteen years after the law. Their caution is the earliest version of the pattern this review documents. Read through Ball's (1993) framework, the corpus describes a policy text that succeeded completely and an enactment that did not follow. The text produced parity of status; enactment operates through funding channels, staffing rules and reporting systems that were built for a school system madrasah had historically sat outside. Recognition, in other words, was the easy part, and treating it as the achievement risks obscuring what recognition failed to deliver.

Financing is where the disadvantage sits

The eight financing studies converge on a single structural fact. Indonesia allocates a constitutionally mandated share of the state budget to education, yet that allocation reaches public schools through routine, formula-driven channels and reaches private madrasah through applications, verification and vertical bureaucratic chains under the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kultsum, Parinduri, & Karim, 2022; Muttaqin, 2018; World Bank, 2020). Kultsum and colleagues, working across two regencies with madrasah heads and supervisors, report that regional autonomy produced no curricular divergence between public and private Islamic schools but did produce a divergence in institutional capacity, funding and staffing. Muttaqin's multilevel analysis of national data locates the same disparity in a broader pattern in which infrastructural and political capital, not household preference, drive unequal access.

The case-level literature shows how this operates. Kahfi, Sanusi, Hanafiah and Rostini (2021) find financing management in two private Madrasah Aliyah to be planned and supervised but chronically under-resourced, and Anwar (2018) identifies unstable financial planning as one of several constraints on private Islamic secondary schools alongside low parental demand and limited public information. Hidayat, Kultsum and Wang (2020), comparing madrasah leadership

across western, central and eastern Indonesia, report that principals in the west and centre are constrained mainly by infrastructure and financial support, and those in the east by teacher performance as well. The geography of the constraint varies; its fiscal character does not.

Two studies extend the argument beyond madrasah proper. Azzahra (2020) analyses the 2019 Pesantren Law and argues that the state funding it unlocked arrives packaged with quality-assurance obligations, so that money purchases standardisation, and institutional distinctiveness is what is traded for it. Hartati, Satoto, Dewi and Diar (2025) show that where public funding is thin, community fundraising fills the gap and opens a channel for informal levies, which converts a financing shortfall into a governance risk. Both findings are readable directly from Pfeffer and Salancik (1978): where a resource is concentrated in one supplier and its flow is uncertain, the dependent organisation surrenders discretion, and where the formal supply fails, it turns to informal ones that carry their own costs.

This is the review's central analytic claim. The threat to madrasah viability is no longer the threat of non-recognition. It is the threat of dependence, and the mechanism is specific enough to be addressed: madrasah receive their resources through a channel with higher transaction costs and lower predictability than the one serving comparable public schools.

Curriculum integration produces both burden and differentiation

Seven studies address what national curriculum policy does inside madrasah, and their findings pull in two directions. The burden side is well evidenced. Ulum and Ekaningrum (2025) trace the emergence of the integrated madrasah curriculum and identify teacher competency and infrastructure as the recurring implementation constraints. Laila, Mufarokah, Anwar and Mudhofar (2025), studying pesantren-based madrasah, document overlapping material, limited instructional hours and the obligation to satisfy both national and pesantren evaluation standards, which is the phenomenon usually described as a double burden. Astuti, Ismail, Fatimah, Puspita and Herlina (2024) find that Merdeka Curriculum implementation in madrasah stalls less on rejection than on administrative unpreparedness and incomplete understanding of the co-curricular components.

The differentiation side is weaker in the evidence but real. Ainissyifa, Nasrullah and Fatonah (2024) show that where madrasah leadership manages the planning and evaluation cycle deliberately, curriculum autonomy becomes usable rather than merely nominal. Asfiati (2023) reports the same for teacher creativity in three state Madrasah Aliyah, conditional on institutional and governmental support. Daher (2022) reads the 2019 ministerial decree on the madrasah religious curriculum as a considered repositioning towards religious moderation and inclusive citizenship rather than as a defensive move, and Akrim, Setiawan, Selamat and Ginting (2022) find, in a survey of curriculum specialists, that curriculum development proceeds more smoothly where cultural and pedagogical resources are already strong.

The two directions are not in conflict once resource position is held constant. Integration is a burden for institutions without the staffing and administrative slack to absorb it, and a differentiator for those that have it. That reading is consistent with Ball's account of enactment as something actors do with a text under material constraint rather than something the text does to them, and it means curriculum policy has been amplifying an existing distribution rather than creating a new one.

Teacher policy improves welfare and consumes teaching time

Three studies address teacher policy, and the number is itself a finding: teacher policy is under-researched relative to its importance in the sector. Anjarsari (2022) reports that certification raised welfare and social recognition while the twenty-four-hour teaching load requirement attached to it displaced other professional work, and she concludes that the policy's net effect on quality is

ambiguous. This study is frequently cited in Indonesian discussions of madrasah teachers, although it does not sample madrasah teachers specifically, and readers should treat its transfer to the madrasah case as an inference rather than a finding.

Mulyana, Kurahman and Fauzi (2023) examine the teacher professional education programme run under the Ministry of Religious Affairs and report high pass rates alongside marked variation in performance across cohorts, which suggests the certification pipeline is functioning as a credentialing mechanism more reliably than as a levelling one. Priatmoko, Santoso, Dewi and Sugiri (2024) find Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teachers broadly ready for the Merdeka Curriculum but weakest precisely on learning and assessment, the two components that most affect what students experience. Taken together, the three studies suggest that teacher policy has succeeded on the welfare dimension it was designed for and has generated administrative load it was not designed to manage.

Digital policy is the newest stratifier

The digitalisation studies are the most recent in the corpus and the most consistent. Maylawati, Mulyana, Rizqullah, Nurjaman and Ramdhani (2025) analysed 13,344 survey responses from Indonesian Islamic school communities and found 52.14 per cent expressing positive sentiment towards the Merdeka Curriculum and 36.28 per cent negative, with inadequate resources and infrastructure limitations named as the substance of the negative responses. Pahrudin, Irwandani, Aridan and Barata (2025), surveying 1,120 teachers across madrasah, pesantren and private Islamic schools and analysing the data with a Rasch model, report moderate readiness overall, with information and communication technology literacy the strongest predictor and infrastructure deficits together with policy misalignment the principal obstacles. Isnaeni, Budiman, Nurjaya and Mukhlisin (2025) reach the same conclusion qualitatively: teachers are willing, access and training are not there.

These are the two largest datasets in the corpus, which matters for the confidence attaching to the theme. Their agreement supports a claim the earlier literature could only assert, namely that infrastructure rather than attitude is the binding constraint on madrasah participation in digital education policy. Where national assessment and curriculum delivery migrate to platforms, a funding gap becomes a participation gap, and the resource dependence mechanism reproduces itself in a new medium.

The outcome evidence complicates the deficit narrative

Four studies caution against reading the preceding themes as a story of straightforward madrasah inferiority, and they deserve more weight than the literature usually gives them. Umar, Kusaeri, Ridho, Ahmad and Asyhar (2022), using multilevel structural equation modelling on 8,258 candidates for state Madrasah Aliyah admission, found madrasah students scoring 27 points below non-madrasah students in mathematics, with instructional time rather than content coverage or instructional quality explaining the gap. That is a substantial disadvantage, and it is also a specific and remediable one.

The picture reverses in other domains. Nawas, Darmawan and Maadad (2023), testing 1,319 secondary students in South Sulawesi, found madrasah students outperforming their secular-school counterparts on English reading and listening subskills, with differential item functioning analysis confirming that the test items were equitable across groups. Patria (2023), applying Bayesian analysis of covariance to interviews with 1,299 Indonesian secondary students, found madrasah students significantly happier than students in regular schools once wealth was controlled, despite heavier subject loads and longer hours. Mujiburrohman and Putri (2024) situate both results in a national pattern in which social inequality, not institutional type, drives most of the variation in educational quality.

This cluster does real work in the argument. If madrasah underperformed uniformly, the case for additional investment would rest on equity alone. The evidence instead describes institutions that convert scarce resources into competitive outcomes in some domains and lose ground in others, mainly where instructional time and infrastructure bind. Investment in such a sector has an efficiency rationale as well as an equity one. It also disciplines the claim that legal parity has been sufficient: parity of status coexists with a measurable mathematics gap traceable to instructional time, which is a resource variable, not a legal one.

What the synthesis adds

Set against the wider comparative literature, the Indonesian case is neither exceptional nor reassuring. National learning outcomes declined across the system between 2000 and 2014, affecting all subgroups (Beatty, Berkhout, Bima, Pradhan, & Suryadarma, 2021), which means madrasah are competing for resources inside a system whose overall performance was already deteriorating. That context makes the distributive question sharper rather than softer, because a system under strain tends to protect its administratively simplest channels first, and the madrasah channel is not one of them.

Three claims follow from the synthesis that no individual study in the corpus makes. First, recognition and financing are not two topics but two stages of one policy process, and the second stage has not been completed. Second, the disadvantage is concentrated by ownership rather than by institutional type, so policy instruments aimed at madrasah as a category will continue to miss it. Third, each successive reform wave, from curriculum integration to certification to digitalisation, has entered the sector through the same resource bottleneck, which is why the burden falls on the same institutions each time. The mechanism is stable, which is discouraging descriptively and useful prescriptively, because a stable mechanism can be targeted.

Conclusion

This review set out to establish what post-Reform education policy has done to the institutional viability of madrasah in Indonesia. Across 32 studies published between 2015 and 2025, the answer is that policy resolved the question of legal standing and left the question of material capacity open. Madrasah are no longer marginal in law. They remain dependent in fact, and the dependence is concentrated in the privately managed institutions that carry most of the sector's enrolment. The review contributes on three fronts. Theoretically, it demonstrates that Ball's text and enactment distinction and resource dependence theory are complementary rather than alternative accounts of the madrasah case, the first specifying where the gap opens and the second explaining why it persists. Empirically, it assembles a corpus that spans historical policy analysis, institutional case studies, large-scale achievement data and the emerging digitalisation literature, which allows claims about mechanism that single-strand studies cannot support. For policy, the implication is narrower than the usual call for equality. Legal equality already exists; what does not exist is parity in the channel through which resources actually move. A differentiated per-student allocation for private madrasah, disbursed through the same routine mechanism that serves public schools rather than through competitive application, would address the mechanism this review identifies. Sequencing matters as well: curriculum, certification and digital mandates arriving at institutions without the administrative slack to absorb them convert reform into load, so infrastructure and staffing investment should precede rather than accompany the next mandate. For madrasah leadership, the evidence on differentiation suggests that management capacity is the variable that converts autonomy on paper into autonomy in practice, which is where limited discretionary resources are best spent. Two lines of further research follow directly. Longitudinal work tracking private madrasah through successive reform waves would test whether the mechanism described here compounds or stabilises. And a study that disaggregates outcomes by ownership rather than by

institutional type would establish whether the achievement patterns reported in the corpus are properly attributes of madrasah at all, or of the funding position most madrasah happen to occupy.

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