

## **Transforming Islamic education management: Strategies for efficiency and effectiveness**

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### **Abstract**

This study examines the management strategies employed in Islamic education to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of educational institutions, with a focused case study on Pondok Pesantren Manbaul Hikam Putat. Motivated by the increasing complexity of challenges faced by Islamic boarding schools amid educational modernization—such as constraints in human resources, funding, and infrastructure—this research adopts a qualitative case study approach to provide an in-depth analysis. The study investigates key managerial dimensions including organizational structure, human resource management, curriculum development, infrastructure, and financial governance. Findings indicate that the pesantren maintains a relatively well-structured and accountable organizational framework, coupled with a strong commitment to continuous professional development through regular training programs for educators. The curriculum effectively integrates religious teachings with general knowledge; however, it requires further refinement to align with contemporary workforce demands. Financially, the institution endeavors to achieve sustainability by developing internal business units, though it remains significantly dependent on community donations. Additionally, the study identifies the need for substantial improvements in educational facilities, particularly classrooms and laboratories. In summary, while the pesantren demonstrates generally effective education management practices, several strategic areas warrant further enhancement to meet evolving educational standards. This research contributes valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners aiming to strengthen the management of Islamic educational institutions facing similar modernization challenges.

**Keywords:** Curriculum development, educational management, efficiency and effectiveness, Islamic boarding schools, strategic management

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### **Introduction**

Management of Islamic education plays a pivotal role in shaping the direction and quality of education within Islamic institutions, including pesantrens (Islamic boarding schools), madrasas, and other Islamic schools. This management system is not merely concerned with the transmission of knowledge but also emphasizes character formation, moral development, and the integration of faith and knowledge (Hidayat, 2022). Given the increasing complexity of contemporary educational challenges, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of Islamic education management has become a critical priority. Effective management ensures that Islamic educational institutions can fulfill their dual mission of academic excellence and

spiritual development, thereby producing well-rounded learners capable of thriving in diverse contexts.

The landscape of Islamic education in Indonesia is undergoing significant transformation, marked by quantitative growth, enhanced quality, and curriculum diversification. Islamic boarding schools, as distinctive educational institutions, prioritize religious learning and moral coaching, serving as vital centers for character education (Muljawan, 2022). However, many pesantrens face persistent challenges such as limited human resources, inadequate funding, and outdated infrastructure, which hinder their ability to deliver quality education. These challenges necessitate strategic improvements in management practices to optimize resource utilization and enhance educational outcomes. Therefore, exploring strategies to improve efficiency and effectiveness in Islamic education management is essential to ensure these institutions can meet the evolving needs of their students and communities.

The case of Pondok Pesantren Manba'ul Hikam exemplifies an Islamic educational institution striving to balance traditional religious values with modern management concepts. This pesantren integrates deep religious understanding with efforts to adopt contemporary management practices, reflecting a broader trend of adaptation within Islamic education (Noor & Islamiya, 2022). By examining the management strategies employed at Manba'ul Hikam, this study aims to identify effective approaches that can be generalized to similar institutions facing modernization pressures. Such insights are crucial for fostering collaborative management involving stakeholders such as government, educators, students, and the community to enhance leadership, curriculum relevance, and overall educational quality.

The conceptualization of Islamic education management encompasses multiple dimensions, including organizational structure, human resource management, curriculum development, infrastructure, and financial governance. Organizational structure provides the framework for decision-making, communication, and task delegation, which are fundamental for operational efficiency (Pulungan & Hasibuan, 2024). Human resource management is particularly critical in pesantrens, where teachers (ustadz) play a central role in delivering education and shaping student character (Solehan, 2022). Effective management of human resources ensures that educators are competent, motivated, and aligned with institutional goals.

Curriculum development in Islamic education must be responsive to contemporary societal demands while maintaining fidelity to Islamic values. A balanced curriculum integrates religious teachings with general knowledge and life skills, preparing students to navigate global challenges (Nasucha, Rapsjani, & Puspitasari, 2021). Infrastructure management, including the provision of adequate classrooms and learning facilities, directly impacts the quality of teaching and learning experiences (Daulae, 2024). Furthermore, transparent and accountable financial management is essential to sustain operations, especially given the reliance on community donations and limited funding sources (Murtyaningsih, 2023).

The efficiency and effectiveness of Islamic education management are often measured by the institution's ability to optimize resources, improve educational quality, and achieve sustainable development goals. Studies have demonstrated that well-implemented management practices significantly enhance learning processes, student outcomes, and institutional accreditation (Afandi, 2020; Misbah, 2016; Nurdin, 2018). Integrating core management functions—planning, organizing, directing, and controlling—within Islamic educational contexts fosters a holistic environment that nurtures both academic excellence and moral integrity (Daulae, 2024).

In light of the above, this study aims to analyze and evaluate the strategies implemented in Islamic education management at Pondok Pesantren Manba'ul Hikam to enhance efficiency

and effectiveness. By investigating internal and external factors influencing management practices, the research seeks to identify innovative solutions to overcome challenges faced by Islamic boarding schools. The findings are expected to contribute valuable insights for improving Islamic education management, offering practical recommendations for administrators and enriching the academic literature in this field.

## **Method**

### ***Research Focus***

This study focuses on the management of Islamic education at Pondok Pesantren Manba'ul Hikam as the primary unit of analysis. The institution represents a typical Islamic boarding school that integrates formal education with traditional pesantren values, making it an ideal case to explore the complexities of educational management within this context. Investigating this unit allows for an in-depth understanding of how managerial practices influence educational efficiency and effectiveness in Islamic institutions (Yin, 2018). By concentrating on this specific institution, the study aims to generate insights that are both contextually rich and potentially transferable to similar Islamic educational settings.

### ***Research Design***

A qualitative case study design was employed to deeply explore the management strategies implemented at the pesantren. This approach is appropriate because it facilitates a comprehensive examination of complex phenomena within their real-life context (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The case study method enables the researcher to investigate multiple managerial dimensions, including organizational structure, human resource management, curriculum development, infrastructure, and financial governance. Such a design supports the collection of detailed, nuanced data that quantitative methods might overlook, thereby providing a holistic view of the institution's management practices.

### ***Research Participant***

The study's data sources include a diverse range of informants and materials to ensure data triangulation and validity. Primary respondents consist of the head of the pesantren, educational managers, teachers (ustadz), and students actively involved in the institution's educational activities. Additionally, interviews were conducted with foundation administrators and administrative staff who play supporting roles in management. Besides human sources, documentary evidence such as organizational charts, curriculum plans, financial reports, and institutional policies were collected. This multi-source approach aligns with best practices in qualitative research to enhance credibility and depth of understanding (Patton, 2015).

### ***Data Collection Techniques***

Data were gathered through three main techniques: semi-structured interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews provided flexibility to explore respondents' perspectives while maintaining focus on relevant management topics (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Participatory observation allowed the researcher to witness firsthand the implementation of management practices, interactions among stakeholders, and the learning environment. Document analysis involved reviewing institutional records to corroborate and enrich data obtained from interviews and observations. Employing multiple data collection methods strengthens the study's validity by enabling triangulation (Flick, 2018).

### ***Data Analysis***

Thematic analysis was utilized to systematically interpret the qualitative data collected. This process involved transcribing interviews verbatim, thoroughly reading the transcripts, and coding data to identify recurring themes related to curriculum management, human resource

management, financial governance, and infrastructure (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Categorizing data into meaningful clusters facilitated the synthesis of findings, which were then interpreted in light of relevant Islamic education management theories. The final stage involved drawing conclusions and formulating recommendations to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of Islamic education management at the pesantren. This rigorous analytical approach ensures that the study's conclusions are well-founded and actionable (Nowell et al., 2017).

### Result

Table 1 below presents a summary of the key findings from this study on the management of Islamic education at Pondok Pesantren Manba'ul Hikam. The table highlights five critical management aspects—organizational structure and human resources, curriculum and education development, financial management, facilities and infrastructure, and overall efficiency and effectiveness. For each aspect, the findings are outlined alongside the main challenges encountered and the strategies implemented to address these issues. This overview provides a comprehensive snapshot of how the institution manages its resources and operations to enhance educational quality despite facing various constraints.

*Table 1*

*The Summary of Research Results*

No	Aspect of Management	Findings	Challenges	Strategies Implemented
1	Structure Organization & HR	The organizational structure is clear with effective task distribution. Human resource management is actively conducted.	Uneven quality of teaching staff; some teachers lack adequate formal education background.	Periodic training and capacity development programs for teachers to enhance their skills and knowledge.
2	Curriculum & Education Development	The curriculum integrates religious education with life skills.	Curriculum is not yet fully aligned with the practical needs of students.	Ongoing evaluation and development of the curriculum to incorporate practical skills and technological competencies.
3	Management Finance	Financial management is relatively transparent, with funding sourced from donations and independent efforts.	Heavy reliance on community donations, which are unstable and unpredictable.	Development of independent business units to ensure financial stability and reduce dependency on donations.
4	Facilities & Infrastructure	Facilities are generally adequate, but classroom space and supporting facilities are limited.	Limited classroom space and suboptimal facilities hinder effective learning environments.	Planned development of new facilities, including additional classrooms and laboratories, in the coming years.
5	Efficiency & Effectiveness	Educational management operates effectively despite existing challenges.	Limited human resources and financial constraints affect optimal implementation of education.	Continuous efforts to improve education quality through teacher training and enhanced financial management.

The organizational structure at Islamic Manba'ul Hikam Boarding School is clearly defined, with effective task distribution and active human resource management. This clarity facilitates smooth communication and decision-making processes within the institution. However, challenges remain regarding the uneven quality of teaching staff, as some teachers lack adequate formal education in Islamic studies. This issue necessitates ongoing capacity-

building efforts. As Participant 1 explained, “We focus on integrating religious education with general knowledge to prepare students for modern challenges, ensuring every aspect of education runs well.” Similarly, Participant 2 highlighted the difficulty of uniting students from diverse educational backgrounds into a cohesive learning environment, stating, “We try to accommodate these differences with more flexible learning.” Therefore, periodic training and development programs are essential strategies to enhance teacher competencies and support effective learning.

The curriculum at Manba’ul Hikam integrates Islamic religious education with essential life skills, aiming to equip students for contemporary challenges while preserving traditional religious knowledge. Observations indicate that the curriculum is flexible, incorporating formal and non-formal elements such as language, technology, and entrepreneurship. Nonetheless, some students feel the curriculum does not fully meet their practical needs for entering the workforce. Participant 3 noted, “Our curriculum balances intensive religious studies with practical skills like language, technology, and entrepreneurship to prepare students for a better future.” This underscores the importance of continuous curriculum evaluation and development to enhance its relevance, particularly by adding practical and technological competencies.

Financial management at the boarding school is relatively transparent and accountable, relying on donations from the community, parents, and income from independent business efforts. These funds support operational continuity, including facility development, teacher salaries, and teaching materials. However, the school faces challenges due to the instability and unpredictability of donation-based funding. Participant 4 acknowledged this vulnerability and are actively seeking alternative funding sources. Participant 1 stated, “We continue to improve financial management by exploring alternative funding, such as independent business ventures, alongside regular teacher training to enhance operational efficiency.” Thus, developing independent business units is a strategic approach to achieving financial stability and reducing reliance on donations.

The facilities at Manba’ul Hikam are generally adequate but limited in classroom space and supporting infrastructure such as libraries, computer rooms, and language laboratories. These limitations constrain the learning environment, especially as student numbers grow. The school is committed to improving its infrastructure, with plans to build new classrooms and laboratories in the coming years. Participant 2 shared, “I personally try to renew my teaching methods by incorporating technology, such as digital presentations and educational software, to enrich students’ learning experiences.” This commitment to facility enhancement and modern teaching methods reflects the school’s strategy to support more interactive and effective learning.

Despite facing challenges related to limited human resources and financial constraints, the educational management at Manba’ul Hikam operates effectively. The school’s commitment to quality education is evident through continuous efforts to improve teaching and management practices. Participant 1 emphasized, “Our biggest challenges are limited funds and qualified human resources, but we remain committed to providing the best education possible.” Participant 3 added, “Adapting the curriculum to meet evolving technological and workforce demands requires time and sufficient resources.” To address these issues, the school implements ongoing teacher training, curriculum reform, financial management improvements, and infrastructure development, all aimed at enhancing overall efficiency and educational outcomes.

The data from this study reveal a consistent pattern of strengths and challenges across key management aspects at Islamic Manba’ul Hikam Boarding School. The organizational

structure and human resource management are well-defined and actively maintained, facilitating effective communication and task allocation. However, a recurring challenge is the uneven quality of teaching staff, which underscores the institution's ongoing commitment to capacity building through regular training programs. Similarly, the curriculum demonstrates a balanced integration of religious education and life skills, yet it requires continuous refinement to better align with students' practical and technological needs. Financial management is characterized by transparency and accountability, but the school's heavy reliance on unstable community donations highlights the necessity for developing independent business ventures to secure financial sustainability. Facilities and infrastructure, while generally adequate, face limitations in classroom space and supportive learning environments, prompting strategic plans for expansion and modernization. Despite these challenges, the overall educational management operates effectively, driven by persistent efforts to enhance teacher competencies, curriculum relevance, financial stability, and infrastructure quality. This pattern reflects a proactive institutional approach that balances tradition with modernization, aiming to improve efficiency and effectiveness in delivering quality Islamic education.

### **Discussion**

The results of this study reveal that the management of Islamic education at Pondok Pesantren Manba'ul Hikam is characterized by clear organizational structures and active human resource management, which facilitate effective communication and task distribution. However, challenges such as uneven teacher quality and insufficient formal educational backgrounds necessitate ongoing capacity-building efforts through periodic training programs. The curriculum successfully integrates religious education with essential life skills, yet it requires continuous evaluation and development to better meet students' practical and technological needs. Financial management is relatively transparent and accountable, but the institution's heavy reliance on unstable community donations underscores the need for developing independent business ventures to ensure financial sustainability. Facilities and infrastructure are generally adequate, though limited classroom space and suboptimal learning environments present obstacles that the school plans to address through future expansion and modernization. Despite these challenges, the overall educational management operates effectively, supported by continuous efforts to improve teacher competencies, curriculum relevance, financial stability, and infrastructure quality. This comprehensive approach reflects the institution's commitment to balancing tradition with modernization to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of Islamic education delivery.

#### ***Structure Organization & Human Resources (HR)***

A clear organizational structure and active HR management are fundamental for smooth operations and effective decision-making in educational institutions. However, the uneven quality of teaching staff can directly impact the quality of education delivered, potentially hindering student learning outcomes and institutional reputation. Addressing this gap through training is crucial to maintain educational standards and adapt to evolving pedagogical demands. The disparity in teacher qualifications often stems from recruitment challenges, limited access to formal training, and resource constraints typical in many Islamic boarding schools. Additionally, diverse student backgrounds require teachers to be versatile and well-prepared, which is only possible through continuous professional development.

This approach contrasts with the more formalized and systematic curriculum strategies observed at Pesantren Miftahul Huda, where teacher schedules and learning materials are tightly structured (Lukmanul Hakim & Luthfiah, 2024). However, Manba'ul Hikam's flexible, kyai-led management demonstrates that informal systems grounded in strong leadership and

community values can also sustain effective educational outcomes. Similarly, although Manba'ul Hikam does not explicitly employ strategic planning tools such as SWOT analysis, its long-term vision and adaptive strategies resonate with the strategic institutional development highlighted by Purwanti et al. (2020). Furthermore, the integration of religious and general education at Manba'ul Hikam parallels efforts at Sunanul Huda, underscoring a shared commitment across pesantrens to balance tradition with modern educational demands (Asy'ari et al., 2020).

### ***Curriculum & Education Development***

Integrating religious education with life skills prepares students holistically for both spiritual and worldly challenges. However, if the curriculum does not fully address practical and technological competencies, graduates may struggle to compete in modern job markets, reducing the institution's relevance and appeal. Continuous curriculum development ensures that education remains responsive to societal needs. The curriculum's partial misalignment with practical needs often results from balancing traditional religious teachings with modern educational demands. Limited resources and expertise in curriculum design can also slow the integration of new skills, necessitating ongoing evaluation and adaptation.

This challenge is echoed in Lukmanul Hakim and Luthfiah's (2024) study of curriculum management at Miftahul Huda Al-Faqih Manonjaya Tasikmalaya, where effective planning, management of learning materials, teacher coordination, and scheduling are emphasized as critical to improving educational quality. Both studies underscore the importance of strategic curriculum management in enhancing the relevance and responsiveness of Islamic education. While Manbaul Hikam adopts a flexible and adaptive curriculum model, Miftahul Huda's more structured approach offers advantages in systematic resource allocation and time management. Conversely, the flexibility at Manbaul Hikam may better accommodate diverse student needs and local contexts. This comparison suggests that ongoing curriculum evaluation and adaptation, supported by adequate resources and expertise, are essential for balancing tradition with innovation. Further comparative analysis of these differing strategies can provide valuable insights into optimizing curriculum development across Islamic boarding schools.

### ***Management Finance***

Transparent financial management builds trust among stakeholders and supports sustainable operations. However, heavy reliance on unstable donations threatens financial stability, risking interruptions in educational services and infrastructure development. Developing independent business ventures can diversify income streams, enhancing resilience and long-term viability. Many Islamic boarding schools depend on community goodwill and donations due to limited access to formal funding channels. Economic fluctuations and donor fatigue contribute to funding unpredictability, making financial diversification a strategic necessity.

This challenge of funding unpredictability is common among Islamic boarding schools, which often depend on community goodwill due to limited access to formal funding channels, a situation exacerbated by economic fluctuations and donor fatigue. Purwanti et al. (2020) emphasize that the implementation of strategic management is crucial for improving educational quality in Islamic boarding schools, highlighting how targeted strategies can optimize resource use and institutional performance. Both studies affirm that effective strategic management positively influences educational quality; however, the present research extends this understanding by analyzing specific financial challenges and obstacles faced by Manbaul Hikam Putat in executing strategic management. This nuanced insight underscores the importance of adaptive financial strategies, including diversification and sustainability planning, to overcome contextual constraints and support long-term institutional development.

### ***Facilities & Infrastructure***

Adequate facilities are essential for creating conducive learning environments that support student engagement and academic success. Limitations in classroom space and supporting infrastructure can restrict enrollment growth and diminish educational quality. Planned expansions signal institutional commitment to improvement but require careful resource allocation and management. Constraints in facilities often arise from financial limitations and rapid increases in student populations. Additionally, evolving pedagogical methods demand modern infrastructure, such as technology-enabled classrooms, which may not be immediately affordable or prioritized.

These constraints are common in many Islamic boarding schools, where financial limitations and rapid enrollment growth strain existing infrastructure. Moreover, the increasing demand for technology-enabled classrooms reflects evolving pedagogical approaches that necessitate modern learning environments, which may not be immediately feasible due to budgetary restrictions. Asy'ari et al. (2020) similarly highlight the importance of integrating general and religious education to improve student quality at Sunanul Huda Islamic Boarding School in Sukabumi. Both studies underscore the significance of harmonizing educational content and physical resources to optimize learning outcomes. Comparing the integration models at Manbaul Hikam and Sunanul Huda can provide deeper insights into how infrastructure development supports the blending of general and religious curricula, ultimately enhancing the holistic quality of Islamic education.

### ***Efficiency & Effectiveness***

Effective educational management despite resource constraints demonstrates institutional resilience and commitment to quality. However, ongoing limitations in human resources and finances can cap the institution's potential, affecting student outcomes and competitive positioning. Continuous improvement efforts are vital to sustain and enhance educational delivery. Resource limitations are common in many Islamic educational institutions due to funding challenges and difficulties in attracting qualified personnel. The dynamic nature of educational demands requires persistent adaptation, which can strain existing capacities without strategic planning and investment.

This situation mirrors broader challenges faced by many organizations, where continuous improvement and strategic planning are essential to sustain and enhance operational performance. For instance, Ateh, Prasojo, and Huseini (2019) demonstrated through their study of Indonesian local governments that structured performance management systems, such as the SAKIP framework, significantly improve efficiency and effectiveness by aligning objectives and streamlining processes. Similarly, Centobelli, Cerchione, and Esposito (2019) highlighted in the SME sector that only a minority of enterprises effectively balance efficiency and effectiveness in knowledge management, underscoring the need for comprehensive evaluation and management tools. These studies collectively emphasize that, whether in public administration, business, or education, adopting systematic performance management and continuous evaluation mechanisms is critical to overcoming resource limitations and achieving optimal outcomes. Manbaul Hikam's ongoing efforts to improve teacher training, financial management, and infrastructure development reflect this imperative, suggesting that strategic investment and adaptive management are key to enhancing educational efficiency and effectiveness in resource-constrained settings.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the management of Islamic education at Pondok Pesantren Manba'ul Hikam demonstrates a well-structured and adaptive approach that balances tradition with modernization to enhance educational quality. The clear organizational structure and active human resource management facilitate effective operations, though challenges in teacher qualifications highlight the need for ongoing professional development. Similarly, the curriculum's integration of religious and life skills reflects responsiveness to contemporary demands, yet continuous evaluation is necessary to address practical and technological gaps. Financial management practices are transparent but constrained by reliance on unstable donations, underscoring the importance of diversifying income sources through independent ventures. Facility limitations, particularly in classroom space and infrastructure, present obstacles that the institution plans to overcome through strategic expansion. Despite these challenges, the school's commitment to continuous improvement in teaching, curriculum, finance, and infrastructure exemplifies institutional resilience and dedication to quality education. This comprehensive and strategic management approach aligns with broader research emphasizing the critical role of adaptive leadership, strategic planning, and resource optimization in sustaining educational effectiveness, particularly within resource-limited Islamic educational settings. Therefore, Manba'ul Hikam's experience offers valuable insights into how Islamic boarding schools can navigate contemporary challenges while preserving their core educational values.

This study makes a significant scientific contribution by providing rich, context-specific data on the management of Islamic education at Pondok Pesantren Manba'ul Hikam, a representative case of pesantren that integrates formal education with traditional Islamic values. By employing a qualitative case study design, the research offers a comprehensive and nuanced exploration of multiple management dimensions—including organizational structure, human resources, curriculum development, financial governance, and infrastructure—that are often overlooked in quantitative studies. Furthermore, the study introduces new variables related to the balance between tradition and modernization, such as the integration of religious and life skills education and the development of independent financial ventures, which enrich existing theoretical frameworks.

Despite its valuable contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research focuses on a single case study of Pondok Pesantren Manba'ul Hikam, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other Islamic boarding schools with different contexts or management structures. Second, the qualitative approach, while providing in-depth insights, relies heavily on self-reported data from participants, which may be subject to bias or social desirability effects. Additionally, the study's data collection was constrained by time and resource availability, potentially limiting the scope of observations and the diversity of informants. Finally, rapid changes in educational policies and external factors such as funding environments may affect the applicability of the findings over time. Future research could address these limitations by incorporating comparative studies across multiple pesantrens, employing mixed-methods designs, and conducting longitudinal analyses to capture evolving management practices.

### **Conflict of interests**

The author declares that he has no conflict of interest.

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