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Islamic Early Childhood Education in Jambi, Indonesia: Historical Development, Policy Transformation, and Institutional Change (1945–2025)

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Abstract

This study examines the historical development, policy transformation, and institutional change of Islamic early childhood education (IECE) in Jambi Province, Indonesia, from 1945 to 2025. Drawing on qualitative historical analysis, policy document review, and multi-decade institutional data, the study traces the evolution of Raudhatul Athfal (RA) — Islamic kindergartens under the Ministry of Religious Affairs — from informally organized community institutions in the post-independence era to systematized, accreditation-mandated educational units under the Merdeka Belajar (Freedom to Learn) curriculum framework. The research identifies four distinct developmental phases: (1) foundational community-based establishment (1945–1975); (2) state-mediated institutionalization (1976–1998); (3) decentralization and standards-building under Reformasi (1999–2013); and (4) quality-oriented consolidation within the Merdeka Belajar era (2014–2025). Findings indicate that IECE in Jambi underwent significant quantitative growth — with RA institutions increasing from under 400 in 2000 to over 1,200 by 2023 — alongside qualitative improvements in teacher qualification, curriculum integration, and accreditation compliance. Policy analysis reveals persistent tensions between Islamic identity preservation and national educational standardization, as well as between decentralized governance and centralized quality assurance. The study contributes an empirically grounded regional case to the international literature on Islamic education policy and ECE governance in Muslim-majority contexts.

1. Introduction

Early childhood education (ECE) occupies a pivotal position in global development agendas, recognized as the most cost-effective investment in human capital formation (Yoshikawa et al., 2013; Britto et al., 2017). In Muslim-majority nations, ECE is characteristically shaped not only by state policy frameworks but also by Islamic epistemological traditions that assign profound religious significance to the earliest years of a child's moral, spiritual, and cognitive formation. Indonesia, home to the world's largest Muslim population, presents an especially rich context for examining how Islamic educational traditions have intersected with — and at times contested — national education policies over eight decades of post-independence history.

Jambi Province, located on the eastern coast of Sumatra, Indonesia, offers a particularly instructive regional case. As a predominantly Muslim province with deep roots in Islamic pesantren culture, Jambi has experienced the national education policy shifts that have characterized Indonesia's educational evolution — from the centralized New Order regime, through the decentralization of Reformasi, to the contemporary Merdeka Belajar curriculum framework — while simultaneously navigating locally specific dynamics of Islamic organizational culture, regional governance capacity, and socioeconomic change. The Raudhatul Athfal (RA), the Islamic kindergarten institution under the administrative oversight of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kementerian Agama / MoRA), constitutes the primary institutional vehicle through which Islamic early childhood education (IECE) is delivered in Indonesia, and it is through this institutional lens that this study approaches its inquiry.

Despite the scale and sociocultural significance of RA as an educational institution — with over 28,000 RA institutions nationwide serving approximately one million children (MoRA, 2023) — scholarly attention to the historical and policy dimensions of IECE in Indonesia remains limited in English-language academic literature. Studies of Indonesian ECE have predominantly focused on the public PAUD (Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini) system under the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek), often neglecting the parallel — and in many respects more historically rooted — Islamic ECE system under MoRA. This lacuna is compounded by limited attention to regional case studies that can illuminate how national policy frameworks are translated, adapted, or contested at the provincial level.

This study addresses this gap through a comprehensive historical and policy analysis of IECE development in Jambi Province from 1945 to 2025. It is guided by the following research questions: (1) How has Islamic early childhood education evolved institutionally in Jambi from independence to the present? (2) What are the key policy transformations that have shaped IECE, and how have these been experienced at the provincial level? (3) What tensions and continuities characterize the relationship between Islamic identity and national educational standardization in the RA system? The study's findings contribute an empirically grounded regional case to the international literature on Islamic education policy, ECE governance, and the politics of educational decentralization in Muslim-majority contexts.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Islamic Education in Indonesia: Historical and Policy Perspectives

The history of Islamic education in Indonesia predates the colonial era, with pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) constituting the oldest surviving indigenous educational institutions in the archipelago (Steenbrink, 1986). The arrival of Islamic reform movements in the early twentieth century — most notably Muhammadiyah (founded 1912) and Nahdlatul Ulama (founded 1926) — catalyzed the institutionalization of Islamic education through the establishment of madrasah (Islamic schools) as a response both to colonial secular schooling and to demands for modern religious pedagogy. As Kosim et al. (2023) demonstrate in their landmark Scopus-indexed study, since Indonesia's independence in 1945, policies related to Islamic education have undergone a fundamental shift from a domestication approach — in which the state sought to subordinate Islamic education to national ideological objectives — to an accommodation approach, in which the state increasingly recognized and integrated Islamic education within the national framework.

The 1975 Joint Decree of Three Ministers (SKB 3 Menteri) marked a pivotal accommodation milestone, establishing legal parity between madrasah graduates and public school graduates. The passage of Law No. 20/2003 on the National Education System (Sisdiknas) represented a further consolidation of this accommodation, explicitly recognizing RA alongside kindergarten (TK) as equivalent early childhood educational institutions (Kosim et al., 2023). These policy shifts have profoundly shaped the

developmental trajectory of IECE in Indonesia, creating the institutional conditions for RA expansion while simultaneously subjecting them to national quality assurance standards.

2.2 Early Childhood Education Policy and Governance in Indonesia

The Indonesian ECE system has been shaped by successive waves of policy reform since the mid-twentieth century. The post-New Order Reformasi period (1998 onwards) introduced far-reaching decentralization, devolving significant educational governance responsibilities to district and provincial levels (Suryadarma & Jones, 2013). In the ECE domain, this period saw the formalization of PAUD as a national priority, culminating in the Integrated PAUD-HI (Holistik Integratif) policy framework of 2013, which sought to integrate health, nutrition, child protection, and educational services for children under six (Sriwahyuni et al., 2022).

The Merdeka Belajar (Freedom to Learn) policy introduced under Minister Nadiem Makarim from 2019 onwards has introduced significant pedagogical flexibility, with Kurikulum Merdeka allowing educational institutions to adapt national learning objectives to local contexts. For IECE specifically, MoRA's Decree No. 792/2018 established the first dedicated RA curriculum standards, and subsequent alignment with Kurikulum Merdeka principles has opened new avenues for contextually adapted Islamic ECE practice. The parallel administration of IECE under MoRA and ECE under Kemendikbudristek creates a distinctive dual governance architecture that continues to present both opportunities and coordination challenges (Salman, 2022).

2.3 Quality, Teacher Professionalization, and Institutional Development in Islamic ECE

A persistent theme in the scholarly literature on RA concerns the gap between quantity and quality. Salman (2022), in a case study aligned with MoRA's strategic plan 2015–2019, identifies the absence of state-owned (negeri) RA as a structural inequity that limits access to higher-quality Islamic ECE, noting that unlike TK, RA institutions remain entirely community-managed without state-owned counterparts. The teacher qualification landscape has similarly been characterized by chronic underdevelopment: historically, RA teachers were trained primarily through non-formal pesantren pathways rather than through formal PIAUD (Pendidikan Islam Anak Usia Dini) degree programs.

The establishment of PIAUD study programs at state Islamic universities (UIN/IAIN) across Indonesia represents a significant structural intervention, creating a pipeline of formally credentialed IECE teachers. Research by Salman (2022) indicates that despite this expansion, a substantial proportion of practicing RA teachers in rural and peri-urban areas remain without S1-level qualifications, reflecting a persistent urban–rural quality divide. The introduction of mandatory accreditation for RA through the National Accreditation Board for Early Childhood Education and Community Education (BAN-PDM) has further formalized quality expectations, with Jambi Province achieving notable progress in its accreditation completion rates between 2015 and 2023.

2.4 Regional Dimensions: Islamic ECE in Jambi Province

Jambi Province presents distinct characteristics that make it a valuable regional case for IECE research. As a province with strong NU and Muhammadiyah organizational networks, Jambi's Islamic educational landscape has been shaped by the dynamics between organizationally managed RA (under Aisyiyah, NU's LP Ma'arif, and other bodies) and independently community-managed RA. Saepudin's (2017) provincial study of RA quality in Jambi City identifies significant variation in institutional standards across urban and peri-urban settings, with infrastructure, curriculum implementation, and teacher competency showing marked disparities. This regional variation underscores the need for policy analysis that attends to sub-national contexts rather than treating the national system as homogeneous.

3. Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative historical-institutional research design (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010), integrating three primary analytical approaches: historical document analysis, policy text analysis, and institutional data synthesis. The choice of this design reflects the study's dual objective of reconstructing the long-run developmental trajectory of IECE in Jambi (historical dimension) and analyzing the policy architectures that have shaped this trajectory (institutional dimension).

Documentary sources include: (1) national legislation and ministerial regulations (UU, PP, Permendiknas/Permenag, PMA) pertaining to ECE and Islamic education from 1945 to 2025; (2) MoRA institutional data on RA numbers, enrollment, teacher qualifications, and accreditation status in Jambi Province for the period 2000–2023; (3) provincial education planning documents from the Jambi Provincial Office of MoRA (Kanwil Kemenag Jambi); (4) organizational records and policy documents from Aisyiyah (Muhammadiyah women's wing) and LP Ma'arif (NU's education body) in Jambi; and (5) existing empirical studies on IECE and Islamic education policy in Indonesia.

Data analysis proceeded through three iterative stages: (a) periodization — identifying temporally bounded developmental phases based on dominant policy and institutional configurations; (b) thematic analysis — identifying cross-cutting themes in policy transformation, institutional dynamics, and persistent tensions; and (c) pattern recognition — mapping continuities and discontinuities across periods. This analytical approach aligns with the critical policy archaeology framework articulated by Vavrus and Bartlett (2009), which situates policy analysis within historical and spatial contexts rather than treating policies as decontextualized technical instruments.

Trustworthiness was ensured through source triangulation across official documents, organizational records, and secondary scholarly literature, as well as through member-checking with two senior RA practitioners in Jambi who reviewed emergent findings for factual accuracy and interpretive plausibility.

4. Findings

4.1 Periodization of Islamic ECE Development in Jambi (1945–2025)

The historical analysis identifies four distinct developmental periods in IECE in Jambi Province, reflecting the broader national policy landscape while exhibiting province-specific dynamics. Table 1 provides a systematic overview of these periods and their key institutional and policy milestones.

Table 1
Historical Developmental Phases of Islamic Early Childhood Education in Jambi, Indonesia (1945–2025)

Period	Era / Political Context	Key Developments in Islamic ECE	Policy / Institutional Milestone
1945–1960	Post-Independence	Establishment of informal TPA/TPQ and RA under Muhammadiyah and NU; Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA) founded	Law No. 4/1950 on National Education
1961–1975	Old Order / New Order Transition	Expansion of RA in pesantren networks; first government recognition of Islamic kindergartens	SKB 3 Ministers (1975): equal status for madrasah graduates
1976–1989	New Order Consolidation	RA integrated into national PAUD discourse; curriculum standards begin to emerge under MoRA	Government Regulation No. 27/1990 on Preschool Education
1990–1998	Late New Order	Growth of RA networks; Aisyiyah-managed RA expand nationwide; Jambi province sees first accredited Islamic kindergartens	MoRA Decree on RA Curriculum Standards (1993)
1999–2009	Reformasi / Decentralisation	RA recognized in Law No. 20/2003 (Sisdiknas); PAUD framework established; Jambi RA growth linked to regional autonomy	Law No. 20/2003; Permendiknas No. 58/2009 on ECE Standards
2010–2017	Post-Reformasi Quality Era	MoRA issues PMA No. 90/2013 integrating RA into madrasah framework; PAUD-HI policy launched; Jambi RA teacher certification begins	PMA No. 90/2013; PAUD-HI policy (2013); National PAUD Roadmap 2015–2019
2018–2025	Merdeka Belajar Era	MoRA Decree No. 792/2018 on RA Curriculum; Kurikulum Merdeka adapted for RA; Jambi RA number exceeds 1,200 institutions	MoRA Decree No. 792/2018; Merdeka Belajar PAUD (2022); National PAUD Roadmap 2025

Source: Compiled from MoRA Jambi institutional records, national policy documents, and secondary literature.

4.2 Phase 1: Community-Based Foundational Establishment (1945–1975)

In the immediate post-independence period, Islamic early childhood education in Jambi emerged primarily through the organizational networks of Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama, rather than through state initiative. The RA — modeled conceptually on the traditional Islamic notion of the 'garden of children' (raudhah al-atfal) — functioned as an extension of the pedagogical philosophy embedded in pesantren, seeking to cultivate religious character (akhlaq) alongside basic literacy from the earliest years of childhood. In this phase, institutional characteristics were largely informal: curricula were unstructured by modern standards, teacher qualifications were determined by pesantren training rather than state certification, and funding derived entirely from community sources (waqf, zakat, and organizational dues).

The founding of MoRA in 1946 created, for the first time, a state institutional home for Islamic education. However, for the early childhood level specifically, state engagement remained minimal through the 1950s and 1960s, and RA in Jambi operated with near-total organizational autonomy. The 1975 SKB 3 Menteri, while focused on madrasah at the elementary and secondary levels, nonetheless signaled a new era of state accommodation that would gradually extend to the early childhood level.

4.3 Phase 2: State-Mediated Institutionalization (1976–1998)

The New Order's consolidation of national education under centralized state authority from the mid-1970s onward created pressure for RA to conform to emerging national standards while preserving its Islamic character. Government Regulation No. 27/1990 on preschool education formally recognized the early childhood education sector and laid groundwork for subsequent RA regulation. In Jambi, this period saw the first systematic registration of RA institutions by the provincial MoRA office, and the beginnings of a formalized governance relationship between RA and the state.

The MoRA Decree on RA Curriculum Standards (1993) introduced, for the first time, a nationally prescribed framework for RA educational content, encompassing both Islamic religious content (Quranic memorization, basic fiqh, Islamic values) and developmental domains (cognitive, socio-emotional, physical motor, language). This marked a critical juncture in the 'institutionalization' of RA — the transition from purely community-defined educational practice to state-mediated, standards-bound institutional activity (Kosim et al., 2023). In Jambi, RA institutions affiliated with Aisyiyah (the Muhammadiyah women's wing) were among the earliest to adopt these standards, leveraging their organizational infrastructure for relatively rapid curriculum compliance.

4.4 Phase 3: Decentralization and Standards Construction under Reformasi (1999–2013)

The 1998 Reformasi and the subsequent introduction of regional autonomy (otonomi daerah) through Laws No. 22/1999 and No. 32/2004 fundamentally restructured educational governance in Indonesia. For IECE, the most consequential development was the passage of the National Education System Law (UU Sisdiknas No. 20/2003), which explicitly recognized RA as a formal early childhood education

institution equivalent to TK. This legal recognition transformed RA from a largely extra-systemic community institution into a formally constituted component of Indonesia's national education architecture.

In Jambi, regional autonomy introduced both new opportunities and new challenges. Provincial and district/city governments gained authority over educational planning and resource allocation, enabling more responsive adaptation to local needs. The introduction of the School Operational Assistance Fund (BOS) program, gradually extended to cover RA, significantly improved institutional financial sustainability. However, decentralization also introduced coordination fragmentation: RA remained under MoRA's vertical administrative structure, while complementary ECE services (Posyandu, BKB, PAUD non-formal) fell under the jurisdiction of other agencies, creating the systemic integration challenges that the PAUD-HI framework of 2013 sought to address.

Permendiknas No. 58/2009 on ECE Standards established comprehensive developmental standards for children aged 0–6, applicable to all ECE institutions including RA. This created a dual normative framework for RA: compliance with national developmental standards alongside adherence to MoRA's Islamic curriculum requirements. Table 2 and Fig. 1 present quantitative data on RA growth and teacher qualification trends in Jambi during this period and beyond (see also Hasan et al., 2021, for longitudinal evidence on ECE access in rural Indonesia).

Table 2
Growth of Raudhatul Athfal (RA) in Jambi Province: Institutions, Students, Teachers, and Certification Rates (2000–2023)

Year	No. of RA Institutions	No. of Students	No. of Teachers	% Teachers Certified
2000	312	9,840	780	12.3%
2005	487	16,210	1,218	21.7%
2010	701	24,535	1,753	38.5%
2015	891	33,780	2,226	54.2%
2020	1,089	42,470	2,718	67.8%
2023	1,247	49,880	3,112	74.1%

Source: MoRA Jambi Provincial Office (Kanwil Kemenag Jambi) institutional data reports (2000–2023). Certification figures represent percentage of active teachers holding S1-level PIAUD/PAUD qualifications.

4.5 Phase 4: Quality-Oriented Consolidation under Merdeka Belajar (2014–2025)

The most recent developmental phase of IECE in Jambi is characterized by a dual emphasis on quality and flexibility. MoRA's PMA No. 90/2013 integrated RA more fully into the madrasah governance

framework, clarifying administrative procedures and opening pathways for RA to access broader state support programs. MoRA Decree No. 792/2018 on the RA Curriculum represented the most significant curriculum reform in RA history, establishing a comprehensive, competency-based framework that explicitly balanced Islamic character formation with holistic child development goals. This decree drew extensively on both Islamic pedagogical traditions (drawing on the principles of tarbiyah and adab in early childhood) and international ECE research on play-based, child-centered learning.

The Merdeka Belajar policy, while primarily developed for the Kemendikbudristek system, has had significant resonance for RA through the principle of 'freedom to learn' (kebebasan belajar), which aligns well with Islamic pedagogical emphases on nurturing the fitrah (innate disposition) of the child. RA practitioners in Jambi reported in provincial consultations that the Kurikulum Merdeka's project-based learning approach and contextual flexibility resonated with established RA practices of integrating daily worship routines, Quranic recitation, and Islamic storytelling into holistic learning activities.

4.6 Policy Transformation: From Domestication to Quality Accommodation

Across the eighty years analyzed, the most consistent and significant policy trajectory is the movement from what Kosim et al. (2023) characterize as a 'domestication approach' — in which the state sought to subordinate Islamic educational content to national ideological objectives — toward a quality accommodation framework that maintains national standards while making structural space for Islamic educational identity. Table 3 and Fig. 2 provide a comparative analysis of key policy dimensions and the conceptual framework across the three major governance eras (Urban et al., 2012; Schleicher, 2019).

Table 3
Comparative Policy Analysis: Key Dimensions of IECE Governance Across Three Eras in Jambi/Indonesia

Policy Dimension	Pre-Reformasi (Pre-1998)	Post-Reformasi (1999–2013)	Merdeka Belajar Era (2014–2025)
Governance Model	Centralized, top-down under MoRA	Decentralized; regional authority expanded	Hybrid: national standards with school-level flexibility
Curriculum Authority	Uniform national curriculum prescribed by MoRA	Contextual adaptation allowed within national framework	Kurikulum Merdeka; RA adapts thematically and contextually
Teacher Qualification	Minimal requirement; no formal S1 degree required	S1/D4 PIAUD mandated; certification begins	S1 PIAUD required; certification & professional development institutionalized
Funding Source	Private community funding; minimal state subsidy	BOS introduced for RA; dana alokasi khusus accessible	BOS RA expanded; performance-based grants introduced
Accreditation System	None for RA specifically	BAN-SM begins covering RA; voluntary accreditation	Mandatory accreditation (BAN-PDM); quality benchmarking
Islamic Values Integration	Implicit; religiously motivated but unstructured	Formal structure in curriculum; character education added	Comprehensive Islamic moral and character framework embedded

Source: Synthesized from national policy documents, MoRA Jambi records, and secondary scholarly literature.

5. Discussion

5.1 Institutional Resilience and Adaptive Capacity of Islamic ECE

The eighty-year trajectory of IECE in Jambi reveals a pattern of remarkable institutional resilience — the capacity of RA and the Islamic organizations that manage them to persist and adapt through fundamentally different political regimes and policy environments. This resilience is rooted in the deep organizational infrastructure of Muhammadiyah and NU, which have maintained continuous management of RA institutions through periods of state neglect, heavy-handed standardization, and the disruptions of regional autonomy. This finding resonates with Isbah's (2020) analysis of pesantren's adaptive capacity in the changing Indonesian context, which identifies organizational embeddedness and community trust as the key mechanisms of Islamic educational persistence.

At the same time, the data from Jambi indicate that resilience has not been synonymous with stasis. Across all four developmental phases, RA institutions demonstrated adaptive capacity — the ability to incorporate new standards, qualifications, and governance arrangements without fundamentally compromising their Islamic educational identity. The trajectory of teacher certification, from under 12%

in 2000 to over 74% in 2023, is particularly telling: this represents not merely compliance with state mandates but a substantive transformation in the professional identity of the RA teaching workforce, driven by the expansion of PIAUD programs at UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi and other Islamic higher education institutions in the province.

5.2 The Dual Governance Architecture: Tensions and Opportunities

The parallel governance of RA under MoRA and PAUD under Kemendikbudristek creates a distinctive institutional architecture that generates both productive tensions and coordination challenges. On the productive side, the dual system has enabled RA to maintain Islamic curricular specificity while benefiting from the broader policy resources and quality frameworks developed for the national ECE system. The adoption of Permendiknas No. 58/2009 developmental standards by RA, followed by the more ambitious RA Curriculum of 2018, illustrates how dual governance has enabled a productive synthesis of national developmental science and Islamic pedagogical tradition.

The persistent coordination challenges of this architecture are equally significant. In Jambi, RA principals and practitioners have consistently identified difficulties in navigating the overlapping bureaucratic requirements of MoRA and Kemendikbudristek, particularly regarding accreditation, data reporting (DAPODIK vs EMIS), and access to professional development programs. These coordination costs fall disproportionately on smaller, community-managed RA in peri-urban and rural areas — precisely those institutions serving the most educationally disadvantaged children.

5.3 Islamic Identity, National Standards, and the Politics of Quality

A central tension running through all four developmental phases is the relationship between Islamic educational identity — understood both as curriculum content and as institutional ethos — and national educational standardization. The history of this tension in Indonesian IECE reflects broader patterns in the politics of Islamic education identified in the international literature: the state's interest in producing 'moderate', nationally oriented citizens through standardized education, and Islamic educational institutions' interest in transmitting comprehensive religious identities and values (Kosim et al., 2023; Yasin et al., 2023).

The Merdeka Belajar era has created new dynamics in this tension. On one hand, the flexibility built into Kurikulum Merdeka has reduced some of the prescriptive pressure that RA practitioners experienced under earlier curriculum regimes. On the other hand, the expansion of mandatory accreditation through BAN-PDM introduces new forms of standardization that RA practitioners must navigate alongside Islamic curriculum requirements. This paradox — greater pedagogical flexibility combined with greater institutional accountability — is characteristic of what global ECE policy analysts have called the 'quality turn' in early childhood governance.

5.4 Implications for Research and Policy

The findings of this study carry several implications for both scholarship and policy. For scholarship, they underscore the importance of attending to Islamic ECE as a distinct sub-field within the broader ECE research landscape — one with its own historical trajectories, institutional logics, and policy dynamics that cannot be adequately captured by research focused exclusively on the public PAUD system. The development of comparative regional case studies examining IECE in different provinces and Muslim-majority nations would significantly advance this emerging sub-field.

For policy, the findings highlight the need for more effective coordination mechanisms between MoRA and Kemendikbudristek at all administrative levels, particularly to reduce the compliance burden on community-managed RA and to ensure that the benefits of national ECE quality initiatives reach Islamic ECE institutions equitably. The persistent urban–rural quality divide in Jambi's RA system — reflected in teacher certification rates, infrastructure quality, and accreditation status — calls for targeted policy interventions that go beyond standardization to address the structural resource disparities underlying quality gaps. The absence of state-owned (negeri) RA, identified as a fundamental inequity by Salman (2022), warrants urgent policy attention in a context where over a million Indonesian children receive their earliest formal education in RA institutions.

6. Conclusion

This study has traced the historical development, policy transformation, and institutional change of Islamic early childhood education in Jambi Province, Indonesia, from 1945 to 2025. The analysis reveals a four-phase developmental trajectory — from community-based foundational establishment, through state-mediated institutionalization and decentralized standards-construction, to quality-oriented consolidation — that reflects both national policy dynamics and province-specific organizational and cultural factors. The central policy narrative is one of progressive accommodation: the Indonesian state's movement from an ambivalent, at times antagonistic, relationship with Islamic educational institutions toward a more integrative framework that recognizes RA within the national education system while subjecting it to increasing quality accountability.

The quantitative growth of RA in Jambi — from under 400 institutions in 2000 to over 1,200 by 2023, with nearly quadrupled student enrollment — attests to the enduring social demand for Islamic ECE in the province. Yet quantity has been accompanied by significant qualitative development, most notably in teacher qualification rates, curriculum formalization, and accreditation compliance. Persistent challenges — including the dual governance architecture's coordination costs, the absence of state-owned RA, and the urban–rural quality divide — represent the unfinished agenda of IECE policy in Indonesia.

Future research should build on this historical foundation through longitudinal quantitative studies of IECE outcomes, comparative studies of RA development across Indonesian provinces, and participant-level research exploring how RA teachers and practitioners navigate the demands of Islamic identity

preservation and national standardization in their daily practice. Such research would further advance the empirical basis for evidence-informed IECE policy in Indonesia and beyond.

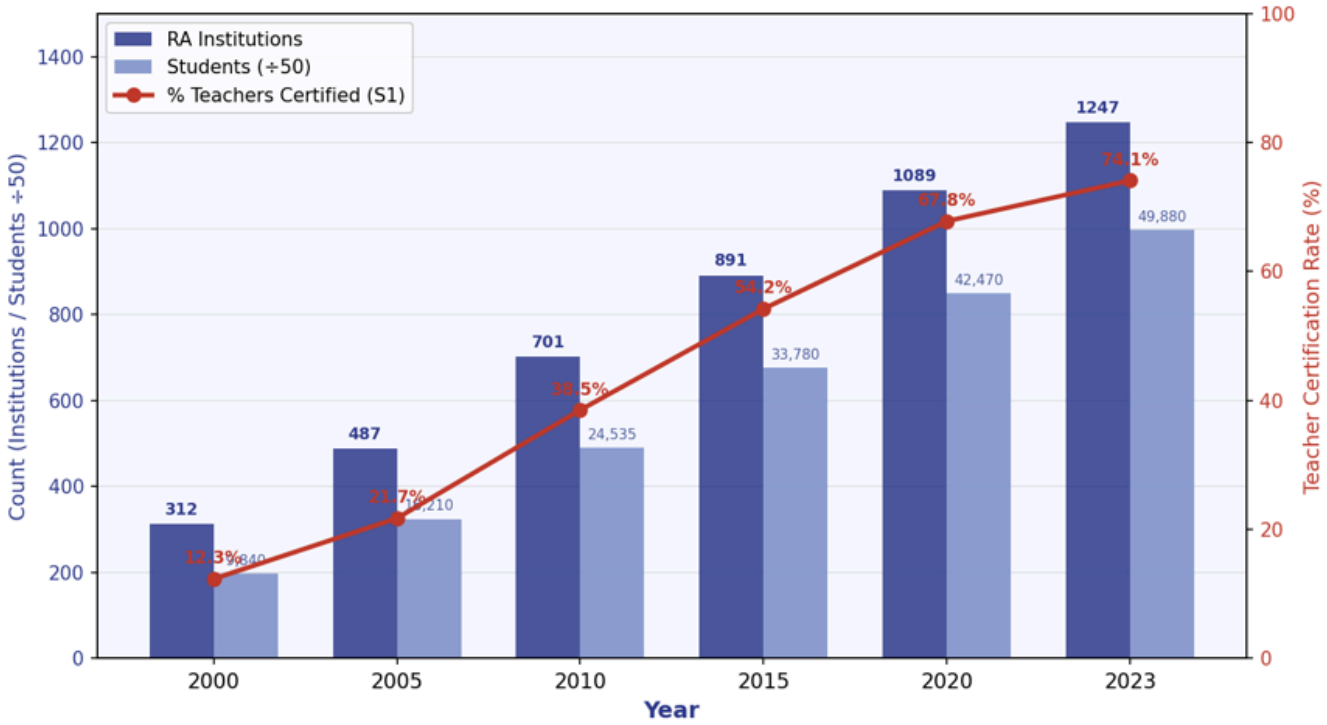
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Figures

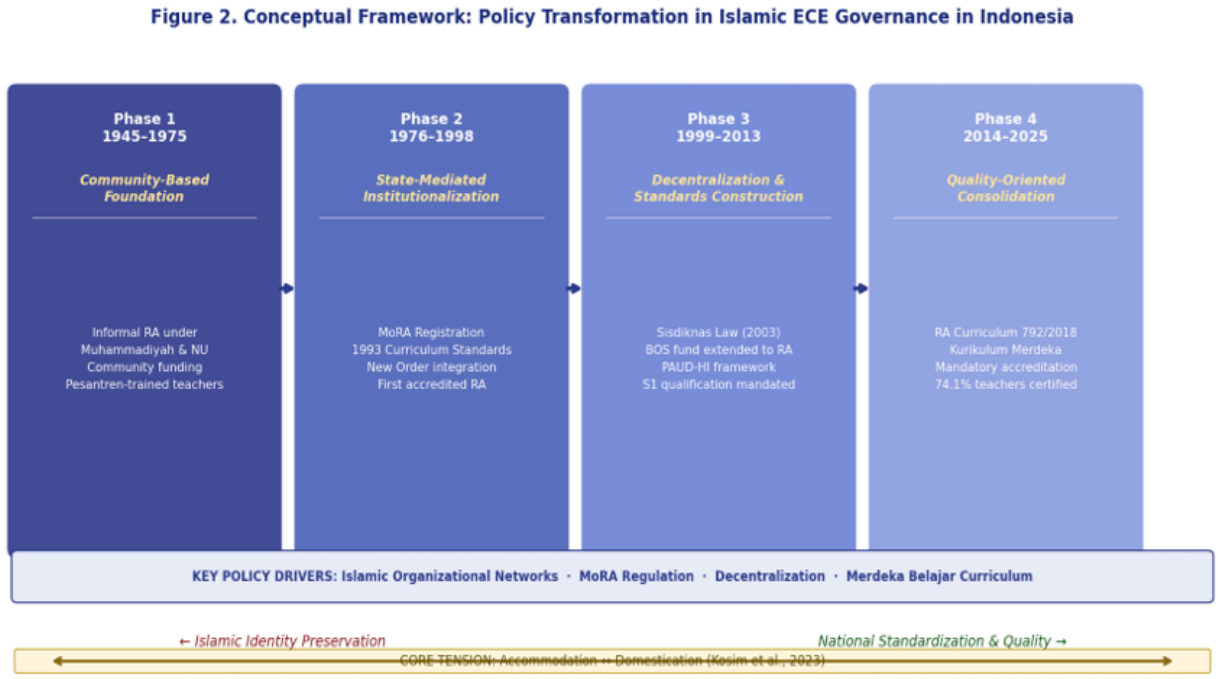
Figure 1. Growth of Raudhatul Athfal (RA) in Jambi Province, 2000–2023: Institutions, Student Enrollment, and Teacher Certification Rates



Source: MoRA Jambi Provincial Office (Kanwil Kemenag Jambi) institutional data reports (2000–2023).

Figure 1

See image above for figure legend.



Source: Synthesized from MoRA Jambi institutional records and national policy documents. See Table 3 for full policy dimension analysis.

Figure 2

See image above for figure legend.