

Transformation of Islamic Boarding School Management: Case Study at Syaikh Zainuddin NW Bintan Islamic Boarding School

Muhardi

Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Tarbiyah Hidayatullah Batam, Indonesia, Email: muhardihardy@gmail.com

Abstract: This study explores management transformation at Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) through a Pondok Pesantren Syaikh Zainuddin NW Bintan case study. The research addresses the urgent need for pesantren to adapt to contemporary educational demands while preserving their traditional identity. Previous studies have highlighted the challenges of integrating classical Islamic education with modern curricula. However, few have examined comprehensive management transformations, including curriculum development, leadership restructuring, and internal quality assurance systems. This study aims to fill that gap by analyzing how pesantren management adapts to these challenges. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with foundation leaders, school principals, teachers, and caregivers, direct observations, and document analysis. Findings reveal three key transformations: first, the integration of the traditional Salafiyah curriculum with the national curriculum and 21st-century competencies; second, a leadership shift from a centralistic to a decentralized model that empowers institutional units; and third, the establishment of a Quality Assurance Team (TPMPP) to ensure sustainable institutional development. These changes indicate a significant movement toward modern, participatory, and quality-oriented pesantren governance. The implications of this study highlight the need for pesantren to balance tradition with innovation to remain relevant in a rapidly evolving educational landscape.


Keywords: transformation, educational management, Islamic boarding school, curriculum development, quality assurance

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) have historically played a significant role in Indonesia's educational and socio-religious landscape. As one of the oldest Islamic educational institutions in the country, *pesantren* are not only centers for religious learning but also act as agents of cultural preservation, social empowerment, and community development.¹ In the face of the 21st century's challenges—globalization, rapid technological advancement, and shifting societal demands—*pesantren* are under increasing pressure to adapt and remain relevant. Education today is no longer limited to transmitting classical religious knowledge; it requires the development of competencies that equip learners with critical thinking, technological literacy, and the ability to navigate complex socio-cultural contexts.²

This transformation is significant because *pesantren* graduates are expected to contribute to the religious sector and broader social, economic, and political spheres. A *pesantren*'s success is thus measured by its ability to produce *ulama* or religious scholars and by its capacity to prepare students to compete in the global workforce and engage productively in society.³ This dual expectation highlights the need to rethink *pesantren* management, particularly in curriculum development, leadership models, and institutional quality assurance systems. Without such transformations, *pesantren* risk being left behind in a rapidly changing educational ecosystem.⁴

Moreover, reforming *pesantren* management is essential for ensuring institutional sustainability. Effective management practices—from curriculum integration to participatory leadership and robust quality assurance mechanisms—are critical for achieving this goal. Educational institutions worldwide increasingly adopt quality assurance frameworks to maintain academic standards and ensure student satisfaction.⁵ As integral components of Indonesia's education system, *Pesantren* must adopt similar practices to ensure their continued relevance and contribution to national education.⁶

Despite their critical role, many *pesantren* still rely on traditional management models that prioritize religious instruction while paying little attention to modern educational needs. Most *pesantren* in Indonesia remain focused on classical Islamic studies (*tafaqquh fid-din*), using curricula centered on *kitab kuning* and instructional methods such as *sorogan* and *bandongan*.⁷ While this approach preserves the authenticity of Islamic knowledge transmission, it often

¹ Azyumardi Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi Dan Modernisasi Di Tengah Tantangan Milenium*, 3rd ed. (Jakarta: Kencana (Prenada Media Group), 2014); M Mastuhu, *Dinamika Sistem Pendidikan Pesantren: Suatu Kajian Tentang Unsur Dan Nilai Sistem Pendidikan Pesantren*, Seri INIS No. 20 (Jakarta: INIS, 1994); M. Aditya Prayoga et al., "Management of Santri Discipline: Bullying Prevention and Intervention at Dayah Terpadu Al-Muslimun," *Journal of Educational Research and Practice* 3, no. 2 (May 17, 2025): 204–12, <https://doi.org/10.70376/jerp.v3i2.358>.

² E Mulyasa, *Manajemen Berbasis Sekolah: Konsep, Strategi Dan Implementasi* (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2009).

³ Mujamil Qomar, *Manajemen Pendidikan Islam: Strategi Baru Pengelolaan Lembaga Pendidikan Islam* (Jakarta: Erlangga, 2007).

⁴ A Halim, *Manajemen Pesantren*, ed. dkk. (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2005).

⁵ Muhammad Miftahul Maulana, *Sistem Penjaminan Mutu Pendidikan* (Sleman: KBM Indonesia, 2025).

⁶ Kementerian Agama RI, "Petunjuk Teknis Sistem Penjaminan Mutu Madrasah Diniyah Takmiliyah" (Jakarta: Kementerian Agama RI, 2023).

⁷ Jamal Ma'mur Asmani, "Pesantren Sebagai 'Kiblat' Pendidikan Dan Pengetahuan Indonesia," *Islamic Review: Jurnal Riset Dan Kajian Keislaman* 5, no. 1 (2016): 59–84.

neglects the integration of national educational standards and 21st-century skills such as digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and critical thinking.⁸

In addition, pesantren leadership models tend to be highly centralized. Decision-making power is often concentrated in the hands of a single figure—the kiai or foundation leader—leaving little room for participatory governance or collaborative problem-solving.⁹ While this centralistic model provides strong direction, it can hinder innovation and responsiveness to emerging challenges. This is particularly problematic in educational institutions, which require dynamic leadership to navigate complex administrative, academic, and social demands.

Another pressing reality is the lack of structured quality assurance mechanisms within pesantren. Unlike formal schools subject to external accreditation and quality evaluations, many pesantren operate without standardized frameworks for monitoring and improving their educational outcomes.¹⁰ This absence of internal quality control systems results in inconsistent curriculum delivery, teacher performance, and student outcomes.¹¹

Efforts have been made to modernize pesantren education, such as by enacting Undang-undang No. 18 tahun 2019 tentang Pesantren, which formally recognizes pesantren as part of the national education system.¹² This legislation encourages pesantren to integrate national curricula and adopt modern management practices. However, implementation remains uneven, and many pesantren struggle to operationalize these reforms due to limited resources, insufficient managerial expertise, and resistance to change from stakeholders who fear the erosion of pesantren's traditional identity.¹³

The tension between preserving pesantren traditions and embracing modern educational reforms creates a significant research gap. While several studies have examined curriculum modernization in pesantren,¹⁴ few have explored this process comprehensively within a broader management framework that includes leadership restructuring and institutional quality assurance. Much of the existing literature focuses on either curriculum reform or leadership styles in isolation, failing to capture how these components transform pesantren into sustainable, quality-oriented educational institutions.

Furthermore, there is limited empirical evidence on how pesantren can effectively transition from centralistic to decentralized leadership models. Decentralization is critical for promoting participatory governance, empowering staff, and fostering innovation.¹⁵ However,

⁸ M A Muhaimin, *Pengembangan Kurikulum Pendidikan Agama Islam Di Sekolah, Madrasah, Dan Perguruan Tinggi* (Jakarta: PT Rajagrafindo Persada, 2005).

⁹ Siti Irene Astuti Dwiningrum, *Desentralisasi Dan Partisipasi Masyarakat Dalam Pendidikan* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2011).

¹⁰ Maulana, *Sistem Penjaminan Mutu Pendidikan*.

¹¹ M. Shoffa Saifillah Al Faruq, M. Asep Fathur Rozi, and Ahmad Sunoko, "Implementation of the Juran Trilogy in Improving the Quality of Islamic Higher Education," *Al-Hayat: Journal of Islamic Education* 8, no. 1 (January 2024): 169, <https://doi.org/10.35723/ajie.v8i1.420>.

¹² Republik Indonesia, "Undang-Undang Nomor 18 Tahun 2019 Tentang Pesantren" (Jakarta: Pemerintah Republik Indonesia, 2019).

¹³ Nanang Fatah, *Landasan Manajemen Pendidikan, Remaja Rosdakarya* (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2004); Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi Dan Modernisasi Di Tengah Tantangan Milenium*.

¹⁴ Muhaimin, *Pengembangan Kurikulum Pendidikan Agama Islam Di Sekolah, Madrasah, Dan Perguruan Tinggi*; Halim, *Manajemen Pesantren*.

¹⁵ Dwiningrum, *Desentralisasi Dan Partisipasi Masyarakat Dalam Pendidikan*.

practical strategies for implementing such leadership transitions within the unique socio-cultural context of pesantren remain underexplored.

Similarly, the development and implementation of internal quality assurance teams or frameworks in pesantren is an area that lacks substantial scholarly attention. While quality assurance is a well-established practice in formal education systems, adapting to pesantren—which operate with distinct cultural, religious, and organizational norms—requires context-specific strategies. This absence of research leaves a gap in understanding how pesantren can establish quality assurance mechanisms without compromising their religious and cultural integrity.

This study aims to address these gaps by investigating the transformation of pesantren management through a case study of Pondok Pesantren Syaikh Zainuddin NW Bintan. Specifically, the study seeks to (1) analyze the integration of traditional and modern curricula within the pesantren framework, (2) examine the shift from centralistic to decentralized leadership models in pesantren governance, and (3) explore the establishment and functioning of internal quality assurance teams as a strategy for institutional development.

By addressing these objectives, the research contributes both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it expands the discourse on pesantren modernization by presenting a holistic framework that combines curriculum reform, leadership restructuring, and quality assurance. The findings provide actionable insights for pesantren leaders, policymakers, and educators seeking to navigate the complex process of balancing tradition with innovation in Islamic education. This study thus serves as a model for other pesantren aiming to enhance their management systems while maintaining their religious and cultural identity.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research approach with a case study design to deeply explore the management transformation process at Pondok Pesantren Syaikh Zainuddin NW Bintan. A qualitative approach was chosen because it comprehensively explains complex cultural and organizational phenomena within their natural context.¹⁶ The pesantren was selected as the research site due to its recent, significant management reforms. It is a relevant case for investigating how traditional Islamic educational institutions adapt to modern educational demands. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure the inclusion of individuals with substantial insights into the transformation process. They consisted of the foundation chairman, school principal, senior teachers, caregivers, and selected students, totaling 15 participants. These informants represent different levels of involvement in the institution's management, allowing for a multi-layered understanding of the changes in curriculum, leadership, and quality assurance.

Data collection used triangulation through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis to capture the phenomenon comprehensively. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with leaders, teachers, caregivers, and students to gather their perspectives on curriculum integration, leadership restructuring, and the formation of the quality assurance

¹⁶ John W Creswell and Cheryl N Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (London: Sage publications, 2016).

team. Each interview lasted between 45 and 90 minutes and was audio-recorded with consent. In addition to interviews, participant observations were conducted to document real-time classroom interactions, meetings, and program activities, providing contextual insights into daily practices at the pesantren.¹⁷ Document analysis complemented these methods by examining pesantren profiles, curricula, internal policies, and program evaluation reports. This combination of techniques ensured that the data captured reflected both lived experiences and institutional records, offering a holistic view of the transformation.

Following Braun and Clarke's framework, the thematic analysis was used to process the data.¹⁸ All interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and coded inductively to identify emerging themes, which were then organized into broader categories representing curriculum changes, leadership transitions, and quality assurance initiatives. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary interpretations with participants, and peer debriefing was performed with academic colleagues familiar with qualitative methods. This study adhered to Lincoln and Guba's criteria for credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability through prolonged engagement, triangulation, thick description, and maintaining an audit trail.¹⁹

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The findings indicate that Pondok Pesantren Syaikh Zainuddin NW Bintan has implemented a significant curriculum transformation by integrating the traditional Salafiyah model with the national curriculum. Historically, the pesantren's education was centered on classical Islamic studies through the mastery of kitab kuning using conventional teaching methods such as bandongan and sorogan. However, recognizing the demands of the 21st century, the pesantren incorporated general subjects including mathematics, science, English, and digital literacy into its learning system. This integration is intended to provide students with broader competencies, enabling them to pursue higher education or professional careers while maintaining their Islamic identity. The curriculum transformation process was carried out through collaborative workshops involving teachers, foundation leaders, and external education consultants, ensuring that the curriculum design balances religious values with modern educational standards.

The study also reveals a significant shift in the leadership model at the pesantren. Traditionally, decision-making authority was heavily concentrated in the hands of the kiai or foundation chairman, a practice that limited the involvement of other stakeholders in governance. In recent years, the pesantren leadership adopted a more decentralized approach, empowering school principals, program coordinators, and senior teachers to participate actively in decision-making. This change was implemented by establishing regular leadership forums and institutional committees responsible for academic, administrative, and extracurricular programs.

¹⁷ James P Spradley, *The Ethnographic Interview* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 1979).

¹⁸ Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (January 2006): 77-101, <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>.

¹⁹ Yvonna S. Lincoln and Egon G. Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, vol. 75 (London: Sage Publication, 1985).

As a result, the institution has become more responsive to emerging challenges and better equipped to distribute managerial responsibilities across different levels of the organization.

Another significant finding is the formation of the Pesantren Quality Assurance Team (Tim Benjamin Mutu Pondok Pesantren or TPMPP). This team was created to monitor, evaluate, and enhance the quality of the pesantren's academic and non-academic programs. The TPMPP comprises representatives from the foundation, school management, teachers, and external stakeholders such as community leaders and parents. Its primary responsibilities include conducting curriculum evaluations, organizing teacher training programs, monitoring student progress, and reviewing institutional policies. The team works on a quality cycle emphasizing continuous improvement through planning, implementation, evaluation, and follow-up. The establishment of TPMPP reflects the pesantren's growing awareness of the importance of adopting systematic quality assurance practices to sustain institutional development.

Discussion

Analysis of Curriculum Transformation at the Islamic Boarding School

The curriculum transformation at Pondok Pesantren Syaikh Zainuddin NW Bintan represents a significant response to the evolving demands of Islamic education in the 21st century. Traditionally, pesantren curricula have been deeply rooted in the study of classical Islamic sciences, with the kitab kuning forming the cornerstone of instructional content.²⁰ This form of education emphasizes mastery of jurisprudence (*fiqh*), theology (*tauhid*), Arabic grammar (*nahwu-sharaf*), and spirituality (*tasawuf*), which are critical for producing scholars capable of religious guidance in their communities. However, while this traditional approach has successfully preserved Islamic intellectual heritage for centuries, it has been criticized for its limited ability to prepare students for contemporary challenges such as professional employment, technological literacy, and socio-political engagement.²¹ This criticism has grown increasingly relevant as globalization and rapid technological change reshape the knowledge and skill sets needed by graduates of Islamic educational institutions.²²

The decision of Pondok Pesantren Syaikh Zainuddin NW Bintan to integrate the national curriculum alongside its traditional program marks an important step in bridging the gap between religious and secular education. This integration ensures that students gain a profound understanding of Islamic sciences and acquire competencies in general education subjects such as mathematics, science, English, information technology, and vocational skills. Such hybrid curricula reflect the pesantren's dual mission: to nurture pious Muslims who can contribute productively to broader society. Including general subjects prepares students to pursue higher education in universities or vocational programs and equips them to participate in professional fields beyond traditional religious roles. This curricular integration aligns with the national education framework outlined in the Indonesian Undang-undang No. 20 tahun 2003 tentang

²⁰ Mastuhu, *Dinamika Sistem Pendidikan Pesantren: Suatu Kajian Tentang Unsur Dan Nilai Sistem Pendidikan Pesantren*; Muhaimin, *Pengembangan Kurikulum Pendidikan Agama Islam Di Sekolah, Madrasah, Dan Perguruan Tinggi*.

²¹ Halim, *Manajemen Pesantren*.

²² Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi Dan Modernisasi Di Tengah Tantangan Milenium*.

Sistem Pendidikan Nasional. It is reinforced by Undang-undang No. 18 tahun 2019 tentang Pesantren, formally recognizing pesantren as part of the national education ecosystem.²³

The curriculum development process at this pesantren did not occur in isolation but involved collaborative efforts between internal and external stakeholders. Internal discussions were held between the pesantren leadership, teachers, and administrators to determine how best to align religious studies with national education standards. Additionally, the pesantren engaged with external consultants, including representatives from the local education office and Islamic education experts, to ensure that the integrated curriculum met both regulatory requirements and the unique educational needs of the pesantren.²⁴ This participatory approach reflects contemporary educational planning practices, which emphasize collaboration and inclusivity in curriculum design.²⁵ Such collaboration is essential for building ownership among stakeholders and reducing resistance to change, which is often encountered in efforts to reform deeply traditional institutions.

An important consideration in this transformation is maintaining the pesantren's religious identity while integrating secular content. Scholars like Muhaimin²⁶ and Qomar²⁷ caution that curricular reforms must not dilute the religious ethos that defines pesantren education. To address this, Pondok Pesantren Syaikh Zainuddin NW Bintan has adopted a curriculum integration model that prioritizes Islamic values as the foundation for all learning. For example, science and social studies are taught from perspectives encouraging students to see knowledge as a means of understanding and appreciating God's creation. At the same time, vocational subjects are framed as tools for serving the community. This approach reflects the Islamic educational philosophy, integrating intellectual, moral, and spiritual development.²⁸ By embedding Islamic values into all areas of learning, the pesantren ensures that modern subjects complement rather than undermine its religious mission.

The transformation also involved significant changes in teaching methodology. Traditionally, pesantren instruction relied heavily on *bandongan* (lecture-based teaching) and *sorogan* (individual recitation), which focus on the rote transmission of knowledge. While these methods are effective for mastering classical texts, they are less suited for developing critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaborative skills. The pesantren has introduced more interactive teaching strategies to address this limitation, including group discussions, project-based learning, and digital-assisted instruction. These methods encourage students to engage actively with content, collaborate with peers, and apply knowledge in real-life contexts. This pedagogical shift aligns with the principles of student-centered learning advocated by contemporary education theorists²⁹ and reflects global trends toward competency-based education.

²³ Indonesia, "Undang-Undang Nomor 18 Tahun 2019 Tentang Pesantren."

²⁴ M. Asep Fathur Rozi, "Implementation of Prophetic Education in Islamic Boarding School (Pesantren)," *Edukasi* 06, no. 01 (2018).

²⁵ Mulyasa, *Manajemen Berbasis Sekolah: Konsep, Strategi Dan Implementasi*.

²⁶ Muhaimin, *Pengembangan Kurikulum Pendidikan Agama Islam Di Sekolah, Madrasah, Dan Perguruan Tinggi*.

²⁷ Qomar, *Manajemen Pendidikan Islam: Strategi Baru Pengelolaan Lembaga Pendidikan Islam*.

²⁸ Asmani, "Pesantren Sebagai 'Kiblat' Pendidikan Dan Pengetahuan Indonesia."

²⁹ Mulyasa, *Manajemen Berbasis Sekolah: Konsep, Strategi Dan Implementasi*.

Integrating technology into teaching and learning is another noteworthy aspect of the curriculum reform. Recognizing the importance of digital literacy, the pesantren has invested in basic ICT infrastructure and training programs for teachers to enhance their ability to use technology effectively in the classroom. This development equips students with essential digital competencies, enabling them to participate more fully in the knowledge economy. As noted by Fandi et al., incorporating digital media into Islamic education enhances the quality and accessibility of learning, particularly in contexts where traditional methods dominate.³⁰

Despite these achievements, the curriculum transformation process faced several challenges. One major challenge was balancing the pesantren's traditional religious curriculum with the added demands of the national curriculum. Teachers expressed concerns about the increased workload and the risk of overburdening students with excessive content. Moreover, some conservative stakeholders feared that the inclusion of secular subjects might erode the pesantren's distinctive Islamic character. These concerns mirror those documented in other studies of pesantren modernization.³¹ To mitigate these challenges, the pesantren adopted a phased approach to curriculum implementation, gradually introducing new subjects and providing ongoing professional development for teachers to build their capacity for delivering integrated instruction.

From a broader perspective, the curriculum transformation at Pondok Pesantren Syaikh Zainuddin NW Bintan illustrates a model of adaptive educational reform that balances tradition with innovation. It demonstrates that pesantren can remain faithful to their historical mission of Islamic scholarship while embracing the knowledge and skills necessary for survival in a rapidly changing world. This balance is critical for ensuring that pesantren play a central role in Indonesia's educational landscape while contributing to the nation's broader social and economic development.

Curriculum transformation at Pondok Pesantren Syaikh Zainuddin NW Bintan reflects a strategic effort to integrate the timeless values of Islamic education with the practical demands of contemporary life. It underscores the potential for pesantren to evolve into holistic educational institutions that nurture spiritual, intellectual, and professional competencies in their students. By situating religious learning within a modern educational framework, this pesantren preserves its identity and enhances its relevance in the face of global challenges.

Concept of Leadership Transformation: From Centralized to Decentralized Models

The leadership transformation at Pondok Pesantren Syaikh Zainuddin NW Bintan reflects a fundamental shift in governance that redefines institutional stakeholders' roles, responsibilities, and participation. Traditionally, pesantren leadership has been characterized by a highly centralized system where authority resides almost exclusively in the hands of the kiai or foundation leader. While effective in maintaining strong institutional identity and direction, this form of leadership often results in limited participation from teachers, administrators, and other

³⁰ Bima Fandi Asy'arie, M Mujab, and Zulfi Mubaraq, "Islamic Religious Education Learning Innovation Through Digital Media: A Literature Review," in *International Seminar On Islamic Education & Peace*, vol. 3 (Malang: Universitas Islam Raden Rahmat Malang, 2023), 1–18.

³¹ Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi Dan Modernisasi Di Tengah Tantangan Milenium*.

stakeholders in decision-making processes.³² Such centralistic models are deeply rooted in pesantren culture, as the kiai is regarded as an educational leader and a spiritual guide whose authority is both intellectual and moral.³³

However, contemporary challenges in educational management require pesantren to evolve beyond traditional models of authority. The increasing complexity of institutional governance, driven by curriculum integration, quality assurance requirements, and community expectations, necessitates a more participatory and collaborative approach to leadership. Decentralized or distributed or shared leadership emerges as an appropriate response to these challenges.³⁴ Decentralization allows authority and decision-making power to be distributed across different organizational levels, enabling teachers, administrators, and program coordinators to contribute actively to institutional development. In the case of Pondok Pesantren Syaikh Zainuddin NW Bintan, this shift has materialized through the establishment of leadership forums, the delegation of program management to department heads, and the active involvement of teachers in curriculum planning and institutional policy discussions.

The adoption of decentralized leadership models in pesantren aligns with broader theories of educational leadership that emphasize empowerment, collaboration, and capacity-building. Spillane conceptualizes distributed leadership as an interactive practice where leadership functions are stretched over multiple actors rather than concentrated in a single individual.³⁵ This approach enhances organizational learning and resilience by harnessing the collective expertise of stakeholders. Bush similarly argues that participatory leadership fosters a sense of ownership among staff, improving their motivation and commitment to institutional goals.³⁶ Such perspectives are highly relevant for pesantren, where collaborative governance can bridge the gap between traditional religious authority and modern organizational management.

Empirical evidence supports the benefits of decentralized leadership in educational contexts. Mulyasa notes that participatory leadership increases teacher engagement, enhances institutional responsiveness, and promotes innovation.³⁷ In pesantren settings, where teaching staff often serve dual roles as educators and community mentors, their inclusion in decision-making can lead to more contextually relevant policies and program.³⁸ Maulana further emphasize that shared leadership improves institutional accountability, as decisions are made collectively and monitored transparently.³⁹ This is particularly important in pesantren, where

³² Hadari Nawawi, *Administrasi Pendidikan* (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 2000); Qomar, *Manajemen Pendidikan Islam: Strategi Baru Pengelolaan Lembaga Pendidikan Islam*.

³³ Manfred Ziemek and Butche B Soendjojo, *Pesantren Dalam Perubahan Sosial* (Jakarta: Perhimpunan Pengembangan Pesantren dan Masyarakat (P3M), 1986); Mastuhu, *Dinamika Sistem Pendidikan Pesantren: Suatu Kajian Tentang Unsur Dan Nilai Sistem Pendidikan Pesantren*.

³⁴ James P Spillane, *Distributed Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006); Tony Bush, *Theories of Educational Leadership and Management*, 3rd ed. (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2020).

³⁵ Shimon Kogan, Tobias J. Moskowitz, and Marina Niessner, "Fake News: Evidence from Financial Markets," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3237763>.

³⁶ Bush, *Theories of Educational Leadership and Management*.

³⁷ Mulyasa, *Manajemen Berbasis Sekolah: Konsep, Strategi Dan Implementasi*.

³⁸ Halim, *Manajemen Pesantren*.

³⁹ Maulana, *Sistem Penjaminan Mutu Pendidikan*.

accountability to the religious mission and broader community expectations is critical for maintaining legitimacy and trust.

Nevertheless, transitioning from a centralistic to a decentralized leadership model is challenging. One of the main obstacles lies in reconciling the pesantren's cultural norms, which place the kiai at the center of authority, with the principles of shared governance. As Azra observes, pesantren leaders often view participatory models cautiously, fearing they may undermine the kiai's spiritual authority.⁴⁰ To address this, Pondok Pesantren Syaikh Zainuddin NW Bintan has implemented decentralization in a culturally sensitive manner by maintaining the kiai's role as the spiritual leader while delegating operational and administrative responsibilities to other institutional actors. This hybrid model allows for preserving traditional authority while embracing collaborative management practices.

The shift toward decentralized leadership also requires capacity-building among staff. As Dwiningrum highlights, effective decentralization depends on the readiness of teachers and administrators to assume new roles and responsibilities.⁴¹ At Pondok Pesantren Syaikh Zainuddin NW Bintan, this has been addressed through leadership training programs, regular workshops, and mentoring initiatives to equip staff with the skills necessary for participatory governance. These efforts reflect the recommendations of Hallinger and Heck,⁴² who argue that leadership development is essential for sustaining shared governance in educational institutions.

From a policy perspective, the decentralization of pesantren leadership aligns with Indonesia's broader educational reform agenda, which promotes school-based management (*manajemen berbasis sekolah*) as a means of improving institutional effectiveness.⁴³ By granting greater autonomy to schools and encouraging stakeholder participation, this policy framework seeks to enhance educational quality and relevance.⁴⁴ The leadership reforms at Pondok Pesantren Syaikh Zainuddin NW Bintan can thus be part of a larger movement toward democratizing education governance in Indonesia, reflecting the accountability, transparency, and inclusivity principles outlined in national education laws.

Another critical dimension of this leadership transformation is its impact on institutional culture. Leithwood et al. argue that leadership is a key driver of school culture, influencing values, norms, and collective behaviors.⁴⁵ The shift toward participatory governance at Pondok Pesantren Syaikh Zainuddin NW Bintan has fostered a more collaborative culture, where teachers and administrators feel empowered to contribute ideas and take initiative. This cultural shift is significant for sustaining long-term institutional change, as it encourages continuous learning and adaptation.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi Dan Modernisasi Di Tengah Tantangan Milenium*.

⁴¹ Dwiningrum, *Desentralisasi Dan Partisipasi Masyarakat Dalam Pendidikan*.

⁴² Philip Hallinger and Ronald H. Heck, "Collaborative Leadership and School Improvement: Understanding the Impact on School Capacity and Student Learning," *School Leadership & Management* 30, no. 2 (April 2010): 95–110, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632431003663214>.

⁴³ Fatah, *Landasan Manajemen Pendidikan*; Mulyasa, *Manajemen Berbasis Sekolah: Konsep, Strategi Dan Implementasi*.

⁴⁴ M. Asep Fathur Rozi, "Strategi Peningkatan Mutu Pendidikan Islam," *EDUKASI : Jurnal Pendidikan Islam (e-Journal)* 4, no. 2 (2016).

⁴⁵ Kenneth Leithwood et al., *Successful School Leadership: What It Is and How It Influences Pupil Learning* (London: University of Nottingham, 2006).

⁴⁶ Michael Fullan, *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, 4th ed. (London: Teachers College Press, 2016).

Despite these advances, challenges remain in fully institutionalizing decentralized leadership. Resistance from conservative stakeholders, limited managerial skills among staff, and resource constraints can hinder the implementation of participatory governance.⁴⁷ Addressing these challenges requires ongoing dialogue between traditional leaders and reform-oriented actors and continued investment in professional development and infrastructure.

Leadership transformation at Pondok Pesantren Syaikh Zainuddin NW Bintan illustrates how pesantren can balance tradition and modernity through hybrid governance models. By retaining the kiai's spiritual authority while distributing operational responsibilities, the pesantren has created a more inclusive, responsive, and adaptive leadership structure. This approach not only enhances institutional effectiveness but also positions the pesantren as a model for other Islamic educational institutions seeking to navigate the complexities of modernization. Ultimately, decentralized leadership in pesantren is not merely a managerial innovation but a strategic adaptation that ensures the continued relevance of these institutions in a rapidly changing educational landscape.

Establishment of the Pesantren Quality Assurance Team (TPMPP)

The establishment of the TPMPP at Pondok Pesantren Syaikh Zainuddin NW Bintan signifies a strategic shift toward institutionalizing systematic quality assurance in the governance of pesantren. Historically, pesantren operated with relatively informal management systems, relying heavily on the authority and discretion of the kiai for decision-making and quality oversight.⁴⁸ While this model preserved the spiritual integrity and autonomy of the institution, it lacked structured mechanisms for evaluating program effectiveness, ensuring accountability, and facilitating continuous improvement.⁴⁹ The growing complexity of educational demands—such as curriculum integration, compliance with national education regulations, and stakeholder expectations—has rendered such informal systems insufficient for sustaining institutional development. In response, Pondok Pesantren Syaikh Zainuddin NW Bintan established TPMPP as an internal quality assurance body tasked with monitoring, evaluating, and improving the pesantren's educational and organizational practices.

The formation of TPMPP aligns with broader trends in educational management that emphasize quality assurance as a cornerstone of institutional effectiveness. Maulana argue that quality assurance in education is a continuous, systematic process to maintain and enhance institutional standards to meet the needs of students, stakeholders, and society.⁵⁰ Within the pesantren context, quality assurance is about improving educational outcomes and ensuring that these improvements align with the institution's religious mission and cultural values.⁵¹ Recognizing this dual mandate, TPMPP at Pondok Pesantren Syaikh Zainuddin NW Bintan was designed to integrate Islamic principles of *ihsan* (excellence) and *amanah* (accountability) into

⁴⁷ Qomar, *Manajemen Pendidikan Islam: Strategi Baru Pengelolaan Lembaga Pendidikan Islam*; Dwiningrum, *Desentralisasi Dan Partisipasi Masyarakat Dalam Pendidikan*.

⁴⁸ Mastuhu, *Dinamika Sistem Pendidikan Pesantren: Suatu Kajian Tentang Unsur Dan Nilai Sistem Pendidikan Pesantren*; Ziemek and Soendjojo, *Pesantren Dalam Perubahan Sosial*.

⁴⁹ Qomar, *Manajemen Pendidikan Islam: Strategi Baru Pengelolaan Lembaga Pendidikan Islam*.

⁵⁰ Maulana, *Sistem Penjaminan Mutu Pendidikan*.

⁵¹ Kementerian Agama RI, "Petunjuk Teknis Sistem Penjaminan Mutu Madrasah Diniyah Takmiliyah."

its quality management framework, thus ensuring that quality improvement efforts are rooted in the pesantren's religious ethos.

Structurally, TPMPP comprises representatives from various stakeholder groups, including foundation leaders, school administrators, teachers, and external community members such as parent representatives and local religious figures. This diverse composition ensures that the quality assurance process reflects multiple perspectives and fosters collaborative problem-solving. According to Bush, involving many stakeholders in quality assurance processes enhances institutional accountability and promotes buy-in for reform initiatives.⁵² In practice, TPMPP at this pesantren functions as a coordinating body that oversees key areas such as curriculum evaluation, teacher professional development, student assessment, and institutional policy review. By distributing responsibilities across its members, the team embodies the principles of participatory governance and shared accountability emphasized in distributed leadership theory.⁵³

One of the core functions of TPMPP is conducting regular evaluations of the pesantren's curriculum. This involves assessing the effectiveness of integrating the traditional Salafiyah curriculum with national educational standards and identifying areas for improvement. These evaluations are informed by feedback from teachers, students, and external advisors, ensuring that curriculum reforms remain responsive to evolving educational needs.⁵⁴ Additionally, TPMPP organizes periodic workshops and training sessions for teachers to enhance their pedagogical skills and equip them with the competencies needed to deliver both religious and general education effectively. This aligns with Juran's view that quality improvement is achieved by empowering individuals with the knowledge and tools necessary to perform their roles effectively.⁵⁵

Another significant contribution of TPMPP is its role in establishing clear performance indicators and benchmarks for institutional success. Drawing on best practices in quality management, the team has developed measurable standards for evaluating student achievement, teacher performance, and program outcomes. These benchmarks are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect changes in national education policies and stakeholder expectations. By adopting a data-driven approach to evaluation, TPMPP enhances the pesantren's capacity for evidence-based decision-making, a practice widely recommended in educational quality assurance literature.⁵⁶

Implementing TPMPP also reflects continuous quality improvement (CQI) principles, which emphasize iterative cycles of planning, action, evaluation, and refinement.⁵⁷ At Pondok Pesantren Syaikh Zainuddin NW Bintan, TPMPP conducts semesterly reviews of institutional programs, using the findings to inform strategic planning and resource allocation. For example,

⁵² Bush, *Theories of Educational Leadership and Management*.

⁵³ Spillane, *Distributed Leadership*.

⁵⁴ Muhaimin, *Pengembangan Kurikulum Pendidikan Agama Islam Di Sekolah, Madrasah, Dan Perguruan Tinggi*.

⁵⁵ Joseph M Juran and A. Blanton Godfrey, *Juran's Quality Handbook* (New York: Mcgraw-Hill, 1999).

⁵⁶ Lee Harvey and Diana Green, "Defining Quality," *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 18, no. 1 (January 1993): 9–34, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0260293930180102>.

⁵⁷ W. Edwards Deming, *Out of the Crisis* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/11457.001.0001>.

the team has initiated improvements in student support services, upgraded teaching materials, and advocated for investments in ICT infrastructure to enhance digital learning.⁵⁸ These efforts demonstrate the dynamic nature of quality assurance as an ongoing process rather than a one-time intervention.⁵⁹

Despite these advancements, implementing quality assurance in a pesantren setting presents unique challenges. One major challenge is balancing the formal requirements of quality management with the informal, relational dynamics that characterize pesantren life. Azra notes that pesantren are deeply rooted in a communal ethos where relationships between the kiai, teachers, and students are based on trust and mutual respect rather than formal contractual arrangements.⁶⁰ Introducing structured evaluation mechanisms risks being perceived as bureaucratic or misaligned with these cultural norms. To address this, TPMPP has adopted a culturally sensitive approach that frames quality assurance activities as extensions of the Islamic values of *muhasabah* (self-reflection) and *islah* (improvement), thus aligning them with the pesantren's spiritual mission.

Another challenge is building the capacity of TPMPP members to carry out their roles effectively. Many pesantren staff lack formal training in quality management, which can limit their ability to design and implement robust evaluation systems. In response, Pondok Pesantren Syaikh Zainuddin NW Bintan has collaborated with local education authorities and external consultants to provide training in data analysis, strategic planning, and educational assessment. These capacity-building initiatives echo the recommendations of Fullan, who emphasizes that sustainable institutional change depends on developing the skills and competencies of those responsible for implementing reforms.⁶¹

The establishment of TPMPP also has broader implications for pesantren governance. By institutionalizing quality assurance, the pesantren is committed to transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement. These principles are critical for enhancing stakeholder trust and ensuring the pesantren's long-term sustainability in an increasingly competitive educational landscape.⁶² Moreover, TPMPP serves as a model for other pesantren seeking to reconcile their traditional religious mission with modern quality management practices, illustrating that quality assurance can be adapted to Islamic education's unique cultural and spiritual contexts.

In conclusion, the formation of TPMPP at Pondok Pesantren Syaikh Zainuddin NW Bintan represents a transformative step toward embedding systematic quality assurance within the pesantren's governance framework. By integrating Islamic values with contemporary quality management practices, TPMPP enhances the institution's ability to deliver high-quality education that is both religiously grounded and socially relevant. This initiative not only strengthens the pesantren's internal capacity for self-improvement but also positions it as a

⁵⁸ Moch Rizal Fuadiy et al., "Mapping the Digital Transformation of Education in Indonesia from 2012 to Early 2025," *Journal of Educational Research and Practice* 3, no. 2 (July 26, 2025): 276–306, <https://doi.org/10.70376/jerp.v3i2.390>.

⁵⁹ Maulana, *Sistem Penjaminan Mutu Pendidikan*.

⁶⁰ Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi Dan Modernisasi Di Tengah Tantangan Milenium*.

⁶¹ Fullan, *The New Meaning of Educational Change*.

⁶² Harvey and Green, "Defining Quality"; Bush, *Theories of Educational Leadership and Management*.

progressive model for other Islamic educational institutions navigating the challenges of modernization.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the significant transformation of management at Pondok Pesantren Syaikh Zainuddin NW Bintan, focusing on three key areas: curriculum integration, leadership restructuring, and establishing a quality assurance team. The pesantren successfully merged its traditional salafiyah curriculum with the national education framework, enhancing students' competencies without compromising its religious identity. Leadership shifted from a centralized, kiai-dominated model to a more decentralized, participatory approach, empowering teachers and administrators in decision-making. Additionally, the formation of the TPMPP institutionalized continuous quality assurance practices, fostering a culture of accountability and improvement that aligns with both Islamic values and contemporary educational standards.

The implications of these findings underscore the potential for pesantren to evolve into holistic educational institutions that balance tradition with modernity. This transformation provides a model for other Islamic boarding schools seeking to strengthen institutional capacity and remain relevant in a rapidly changing educational landscape. However, the study is limited by its single-case design, which may not fully represent the diversity of pesantren contexts in Indonesia. Future research should explore comparative studies across different pesantren to better understand the varied pathways of management transformation and examine the long-term impacts of these reforms on educational outcomes and community engagement.

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