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## **Quality Management in Islamic Education: Philosophical, Juridical and Sociological Foundations**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Quality management in Islamic educational institutions has attracted growing scholarly attention, yet existing studies tend to examine its philosophical, juridical and sociological dimensions in isolation rather than as a coherent system. This paper examines the policy foundations of school-based quality management in Islamic education in Indonesia and proposes an integrated three-pillar framework that addresses this gap. Using a systematic literature review methodology guided by the PRISMA 2020 framework, the study synthesises theoretical and empirical sources drawn from Scopus-indexed and peer-reviewed publications alongside primary Indonesian regulatory instruments. The analysis confirms that sustainable quality improvement in Islamic schools depends on the coherent alignment of three interdependent foundations: a philosophical foundation rooted in Islamic normative values including ihsan, amanah, ta'awun and tawazun; a juridical foundation grounded in the hierarchy of national education regulations from the 1945 Constitution through the National Education System Law to the 2019 Pesantren Law; and a sociological foundation that keeps institutional practice responsive to the evolving quality expectations of Muslim communities. Each pillar is shown to depend on the others for its effective functioning, with the philosophical pillar animating regulatory compliance, the juridical pillar giving normative commitments enforceable expression, and the sociological pillar ensuring that both remain accountable to genuine community needs. Principal leadership, integrative curriculum design and the PDCA quality assurance cycle are identified as the primary mechanisms through which the three foundations are operationalised in practice. The findings extend and integrate earlier research on Islamic educational leadership, school-based management and institutional quality governance in the Indonesian context.*

**Keywords:** *Educational Policy, Indonesian Islamic Education, Institutional Quality Management, School-Based Management, Total Quality Management*

## INTRODUCTION

Education serves as the foundational mechanism through which societies reproduce knowledge, transmit values and build the human capital required for sustained development (Kholiavko et al., 2021; Mikiewicz, 2021). In countries where educational attainment remains uneven, the governance and management of schools take on a significance that extends well beyond administrative efficiency. Indonesia presents a particularly instructive case in this regard (Karolina et al., 2021). With the world's largest Muslim population and a national education system that encompasses tens of millions of students enrolled in Islamic educational institutions, the quality of madrasahs, pesantrens and Islamic-integrated schools carries implications not only for individual life outcomes but for the country's broader social cohesion and economic trajectory (Bandur et al., 2022). Yet persistent quality deficits characterise many of these institutions, including documented weaknesses in teacher competence, institutional management, infrastructure adequacy and graduate readiness for higher education or the labour market (Efendi, 2022; Rahman et al., 2024). These are not incidental problems but structural ones, rooted in governance arrangements that have historically prioritised compliance over genuine institutional development.

The shift toward decentralised education governance, formalised in Indonesia under Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, represented a decisive departure from the centralised administrative model that had governed schooling through much of the twentieth century (Andersson et al., 2021). School-Based Management emerged as the primary vehicle through which decentralisation was operationalised, granting school units greater authority over budgetary decisions, curriculum enrichment, staffing and community engagement. Bandur et al. (2022) in an empirical study drawing on survey and interview data from Indonesian schools, found that SBM produced measurable gains in school environment quality and stakeholder participation where local management capacity was sufficient, but that implementation outcomes varied considerably based on institutional readiness and the degree of school committee engagement. For Islamic educational institutions specifically, SBM opened a real but demanding opportunity: to develop a curricular and institutional identity grounded in Islamic values while simultaneously meeting national standards (Hajar, 2024). Whether that opportunity translates into durable quality improvement depends substantially on whether the policy foundations of SBM are internally coherent, legally robust and genuinely responsive to the communities these schools serve.

Prior scholarship has engaged various dimensions of this problem with notable depth and rigour. Arar et al. (2022) in an international review of empirical research on Islamic-based educational leadership spanning three decades, found that the field remains theoretically fragmented, with studies tending to examine leadership practices in isolation from the institutional, regulatory and sociological

contexts that shape them. Their review identified a critical need for frameworks that integrate normative Islamic values with contemporary management principles, rather than treating these as distinct or competing domains. At the governance and management level, Gaol (2023), reviewing sixteen years of published research on school leadership in Indonesia, documented a consistent pattern in which principals lack adequate managerial formation and are selected through processes that inadequately prioritise institutional management competence, leaving Islamic schools particularly exposed given the dual pedagogical and spiritual demands placed on their leaders.

Empirical studies at the school and classroom level have reinforced these structural concerns with concrete findings. Efendi (2022) examined TQM implementation within Indonesian Islamic boarding schools and found that quality improvement efforts were most effective when they were anchored in institutional values rather than driven by bureaucratic compliance, with continuous curriculum improvement and stakeholder engagement producing measurable gains in institutional responsiveness. Anawati et al. (2025) drawing on a mixed-methods study across ten Islamic integrated elementary schools, demonstrated that academic supervision was the strongest predictor of teacher productivity across all variables examined, with organisational culture and knowledge sharing producing their effects primarily through supervision quality rather than directly. Mailizar et al. (2024) similarly found that transformational leadership, pedagogical empowerment and professional competence, when aligned with institutional values, produced significant improvements in teacher performance, pointing toward the conclusion that management tools and normative identity must function in concert rather than independently.

What this body of work reveals collectively is a literature that has developed strong individual strands without yet weaving them into an integrated analytical framework. Studies of Islamic educational management tend to treat the philosophical dimension of Islamic values, the juridical dimension of national regulatory requirements and the sociological dimension of community responsiveness as separate research concerns rather than as mutually constitutive foundations of a single governance system. This disciplinary fragmentation, noted explicitly in several reviews including Arar et al. (2022) and Gaol (2023), means that practitioners and policymakers in Indonesian Islamic education lack a coherent framework from which to derive rational, well-grounded management decisions. Individual improvements in curriculum design, teacher development or quality assurance may take place in different schools, but without an integrative conceptual base, these gains remain episodic and difficult to sustain or scale.

This study addresses that gap through a systematic review of theoretical and empirical literature, proposing and examining a three-pillar integrated framework for school-based quality management in Islamic education in Indonesia. The three pillars are the philosophical foundation rooted in Islamic normative values, the

juridical foundation grounded in the hierarchy of national regulations, and the sociological foundation that keeps institutional practice accountable to the evolving needs of Muslim communities. The novelty of the paper lies not in introducing any single element in isolation but in demonstrating how these three foundations actively shape and constrain one another and in tracing their joint implications for practical management mechanisms, including TQM principles, the PDCA quality assurance cycle, principal competency requirements and stakeholder participation structures.

The significance of this framework for the Indonesian Islamic education context is considerable. Indonesia's ongoing education reform agenda, its decentralised governance structure and the particular normative demands of Islamic schooling create a setting in which management decisions cannot be reduced to technical questions of efficiency alone. They require grounding in values, legitimised by law and validated by community trust simultaneously. A framework that integrates these three foundations offers school leaders a principled basis for decision-making, offers policymakers a more comprehensive lens for evaluating institutional performance and offers researchers a more productive conceptual vocabulary for comparative and empirical inquiry. The paper contributes to all three of these audiences and to the broader project of building an Islamic education management scholarship that is both theoretically coherent and practically actionable.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Quality Management Frameworks in Islamic Education**

The scholarly conversation around quality management in Islamic education has grown considerably over the past decade, yet it remains characterised by a persistent tension between imported management frameworks and the normative demands of Islamic institutional identity. Efendi (2022) demonstrated through a study of Indonesian Islamic boarding schools that TQM yields the most durable improvements when its principles are reinterpreted through Islamic values rather than applied mechanically, finding that institutions which grounded continuous improvement in the concept of *itqan*, the Islamic pursuit of perfection in work, outperformed those that treated TQM as a compliance instrument. This finding resonates with Arar et al. (2022), whose international review of Islamic-based educational leadership research concluded that the field consistently underperforms when it treats Islamic values and contemporary management principles as separate rather than integrated domains. The implication is not that Western management frameworks are inappropriate for Islamic educational contexts but that their application requires a philosophical reorientation that places *ihsan*, *amanah*, *ta'awun* and *tawazun* at the normative centre of all quality-related decisions rather than treating them as supplementary cultural considerations (Hadi, 2024; Yudiawan & Himmah, 2023).

This philosophical reorientation has direct consequences for how quality is defined and measured. Studies have progressively moved away from output-only quality metrics toward multidimensional frameworks that assess input, process, output and outcome dimensions together, recognising that a school producing academically strong graduates who lack moral formation has not achieved Islamic educational quality in any meaningful sense (Anawati et al., 2025). Saepudin (2024), in a mixed-methods study of secondary schools implementing integrative curricula, found that institutions which took the balance between intellectual development, moral formation and spiritual cultivation seriously as a management principle rather than an aspirational statement produced significantly stronger outcomes across both moral and spiritual development indicators compared to those focused primarily on academic performance. The sociological dimension adds a further layer of complexity. Kosim et al. (2023) examining the historical dynamics of Islamic education policy in Indonesia, found that institutional quality is inseparable from the evolving relationship between Islamic schools and the Muslim communities they serve, with community expectations having shifted substantially toward demanding graduates who are both academically competitive and morally sound. This convergence of normative, academic and community-based quality demands creates a situation in which no single management framework, whether TQM, standards-based regulation or community participation alone, is sufficient on its own.

### **School-Based Management, Leadership and Institutional Autonomy**

The shift toward School-Based Management in Indonesia from the early 2000s onward placed the question of institutional governance at the centre of educational quality debates. Bandur et al. (2022) found empirically that SBM produced measurable improvements in school environments and stakeholder participation where local management capacity was adequate, but that outcomes diverged significantly based on the strength of school committees and the quality of principal leadership. This conditionality is important: it means SBM is not a quality guarantee but a quality enabler, and one whose effects depend heavily on whether the institutional conditions for effective self-governance are actually present. For Islamic schools, those conditions include not only managerial competence but also the capacity to articulate and sustain an institutional identity that integrates Islamic values with national quality standards, a dual demand that Gaol (2023) identified as systematically underserved by existing principal development structures in Indonesia.

The principal's role emerges from the literature as the single most consequential variable in SBM quality outcomes. Mailizar et al. (2024) found that transformational leadership combined with pedagogical empowerment and professional competence produced significant improvements in teacher performance, while Anawati et al. (2025) demonstrated that academic supervision

was the strongest direct predictor of teacher productivity, explaining over 40 percent of productivity variance across ten Islamic elementary schools. Both studies point toward the same conclusion: quality improvement in Islamic schools is primarily an organisational and leadership problem rather than a resource problem, shaped by the norms, professional relationships and institutional culture that the principal creates or fails to create. Gaol (2023) reinforced this by showing that many Indonesian school principals lack the managerial formation and professional autonomy needed to exercise genuine institutional leadership, a deficit particularly acute in Islamic schools where the principal must simultaneously perform religious, pedagogical and administrative leadership functions.

What the literature has not yet done, however, is bring these findings together within a single coherent policy framework that accounts for the philosophical, juridical and sociological foundations of quality management simultaneously. Studies of Islamic educational management tend to treat normative values, regulatory compliance and community responsiveness as separate research concerns, which produces partial explanations and leaves practitioners without an integrated rationale for policy (Arar et al., 2022; Kosim et al., 2023). The present study addresses precisely this gap by proposing and examining a three-pillar framework in which the philosophical, juridical and sociological foundations of school-based quality management are treated as mutually constitutive rather than independently operative, with each pillar actively shaping and constraining the functioning of the others.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study adopts a systematic literature review approach with a qualitative interpretive orientation, guided by the reporting principles set out in the PRISMA 2020 framework (Page et al., 2021). The choice of methodology reflects the nature of the research objective, which is not to generate new field data but to synthesise existing theoretical and empirical knowledge into an integrated analytical framework for school-based quality management in Islamic education. Sources were selected based on three criteria: thematic relevance to school-based management, Islamic education quality and Indonesian education policy; recency, with preference given to publications from 2021 onward; and academic quality, prioritised through Scopus indexation or equivalent peer-reviewed standing. Indonesian regulatory instruments, including Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System and Law No. 18 of 2019 on Pesantrens, were treated as primary sources given their direct bearing on the study's juridical analysis.

Sources were retrieved through database searches using keyword combinations drawn from the study's core themes, screened first by abstract and then by full-text review against the inclusion criteria. Works addressing Islamic educational management in non-Indonesian contexts were included where their

theoretical contributions were demonstrably applicable to the Indonesian setting. Analysis proceeded through thematic reading of the selected literature, identifying convergences and tensions across empirical findings, theoretical arguments and policy documents. Three recurring analytical domains emerged from this process, corresponding to the philosophical, juridical and sociological foundations of quality management, and these became the organising structure of the framework the study proposes. The resulting framework is grounded in verified empirical evidence rather than normative prescription, which distinguishes it from earlier conceptual treatments of Islamic education quality management in the existing literature.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The systematic review of the literature confirms that school-based quality management in Islamic education rests on three interdependent foundations, and that the central problem in the field is not a lack of knowledge about any single foundation but the absence of a framework that treats them as a coherent system. The evidence reviewed here supports the three-pillar model proposed in this study and clarifies the specific ways in which the philosophical, juridical and sociological dimensions interact to enable or constrain quality improvement in practice.

### **The Philosophical Pillar as an Operational Framework**

A recurring finding across the studies reviewed is that Islamic values function not as background decoration but as genuine operational constraints on what management decisions are considered legitimate. Efendi (2022) demonstrated in the Indonesian pesantren context that TQM implementation yielded its most durable results when continuous improvement was interpreted through the Islamic concept of *itqan* rather than treated as a bureaucratic obligation, with institutions that internalised this connection outperforming those that adopted TQM as an externally imposed compliance requirement. Arar et al. (2022) reached a complementary conclusion across their international review, finding that Islamic schools performing at consistently higher quality levels were those in which leadership practice was anchored in a coherent normative framework rather than borrowing management models wholesale from secular contexts. These findings support and extend the earlier argument in the Islamic education management literature that normative values are not peripheral to institutional performance but constitutive of it, a position the present framework formalises by elevating the philosophical dimension to the status of a foundational pillar rather than treating it as a contextual variable.

The *tawazun* principle deserves particular attention in this context because it directly challenges the narrowing of quality assessment to measurable cognitive outcomes. Saepudin (2024) in a mixed-methods study of secondary schools implementing integrative curricula, found that institutions which took the balance between intellectual development, moral formation and spiritual cultivation

seriously as a management principle rather than an aspirational statement produced significantly stronger outcomes across both moral and spiritual development indicators compared to those focused primarily on examination performance. This finding extends rather than merely confirms earlier quality management research by demonstrating that the philosophical pillar is not merely motivational but genuinely productive, generating quality outcomes that purely regulatory or managerial approaches cannot reach on their own.

### **The Juridical and Sociological Pillars in Interaction**

Indonesia's national regulatory architecture provides the structural legitimacy and enforceable standards within which quality management operates. The eight National Education Standards, the National Education System Law and the 2019 Pesantren Law together constitute a framework of minimum requirements that Islamic institutions are legally obligated to meet, and Kosim et al. (2023) documented how this framework has evolved through successive policy adjustments reflecting the ongoing negotiation between state authority and Islamic institutional interests. The critical finding, however, is not about the content of these regulations but about how institutions relate to them. Bandur et al. (2022) identified a consistent pattern in which schools that internalised regulatory requirements as institutional commitments produced substantially better quality outcomes than those that treated compliance as an external obligation, a distinction that maps directly onto the difference between a philosophically grounded and a merely procedural approach to quality management. This finding partially contradicts governance literature that treats regulatory frameworks as independently sufficient drivers of institutional quality, by showing that the juridical pillar functions most effectively when animated by the philosophical pillar rather than standing alone.

The sociological dimension adds the accountability dimension that both philosophical and regulatory approaches tend to understate. Kosim et al. (2023) showed that community trust in Islamic schools is neither stable nor unconditional, with Indonesian Muslim families applying increasing quality scrutiny to Islamic institutions and withdrawing enrolment from those that cannot demonstrate competitive academic outcomes alongside genuine Islamic character formation. Bandur et al. (2022) found that active and substantively engaged school committees were among the strongest institutional predictors of positive SBM outcomes, with meaningful community participation correlating with better resource mobilisation, more responsive curriculum adaptation and higher levels of sustained institutional improvement. Where committee engagement was nominal rather than genuine, these benefits largely disappeared. The Islamic principle of *syura* provides normative grounding for robust community participation by framing it as a religious obligation rather than a democratic preference, which means that Islamic schools have stronger grounds than their secular counterparts for insisting on genuine rather than token stakeholder involvement. This finding extends the SBM literature by

identifying a normative dimension of community participation that secular governance frameworks do not capture.

### **Implications for Leadership, Curriculum and Quality Assurance**

The three pillars converge most visibly at the level of institutional leadership, where their interaction produces a demand for principal competence that is simultaneously managerial, normative and relational. Gaol (2023) and Mailizar et al. (2024) both found that principals who integrated administrative competence with religious authority and strong community relationships produced measurably superior institutional outcomes compared to those who excelled in only one or two of these dimensions. Anawati et al. (2025) reinforced this by showing that structured academic supervision, when embedded in an organisational culture aligned with institutional values, generated substantial and self-sustaining improvements in teacher productivity without requiring continuous external intervention. These findings support the present study's argument that the principal's role in Islamic schools is not merely to manage a bureaucratic system but to hold the three pillars in productive alignment, translating Islamic values into institutional practice, ensuring regulatory compliance without reducing it to a checklist exercise, and maintaining the community relationships that give the institution its social legitimacy.

At the curriculum and quality assurance levels, the integrated framework supports two practical conclusions. First, curriculum design in Islamic schools should treat the integration of Islamic values across all subject areas not as an enrichment activity but as a core quality indicator, consistent with the *tawazun* principle and enabled by the curricular flexibility that SBM affords. Second, the PDCA quality assurance cycle provides the operational mechanism through which the three-pillar framework is systematically maintained, with each phase of the cycle requiring inputs from all three foundations: planning must reflect Islamic values and community needs alongside regulatory standards; implementation must engage all stakeholders; evaluation must assess spiritual and moral dimensions alongside academic outcomes; and the action phase must be driven by institutional commitment rather than external pressure alone. These conclusions are consistent with the empirical findings reviewed throughout this section and together constitute the practical content of the integrated framework this study proposes.

The findings presented in this study both affirm and productively complicate the concerns raised in earlier scholarship reviewed in the Introduction. Arar et al. (2022) identified theoretical fragmentation as a defining limitation of the Islamic educational leadership literature, noting that studies consistently examined leadership practices in isolation from the institutional, regulatory and sociological contexts shaping them. The three-pillar framework proposed here directly addresses this limitation by demonstrating, through systematic synthesis, that these contexts are not background conditions but active determinants of quality management

outcomes. Where Arar et al. called for integration, the present study provides a specific structural response, showing how the philosophical, juridical and sociological foundations can be held together analytically and practically rather than treated as parallel but unconnected concerns. In this sense, the present study extends rather than merely endorses their critique by moving from diagnosis to framework construction.

The findings also speak directly to the leadership deficit documented by Gaol (2023) and the participatory quality gains observed by Bandur et al. (2022), both cited in the Introduction as evidence of the field's unresolved tensions. Gaol (2023) finding that Indonesian school principals lack adequate managerial formation is not contradicted by the present analysis but recontextualised within it: the problem, as the three-pillar framework reveals, is not simply that principals need more management training but that existing development frameworks treat managerial, normative and relational competencies as separable when the evidence consistently shows they must develop together. Similarly, Bandur et al. (2022) observation that SBM outcomes depend heavily on local management capacity and school committee strength is confirmed and deepened by the present study's finding that these capacities are themselves products of how well the three foundations are integrated at the institutional level. Schools with strong philosophical grounding, clear juridical understanding and genuine sociological responsiveness are, in effect, the schools most likely to develop the local capacity that SBM requires, which means that the three-pillar framework offers not just an explanatory model but a practical pathway for building the conditions under which SBM can succeed

## **CONCLUSION**

This study set out to examine the policy foundations of school-based quality management in Islamic education in Indonesia and to propose an integrated framework that the existing literature has not yet provided. The analysis confirms that three foundational pillars, namely the philosophical grounding in Islamic normative values, the juridical framework of national education regulations, and the sociological responsiveness to Muslim community needs, are mutually constitutive rather than independently operative. Quality management efforts that engage only one or two of these foundations consistently fall short of producing durable institutional improvement, while those that integrate all three create the conditions under which genuine and self-sustaining quality development becomes possible.

The practical implications of this finding are concentrated at the level of institutional leadership. Principals of Islamic schools bear responsibility for holding the three pillars in productive alignment, which demands a combination of managerial competence, religious authority and relational skill that existing professional development frameworks have not adequately addressed. Curriculum

design, quality assurance cycles and stakeholder participation structures all function more effectively when they are grounded simultaneously in Islamic values, regulatory standards and genuine community responsiveness rather than in any single dimension alone.

The study carries limitations that future research should address. As a systematic literature review, it produces a conceptual framework rather than direct empirical evidence of the three-pillar model in operation across specific institutional settings. Field-based research examining how the philosophical, juridical and sociological foundations interact in actual madrasah and pesantren contexts would significantly strengthen and potentially refine the framework proposed here. Such research would also clarify which combinations of pillar strength or weakness most commonly characterise Indonesian Islamic schools and what targeted interventions are most likely to address the specific gaps institutions face.

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