

Title of the project :

Islam and the State: Religious Education in the Age of Mass Schooling

Duration of the project :

Coordinator(s) of the project :

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Description of the project :

Public schooling systems are an essential feature of modern states. In many countries, the formation of such systems came at the expense of religious schools, which undertook the bulk of education historically and still cater to large student populations worldwide. The dramatic expansion of Indonesia's public school system since the 1970s provides a unique setting to study the competition between state and religious schools. Using novel data on Islamic school establishments and curriculum, we identify demand-side and supply-side responses to the construction of 61,000 new public primary schools, as well as the policy's downstream effects on religious attitudes and nation building. Mass public schooling pulled students away from Islamic primary schools while pushing them towards Islamic secondary schools, as the religious sector partly absorbed the increased demand for higher education. Islamic schools responded along both a quantity and an ideological margin. Districts targeted by the policy experienced an increase in establishments of new Islamic schools at all levels, outpacing the establishment of state schools over subsequent decades. In this proposal, we propose to study the extent of curriculum differentiation—via the volume of study hours dedicated to the study of Islamic theology, history, philosophy and law—between public and Islamic schools at the primary and secondary level. This project builds on a previous study of the long-term impacts of Islamic institutions on development in Indonesia.