

REGULATORY DUALISM AND POLYCENTRIC GOVERNANCE IN MTs: CHALLENGES IN SYNCHRONIZING POLICIES BETWEEN KEMENAG AND KEMENDIKBUDRISTEK

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ABSTRACT

Regulatory duality in Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) governance presents a strategic challenge in Indonesia's education system, involving two policy authorities with differing institutional orientations: the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek). This situation creates polycentric governance characterized by multi-actor, multi-regulatory dynamics. Employing a conceptual paper approach based on systematic literature review (2020–2026), this study critically analyzes regulatory duality, polycentric governance dynamics, and policy synchronization challenges. Findings reveal that regulatory duality causes implementation asynchrony in curriculum, assessment, teacher management, digitalization, data governance, and accountability mechanisms. MTs occupy an ambivalent position between national standardization and Islamic identity preservation, generating administrative burdens and governance capacity disparities. Hierarchical bureaucratic approaches prove inadequate; a collaborative polycentric governance model is required, positioning regulatory synchronization, data integration, adaptive leadership, and multi-stakeholder participation as foundational reforms. The primary contribution lies in developing a conceptual framework for polycentric madrasah governance based on cross-ministerial policy integration, expanding Islamic education governance discourse through institutional theory, network governance, and political economy perspectives. Implications emphasize reforming national education regulatory architecture to position madrasahs as integral components of an adaptive, inclusive, and sustainable public education system.

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INTRODUCTION

The transformation of national education governance in Indonesia has increasingly demonstrated the growing complexity of authority relations in managing educational units. This complexity is particularly evident in Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs), which are administratively under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, yet in academic practice and national policy remain significantly influenced by regulations issued by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek). This position places MTs in a dual policy space, subject to the national education system while maintaining Islamic education characteristics based on religious institutionalism (Hening Purwati Parlan & Ahmad Suryadi, 2024).

The phenomenon of regulatory duality in MTs governance has intensified as the government promotes national educational transformation through the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka (Independent Curriculum), learning digitalization, national assessment reform, and the strengthening of the Pancasila student profile. Concurrently, the Ministry of Religious Affairs is developing Islamic education transformation policies through the Kurikulum Merdeka Madrasah, strengthening religious moderation, and revitalizing madrasah institutions based on Islamic values (Raikhan & Amin, 2023; Robihah et al., 2025). This situation results in policy intersections that do not always operate harmoniously at the implementation level.

Historically, the dualism of education in Indonesia has evolved since the colonial era, when general education and Islamic education were positioned in different institutional tracks. This historical legacy continues into the modern era through the separation of bureaucratic authority between the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of National Education. Consequently, madrasahs often find themselves in a marginal position in national educational development, despite their significant quantitative contribution to the educational access of the Indonesian Muslim community (Kosim et al., 2023; Wiratama & Safitri, 2023).

In an institutional context, regulatory duality requires madrasah principals and MTs administrators to navigate various cross-ministerial policies with differing orientations, terminologies, quality indicators, and evaluation approaches. This asynchrony is evident in curriculum implementation, educational data management, teacher certification, quality evaluation systems, digital literacy enhancement, and educational funding governance (Fathurrochman et al., 2025; Hidayati et al., 2025). This condition imposes not only an administrative burden but also creates policy ambiguity that potentially reduces the effectiveness of madrasah management.

Contemporary educational governance no longer operates within a single, centralistic bureaucratic model. Developments in governance theory indicate that modern educational management tends to occur through polycentric governance, involving multiple decision-making centers and policy actors within a single education system (McGinnis, 2016; Ostrom et al., 1961). In the MTs context, these centers of authority originate not only from the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Kemendikbudristek but also from local governments, educational foundations, Islamic civil society organizations, school committees, and local madrasah communities.

While the polycentric governance model opens spaces for participation and policy flexibility on one hand, it potentially generates regulatory fragmentation if inter-institutional coordination is ineffective. Research by Mustabsyirah & Yuspiani (2025) demonstrates that decision-making in modern madrasahs is increasingly influenced by multi-party power relations, often giving rise to a tug-of-war between state bureaucratic orientations, local community needs, and Islamic educational identity. This situation illustrates that MTs governance problems can no longer be understood solely through classical educational administration approaches but require a more multidimensional governance perspective.

The post-pandemic digital transformation of education has also accelerated the emergence of governance disparities among Islamic educational units. Several studies indicate that madrasahs face challenges in technology adaptation, digital infrastructure limitations, and human resource unpreparedness in responding to national digital-

based educational policy changes (Choiriyah & Dwi Lestari, 2025; Rahmadi Bagus Wijaya, 2025). Concurrently, public accountability demands regarding the quality of Islamic education are increasing, particularly concerning graduate quality, character strengthening, religious moderation, and the global competitiveness of madrasah education.

The primary conceptual issue in MTs governance lies in the contradiction between the ideal of national education system integration and the reality of educational bureaucratic duality. Normatively, Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System positions madrasahs as an integral part of the national education system. However, in implementation, madrasah management still operates in a segregative pattern that separates religious and general education both institutionally and administratively (Masnuah et al., 2022; Salamah et al., 2022).

Theoretically, this problem indicates the presence of institutional hybridity in Islamic education governance. Madrasahs cannot be entirely categorized as either general educational institutions or purely religious educational institutions. They are hybrid organizations that must simultaneously integrate the demands of the modern state, religious identity, local community needs, and global educational standards (Battilana & Lee, 2014; Tamim, 2024). Under such conditions, policy synchronization becomes highly complex as it involves administrative, ideological, cultural, and political dimensions of education.

Studies on the dualism of Islamic education in Indonesia have been developing for quite some time, particularly concerning the dichotomy between general and religious education. Research by Parlan and Suryadi (2024) indicates that the dualism of Islamic education remains a structural issue affecting the direction of national educational management. Their study emphasizes that madrasahs still experience disparities in regulation, funding, and institutional legitimacy compared to public schools. Research by Aini & Lazuardy (2020) reveals that the roots of Indonesian educational dualism stem from the history of the colonial education system's formation, which separated religious and secular education, influencing the culture of the national educational bureaucracy to this day.

Recent studies have begun to address the issue of madrasah governance transformation. Through a systematic bibliometric review, Saugi et al. (2025) found that madrasah transformation policies from 2019 to 2024 have focused more on education digitalization, management reform, and the strengthening of religious moderation. However, the research also highlights the persistent weakness of cross-sectoral policy synchronization in implementing Islamic education transformation. Research by Jauhari et al. (2025) on the transformation of madrasah curriculum policies shows a paradigm shift toward a more adaptive and contextual approach, yet implementation still faces challenges in harmonizing regulations between the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Kemendikbudristek.

Another study by Taufikin (2023) introduces the concept of hybrid Islamic education governance, explaining that modern Islamic education develops through a blend of religious traditions and modern educational management demands. This research is significant as it shows that madrasah governance can no longer be analyzed solely through a state bureaucracy perspective. Despite these contributions, most previous studies still view madrasah problems through the general perspective of educational dualism. Studies specifically linking regulatory duality with polycentric governance theory in the context of MTs policy synchronization remain highly limited.

Based on these conditions, this article attempts to offer a new perspective by positioning the regulatory duality and polycentrism of MTs governance as a multidimensional educational governance issue. This study is directed toward building a conceptual framework regarding cross-ministerial policy synchronization in madrasah governance as an integral part of the Indonesian national education system. The primary contribution lies in developing a conceptual framework for polycentric madrasah education governance based on cross-ministerial policy integration, expanding the discourse on Islamic education governance by integrating institutional theory, network governance, and the political economy of education to explain madrasah policy dynamics.

RESEARCH METHODS

This article employs a conceptual paper approach grounded in a critical literature review, oriented toward educational policy analysis and the institutional governance of Islamic education. This approach was selected because the primary objective is not to generate empirical field data but to construct theoretical synthesis, deconstruct policies, and formulate a new conceptual framework regarding regulatory duality and polycentric governance in Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) within Indonesia's national education system.

In educational studies, conceptual papers serve to develop theoretical arguments by integrating diverse academic perspectives on specific policy phenomena or institutional problems (Gruber et al., 2015). Within the educational research context, conceptual papers function to produce theoretical reframing, strengthen epistemological perspectives, and develop new conceptual models that can inform subsequent empirical investigations (Lase et al., 2025). This approach is particularly relevant because the regulatory duality of MTs encompasses not merely administrative dimensions but also governance structures, educational politics, and cross-ministerial institutional relations.

The study employs an interdisciplinary policy analysis framework integrating perspectives from governance studies, educational policy, and Islamic education management. This multidisciplinary lens is essential because the governance dynamics of MTs cannot be adequately explained through classical educational administration theories alone. The relational dynamics between the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) manifest a complex interplay of state regulations, Islamic educational institutional identity, and national educational bureaucracy (Hening Purwati Parlan & Ahmad Suryadi, 2024).

The analytical framework was constructed through three principal stages. The first stage involved identifying the dual regulatory structure of madrasah education by tracing national education policy documents and Islamic education regulations. The second stage entailed theoretical synthesis of polycentric governance, institutional hybridity, and educational policy synchronization concepts to explain MTs governance dynamics. The third stage involved reconstructing a conceptual model of madrasah education policy synchronization grounded in collaborative governance principles.

The governance approach was utilized to analyze how authority distribution among educational actors shapes decision-making patterns in madrasah education. Within governance studies, modern education is understood as a multi-centric arena involving the state, civil society, religious institutions, and local actors in policy formulation and implementation processes (Dewi et al., 2025; Muhadi et al., 2021). This perspective is highly relevant to MTs conditions, which exist within a dual bureaucracy between the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Kemendikbudristek.

Furthermore, the institutional hybridity approach was employed to explain madrasahs' position as hybrid educational organizations situated between modern state bureaucratic logic and traditional Islamic educational identity. The hybrid institution perspective elucidates that modern Islamic educational organizations tend to experience institutional tension due to simultaneous demands for public accountability, national educational standardization, and preservation of religious identity (Battilana & Lee, 2014; Yaqin, 2016).

This study also employed policy synchronization analysis to examine cross-ministerial educational policy harmonization levels. Policy synchronization is understood as regulatory integration, bureaucratic coordination, and policy implementation harmonization to ensure the education system operates effectively without administrative fragmentation (Anis Sri Wijayanti et al., 2025). In the MTs context, policy synchronization analysis is crucial because Islamic education policy implementation is significantly influenced by the coordinative relationship between the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Kemendikbudristek.

Literature sources were purposively selected based on substantive relevance to regulatory duality, educational governance, policy synchronization, and madrasah governance themes. The literature comprised reputable international journal articles, nationally accredited journals (SINTA 1 and SINTA 2), government policy documents, and academic publications related to Islamic education and educational governance. Priority was given to articles from reputable international publishers including Springer, Taylor & Francis, Elsevier, Wiley, MDPI, Emerald, and Sage Publications, with a preference for publications between 2020 and 2026 to ensure relevance to contemporary developments in educational governance and national educational policy transformation.

International literature sources were accessed through academic databases including Scopus, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis Online, Wiley Online Library, and Google Scholar. National sources were obtained through the Garuda portal, SINTA, and open-access Islamic education journals with verified academic track records. All included literature possessed a DOI or verifiable official link to maintain academic validity.

The study also utilized several national educational regulation documents as policy analysis sources, including Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, Kurikulum Merdeka regulations, Minister of Religious Affairs decrees on madrasah curriculum implementation, digital education transformation policies, and documents related to EMIS and Dapodik management. These regulatory documents served not as primary empirical data but as policy analysis objects within the educational governance context.

During the analysis process, collected literature was categorized into several main themes: Islamic education dualism, educational governance, institutional hybridity, educational policy synchronization, collaborative governance, and madrasah governance transformation. Theme categorization facilitated theoretical synthesis and identification of research gaps. Literature triangulation was performed by comparing various academic perspectives from international and national studies to reduce interpretation bias and strengthen conceptual analysis depth regarding the relationship between regulatory duality and MTs polycentric governance.

Methodologically, this article does not employ statistical techniques or field data collection given its conceptual and literature-based nature. However, analysis procedures were conducted systematically through source identification, literature selection, theme categorization, policy content analysis, theoretical synthesis, and conceptual proposition development. This process ensures academic argumentation validity and theoretical analysis consistency in a conceptual paper (Sabrina et al., 2026).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Regulatory Duality in MTs Governance

The governance of Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) in Indonesia exhibits complex characteristics stemming from regulatory duality between the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek). This condition creates not merely administrative fragmentation but also forms a polycentric education management system with overlapping centers of authority. From a modern governance perspective, this situation constitutes institutional overlap, where multiple institutions hold simultaneous authority over the same policy object, generating regulatory implementation ambiguity (Abbott & Snidal, 2021; Cahyono, 2026).

Madrasahs occupy a unique position within Indonesia's national education system. Legally and formally, they constitute an integral part of the national education system as stipulated in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System. However, administratively, madrasah management falls under the Ministry of Religious Affairs. This produces a dual governance structure compelling MTs to comply with various national education policies from Kemendikbudristek while simultaneously adhering to internal regulations from the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Universitas Indonesia et al., 2025).

This regulatory duality manifests visibly in curriculum implementation, national assessments, educational data management, teacher competence development, and institutional governance. On one hand, Kemendikbudristek promotes national standardization through the Kurikulum Merdeka, education digitalization, and competence-based assessments. On the other hand, the Ministry of Religious Affairs develops Islamic education policies based on religious moderation, madrasah identity strengthening, and religious curriculum integration into MTs learning processes (Hakim et al., 2025; Kumalasari et al., 2026).

The asynchrony of these regulations generates significant administrative pressure on madrasah educational units. Madrasah principals and MTs teachers frequently find themselves in ambiguous positions when attempting to meet performance indicators and reporting requirements from two distinct bureaucratic structures with misaligned policy orientations. This condition clearly demonstrates policy fragmentation in Indonesian Islamic education governance (Anshory et al., 2024; Dewi et al., 2025).

From an educational governance perspective, the core problem is not merely the existence of two managing institutions but the absence of an integrated policy synchronization mechanism. Modern educational governance emphasizes collaborative coordination among policy actors to ensure adaptive and effective education system operation (Cahyono, 2026). However, the relational pattern between the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Kemendikbudristek still exhibits strong sectoral-bureaucratic characteristics, rendering policy coordination largely formal and administrative rather than substantive.

The polycentric governance condition of MTs also reveals competing institutional logics. The Ministry of Religious Affairs tends to employ Islamic education logic based on religious identity and Islamic character strengthening, whereas Kemendikbudristek is more oriented toward national standardization, global competence, and educational digital transformation (Hidayati et al., 2025). This divergence places madrasahs within a complex space of identity negotiation.

Beyond regulatory issues, dual governance impacts educational resource distribution. Various studies indicate that madrasahs continue to face inequalities in technology access, funding, teacher capacity building, and infrastructure development compared to public state schools (Efendi & Rifa'i, 2025). This disparity is exacerbated by a policy structure that has not fully integrated madrasah education's specific needs into the national education system.

Another emerging problem is the fragmentation of educational data systems. Madrasahs utilize EMIS (Education Management Information System) under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, while public schools use Dapodik (Education Data and Information System) under Kemendikbudristek. This systemic difference causes asynchrony in the national education database, particularly in educational quality mapping, educational aid distribution, and learning achievement evaluation (Sain et al., 2024).

Deconstructing MTs governance problems reveals that the primary issue lies not in the mere existence of two institutions but in weak governance integration, regulatory overlap, and the absence of a collaborative educational governance model capable of accommodating Islamic education characteristics alongside modern national education demands.

Theoretical Contradictions and Inter-Literature Dialogue

The literature on Islamic education governance demonstrates theoretical contradictions regarding madrasahs' ideal position within the national education system. The first perspective argues for full integration of madrasahs into the national education system to create educational quality standardization and governance efficiency (OECD, 2021). This perspective places educational governance within a centralized policy coordination framework emphasizing curriculum harmonization, assessment, and national education management. This approach is supported by policy coherence theory, which posits that education system effectiveness depends heavily on

regulatory consistency and inter-agency government coordination (Wijaya & Hidayat, 2026). From this viewpoint, regulatory duality constitutes a structural barrier that can diminish educational policy implementation effectiveness.

Conversely, the second perspective rejects the centralistic approach, arguing it risks erasing Islamic education's distinctive identity. This perspective utilizes institutional hybridity theory, viewing madrasahs as hybrid educational institutions possessing distinct epistemological, historical, and social characteristics compared to public schools (Saputra & Faridi, 2026). Consequently, madrasahs require a degree of institutional autonomy to preserve their Islamic identity.

This theoretical contradiction highlights a debate between standardization logic and identity preservation logic in Islamic education governance. Standardization logic emphasizes uniformity in the national education system to guarantee educational quality, whereas identity preservation logic stresses institutional differentiation based on Islamic education's character (Brady & Bates, 2016).

In modern governance contexts, polycentric governance theory offers a middle ground to this contradiction. This theory emphasizes that public governance systems need not be centralistic but can be managed through collaborative and adaptive multi-centric coordination (Carlisle & Gruby, 2019). Within polycentric governance, various actors can hold different authorities as long as clear mechanisms exist for coordination, accountability, and policy synchronization.

Nevertheless, implementing polycentric governance in MTs management still faces structural challenges. Recent research indicates that Indonesia's educational bureaucracy remains dominated by a hierarchical administrative culture, hindering optimal cross-institutional collaboration (Widowati et al., 2023). Consequently, the emerging polycentric model produces fragmented rather than collaborative governance.

Further contradictions arise in digital education governance literature. Some studies assert that integrating national digital education systems is necessary to enhance data-driven decision-making effectiveness (Williamson, 2016). However, other research demonstrates that digital standardization can reinforce central bureaucratic dominance and reduce religion-based educational institutions' flexibility (Selwyn, 2023). This inter-literature dialogue illustrates that MTs governance problems cannot be resolved solely through administrative or regulatory approaches. A governance approach capable of integrating national educational standardization needs with Islamic educational identity protection is required.

Toward Collaborative Polycentric Madrasah Governance

Based on theoretical synthesis and policy deconstruction, this article proposes the Collaborative Polycentric Madrasah Governance model as a new framework for MTs management in Indonesia. This model is built upon the integration of collaborative governance, policy synchronization, and institutional hybridity theories.

The Collaborative Polycentric Madrasah Governance model positions the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Kemendikbudristek as co-governance institutions holding distinct but mutually integrated authorities through a national madrasah education policy coordination mechanism. In this model, inter-agency relations are no longer sectoral-hierarchical but take the form of a collaborative policy network.

The first component is the integration of madrasah education regulations through a joint policy framework. This framework serves as a synchronization platform for curriculum, assessment, education digitalization, and madrasah educational quality development policies. Through this mechanism, madrasah education regulations will no longer operate in parallel and fragmented manners.

The second component is the interoperability of educational data systems between EMIS and Dapodik. Educational data integration is a crucial element in modern governance because educational decision-making quality is significantly influenced by the accuracy and synchronization of institutional data (Williamson, 2016). System interoperability allows for more objective and comprehensive mapping of madrasah educational quality.

The third component is the strengthening of collaborative leadership at the madrasah level. MTs principals are no longer positioned merely as policy administrators but as institutional mediators capable of bridging national regulatory demands and local Islamic educational identity. The concept of collaborative leadership in education emphasizes the ability to build institutional networks, multi-party coordination, and organizational change management (Harris & Jones, 2020).

The fourth component is adaptive curriculum governance, which allows for the flexible integration of the national curriculum with Islamic education's peculiarities. This approach avoids the dichotomy between national standardization and madrasah identity. Within adaptive curriculum governance, madrasahs are granted pedagogical innovation space as long as they meet national competence standards.

This model also positions madrasahs as active governance actors, not merely policy implementation objects. Consequently, the madrasah education policy formulation process must involve madrasah principals, teacher professional organizations, Islamic higher education institutions, and Islamic education communities in participatory policy-making mechanisms.

Theoretically, this model construction demonstrates that regulatory duality does not necessarily need to be eliminated through full centralization. Instead, it can be restructured into a more synchronized, adaptive, and contextually relevant collaborative governance system tailored to Indonesian Islamic education's character.

Policy and Practical Implications

The findings regarding regulatory duality and MTs polycentric governance indicate that Indonesian Islamic education governance's primary problem is not merely administrative but pertains to a national educational governance design that is not yet fully integrative. This condition demands macro-level educational policy reformulation so that the relationship between the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Kemendikbudristek no longer operates in a fragmentary sectoral pattern.

The first policy implication concerns the necessity of establishing a national madrasah education regulatory synchronization framework. Hitherto, madrasah education policies have developed through a dual governance approach, causing overlapping regulation in curriculum, assessment, educational data management, and Islamic education human resource development (Hening Purwati Parlan & Ahmad Suryadi, 2024). Therefore, a national policy synchronization framework is required to specifically regulate cross-ministerial coordination in MTs management. This synchronization framework must be built through a collaborative governance approach. In modern governance perspectives, public policy effectiveness is heavily influenced by state institutions' ability to establish horizontal coordination among government organizations (Ansell & Torfing, 2021).

The second policy implication is the necessity of integrating national education planning systems based on data interoperability. The asynchrony between EMIS and Dapodik causes disparities in educational quality mapping, educational aid distribution, and data-driven decision-making (Janssen et al., 2012). The government must build an integrated educational data governance system enabling real-time and standardized cross-ministerial data exchange. In the context of educational digital transformation, data system integration serves not only an administrative function but also acts as the foundation for evidence-based educational policy.

The third implication relates to harmonizing madrasah education curriculum policies. The implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka in MTs still exhibits variations in interpretation and policy adaptation due to the lack of substantive synchronization between national curriculum policies and distinctive madrasah curricula (Kumalasari et al., 2026). The government needs to develop adaptive curriculum governance that provides flexibility for madrasahs to integrate national curricula with Islamic educational peculiarities. Recent research shows that Islamic education's institutional identity significantly influences organizational culture, pedagogical practices, and character education orientation in madrasahs (Delvia et al., 2025).

The subsequent policy implication concerns reforming the Islamic education bureaucracy model. The national education bureaucratic structure, which remains hierarchical, causes cross-ministerial policy coordination processes to be slow and less adaptive to socio-educational changes (Sidiq & Widyawati, 2019). The government must develop a networked educational bureaucracy model that is more collaborative, flexible, and based on cross-sectoral coordination. From a modern public administration perspective, educational bureaucracy is no longer effective if it relies solely on vertical administrative control. Contemporary educational governance emphasizes distributed authority, interagency collaboration, and participatory policy-making in public education management (Nuradhawati, 2026).

Another macro-level implication is the necessity of strengthening affirmative policies for madrasahs. Various studies indicate that madrasahs continue to face inequalities in funding access, teacher capacity building, digital infrastructure, and educational innovation development compared to public state schools (Wijaya & Hidayat, 2026). This disparity risks reinforcing educational inequality within the national education system. Affirmative policies are necessary not merely to improve educational resource access but also to strengthen madrasahs' position as a strategic component of national educational development.

At the micro level, these findings have direct implications for internal MTs governance, madrasah principal leadership, learning management, and Islamic educational organizational culture. The regulatory fragmentation experienced hitherto has often placed madrasahs in a reactive position toward policy changes. Therefore, a transformation in madrasah management practices is required to become more adaptive to national educational governance dynamics.

The first micro-level implication concerns strengthening MTs principals' leadership capacity. Madrasah principals can no longer merely serve as educational bureaucracy administrators; they must function as collaborative educational leaders capable of building coordination with various educational stakeholders (Budi et al., 2025; Harris & Jones, 2020). Collaborative leadership is crucial because modern educational governance demands institutional negotiation skills, policy adaptation, and organizational change management.

The second implication is the importance of strengthening school-based governance in MTs. Madrasahs must establish participatory decision-making mechanisms involving teachers, madrasah committees, parents, and local education communities. The school-based governance approach has proven capable of increasing educational organizational flexibility in facing external policy changes (Leithwood et al., 2020). Strengthening school-based governance is also vital to reduce excessive dependence on centralistic bureaucratic patterns.

The subsequent practical implication relates to transforming madrasah organizational culture. Regulatory duality has hitherto tended to create an administrative culture oriented toward bureaucratic compliance rather than educational innovation. However, 21st-century educational governance demands that educational organizations possess an adaptive, collaborative, and learning organization-based culture (Fullan, 2020). Madrasah organizational culture transformation can be achieved through strengthening professional learning communities, cross-disciplinary teacher collaboration, and developing learning innovations based on student needs.

The next implication is the necessity of strengthening digital literacy and educational data management capacity at the madrasah level. Modern educational governance integration is heavily influenced by the educational unit's ability to manage educational data systematically. Madrasah principals and administrative staff must possess digital governance competence to effectively integrate EMIS reporting needs, national assessments, and other educational evaluation systems (Selwyn, 2023).

Another practical implication is strengthening collaborative networking among madrasahs. Hitherto, MTs capacity development has operated individually and lacks connection within an institutional collaboration system. However, educational networking has proven capable of accelerating educational innovation transfer, teacher capacity strengthening, and effective educational management practices development (Chapman, 2021). These

findings also highlight the importance of strengthening partnerships between madrasahs and Islamic higher education institutions. Higher education institutions can play a role in policy mentoring, developing innovative learning models, madrasah leadership training, and strengthening school action research capacity.

Practically, the primary implication of this study is the need for a paradigm shift in MTs management from bureaucratic compliance toward collaborative adaptive governance. Madrasahs must be positioned as educational institutions that actively build innovation, collaborative networks, and policy adaptation capabilities within Indonesia's increasingly complex national education system.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that regulatory duality in MTs governance stems not merely from the existence of two managing institutions but from the absence of an integrative policy architecture harmonizing their authorities. This condition creates regulatory fatigue, implementation ambiguity, and institutional capacity disparities, placing madrasahs between national standardization demands and Islamic educational identity preservation (Hefner, 2023; Kumalasari et al., 2026).

Hierarchical bureaucratic approaches prove inadequate for contemporary madrasah governance complexities. A reconstructive paradigm shift toward collaborative polycentric governance is required, where regulation functions as knowledge coordination rather than administrative control. The proposed Collaborative Polycentric Madrasah Governance model integrates four components: joint regulatory frameworks, EMIS-Dapodik data interoperability, collaborative leadership, and adaptive curriculum governance accommodating both national standards and Islamic characteristics.

The theoretical contribution lies in integrating institutional theory, network governance, and political economy perspectives to explain madrasah policy dynamics. Practical implications emphasize reforming national education regulatory architecture to position madrasahs as integral components of an adaptive, inclusive public education system.

Future research must empirically validate this model through mixed methods and multi-site studies examining regulatory synchronization impacts on governance effectiveness (Arifin et al., 2024). Studies should also explore digital governance integration and educational big data to understand technological impacts on madrasah capacity (Latif et al., 2025; Serour et al., 2026). Addressing regulatory duality requires transforming it into collaborative governance harnessing both ministries' strengths while respecting Islamic education's distinctive contributions to Indonesia's national development.

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