



Management Practices for Enhancing Graduate Quality in an Islamic Boarding School

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Abstract

This study aims to examine management practices in an Islamic boarding school for enhancing graduate quality through the implementation of educational management functions. A qualitative case study approach was employed using purposive sampling to select institutional leaders, administrators, school principals, teachers, students, alumni, and community representatives as participants. Data were collected through observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis, and were analyzed using an interactive qualitative analysis approach. The findings indicate that management practices are implemented systematically through planning, organizing, implementation, evaluation, and continuous supervision. Educational quality is strengthened through teacher professional development, curriculum and instructional improvement, the provision of educational facilities and infrastructure, and the cultivation of students' character and discipline. These efforts are supported by visionary leadership, an adaptive curriculum, and active community engagement, although challenges related to technological change and limited resources remain. The study highlights that integrated and quality-oriented management practices contribute to strengthening graduate quality and provide practical insights for the continuous improvement of educational management in Islamic boarding schools.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a strategic instrument for developing high-quality, competitive human resources capable of addressing the challenges of national development in the global era (Dewi et al., 2024; Syamsurijal, 2024). In the context of Islamic education in Indonesia, Islamic boarding schools play a strategic role not only as institutions for the transmission of Islamic knowledge but also as centers for fostering character, morality, and community values (Muhidin et al., 2025; Niswah et al., 2025; Saputra et al., 2024). Since their establishment, Islamic boarding schools have contributed significantly to producing graduates with strong religious competence, moral integrity, and the ability to adapt to social change (Dahlan, 2018; Fatmawati, 2025; Khotimah, 2020; W et al., 2026). However, rapid advances in science and technology,

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together with increasing public expectations regarding educational quality, require Islamic boarding schools to continuously innovate their institutional management while preserving their fundamental educational values (Manshur & Isroani, 2023; Missouri, 2023; Mufron, 2020).

The increasing demand for educational quality indicates that educational institutions are no longer evaluated solely based on students' academic achievement but also on their success in developing character, social skills, critical thinking, and the competencies required to respond to global challenges (Arifin & Mu'id, 2024; Pakaya & Hakeu, 2023). This condition encourages educational institutions, including Islamic boarding schools, to establish management systems capable of continuously improving educational quality (Efendi & Sholeh, 2023; Febrianti & Syukri, 2023; Muttaqien et al., 2024). Accordingly, educational quality should not be understood merely as students' academic performance but also as an institution's ability to produce graduates with academic competence, ethical values, positive character, and skills that meet the needs of society (Asrori, 2017; Lubis, 2022).

From the perspective of educational management, the achievement of educational quality is strongly influenced by the effectiveness of management functions, including planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating educational programs systematically (Hidayat et al., 2023; Maujud, 2018; Mubarak, 2021). Effective management enables educational institutions to optimize resource utilization, establish a supportive organizational culture, and ensure the sustainable achievement of educational goals (Bahar et al., 2024; Firdaus, 2022; Maulana et al., 2025). Within Islamic boarding schools, educational management is more complex because it encompasses not only administrative and academic functions but also the integration of Islamic values, pesantren traditions, and the continuous supervision and development of students' daily lives within the boarding environment (Lutfiyah et al., 2025; Widodo, 2025). Therefore, effective educational management constitutes one of the key determinants of educational quality and the production of high-quality graduates.

One of the Islamic boarding schools that has played a significant role in the development of Islamic education in Indonesia is Islamic Boarding School, North Sumatra (Lubis & Salam, 2023; Musa et al., 2022). As one of the oldest and largest Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia, Musthafawiyah has produced numerous religious scholars, academics, government officials, and community leaders. This long-standing contribution demonstrates the institution's ability not only to preserve the traditions of classical Islamic education but also to adapt to the changing demands of the modern educational system. These characteristics make Islamic Boarding School an appropriate context for examining how educational management is implemented to improve educational quality and produce graduates capable of meeting the evolving needs of society.

As an Islamic boarding school that has been established for more than a century, Islamic Boarding School faces various challenges in maintaining and continuously improving the quality of education. These challenges arise not only from the rapid advancement of information technology and changing societal perspectives but also from increasing competition among educational institutions and the growing demand for graduates who possess strong academic competence, sound character, and the ability to adapt to contemporary developments. Under these circumstances, Islamic boarding schools are required to develop adaptive management systems without compromising the fundamental values and identity of the pesantren tradition. Therefore, the ability of Islamic boarding schools to respond effectively to these challenges has become an important indicator of their managerial effectiveness and their success in producing high-quality graduates.

In response to these challenges, Islamic Boarding School has implemented

various strategies to improve educational quality through the strengthening of both academic and non-academic aspects. These initiatives include curriculum development that is responsive to contemporary needs, continuous improvement of teachers' professional competence, enhancement of the student guidance system, development of extracurricular activities, and the provision of adequate educational facilities and infrastructure. At the same time, the institution continues to preserve the tradition of Islamic scholarship as the foundation of its educational system while adapting to the evolving demands of modern education. These efforts demonstrate that improving educational quality is a continuous process requiring careful planning, consistent implementation, and the active involvement of all stakeholders within the Islamic boarding school.

Nevertheless, the success of educational quality improvement is determined not only by the programs implemented but also by various internal and external factors that influence their effectiveness. Supporting factors, such as visionary leadership, competent teachers, a strong organizational culture, community support, and the availability of adequate resources, play a significant role in facilitating the implementation of educational programs. Conversely, limitations in educational facilities and infrastructure, rapid technological change, evolving student needs, and various administrative and managerial challenges may hinder the process of educational quality improvement. Therefore, examining these supporting and inhibiting factors is essential for developing a comprehensive understanding of how Islamic boarding schools manage sustainable educational quality improvement.

Previous studies have extensively examined educational management and quality improvement in Islamic boarding schools. Overall, the existing literature indicates that effective educational management, leadership, and quality management practices contribute significantly to improving the quality of Islamic educational institutions. Díez et al (2020) reported that successful educational quality improvement is strongly influenced by the effectiveness of management functions, particularly in planning, implementing, and evaluating educational programs. Similarly, Safitri (2025) emphasized that effective kyai leadership plays a crucial role in enhancing educational quality through curriculum development, the adoption of modern management practices, and the utilization of educational technology. Furthermore, Iskandar & Sunhaji (2025) argued that the primary strengths of Islamic boarding school graduates lie in their moral values, discipline, and prophetic leadership, although these competencies should be strengthened through digital literacy and improved management systems. Likewise, Engkizar et al (2026) demonstrated that the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) integrated with pesantren values contributes to improving institutional quality by strengthening governance, quality culture, and the professionalism of human resources.

Although previous studies have made significant contributions to explaining the relationship between educational management, pesantren leadership, and educational quality improvement, most have examined these dimensions separately. Existing studies have primarily focused on the effectiveness of management functions, kyai leadership, or the implementation of Total Quality Management as individual determinants of educational quality. However, limited attention has been given to integrating educational management functions, quality improvement strategies, and the supporting and inhibiting factors within a single analytical framework, particularly in the context of Islamic Boarding School. Such an integrated perspective is essential for developing a comprehensive understanding of how educational management contributes to producing high-quality graduates.

The uniqueness of Islamic Boarding School further reinforces the importance of this study. As one of the oldest and largest Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia,

the institution has a long-standing tradition in Islamic education while continuously adapting to the demands of contemporary educational development. This distinctive combination of traditional pesantren values and modern educational management provides an appropriate context for examining how management functions are implemented, how educational quality improvement strategies are formulated and executed, and how supporting and inhibiting factors are managed to produce graduates with strong academic competence, moral integrity, and competitiveness.

Based on this research gap, the present study offers a novel perspective by comprehensively examining the integration of educational management functions, educational quality improvement strategies, and the supporting and inhibiting factors influencing educational quality at Islamic Boarding School. Unlike previous studies that have tended to investigate these dimensions independently, this study conceptualizes educational quality improvement as a holistic process shaped by the interaction of planning, organizing, implementation, supervision, and both internal and external institutional factors. Accordingly, this study is expected to contribute theoretically to the advancement of Islamic educational management literature while also providing practical recommendations for Islamic boarding school administrators in designing more effective and sustainable quality improvement strategies (Raharjo & Ibad, 2024; Rahmi, 2019).

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study aims to analyze how educational management is implemented at Islamic Boarding School to improve educational quality, identify the strategies employed to produce high-quality graduates, and examine the supporting and inhibiting factors that influence the implementation of educational management within the institution. Accordingly, this study seeks to answer the following research question: How is educational management implemented at Islamic Boarding School to improve educational quality, and what supporting and inhibiting factors influence the production of high-quality graduates?. By addressing this question, the study is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of educational management practices in Islamic boarding schools while enriching the growing body of literature on Islamic educational management in Indonesia.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of the educational management practices implemented at Islamic Boarding School in producing high-quality graduates. This approach was selected because it enables a comprehensive exploration of phenomena related to Islamic boarding school management, educational quality improvement strategies, and the factors influencing the institution's success in producing outstanding graduates (Alam, 2021; Ateş & Afat, 2018; Engkizar et al., 2025; Magolda, 2007). The research was conducted at Musthafawiyah Purbabaru Islamic Boarding School, located in North Sumatra Province, Indonesia. The research site was purposively selected because Musthafawiyah is one of the oldest and largest Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia, with a well-established reputation for advancing Islamic education and producing high-quality human resources.

Research participants were selected using purposive sampling, whereby individuals with relevant knowledge and experience related to the research focus were intentionally chosen. The participants included the head of the Islamic boarding school, administrators, madrasah principals, teachers, students, alumni, and community leaders who possessed a comprehensive understanding of the development and management of Islamic Boarding School (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2016; Engkizar et al., 2026; Muswara & Zalnur, 2019). Data were collected through three complementary techniques: observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis.

Observation was conducted to examine directly the educational activities and management practices within the Islamic boarding school. In-depth interviews were carried out to obtain detailed information regarding the educational management system, strategies for improving educational quality, and the supporting and inhibiting factors affecting the institution's efforts to produce high-quality graduates. Document analysis involved reviewing institutional documents, including the school profile, organizational structure, curriculum, activity reports, and other relevant records (Kim, 2020; Malandrino, 2024).

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, source triangulation and methodological triangulation were employed. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from different participants, whereas methodological triangulation involved cross-checking data derived from observations, interviews, and document analysis. The data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data analysis was conducted continuously throughout the research process, beginning with data collection and continuing until valid and comprehensive findings regarding educational management, educational quality improvement, and the production of high-quality graduates were obtained (Miles et al., 2014; Saldaña & Omasta, 2021; Saldaña, 2020).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Educational Management in Improving Educational Quality in Islamic Boarding Schools

Educational management plays a fundamental role in determining the success of an educational institution in achieving its goals. Within Islamic boarding schools, educational management encompasses not only administrative and academic functions but also serves as a strategic instrument for improving educational quality and producing high-quality graduates. Islamic Boarding School recognizes that educational quality can only be achieved through systematic management encompassing planning, organizing, implementation, supervision, and continuous evaluation. As explained by the head of the Islamic boarding school:

"Improving educational quality is not something that happens automatically. Every program must be carefully planned, implemented collaboratively, monitored continuously, and evaluated regularly so that the educational objectives can be achieved and graduates possess both academic competence and good character." (informant).

The interview indicates that educational quality improvement is perceived as a continuous managerial process rather than a series of isolated educational activities. This perspective is reflected in the institution's strategic planning, which includes short-, medium-, and long-term educational programs, the formulation of institutional vision and mission, budget planning, and activity scheduling. The planning process also involves teachers, students' parents, and the pesantren committee, demonstrating that educational quality is developed through collaboration among multiple stakeholders.

The findings further reveal that effective planning is supported by a well-structured organizational system. Responsibilities are distributed according to teachers' educational background, professional competence, and experience to ensure that each educational program is implemented efficiently. In addition, teachers are encouraged to participate in seminars, workshops, and professional development programs to strengthen their pedagogical and professional competencies. As stated by one of the administrators:

"Teachers are assigned according to their expertise, and we continuously encourage them to participate in professional development activities because improving teachers' competence is one of the keys to improving educational quality." (informant).

These findings suggest that organizational management extends beyond the allocation of responsibilities and includes continuous investment in human resource development as an essential component of educational quality improvement.

The implementation of educational programs is likewise carried out systematically through the application of a curriculum aligned with national educational standards, supported by comprehensive instructional planning and adequate learning facilities. Teachers prepare annual programs, semester programs, syllabi, and lesson plans before conducting classroom instruction. The pesantren also provides libraries, classical Islamic reference books, instructional media, and other educational facilities to support the teaching and learning process. According to one of the senior teachers:

"Every teacher is required to prepare complete instructional documents before teaching. Educational quality depends not only on teachers' competence but also on adequate learning resources and facilities that support the instructional process." (informant).

Beyond classroom instruction, educational quality is strengthened through active collaboration among teachers, students, parents, and the wider community. The participants emphasized that communication with parents is maintained continuously to ensure consistency in students' academic development and character formation both within the boarding school and at home. Such collaboration reflects the institution's understanding that educational quality is a shared responsibility requiring sustained cooperation among all stakeholders.

The findings also demonstrate that continuous evaluation and supervision constitute integral components of the educational management system. Evaluation is conducted regularly to assess the achievement of educational objectives, identify institutional strengths and weaknesses, and formulate improvement strategies for subsequent programs. Meanwhile, supervision ensures that educational activities remain consistent with the institution's vision, mission, and strategic plans while maintaining instructional quality, teachers' performance, and students' development. As emphasized by the head of the Islamic boarding school:

"Evaluation is carried out continuously, not to identify failures, but to identify opportunities for improvement. Every evaluation result becomes the basis for developing better educational programs in the following academic period." (informant).

Overall, these findings demonstrate that educational quality improvement at Islamic Boarding School is achieved through the integration of planning, organizing, implementation, supervision, and evaluation within a continuous management cycle. Rather than functioning independently, these management functions complement one another in creating an educational environment that supports academic excellence, character development, and the production of high-quality graduates.

Strategies for Improving Educational Quality in Islamic Boarding Schools

Improving educational quality is a continuous process that requires the effective utilization of all institutional resources. The findings reveal that the Islamic boarding school implements a series of integrated and sustainable strategies to enhance educational quality, based on the understanding that the quality of graduates is influenced not only by the learning process itself but also by teachers' competence, curriculum development, instructional methods, educational facilities, and the active participation of all educational stakeholders. As explained by one of the administrators:

"Improving educational quality is not solely about classroom instruction. It requires strengthening teachers' competence, improving learning materials and teaching methods, providing adequate facilities, and ensuring that all stakeholders work together to support students' development." (informant).

The interview indicates that educational quality improvement is viewed as a comprehensive and continuous institutional effort rather than as isolated educational

activities. Accordingly, the institution seeks to improve every component of the educational process to produce graduates who possess strong academic competence, Islamic values, and moral integrity.

One of the primary strategies identified in this study is the continuous development of teachers' professional competence. The participants emphasized that teachers are central to the educational process because they directly guide students' intellectual, spiritual, and character development. Consequently, the Islamic boarding school encourages teachers to participate in professional development activities, including educational workshops, training programs, Arabic and English language courses, and information technology training. Teachers are also encouraged to broaden their academic perspectives through extensive reading and comparative studies with other educational institutions. As stated by one of the participants:

"Teachers are continuously encouraged to improve their competencies through training, language courses, comparative studies, and independent learning so that they are able to respond to educational developments and students' learning needs." (informant).

These findings demonstrate that teacher professional development is considered a strategic investment in improving educational quality by strengthening both pedagogical competence and professional capacity.

In addition to teacher development, educational quality is enhanced through continuous improvement of learning materials and instructional methods. The findings indicate that the institution enriches learning materials beyond the formal curriculum by incorporating relevant and up-to-date learning resources. Teachers are encouraged to develop contextual instructional materials that enable students not only to understand theoretical concepts but also to apply their knowledge in everyday life. Furthermore, participants explained that teachers are expected to employ diverse instructional approaches, including lectures, discussions, question-and-answer sessions, and practical activities, to create a more engaging and student-centered learning environment.

As explained by one of the participants:

"Learning becomes more meaningful when teachers combine various instructional methods rather than relying on lectures alone. Students become more active, motivated, and able to understand the learning materials more effectively." (informant).

The interview findings suggest that instructional quality is strengthened through the integration of contextual learning materials and varied teaching methods that encourage active student participation.

The findings further reveal that educational quality improvement is supported by the continuous development of educational facilities and infrastructure. Participants emphasized that adequate classrooms, libraries, instructional media, teaching aids, and other educational resources are essential for creating an effective learning environment. The institution therefore continues to improve its educational facilities to ensure that both teachers and students have access to resources that support the teaching and learning process.

Another important strategy identified in this study is strengthening students' learning motivation. The Islamic boarding school seeks to cultivate students' enthusiasm for learning by creating an enjoyable learning atmosphere, providing academic stimulation, recognizing outstanding achievement, and organizing both academic and non-academic competitions. These activities are intended to foster students' self-confidence, discipline, competitiveness, and commitment to continuous learning.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that educational quality improvement is achieved through the integration of teacher professional development, curriculum enrichment, innovative instructional methods, adequate educational facilities, and strategies designed to strengthen students' learning motivation. These efforts are

further reinforced by effective institutional leadership, active teacher participation, a dynamic curriculum, and strong collaboration among the Islamic boarding school, parents, and the wider community. Together, these interconnected strategies contribute to producing graduates who possess academic excellence, strong moral character, and the competencies required to address the challenges of contemporary society.

Factors Influencing Educational Quality Improvement in Islamic Boarding Schools

The findings indicate that the improvement of educational quality is influenced not only by the effective implementation of educational programs but also by a combination of supporting and inhibiting factors that shape the overall effectiveness of educational management. Participants consistently emphasized that educational quality is the result of the interaction between institutional leadership, teacher competence, curriculum development, educational facilities, stakeholder support, and the institution's ability to respond to emerging challenges. As one participant explained:

"Educational quality depends on many interconnected factors. Good leadership, competent teachers, adequate facilities, and strong cooperation among all stakeholders are equally important in ensuring that educational programs achieve their objectives." (informant).

The interview findings suggest that educational quality is not determined by a single management component but rather by the synergy among various institutional elements that collectively support the achievement of educational goals.

One of the most influential supporting factors identified in this study is visionary leadership. Participants emphasized that institutional leaders play a crucial role in establishing strategic directions, fostering organizational commitment, and coordinating educational programs. Through effective leadership, the Islamic boarding school is able to cultivate a productive organizational culture, strengthen teachers' commitment, and ensure that institutional development remains aligned with its educational vision. As stated by one of the participants:

"The leader provides direction for every educational activity. Without strong leadership, educational programs cannot be implemented consistently because coordination and commitment among all members of the institution would be difficult to maintain." (informant).

These findings indicate that leadership functions not only as an administrative mechanism but also as a driving force for continuous institutional improvement.

Another supporting factor highlighted by participants is the competence and dedication of teachers. The findings reveal that teachers perform multiple roles as educators, mentors, and role models who directly influence students' academic achievement and character development (Jaafar et al., 2025; Okenova et al., 2025; Tadol et al., 2025). Their professional competence, teaching experience, and commitment to students are considered essential for maintaining instructional quality. Participants also emphasized that continuous professional development contributes significantly to improving the overall quality of education within the institution (Alatise & Akinfolarin, 2025; Harun et al., 2026; Sriwahyuni et al., 2025).

Furthermore, participants identified the adaptive curriculum as another important factor supporting educational quality improvement. The curriculum integrates the classical traditions of Islamic scholarship with contemporary educational needs, enabling students to develop both religious knowledge and broader academic competencies (Mustafa et al., 2026; Mutiaramses et al., 2025). This integration allows graduates to maintain their Islamic identity while acquiring the knowledge and skills required to respond to social and professional challenges. In addition, adequate educational facilities including classrooms, libraries, dormitories, places of worship, instructional media, and other learning resources were recognized

as essential for creating a conducive learning environment that supports both academic and non-academic activities (Engkizar et al., 2025; Numan et al., 2025).

The findings also emphasize the importance of collaboration between the Islamic boarding school, parents, and the wider community. Participants explained that strong community trust and active parental involvement contribute substantially to educational quality by reinforcing students' learning and character development beyond the classroom. Such collaboration strengthens institutional sustainability and supports the successful implementation of educational programs.

Despite these strengths, the study also identifies several challenges that may hinder educational quality improvement. One of the primary challenges is the rapid advancement of information and communication technology. Participants acknowledged that technological development provides valuable educational opportunities while simultaneously introducing new challenges related to students' supervision and the responsible use of digital media. As one participant noted:

"Technology offers many educational benefits, but it also requires stronger supervision because students have easier access to information that may not always support their academic and moral development." (informant).

The findings indicate that effective educational management requires balancing the educational benefits of technology with appropriate supervision and character guidance.

Another challenge concerns the increasing demand for educational resources. Participants explained that the growing number of students and the expanding scope of educational programs require additional financial resources, qualified teachers, learning facilities, and institutional support. Consequently, effective resource management has become an important managerial responsibility for maintaining educational quality under changing institutional conditions.

In addition, participants highlighted the diversity of students' academic abilities, educational backgrounds, and personal characteristics as another challenge influencing educational quality (Jannah, 2018; Sadali, 2020). Such diversity requires teachers to implement flexible instructional strategies capable of accommodating different learning needs while ensuring that every student has opportunities to achieve optimal academic and personal development. These findings suggest that educational quality is strengthened when instructional practices are responsive to students' diverse characteristics rather than relying on uniform approaches (Das et al., 2016; Engkizar et al., 2019; Huda et al., 2016; Yugo, 2025).

Overall, the findings demonstrate that educational quality improvement results from the interaction between multiple supporting and inhibiting factors. Visionary leadership, competent and dedicated teachers, an adaptive curriculum, adequate educational facilities, and strong collaboration with parents and the community constitute the primary institutional strengths supporting educational quality. At the same time, rapid technological change, increasing resource demands, and the diversity of students' educational needs present significant managerial challenges (Hamdana & Donna, 2024; Rohmah & Roqib, 2024; Zahirah & Suhaedi, 2025). The ability of the Islamic boarding school to maximize these supporting factors while effectively addressing institutional challenges contributes substantially to producing graduates who possess academic excellence, strong moral character, and the competencies needed to contribute positively to society (MF, 2024; Yugo, 2025).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that educational quality improvement in Islamic Boarding School is achieved through the integrated implementation of educational management functions, including planning, organizing, implementation, and continuous evaluation and supervision. These management functions provide a

systematic framework for optimizing educational resources and achieving the institution's educational objectives. The findings further demonstrate that educational quality is strengthened through teacher professional development, curriculum and instructional improvement, adequate educational facilities, and the cultivation of students' motivation and discipline. The success of these efforts is supported by visionary leadership, competent and dedicated teachers, an adaptive curriculum, and strong collaboration among the Islamic boarding school, parents, and the wider community, while rapid technological development, resource limitations, and the diverse characteristics of students remain significant challenges that require adaptive management. The main contribution of this study lies in providing a comprehensive understanding of the interrelationship between educational management functions, educational quality improvement strategies, and the supporting and inhibiting factors influencing the production of high-quality graduates within the context of Islamic boarding schools. These findings contribute to the advancement of Islamic educational management literature and offer practical insights for Islamic boarding school administrators in developing more effective, adaptive, and sustainable strategies for improving educational quality while preserving the Islamic values that constitute the distinctive identity of pesantren.

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