Critical Review of KMA 1503/2025: The Transformation of the Madrasah Curriculum Based on Deep Learning and the Curriculum of Love

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the implementation of KMA Number 1503 of 2025 as a strategic policy that reconstructs the direction of madrasah curriculum development through two main pillars: Deep Learning (PM) and Love-Based Curriculum (KBC). This policy marks a fundamental paradigm shift, where madrasahs are no longer positioned as centralized curriculum implementers, but as institutions that have broad autonomy in designing, adjusting, and contextualizing the curriculum according to the needs of students and local characteristics. This autonomy provides space for madrasahs to develop program differentiation and optimize local content as a vehicle for forming essential competencies and strengthening learner identity. Deep learning emphasizes a meaningful, reflective learning process oriented towards critical, collaborative, and creative thinking skills, while KBC focuses on the formation of values, affections, and moderate character based on compassion, respect, and humanity. The integration of the two is aimed at producing a graduate profile that is intellectually intelligent, religious, and has an inclusive character. The results of the analysis show that the successful implementation of KMA 1503/2025 is strongly influenced by madrasah readiness in facing the demands of managerial transformation, strengthening teacher capacity, and fulfilling adequate learning resources. These factors are important prerequisites for the principles of Deep Learning and KBC to be applied consistently and effectively in the classroom. This article recommends the need for systemic support through teacher training, curriculum implementation assistance, and reorganization of madrasah management to align with the new policy direction. Thus, KMA 1503/2025 has great potential to strengthen the quality of madrasah education while affirming the role of madrasah as a center of learning that is humanist, transformative, and responsive to change.

Introduction

The Decree of the Minister of Religious Affairs Number 1503 of 2025 emerges as a new milestone marking a shift in the direction of the madrasah curriculum toward a model that is more relevant to the demands of twenty-first century learning and socio-religious dynamics. This regulation offers a philosophical and pedagogical foundation that encourages a transition from mere content delivery toward integrative, humanistic, and meaningful learning experiences. Within the framework of education policy studies, KMA 1503/2025 can be understood as a policy message that affirms the institutional transformation of madrasahs, an approach that requires an in-depth reading of the construction of meaning and the normative direction it promotes (Kementerian Agama RI, 2025).

This KMA explicitly formalizes two transformative agendas of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, namely Deep Learning and the Love-Based Curriculum (Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta/KBC). Deep Learning requires teachers to develop learning processes that foster critical thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, and sustained conceptual understanding (Zubaidah & UM, 2017). Meanwhile, the Love-Based Curriculum places values of compassion, empathy, and respect for diversity as the primary foundations of the educational process, in line with the vision of religious moderation (Awalita, 2024).

KMA 1503/2025 was issued in response to the need for learning that is more humanistic, meaningful, and aligned with the psychological development of learners. In its accompanying letter, it is stated that this policy is part of an effort to strengthen the quality and relevance of the madrasah curriculum and must be socialized and integrated into all activities related to teacher development and supervision (Kementerian Agama RI, 2025).

This indicates that curriculum change is not only related to the structure of learning content but also demands transformation in managerial practices, pedagogical approaches, and the professionalism of educators. (Permadi & Sya'ban, 2025).

The new paradigm introduced in this KMA emphasizes learning models that are deeper, more reflective, and closely connected to students' real-life experiences. Deep Learning requires teachers to develop learning processes that encourage critical thinking, problem-solving, and sustained conceptual understanding (Isnayanti et al., 2025). On the other hand, the Love-Based Curriculum positions values of compassion, empathy, respect for diversity, and healthy educational relationships as the core foundations of the educational process (Aslan & Arifudin, 2025). This approach is aligned with the vision of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in strengthening religious moderation, tolerance, and character education within madrasah environments. (Permadi et al., 2025).

This policy also shifts the focus of curriculum implementation from an administrative approach toward a transformational one. Madrasahs are encouraged not merely to implement the curriculum procedurally but to build an empowering learning culture. Therefore, KMA 1503/2025 mandates that educational institutions strengthen teachers' capacities through systematic and sustainable coaching, supervision, and competency development (Kementerian Agama RI, 2025).

Thus, the success of the implementation of this policy is highly dependent on the ability of madrasahs to adopt pedagogical innovations and strengthen the learning ecosystem.

At the same time, this transformation requires the readiness of various stakeholders, including policymakers, madrasah leaders, and educators, to deeply understand the philosophy and direction of the new curriculum. A critical analysis of KMA 1503/2025 is essential to understand how this policy can be implemented effectively, what challenges may arise, and to what extent the paradigms of Deep Learning and the Love-Based Curriculum can strengthen the quality of religious education in Indonesia.

Therefore, this article is prepared to comprehensively analyze the new paradigm of religious education policy as stipulated in KMA 1503/2025, with a focus on the implementation of the madrasah curriculum based on Deep Learning and the Love-Based Curriculum. This analysis is expected to provide academic and practical contributions to the development of more progressive, relevant, and humanistic religious education policies.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach with a document study design (documentary analysis) to analyze the substance of religious education policy contained in the Decree of the Minister of Religious Affairs (KMA) Number 1503 of 2025. This approach is selected because the focus of the study lies in interpreting policy content, constructing meaning, and examining normative implications for curriculum implementation in madrasahs. Document study is considered the most relevant method for examining formal regulations issued by the government and for understanding the policy direction articulated within them.

This research is a descriptive qualitative study that aims to describe, examine, and interpret (Waruwu, 2024) the content of the KMA 1503/2025 policy in a systematic manner. This approach enables the researcher to identify the main ideas, fundamental principles, and paradigm shifts in madrasah curriculum policy that give rise to the concepts of Deep Learning and the Love-Based Curriculum.

Results and Discussion

1. Formalization of Policy: Deep Learning (DL) and the Love-Based Curriculum (KBC)

KMA Number 1503 of 2025 functions as a regulatory instrument that explicitly formalizes two transformative agendas of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, namely Deep Learning and the Love-Based Curriculum (KBC) (Kementerian Agama RI, 2025). This regulation transforms conceptual ideas into operational mandates applicable across all levels of madrasah education, and from the perspective of policy implementation, it provides clear standards and objectives (Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975).

Normative Direction of Deep Learning and KBC:

a. Deep Learning as a Competency Orientation:

This KMA shifts the way madrasahs understand the curriculum from a content-driven approach to a learning-outcomes-driven approach. Deep Learning is mandated as a pedagogical approach that focuses on competencies such as critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and character development (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). This constructs learning as a process of holistic learner development, requiring teachers to promote high-level conceptual understanding

b. KBC as an Ethical Framework:

KMA 1503/2025 positions the Love-Based Curriculum as an ethical and spiritual framework that is inter-curricular in nature. This policy emphasizes that knowledge must not be separated from ethics and adab, in line with the integrated Islamic curriculum perspective (Al-Attas et al., 2023). The integration of values of compassion and respect for diversity becomes the operational basis for mainstreaming religious moderation (Nuhaliza et al., 2024). This KMA strengthens the identity of madrasahs as institutions that integrate contemporary knowledge with Islamic values and moderate character.

2. Curricular Autonomy and Flexibility: Program Differentiation and Contextualization (Mulok and Excellence Programs)

KMA 1503/2025 conceptualizes the curriculum as an adaptive instrument rather than a rigid document. This flexibility opens opportunities for madrasahs to design contextually relevant curricula, in line with the discourse on educational decentralization (Mustabsyirah & Yuspiani, 2025).

Differentiation of Excellence Programs:

The KMA provides space for madrasahs to develop specific excellence programs in areas such as research, sports, arts, and skills. These programs function as strategies for institutional differentiation to build branding and competitive advantage (Hanun, 2016). The particular emphasis on research programs strengthens the orientation of Deep Learning by encouraging a shift from knowledge transfer to knowledge construction.

a. Contextualization of Local Content (Mulok):

KMA 1503/2025 allows Mulok to be integrated into other subjects or established as a standalone subject. This flexibility responds to the sociological foundation of the curriculum, which demands relevance to local cultural contexts. The integration of Mulok supports Deep Learning by connecting academic concepts with students' real-life experiences and serves as an effective vehicle for instilling KBC values and religious moderation. This autonomy requires strengthened managerial capacity at the madrasah level to conduct accurate analyses of local needs (Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975).

3. Respons Abad ke-21: Integration of Technology (Coding and AI) and Inclusive Services

The policies contained in KMA 1503/2025 demonstrate responsiveness to global skill demands and principles of educational equity.

a. Technology Integration:

The provision to include Coding and Artificial Intelligence (AI) as elective subjects represents a future-proofing of education. Coding instruction is consistent with the principles of Deep Learning because it encourages logical and systematic thinking and develops algorithm-based problem-solving skills. The flexibility in its implementation reflects realistic considerations regarding the varying levels of infrastructure and human resource readiness among madrasahs (Yunadi, 2025).

b. Inclusive Services:

The KMA positions madrasahs as institutions that must be responsive to the diversity of learners' abilities, including Children with Special Needs (ABK) and gifted students. Philosophically, inclusive policy aligns with the Love-Based Curriculum (KBC), which guarantees respect for human dignity. Pedagogical implications include the obligation to implement differentiated instruction and to develop Individual Learning Programs (PPI) for ABK, as well as to provide acceleration pathways for students with high intellectual potential.

1. Managerial Implications and Policy Implementation (Van Meter and Van Horn Perspective)

The curriculum transformation mandated by KMA 1503/2025 brings direct consequences for madrasah management, where policy effectiveness is highly dependent on the capacity of implementing agents.

a. Implications for Curriculum Planning: The KMA requires madrasahs to design curricula based on big ideas and cross-disciplinary competencies, consistent with the backward design approach (McTighe & Ferrara, 2021). This has implications for enhancing the capacity of curriculum planners to develop flexible and visionary teaching modules.

b. Implications for Teachers' Instructional Practices: Teachers are required to shift from lecture-based approaches to constructive, inquiry-based, collaborative, and reflective strategies. The repositioning of teachers from knowledge transmitters to designers of learning experiences necessitates continuous professional training and support from professional learning communities (Hutabarat et al., 2024).

c. Implications for Assessment: Assessment must move toward authentic assessment models, particularly performance-based assessment. Madrasahs are required to evaluate problem-solving abilities, collaboration, creativity, and moral values, rather than merely cognitive content mastery.

d. Implications for Madrasah Management: The flexibility provided by the KMA expands the scope of autonomy for madrasah principals. Leadership is required to be more visionary and collaborative, as well as capable of ensuring a learning organizational culture so that madrasahs can grow as centers of innovation (Prajuningsetia & Hariyadi, 2025).

Conclusion

KMA Number 1503 of 2025 is a strategic policy that consolidates the agenda of madrasah curriculum transformation based on Deep Learning and the Love-Based Curriculum (KBC). This KMA essentially repositions madrasahs from implementing institutions to curriculum-designing institutions with broad pedagogical autonomy to carry out program differentiation and contextualization of Mulok. The implementation of Deep Learning and KBC functions to shape individuals who are intellectually capable, religious, and characterized by moderation. The success of this policy is highly dependent on the ability of madrasahs to respond to demands for managerial transformation, strengthening teacher capacity, and the provision of adequate resources, in line with the principles of effective policy implementation.

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