



Improving Madrasah Competitiveness Through Excellent Islamic Education Development Strategies

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Abstract

This study analyzes the development strategy of superior Islamic education at Madrasah Aliyah Unggulan Amanatul Ummah (MAU Amanatul Ummah) Mojokerto. This article uses case study research to reveal the comprehensive and integrative efforts made by MAU Amanatul Ummah to realize the vision of superior, intact, and noble Islamic education. The results showed that the development strategy implemented by MAU Amanatul Ummah includes institutional strengthening, improving the quality of human resources, developing a holistic curriculum, varying learning programs, implementing a comprehensive evaluation system, and strengthening networks and partnerships. The success of MAU Amanatul Ummah is inseparable from the visionary and transformative leadership of the Kiai, as well as the commitment of the entire academic community to continue to innovate and pursue excellence. Although still facing some challenges, the experience of MAU Amanatul Ummah can be an inspiration and reference for the development of Islamic education in Indonesia, especially in the context of pesantren-based education. This research contributes to the development of Islamic education discourse and practice in Indonesia and opens space for further study.

Keywords: Islamic Education, Superior Madrasahs, Development Strategy.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis strategi pengembangan pendidikan Islam unggulan di Madrasah Aliyah Unggulan Amanatul Ummah (MAU Amanatul Ummah) Mojokerto. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dan metode studi kasus, penelitian ini berusaha mengungkap upaya komprehensif dan integratif yang dilakukan oleh MAU Amanatul Ummah dalam mewujudkan visi pendidikan Islam yang unggul, utuh, dan berakhlak mulia. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa strategi pengembangan yang diterapkan oleh MAU Amanatul Ummah meliputi penguatan kelembagaan, peningkatan kualitas sumber daya manusia, pengembangan kurikulum yang holistik, variasi program pembelajaran, penerapan sistem evaluasi yang komprehensif, serta penguatan jejaring dan kemitraan. Keberhasilan MAU Amanatul Ummah tidak terlepas dari kepemimpinan kiai yang visioner dan transformatif, serta komitmen seluruh sivitas akademika untuk terus berinovasi dan mengejar keunggulan. Meski masih menghadapi beberapa tantangan, pengalaman MAU Amanatul Ummah dapat menjadi inspirasi dan referensi bagi pengembangan pendidikan Islam di Indonesia, khususnya dalam konteks pendidikan berbasis pesantren. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi bagi pengembangan wacana dan praktik pendidikan Islam di Indonesia, sekaligus membuka ruang bagi penelitian-penelitian lanjutan.

Kata kunci: Pendidikan Islam, Madrasah Unggulan, Strategi Pengembangan.

INTRODUCTION

Madrasahs, one of the leading Islamic educational institutions, have contributed significantly to implementing national education in Indonesia.¹ The rapid development of madrasahs from various aspects, such as infrastructure, quality of teachers, students, and government attention through the Ministry of Religious Affairs as the leading sector, shows the ability of madrasahs to survive and adapt to the needs of the community and the demands of the times.² This condition is evidenced by the high public interest in madrasahs, where data reported by pendis.kemenag.go.id shows as many as 15,292 students competed in the National Selection of New Learners (SNPDB) of State Aliyah Madrasahs with a dormitory system (Islamic boarding school) under the guidance of the Ministry of Religion to compete for 2,883 seats available in 23 Insan Cendekia State Aliyah Madrasahs (MAN), 17 MAN Religious Programs (MAN PK), and 2 State Vocational Aliyah Madrasahs (MAKN).³ This phenomenon proves that madrasahs have upgraded their ability to remain competitive and have high bargaining power in offering integrated religious education to the community.⁴

However, of the many madrasahs in Indonesia, namely 1,709 State Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MIN), 23,884 Private Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MAS), 1,499 State Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTsN), 16,677 Private Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTsS), 802 State Madrasah Aliyah (MAN), and 8,005 Private Madrasah Aliyah (MAS)⁵, there are still some madrasahs that are in quite a poor condition and face various problems that reduce their marketability.⁶ This problem is exacerbated by the negative stigma from the community that doubts the prospects of madrasah graduates, such as the phrase "What do madrasah graduates want to be?". This stigma further burdens the community's mindset and prospective students who want to study in madrasahs.⁷ In response to this problem, Chairman of the DPP of the Indonesian Madrasah Teachers Association (PGMI) Syamsuddin stated the need for additional budget and intense assistance for madrasahs, both public and private, as well as increased attention from the Ministry of

¹ Muhammad Anas Maarif, Moh Wardi, and Surya Amartika, 'The Implementation Strategy of Religious Culture in Madrasah', *Tarbawi: Jurnal Keilmuan Manajemen Pendidikan* 6, no. 02 (30 November 2020): 163–74, <https://doi.org/10.32678/tarbawi.v6i02.2962>.

² Mujahid Ansori, 'Pengembangan Kurikulum Madrasah Di Pesantren', *Munaddhomah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 1, no. 1 (2020): 41–50, <https://doi.org/10.31538/munaddhomah.v1i1.32>; Dian, Ilis Rosbiah, and Ari Prayoga, 'Implementasi Strategi Pemasaran Pendidikan Di Madrasah', *Dirasah: Jurnal Studi Ilmu Dan Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 3, no. 1 (29 February 2020): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.29062/dirasah.v3i1.73>.

³ Kemenag, '15 Ribu Siswa Berebut Masuk Madrasah Aliyah Unggulan Kemenag', <https://kemenag.go.id>, accessed 7 March 2024, <https://kemenag.go.id/nasional/15-ribu-siswa-berebut-masuk-madrasah-aliyah-unggulan-kemenag-e0f0ah>.

⁴ Mukhammad Abdullah, 'School Culture to Serve Performance of Madrasah in Indonesia', *QIJIS (Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies)* 7, no. 1 (3 June 2019): 71–100, <https://doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v7i1.4809>.

⁵ Badan Pusat Statistik Indonesia, 'Jumlah Sekolah, Guru, dan Murid Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) di Bawah Kementerian Agama Menurut Provinsi, 2022/2023 - Tabel Statistik', accessed 7 March 2024, <https://www.bps.go.id/id/statistics-table/3/VXlzME1rOWtlbHB4YW1WbU1VWXJNa1JlU0ZjeVp6MDkjMw==/jumlah-sekolah--guru--dan-murid-madrasah-tsanawiyah--mts--di-bawah-kementerian-agama-menurut-provinsi--2022.html?year=2022>.

⁶ Abdi Madrasah, 'Madrasah Harus Mampu Menjadi Pilihan Utama Bukan Alternatif', Abdi Madrasah, accessed 7 March 2024, <https://www.abdimadrasah.com/2014/03/madrasah-harus-mampu-menjadi-pilihan-bukan-alternatif.html>.

⁷ Rahmat Rifai Lubis, Dairina Yusri, and Mursal Aziz, 'Eksistensi Madrasah Di Tengah Popularitas Sekolah Islam Terpadu: Studi Historisitas, Rivalitas, Dan Kontinuitasnya Di Kota Medan', *Hikmah* 19, no. 1 (30 June 2022): 77–95, <https://doi.org/10.53802/hikmah.v19i1.182>.

Religious Affairs to aspects of quality and quality of service, quality of teachers and their welfare, infrastructure, curriculum, and matters related to madrasah institutions.⁸

In this context, Madrasah Aliyah Unggulan Amanatul Ummah (MAU Amanatul Ummah), located in Pacet, Mojokerto, is one example of a madrasah that has won the Excellence for Quality Education title within two decades since its establishment. This success is inseparable from the priority given to the quality and competence of educators, resulting in madrasah graduates with character who are accepted into various universities, both at home and abroad.⁹ Although there have been several studies examining MAU Amanatul Ummah, such as research by Mizanul Hasanah on dormitory-based Islamic religious character development,¹⁰ Chusnul Chotimah and Indah Khomsiyah on boarding school institutional innovation through value transformation,¹¹ as well as other studies that review the boarding school management model in improving the quality of international students and the implementation of accelerated program policies, no study specifically examines the development strategy of superior Islamic education at MAU Amanatul Ummah.¹²

Therefore, this article aims to complement existing studies by identifying a superior Islamic education development strategy at MAU Amanatul Ummah, Mojokerto. The specific purpose of this paper is to reveal how the approach applied by MAU Amanatul Ummah in developing outstanding Islamic education so that it can achieve achievements and recognition as one of the leading madrasahs in Indonesia. Through this research, the author wants to prove that the success of MAU Amanatul Ummah in developing excellent Islamic education depends not only on institutional factors and graduate output but is also influenced by appropriate and effective development strategies.

This research is expected to make a significant contribution to the development of science, especially in the field of Islamic education management. The results of this study are expected to be a reference for madrasah managers in formulating strategies for developing superior Islamic education in their respective institutions. In addition, this research is also likely to be a consideration for the government, in this case, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, in formulating policies related to madrasah development in Indonesia. Thus, this article provides theoretical and practical contributions in efforts to improve the quality of Islamic education in Indonesia.

⁸ Republika ID, 'Kemenag Diminta Tambah Jumlah Madrasah Negeri |', [republika.id](https://republika.id/posts/12268/kemenag-diminta-tambah-jumlah-madrasah-negeri), accessed 7 March 2024, <https://republika.id/posts/12268/kemenag-diminta-tambah-jumlah-madrasah-negeri>.

⁹ Muhammad Anas Ma'arif and Ibnu Rusydi, 'Implementasi Pendidikan Holistik Di Pondok Pesantren Amanatul Ummah Mojokerto', *EDUKASI: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama Dan Keagamaan* 18, no. 1 (27 April 2020): 100–117, <https://doi.org/10.32729/edukasi.v18i1.598>; Mizanul Hasanah, 'The Role of Parents in Children Memorizing the Qur'an in Middle School Based on the Amanatul Ummah Islamic Boarding School', *Tajkeir: Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Education* 2, no. 2 (25 July 2021): 139–56, <https://doi.org/10.31538/tijie.v2i2.43>.

¹⁰ Mizanul Hasanah, 'Rekrutmen Dan Seleksi Tenaga Pendidikan (Guru) Untuk Meningkatkan Kualitas Pendidikan Di SMA Unggulan Berbasis Pesantren Amanatul Ummah Pacet', *Al-Tarbawi Al-Haditsah: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 5, no. 1 (27 June 2020), <https://doi.org/10.24235/tarbawi.v5i1.6310>.

¹¹ Chusnul Chotimah and Indah Khomsiyah, 'Inovasi Kelembagaan Pondok Pesantren Melalui Transformasi Nilai: Studi Kasus Di Pondok Pesantren Amanatul Ummah Pacet Mojokerto', *Jurnal At-Turats* 13, no. 1 (2019).

¹² Amirudin Amirudin, 'Model Manajemen Pondok Pesantren Dalam Peningkatan Mutu Santri Bertaraf Internasional: Studi Pada Pondok Pesantren Amanatul Ummah Mojokerto Jawa Timur', *Al-Idarah: Jurnal Kependidikan Islam* 9, no. 2 (5 January 2020): 222–41, <https://doi.org/10.24042/alidarah.v9i2.5607>.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study type of research. The qualitative approach was chosen because this research aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the development strategy of excellent Islamic education at Madrasah Aliyah Unggulan Amanatul Ummah (MAU Amanatul Ummah), Mojokerto. The case study was chosen because this research focuses on one educational institution, namely MAU Amanatul Ummah, which has uniqueness and success in developing excellent Islamic education.

Data collection in this study was carried out through three techniques, namely observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were made by directly observing learning activities, extracurricular activities, and facilities and infrastructure at MAU Amanatul Ummah. Interviews were conducted with key informants, namely the head of the madrasah, the deputy head of the madrasah, teachers, and students. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner using pre-prepared interview guidelines. Documentation was completed by collecting written data, such as madrasah profiles, curriculum, teacher and student data, and other documents relevant to the focus of the research.¹³

Data analysis in this study used an interactive analysis model consisting of three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.¹⁴ Data reduction is made by selecting, simplifying, and focusing data relevant to the research focus. Data presentation is done by organizing the reduced data through narrative text, tables, or pictures. Conclusions were drawn by interpreting the data that had been presented and answering research questions. This research uses triangulation techniques. The triangulation used was source triangulation and technique triangulation. Source triangulation is done by comparing data obtained from different informants, while technique triangulation is done by comparing data obtained through various techniques, namely observation, interview, and documentation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Madrasah Aliyah Unggulan Amanatul Ummah (MAU Amanatul Ummah) is one of the Islamic educational institutions that has implemented a comprehensive and integrative development strategy in realizing the vision of superior, intact, and noble Islamic education. The success of MAU Amanatul Ummah is inseparable from its ability to integrate various aspects of development holistically, ranging from institutional strengthening, improving the quality of human resources (HR), providing adequate infrastructure, implementing an integrative curriculum, varying learning services, competitive evaluation systems, to strengthening cooperation networks with various parties.

Based on interviews with the madrasah, information was obtained that MAU Amanatul Ummah has the vision to realize superior, intact, and moral human beings for the glory of Muslims and the Indonesian nation. To achieve this vision, MAU Amanatul Ummah implements several development strategies.

¹³ John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (SAGE Publications, 2018).

¹⁴ Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldana, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (SAGE Publications, 2018).

“We are establishing cooperation with various parties such as local government, central government, school committees, parents, and educational institutions. We are placing qualified and well-structured human resources. We are equipping adequate facilities and infrastructure such as mosques, dormitories, classrooms, laboratories, and libraries. It is implementing implement an integrative curriculum that combines national, international, and Al-Azhar Egyptian curricula. We provide varied learning service programs such as superior, accelerated, and international standard madrasah programs. I am implementing a competitive evaluation system through oral and written exams” (Interview: 2023)

Observations show that a very conducive learning environment supports MAU Amanatul Ummah. Its location in a mountainous area with cool air and away from noise makes the learning atmosphere comfortable. The magnificent mosque and representative dormitory are very supportive facilities for moral development and the development of Islamic learning. The facilities and infrastructure at MAU Amanatul Ummah are complete and modern. In addition to classrooms and laboratories, there are libraries, polyclinics, business units, and others. All these facilities are optimally utilized to support the learning process. The learning process at MAU Amanatul Ummah takes place in a disciplined and organized manner. Formal learning in the classroom is combined with boarding school activities such as book recitation and moral development. The learning approach is teacher-centered and student-centered, according to the characteristics of the material.

Meanwhile, the document review revealed that institutionally, MAU Amanatul Ummah has a systematic organizational structure with a clear division of tasks and authority. The curriculum is integrative and combines the national, international, and Al-Azhar curricula. This can be seen from the learning tools documents such as syllabi and lesson plans. Teacher data shows high educational qualifications ranging from S1, S2 to S3. Many teachers are certified and regularly receive training and coaching. Cooperation documents show the extensive network built by MAU Amanatul Ummah with government agencies, domestic and foreign universities, and non-governmental organizations. This cooperation allows students to continue their studies and get scholarships.

The findings from the interviews, observations, and documentation above show that the excellence of MAU Amanatul Ummah lies in its ability to comprehensively integrate various aspects of development. Institutional strengthening is carried out through the application of professional and accountable management. Improving the quality of human resources is prioritized through selective recruitment, regular training, and intensive coaching. Infrastructure procurement is planned and adapted to modern learning needs. The curriculum is developed integratively by combining local, national, and international content. The variety of learning programs is directed to accommodate the diversity of student's potential and interests. The evaluation system is designed comprehensively, covering cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. All of this is combined with pesantrenan values, which are the soul and distinctive character of MAU Amanatul Ummah.

On the other hand, MAU Amanatul Ummah also realizes the importance of building networks and partnerships with various parties. Cooperation with the government at the regional and central levels provides policy and funding support for madrasah development. Partnerships with domestic and foreign universities allow students to continue their studies. Cooperation with other institutions and agencies also expands the space for madrasahs to develop innovative programs.

Observations also show that MAU Amanatul Ummah needs to strengthen character education and 21st-century skills for its students. Supporting character education is required to fortify students from the negative influence of globalization and equip them with noble morals. Meanwhile, mastering 21st-century skills such as critical, creative, communicative, and collaborative thinking is needed so students can compete and contribute in an increasingly complex era. As an Islamic educational institution born from the womb of pesantren, MAU Amanatul Ummah also upholds the principle of *'al-muhafadzah 'ala al-qadim as-shalih wa al-akhdzu bi al-jadid al-aslah'* (maintaining good old traditions and adopting new, better innovations). In this context, MAU Amanatul Ummah seeks to combine the tradition of pesantren education with the modernity of formal education. Values such as sincerity, simplicity, independence, and exemplary will continue to be maintained while continuing to innovate in management, learning, and resource development.

With this holistic and integrative development model, MAU Amanatul Ummah is expected to be a reference and inspiration for implementing Islamic education in Indonesia. Of course, by still considering the uniqueness and characteristics of each institution. In the end, the most important thing is a joint commitment to continuously improve the quality of Islamic education to produce a generation of superior, characterized, and globally competitive Muslims. Islamic education can contribute more optimally to building a dignified national civilization.

Table 1. Research Findings on the Development Strategy of Excellent Islamic Institutions at MAU Amanatul Ummah Pacet

Aspect	Strategy	Explanation
Institutional	Professional and accountable management	Implementation of a quality management system, internal audit, and transparent financial reporting.
Human resources	Improving the quality of human resources	Recruitment selection, regular training, and intensive provision for teachers and staff.
Infrastructure	Procurement of infrastructure	Construction of modern classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and dormitories.
Curriculum	Integrative curriculum development	Combining local, national, and international content with Islamic values.
Teaching and Learning	Variations in learning programs	Flagship programs, acceleration, international standard madrasahs, and Quran <i>tabfidz</i> programs.
Evaluation	Comprehensive evaluation system	Includes cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects.

Islamic boarding school traditions	Instilling Islamic boarding school values	Discipline, independence, sincerity, and simplicity.
Networking and Partnerships	Collaboration with various parties	Government, universities, non-governmental organizations, and industry.

Discussion

The results of research on the development strategy of superior Islamic education at Madrasah Aliyah Unggulan Amanatul Ummah (MAU Amanatul Ummah) Mojokerto show the comprehensive and integrative efforts made by this institution in realizing the vision of superior, intact, and noble Islamic education. These findings are interesting for further discussion, both from theoretical and empirical perspectives, to gain a deeper and holistic understanding of the phenomenon of superior Islamic education development.

Theoretically, the development strategy implemented by MAU Amanatul Ummah aligns with the concept of Total Quality Management (TQM) in education. TQM is a philosophy and methodology that helps institutions manage change and set the agenda to meet customer satisfaction continuously.¹⁵ In the context of Islamic education, TQM can be interpreted as a systematic and sustainable effort to improve the quality of Islamic education holistically to meet the internal and external stakeholders' expectations and needs.¹⁶

The implementation of TQM at MAU Amanatul Ummah can be seen from the continuous improvement efforts in various aspects of education implementation. These improvements include institutional strengthening, improving the quality of human resources (HR), providing adequate infrastructure, developing a holistic curriculum, varying learning programs, implementing a comprehensive evaluation system, and strengthening networks and partnerships. All these efforts are carried out integratively and consistently to ensure superior and sustainable education quality.

This finding also strengthens the thesis that the success of Islamic education in facing the challenges of modernity and globalization is largely determined by its ability to transform and innovate in various aspects.¹⁷ As argued by Azra, Islamic education must make updates

¹⁵ Hale Kaynak, 'The Relationship between Total Quality Management Practices and Their Effects on Firm Performance', *Journal of Operations Management* 21, no. 4 (July 2003): 405–35, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0272-6963\(03\)00004-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0272-6963(03)00004-4).

¹⁶ Cenk Budayan and Ozan Okudan, 'Roadmap for the Implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in ISO 9001-Certified Construction Companies: Evidence from Turkey', *Ain Shams Engineering Journal* 13, no. 6 (1 November 2022): 101788, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asej.2022.101788>; Muhammad Hakim Azizi, Syamsul Bakri, and Siti Choiriyah, 'Implementation of Total Quality Management in the Ministry of Religion-Based Education', *Nidhomul Haq: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 8, no. 1 (26 March 2023): 125–36, <https://doi.org/10.31538/ndh.v8i1.3067>.

¹⁷ Ahmad Mukhtar B et al., 'The Role of Quality Human Resources in Developing Missions of Future Universities in Indonesian Higher Education', *Munaddhomah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 4, no. 1 (14 February 2023): 49–59, <https://doi.org/10.31538/munaddhomah.v4i1.342>; Moh Yamin, Hasan Basri, and Andewi Suhartini, 'Learning Management in Salaf Islamic Boarding Schools', *At-Tadzkiir: Islamic Education Journal* 2, no. 1 (16 February 2023): 25–36, <https://doi.org/10.59373/attadzkiir.v2i1.10>.

(modernization) to respond to the demands and changes of the times.¹⁸ This modernization includes institutional aspects, curriculum, methodology, and human resources updates.

In the institutional context, MAU Amanatul Ummah has implemented professional and accountable management. This can be seen from the existence of a clear organizational structure, regular division of tasks and authority, as well as effective coordination and supervision mechanisms. This finding is in line with Azmi's view that the management of Islamic educational institutions must be based on modern management principles, such as planning, organizing, mobilizing, and supervising.¹⁹ With the implementation of good management, Islamic education institutions can perform their functions optimally and achieve the expected goals.²⁰

In terms of curriculum, MAU Amanatul Ummah develops an integrative curriculum that combines local, national, and international content. This curriculum model is in line with the idea of science integration in Islamic education. As explained by Al-Faruqi, as quoted by Hanifah, integration of science means reconnecting modern sciences with the treasures of Islamic science so that it becomes a holistic unity.²¹ With the integrative curriculum model, MAU Amanatul Ummah seeks to equip its students with comprehensive knowledge and skills, both in Islamic sciences and modern sciences.²²

Human resource development at MAU Amanatul Ummah also shows the seriousness of this institution in improving the quality of its education. Selective teacher recruitment, regular training, and intensive coaching are strategic steps to ensure the availability of quality human resources. This finding reinforces Muhammad Isa's research that teacher quality is one of the most critical factors in determining the success of Islamic education.²³ Qualified teachers not only master learning materials but also have qualified pedagogical, personality, social, and professional competencies.²⁴

The availability of adequate facilities and infrastructure at MAU Amanatul Ummah also deserves appreciation. As emphasized by Sutisno, educational facilities, and infrastructure are

¹⁸ Azyumardi Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi Dan Modernisasi Di Tengah Tantangan Milenium III* (Prenada Media, 2019).

¹⁹ Fauziyyah Nur Azmi Nst, Delpi Aprilinda, and Alim Putra Budiman, 'Urgensitas Manajemen Pendidikan Islam Pada Era Globalisasi', *Jurnal Pendidikan Indonesia* 2, no. 08 (21 August 2021): 1320–31, <https://doi.org/10.59141/japendi.v2i08.249>.

²⁰ Palahudin Palahudin, Muhammad Eri Hadiana, and Hasan Basri, 'Implementasi Standar Pengelolaan Pendidikan Dalam Mencapai Tujuan Pendidikan Islam', *J-PAI: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 7, no. 1 (29 December 2020), <https://doi.org/10.18860/jpai.v7i1.9776>.

²¹ Umi Hanifah, 'Islamisasi Ilmu Pengetahuan Kontemporer (Konsep Integrasi Keilmuan Di Universitas-Universitas Islam Indonesia)', *TADRIS: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 13, no. 2 (10 December 2018): 273–94, <https://doi.org/10.19105/tjpi.v13i2.1972>.

²² Ibrahim Mohamed Zein, 'Religions As a "Life Fact": Al Faruqi's Impact on The International Islamic University Malaysia', *American Journal of Islam and Society* 28, no. 3 (1 July 2011): 53–74, <https://doi.org/10.35632/ajis.v28i3.337>.

²³ Muhammad Isa, Neliwati Neliwati, and Yusuf Hadijaya, 'Quality Improvement Management in Teacher Professional Development', *Munaddhomah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 5, no. 2 (12 February 2024): 136–47, <https://doi.org/10.31538/munaddhomah.v5i2.782>.

²⁴ Yossy Dipoyanti Surahmi et al., 'Kompetensi Pedagogik Guru Sekolah Dasar Dalam Mengelola Pembelajaran Terpadu Pada Kurikulum 2013', *Jurnal Cakrawala Pendas* 8, no. 1 (22 January 2022): 135–46, <https://doi.org/10.31949/jcp.v8i1.1923>.

essential resources supporting the learning process.²⁵ The availability of complete and modern facilities and infrastructure, such as representative classrooms, adequate laboratories, reference-rich libraries, and magnificent mosques, shows MAU Amanatul Ummah's commitment to creating a conducive learning environment and supporting the optimal development of student potential.

The variety of learning programs offered by MAU Amanatul Ummah, ranging from regular, superior, to accelerated programs, shows the attention of this institution to the diversity of interests, talents, and abilities of its students. This is following the principles of Islamic education which emphasizes the maximum development of students' potential.²⁶ As explained by Murharyana et al, Islamic education aims to develop all the potential of students, whether physical, spiritual, intellectual, or social, so that they can become perfect human beings (*insan kamil*).²⁷

The comprehensive evaluation system, which includes process and outcome evaluation, is also an advantage of MAU Amanatul Ummah. As argued by Arikunto, evaluation in Islamic education focuses on cognitive aspects and must include affective and psychomotor aspects.²⁸ With a holistic evaluation system, MAU Amanatul Ummah can measure student development as a whole, both in terms of knowledge, attitudes, and skills.

The strengthening of networks and partnerships carried out by MAU Amanatul Ummah, both with the government, higher education institutions, and social community organizations, also deserves appreciation. This network shows the openness of this institution to collaborate and synergize with various parties to improve the quality of education. This finding aligns with Rosyada's view that Islamic educational institutions must build strategic cooperation and partnerships with multiple sectors to expand their impact and contribution to society.²⁹

However, the results of this study also reveal several challenges that MAU Amanatul Ummah still faces in developing superior Islamic education. The first challenge is optimizing the utilization of available facilities and infrastructure. Although MAU Amanatul Ummah already has complete and modern facilities and infrastructure, their utilization still needs to be improved to impact the quality of learning significantly. This requires creativity and

²⁵ Sutrisno Sutrisno et al., 'The Influence of The Head of Madrasah and Infrastructure Facilities on The Quality of Education Through Teacher Competence', *Tafkir: Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Education* 4, no. 2 (13 June 2023): 274–88, <https://doi.org/10.31538/tijie.v4i2.423>.

²⁶ Nurmawati Nurmawati, Cheri Julida Panjaitan, and Khairul Amri, 'Measurement of the Parenting Style of the Character of Millennial Students at State Islamic Higher Educational Institutions', *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 10, no. 3 (30 September 2022): 685–98, <https://doi.org/10.26811/peuradeun.v10i3.712>; Ateng Ruhendi and Nanang Kosim, 'Developing Arabic Language Teachers' Competence and Performance through Teacher Profession Education', *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 8, no. 1 (30 June 2022): 37–50, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v8i1.18243>.

²⁷ Murharyana Murharyana et al., 'The Effects of Islamic Religious Education Learning on Students' Motivation', *At-Tadzkiir: Islamic Education Journal* 3, no. 1 (10 February 2024): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.59373/attadzkiir.v3i1.44>.

²⁸ Suharsimi Arikunto, *Dasar-Dasar Evaluasi Pendidikan Edisi 3* (Bumi Aksara, 2021).

²⁹ Dede Rosyada, *Madrasah Dan Profesionalisme Guru Dalam Arus Dinamika Pendidikan Islam Di Era Otonomi Daerah* (Kencana, 2017).

innovation from teachers in using existing facilities and infrastructure to create more engaging, interactive, and effective learning.³⁰

The second challenge is strengthening learning based on information and communication technology. In the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 as it is now, mastery of digital technology is a necessity for educational institutions, including Islamic education.³¹ MAU Amanatul Ummah must continue to increase its technological capacity, both in terms of infrastructure and the competence of its human resources, to be able to organize learning under the demands of the times.

The third challenge is the development of character education and 21st-century skills. Amid increasingly rapid globalization and modernization, Islamic education is not only required to produce graduates who excel academically but also have strong character and skills relevant to the times' needs.³² Therefore, MAU Amanatul Ummah must continue strengthening character education based on Islamic values and integrate it with 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration.

The discussion above shows that the superior Islamic education development strategy carried out by MAU Amanatul Ummah has generally aligned with the principles of integrated quality management (TQM) and the latest ideas about the transformation and innovation of Islamic education. Although facing some challenges, it can inspire the development of Islamic education in Indonesia. However, the success of MAU Amanatul Ummah in developing superior Islamic education must be connected to the leadership factor of Kiai as the central figure in pesantren-based educational institutions.³³ Dhofier said kiai is the most essential element of a pesantren.³⁴ Kiai not only acts as a spiritual leader but also as an educational leader who determines the direction and policies of the pesantren.³⁵

In the context of MAU Amanatul Ummah, the leadership of the Kiai is KH. Asep Saifuddin Chalim has made a significant contribution to the progress of this institution. His vision and charisma in combining the pesantren tradition with the modernity of formal

³⁰ Abdussyukur Abdussyukur et al., 'Learning Process for Islamic Religious Education Based on Minimum Service Standards for Education', *Tafkir: Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Education* 4, no. 3 (21 August 2023): 458–72, <https://doi.org/10.31538/tijie.v4i3.536>; Musdalifah Alwi and Lusia Muntahana, 'The Principal's Strategy in Improving the Quality of Teacher Performance in the Learning Process in Islamic Elementary Schools', *Kharisma: Jurnal Administrasi Dan Manajemen Pendidikan* 2, no. 1 (17 April 2023): 66–78, <https://doi.org/10.59373/kharisma.v2i1.18>.

³¹ Ashdaq Fillah Fr, Erny Roesminingsih, and Meini Sondang Sumbawati, 'The Leadership of School Principal in The Education Era 4.0', *Nidhomul Haq: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 6, no. 2 (22 July 2021): 244–50, <https://doi.org/10.31538/ndh.v6i2.1413>.

³² Renni Ramadhani Lubis et al., 'Development of Digital-Based Smart Card Learning Media to Improve the Learning Outcomes of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Students', *MUDARRISA: Jurnal Kajian Pendidikan Islam* 15, no. 1 (2 June 2023): 1–24, <https://doi.org/10.18326/mdr.v15i1.1-24>.

³³ Siti Aisyah et al., 'Kiai Leadership Concept in The Scope of Pesantren Organizational Culture', *Tafkir: Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Education* 3, no. 1 (2022): 40–59, <https://doi.org/10.31538/tijie.v3i1.106>; Muhammad Turhan Yani et al., 'Advancing the Discourse of Muslim Politics in Indonesia: A Study on Political Orientation of Kiai as Religious Elites in Nahdlatul Ulama', *Helikon* 8, no. 12 (1 December 2022): e12218, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.helikon.2022.e12218>; Nurawati, Panjaitan, and Amri, 'Measurement of the Parenting Style of the Character of Millennial Students at State Islamic Higher Educational Institutions'.

³⁴ Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi Tentang Pandangan Hidup Kyai* (Lp3es, 1982).

³⁵ Muhaemin Latif and Erwin Hafid, 'Multicultural Attitudes in an Islamic Boarding School of South Sulawesi – Indonesia', ed. Luis Tinoca, *Cogent Education* 8, no. 1 (1 January 2021): 1968736, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2021.1968736>.

education have driven the entire MAU Amanatul Ummah academic community to continue to innovate and pursue excellence. This Kiai also confirms Horikoshi's thesis that kiai are not just religious leaders but also agents of social change that can bring societal progress.³⁶

On the other hand, kiai leadership that is too dominant also has the potential to create dependency and prevent the emergence of alternative leadership.³⁷ As the results of Hariyadi's research, pesantren needs to develop collective and participatory leadership to ensure the sustainability and stability of the institution in the long term.³⁸ In this context, MAU Amanatul Ummah needs to continue to encourage the emergence of the next generation who can continue the vision and mission of the pesantren while remaining grounded in the noble values that characterize it.

Overall, this research makes an important contribution to the development of Islamic education discourse in Indonesia, especially in the context of pesantren-based education. The findings of this study strengthen the argument that pesantren have great potential to become superior and competitive Islamic education institutions, provided that they can transform and innovate comprehensively and integratively. However, at the same time, pesantren also need to maintain their identity as educational institutions that uphold the values of spirituality, morality, and independence.

However, this research also has limitations. First, this research only focuses on one case, namely MAU Amanatul Ummah, so the findings of this research cannot necessarily be generalized to a broader context. Second, this research emphasizes institutional and managerial aspects, so other elements, such as sociocultural dynamics and interactions between actors within institutions, have yet to be explored in depth. This limitation also opens up opportunities for further research that can deepen and broaden the focus of the study. The success of MAU Amanatul Ummah cannot be separated from the visionary and transformative leadership of the Kiai, as well as the commitment of the entire academic community to continue to innovate and pursue excellence. Even though it still faces several challenges, the experience of MAU Amanatul Ummah can be an inspiration and reference for the development of Islamic education in Indonesia, especially in the context of Islamic boarding school-based education.

Developing superior Islamic education requires commitment and cooperation from all parties, including educational institution managers, government, and society.³⁹ With firm commitment and collaboration, it is hoped that Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia can continue to improve their quality and competitiveness so that they can produce a generation of superior Muslims who have character and are ready to face the challenges of the times. Islamic education is a transfer of knowledge and skills and a vehicle for character

³⁶ Hiroko Horikoshi, 'Kiai and Social Change', *Jakarta. P3M*, 1987.

³⁷ Zainal Arifin, 'Authority of Spiritual Leadership at Pesantren Temboro Based on Jamaah Tabligh Ideology', *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 6, no. 2 (27 December 2017): 265–92, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpi.2017.62.265-292>; Miriam D. Ezzani et al., 'Islamic School Leadership and Social Justice: An International Review of the Literature', *International Journal of Leadership in Education* 0, no. 0 (2 December 2021): 1–33, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2021.2009037>.

³⁸ Sa'dullah Assa'idi, 'The Growth of Pesantren in Indonesia as the Islamic Venue and Social Class Status of Santri', *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 2021, <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1300132>.

³⁹ Umi Nurkhasanah et al., 'Madrasa Principal's Strategy in Improving the Quality of the Pandemic Era Learning Process at Madrasah Aliyah', *Dirasab: International Journal of Islamic Studies* 1, no. 1 (18 June 2023): 48–56.

formation and noble morals.⁴⁰ Therefore, the development of Islamic education must be carried out holistically and integratively, considering the balance between intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and social aspects. Thus, the development of superior Islamic education is not only about how to create modern and competitive educational institutions but also about how to maintain and strengthen the identity of Islamic education as an instrument for the formation of people who are faithful, devout, knowledgeable, and noble people. This innovation is a big challenge and responsibility that must be undertaken by all parties caring about the progress of Islamic education in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

The excellent Islamic education development strategy carried out by Madrasah Aliyah Unggulan Amanatul Ummah (MAU Amanatul Ummah) Mojokerto is a comprehensive and integrative effort that includes institutional strengthening, improving the quality of human resources, developing a holistic curriculum, varying learning programs, implementing a complete evaluation system, and strengthening networks and partnerships. This strategy is based on a strong vision to realize superior, intact, and noble Islamic education, as well as a commitment to integrate the values and traditions of pesantren with the demands of modernity and globalization. The success of MAU Amanatul Ummah in developing superior Islamic education is inseparable from the visionary and transformative leadership of the Kiai, as well as the dedication of the entire academic community to continue to innovate and pursue excellence.

Overall, this research contributes to developing Islamic education discourse and practice in Indonesia, especially in pesantren-based education. The findings and analysis in this study can be material for reflection and discussion for managers of Islamic education institutions, policymakers, academics, and society in general to develop superior, holistic, and competitive Islamic education.

Although this study has attempted to conduct an in-depth and comprehensive analysis, it also has several limitations. First, the research focuses on only one case, MAU Amanatul Ummah, so the findings may need to be more generalizable to a wider context. Second, the study emphasizes institutional and managerial aspects so that socio-cultural aspects, interactions between actors, and the impact of education on society have yet to be explored in depth. Third, the research was conducted in a limited period, so it may need to capture the dynamics and long-term changes in the development of Islamic education. This limitation opens up opportunities for further research that can deepen, expand, or criticize the perspectives used in this study.

⁴⁰ Sigit Handoko and Syahria Anggita Sakti, 'Optimizing Classroom and Activity-Based Character Education: A Comprehensive Guide to Best Practices and Implementation Strategies in Early Childhood Education', *Golden Age: Jurnal Ilmiah Tumbuh Kembang Anak Usia Dini* 8, no. 2 (30 June 2023): 79–88, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jga.2023.82-03>.

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