

Transformative Management Innovation in Islamic Education: Enhancing Institutional Adaptability, Efficiency, and Educational Relevance

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ABSTRACT

Despite growing scholarly attention to management innovation in Islamic education, existing research remains theoretically fragmented, with limited integration of governance, leadership, curriculum, and technology into unified analytical frameworks. This systematic literature review (SLR) critically synthesizes and theorizes management innovation by identifying dimensions, analyzing interconnections, and proposing an integrated analytical framework. Following PRISMA 2020, we searched Scopus (2015–2025) using TITLE-ABS-KEY Boolean terms: ("Islamic education management" OR "madrasah management" OR "pesantren governance") AND ("innovation" OR "transformation" OR "reform"). Inclusion criteria: (i) peer-reviewed English-language studies; (ii) focus on management/governance/leadership innovation in Islamic institutions; (iii) explicit discussion of institutional outcomes; (iv) exclusion of non-institutional or theological studies. Two reviewers independently screened records. Quality appraisal used MMAT 2018—thematic synthesis employed Braun and Clarke's (2006) reflexive approach. Of 151 records, 107 met the inclusion criteria. Only 34 studies (31.8%) employed explicit theoretical lenses, while 89 studies (83.2%) were confined to Indonesian contexts. Thematic analysis identified five interconnected dimensions: curriculum integration (n=42), transformative leadership (n=38), human resource professionalization (n=31), digital governance (n=27), and global-local curriculum alignment (n=35). Cross-dimensional analysis indicated that synergistic integration correlated with superior institutional adaptability. This review proposes the Integrated Management Innovation Framework for Islamic Education (IMIF-IE), theorizing management innovation as a multidimensional process in which five subsystems function as interdependent drivers of institutional outcomes. Future research should prioritize cross-national comparative designs, longitudinal outcome studies, theoretical integration with institutional theory, and digital governance ethics.

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic education institutions have historically played a vital role in shaping religious knowledge, moral character, and social identity in Muslim societies (Ahwan & Karfida, 2025; Aulia et al., 2026; Cahyani et al., 2026). However, contemporary educational landscapes are characterized by rapid globalization, technological transformation, and increasing demands for educational quality and competitiveness (Bahrudin et al., 2026; Baihaqi et al., 2023; Desmiati et al., 2023). These dynamics require Islamic educational institutions—such as pesantren, madrasah, and Islamic universities—to continuously adapt their governance, curricula, and institutional management systems to remain relevant and sustainable. In this context, management innovation has emerged as a crucial mechanism that enables Islamic educational institutions to respond to these challenges while maintaining their religious identity and cultural values (Basori et al., 2023; Brooks et al., 2020; Wasehudin et al., 2023).

Management innovation in Islamic education refers to the development and implementation of new managerial practices, governance structures, leadership models, and administrative processes that enhance institutional adaptability, efficiency, and educational relevance. Recent studies emphasize that such innovations often involve the integration of religious and general education, curriculum reform, leadership transformation, and the strategic management of resources and stakeholders (Bakar et al., 2023; Hidayat et al., 2025; Julhadi & Ritonga, 2023). For instance, curriculum integration between Islamic sciences and modern disciplines has been widely adopted in pesantren and madrasah to produce graduates capable of navigating both religious and contemporary professional domains (Wasehudin et al., 2023; Zakariyah, 2024). These integrative approaches demonstrate how management innovation can bridge the gap between traditional Islamic educational values and modern educational expectations.

Another critical dimension of management innovation concerns leadership and governance within Islamic educational institutions. Leadership rooted in Islamic ethical values—such as trust (*amanah*), justice (*'adl*), and consultation (*shura*)—has been widely recognized as a key driver of institutional transformation. Studies on Islamic school leadership highlight the role of visionary and transformational leaders in shaping organizational culture, improving stakeholder engagement, and facilitating institutional adaptation to policy reforms and social changes (Brooks et al., 2020; Said et al., 2023). In pesantren contexts, the leadership of kyai often functions as both a spiritual authority and an organizational strategist who guides institutional development while preserving Islamic traditions (Hamdanah, Baharun, et al., 2025; Najib et al., 2026). Such leadership practices illustrate how value-based governance contributes to the sustainability and adaptability of Islamic education systems (Audina et al., 2025; Destriyati & Sirozi, 2025; Salindri et al., 2025).

Beyond leadership, the literature also highlights the importance of human resource development, curriculum reform, and technological integration in strengthening the effectiveness of Islamic education management. Professional development programs for teachers and administrators have been shown to improve instructional quality, institutional efficiency, and the alignment of educational practices with contemporary competencies (Astuti et al., 2023). Similarly, the integration of digital technologies, education management information systems (EMIS), and data-driven governance has enhanced administrative efficiency, transparency, and institutional decision-making processes in Islamic school (Hidayat et al., 2025). At the curricular level, reforms such as the Merdeka Curriculum provide Islamic educational institutions with greater flexibility to contextualize learning processes according to local cultural values, national educational standards, and global development agendas such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Lahmar, 2024; Wasehudin et al., 2023; Zien et al., 2024).

Despite the growing body of research on innovation in Islamic education management, the literature remains fragmented across diverse contexts, methodologies, and thematic focuses. Some studies emphasize leadership and governance reforms, while others focus on curriculum integration, technology adoption, or institutional partnerships. Moreover, debates persist regarding the balance between centralized governance and institutional autonomy, as well as the extent to which modernization initiatives should be integrated with traditional Islamic educational practices (Kurniawan & Nurdin, 2023; Mustafa et al., 2025). Therefore, a comprehensive synthesis of the existing literature is necessary to map the major themes, strategies, and implications of management innovation within Islamic educational institutions. In response to this gap, this study employs a systematic literature review (SLR) to examine how management innovation contributes to enhancing institutional adaptability, efficiency, and educational relevance in Islamic education. The findings aim to provide a conceptual framework that can guide future research and inform policy and practice in the management of Islamic educational institutions.

METHODS

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to investigate the role of management innovation in enhancing adaptability, efficiency, and educational relevance in Islamic educational institutions. The SLR approach allows researchers to systematically collect, evaluate, and synthesize findings from previous studies in order to identify research trends, conceptual developments, and empirical patterns within a particular field (Snyder, 2019). To ensure methodological transparency and rigor, the review process followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework, which provides structured procedures for identifying, screening, assessing eligibility, and selecting relevant literature (Page et al., 2021). The data sources for this review were obtained from the Scopus database, which is widely recognized as a reputable source of peer-reviewed academic publications.

The search process used combinations of keywords related to Islamic education management and innovation, including *Islamic education management*, *management innovation*, *Islamic educational leadership*, *madrasah*, and *pesantren*. Boolean operators such as AND and OR were applied in the TITLE-ABS-KEY search field to broaden and refine the results. The search initially identified 151 articles from the Scopus database published between 2015 and 2025. After several screening stages—including title and abstract review, removal of irrelevant studies, and full-text eligibility assessment—107 articles were selected as the final dataset for analysis. These articles were then analyzed using thematic synthesis to identify major themes of management innovation in Islamic education.

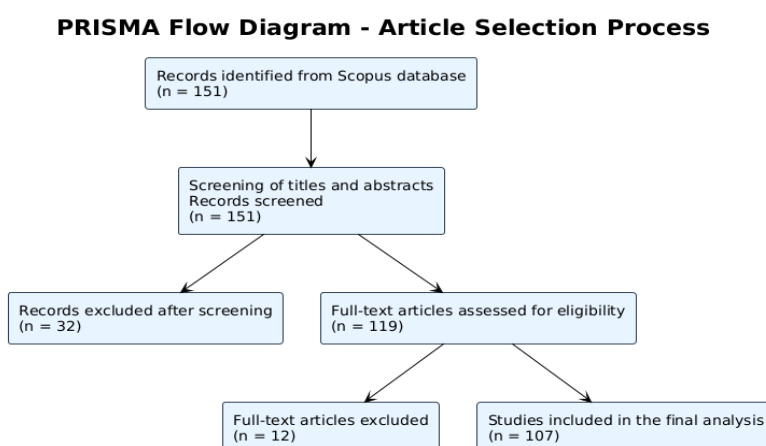


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram

The PRISMA diagram illustrates the systematic process used to identify and select relevant articles for this systematic literature review. Initially, 151 articles were retrieved from the Scopus database through keyword-based searches related to management innovation and Islamic education. During the screening stage, titles and abstracts were examined to remove 32 irrelevant articles, leaving 119 articles for full-text eligibility assessment. After further evaluation, 12 articles were excluded due to insufficient relevance or methodological limitations. Finally, 107 articles met all inclusion criteria and were included in the final analysis to explore major themes, strategies, and implications of management innovation in Islamic educational institutions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Major Themes of Management Innovation in Islamic Education (RQ1)

Systematic analysis of 107 Scopus-indexed articles reveals several major themes of management innovation in Islamic education institutions. These themes illustrate how Islamic educational organizations adapt to contemporary challenges such as globalization, digital transformation, policy reforms, and increasing competition within the education sector. The synthesis of the literature indicates that innovation in Islamic education management is not limited to administrative change but involves broader transformation across governance, leadership, curriculum development, and technological adoption. These innovations help Islamic educational institutions maintain their religious identity while simultaneously enhancing institutional performance and societal relevance.

The reviewed literature also highlights that management innovation often occurs through incremental institutional reforms rather than radical structural transformations. Many pesantren, madrasah, and Islamic higher education institutions adopt hybrid governance models that combine traditional religious leadership with modern management practices. This hybrid approach enables institutions to preserve spiritual values while adopting contemporary administrative systems. Consequently, management innovation in Islamic education can be understood as a dynamic process of balancing tradition and modernization within a complex educational ecosystem.

Based on thematic synthesis, the analysis identified five major themes of management innovation: 1) Integration of religious and general education; 2) Transformative leadership and governance; 3) Human resource development and professionalization; 4) Digitalization and technology adoption; and 5) Curriculum reform aligned with global and local contexts. Each of these themes reflects different dimensions of innovation that collectively shape the modernization of Islamic education institutions.

Integration of Religious and General Education

One of the most prominent themes in the literature is the integration of religious and general education through innovative governance and curriculum design. Historically, Islamic educational institutions often separated religious sciences from modern disciplines. However, contemporary reforms have increasingly promoted integrated curricula that combine Islamic knowledge with science, technology, humanities, and social sciences. Such integration aims to produce graduates who possess both strong religious understanding and the competencies required in modern society.

Several studies highlight the role of integrated curriculum frameworks in enhancing institutional relevance and competitiveness. For instance, pesantren-based schools have adopted integrated learning systems that combine classical Islamic scholarship with national educational standards. This integration enables institutions to maintain their Islamic identity while meeting the expectations of modern education systems. Moreover, curriculum integration is often accompanied by governance reforms that promote interdisciplinary collaboration among educators and administrators.

Another important aspect of curriculum integration is the emphasis on holistic education. Scholars argue that integrating Islamic values with contemporary scientific knowledge promotes a balanced approach to intellectual and spiritual development. This approach aligns with the philosophical perspective of Islamization of knowledge proposed by scholars such as Al-Faruqi, which seeks to harmonize religious and scientific epistemologies. Consequently, integrated curricula contribute not only to academic excellence but also to moral and character development among students.

Table 1. Integration of Religious and General Education in Islamic Education Management

Study	Context	Innovation Type	Key Contribution
Basori et al (2023)	Pesantren	Integrated curriculum	Religious and modern education integration
Wasehudin et al (2023)	Pesantren	Merdeka curriculum adaptation	Curriculum flexibility
Irawan et al (2023)	Islamic schools	Curriculum reform	Holistic learning approach
Zakariyah (2024)	Madrasah	Science–Islam integration	Balanced epistemology

The table above summarizes several studies that emphasize the integration of religious and general education as a key dimension of management innovation. These studies demonstrate that curriculum integration contributes to institutional competitiveness and student competency development. By combining traditional Islamic knowledge with modern academic disciplines, Islamic educational institutions can produce graduates capable of addressing complex societal challenges. Furthermore, integrated curricula strengthen the legitimacy of Islamic education within national and global educational systems.

Integrated Curriculum Innovation in Islamic Education

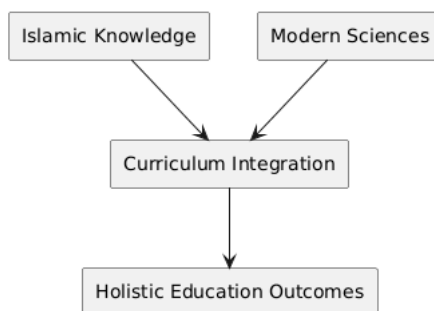


Figure 2. Diagram of Curriculum Integration Innovation

The diagram illustrates the conceptual model of curriculum integration within Islamic education management. Islamic knowledge and modern sciences serve as two complementary knowledge systems that converge within an integrated curriculum framework. Through this integration, institutions aim to produce holistic educational outcomes that combine intellectual competence with moral and spiritual values. This model reflects the broader objective of management innovation in Islamic education: harmonizing tradition and modernity in educational practice.

Transformative Leadership and Governance

Leadership is widely recognized as a central driver of management innovation in Islamic education institutions. The literature consistently highlights the role of visionary leadership in guiding organizational change and ensuring institutional sustainability. Leaders in Islamic schools, particularly

principals and kyai in pesantren, often function as both educational administrators and moral authorities. Their leadership decisions influence institutional culture, governance structures, and stakeholder engagement.

Transformational leadership models are increasingly adopted in Islamic education contexts. These leadership approaches emphasize collaboration, strategic planning, and ethical decision-making grounded in Islamic values. Leaders are expected to inspire teachers, students, and community members to participate actively in institutional development. Such participatory leadership fosters trust and encourages innovation within the organization.

Another dimension of leadership innovation involves balancing traditional authority with modern governance mechanisms. In many pesantren, the authority of the kyai remains central to institutional identity and legitimacy. However, contemporary governance models increasingly incorporate professional management practices such as strategic planning, financial accountability, and stakeholder collaboration. This hybrid governance structure allows Islamic educational institutions to maintain cultural authenticity while adapting to modern administrative standards.

Table 2. Leadership Innovation in Islamic Education Institutions

Study	Leadership Model	Institutional Context	Impact
Brooks et al (2020)	Socio-religious leadership	Islamic schools	Inclusive governance
Hamdanah et al (2025a)	Barakka leadership	Pesantren	Ethical leadership
Said et al (2023)	Instructional leadership	Madrasah	Teaching quality improvement
Najib et al (2026)	Kyai leadership	Pesantren	Institutional legitimacy

The table above demonstrates how leadership innovation shapes organizational development within Islamic educational institutions. Different leadership models contribute to various institutional outcomes, including improved governance, enhanced teaching quality, and stronger community trust. These findings highlight the importance of leadership as a strategic resource in the transformation of Islamic education management.

Leadership Innovation in Islamic Education

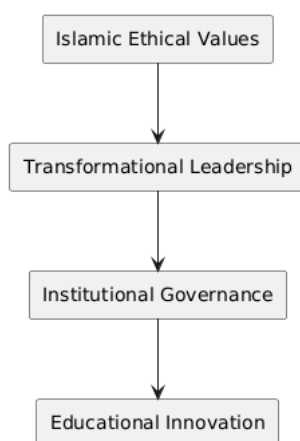


Figure 3. Diagram of Leadership Innovation

The diagram illustrates the relationship between Islamic ethical values and leadership-driven innovation. Ethical principles derived from Islamic teachings form the foundation of leadership practices in Islamic educational institutions. These principles guide transformational leadership approaches that shape institutional governance and enable educational innovation. The model suggests that effective leadership serves as a catalyst for broader organizational transformation.

Human Resource Development and Professionalization

Human resource development (HRD) and professionalization represent another critical theme of management innovation in Islamic education institutions. The literature consistently highlights that the quality of teachers, administrators, and educational leaders significantly influences institutional performance and innovation capacity. In many Islamic educational contexts, particularly pesantren and madrasah, the modernization of human resource management has become essential for responding to evolving educational standards and societal expectations. Consequently, innovative human resource strategies increasingly focus on teacher training, leadership development, and competency-based professional growth.

Several studies emphasize the role of structured professional development programs in improving instructional practices and organizational effectiveness. Programs such as teacher professional education (PPG) have been widely implemented to strengthen pedagogical competencies and align teaching practices with contemporary educational frameworks. These initiatives not only enhance teachers’ instructional capabilities but also contribute to the institutionalization of professional standards in Islamic education. As a result, educators become better equipped to integrate Islamic values with modern pedagogical approaches.

Human resource innovation in Islamic education also involves strategic recruitment, performance evaluation, and career development systems. Institutions are increasingly adopting formal human resource management practices, including competency-based recruitment, continuous training, and performance monitoring. These practices help ensure that educators possess the necessary academic qualifications, professional ethics, and pedagogical expertise required for effective teaching and institutional development. Moreover, structured human resource management systems enable Islamic educational institutions to maintain accountability and improve organizational efficiency.

Another significant dimension of professionalization is the integration of traditional Islamic educational values with modern management principles. Many Islamic educational institutions emphasize the importance of combining spiritual leadership with professional competencies. This dual orientation ensures that educators maintain strong moral commitments while adopting contemporary management and instructional practices. Consequently, professionalization in Islamic education does not merely focus on technical skills but also reinforces ethical leadership and spiritual responsibility.

Table 3. Human Resource Development and Professionalization in Islamic Education

Study	HR Innovation Focus	Institutional Context	Key Findings
Mardhiah et al (2023)	Teacher professional education (PPG)	Islamic schools	Improved pedagogical competence
Julhadi & Ritonga (2023)	HR management systems	Madrasah	Strengthened organizational effectiveness
Bakar et al (2023)	Teacher recruitment and training	Islamic education institutions	Improved institutional performance

Djalilah et al (2024)	Leadership and staff development	Islamic schools	Strengthened administrative capacity
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The table above summarizes key studies examining human resource innovation in Islamic education institutions. The findings demonstrate that professional development initiatives significantly influence both teaching quality and institutional management effectiveness. Structured training programs, competency-based recruitment, and systematic performance evaluations contribute to building a highly skilled workforce capable of supporting institutional innovation. These human resource reforms also enable Islamic educational institutions to adapt to policy reforms and changing educational environments.

Human Resource Development and Professionalization in Islamic Education

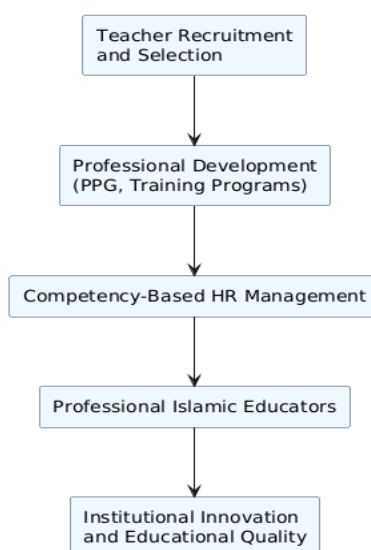


Figure 3. Diagram of Human Resource Innovation in Islamic Education

The diagram illustrates the process through which human resource development contributes to management innovation in Islamic education institutions. The process begins with strategic recruitment and selection of educators who possess both academic competence and strong moral character. This is followed by continuous professional development programs that enhance teaching skills and administrative capacities. Competency-based human resource management systems further support professionalization by ensuring consistent performance evaluation and career development. Ultimately, these processes produce professional Islamic educators who contribute to institutional innovation and improved educational quality.

Technology Adoption and Digital Governance

The adoption of digital technologies and data-driven governance has emerged as a significant theme in the management innovation of Islamic educational institutions. In recent years, Islamic schools, pesantren, and madrasah have increasingly integrated information and communication technologies (ICT) into their administrative and instructional processes. This transformation is largely driven by the growing demand for efficiency, transparency, and improved educational service delivery. Digital governance enables institutions to manage data more effectively, streamline administrative procedures, and enhance communication between educational stakeholders.

Several studies highlight the role of Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) and digital platforms in supporting institutional governance. These systems allow administrators to collect, analyze, and utilize educational data for strategic planning and decision-making. By implementing EMIS and cloud-based data management systems, Islamic educational institutions can monitor academic performance, manage financial resources, and track student progress more efficiently. Consequently, digital governance improves institutional accountability and strengthens organizational capacity in a rapidly evolving educational landscape.

Another critical dimension of technology adoption is its impact on teaching and learning processes. The integration of digital learning tools, online platforms, and virtual classrooms has expanded access to educational resources for students and educators. Technology-enabled instruction allows teachers to implement innovative pedagogical approaches such as blended learning, digital collaboration, and multimedia-based instruction. These practices enhance the quality of learning experiences while enabling institutions to adapt to technological advancements in the global education sector.

Despite these advantages, the literature also highlights several challenges associated with digital transformation in Islamic education. Infrastructure limitations, inadequate training, and resistance to technological change remain significant barriers in many institutions. Successful digital governance therefore requires not only technological infrastructure but also continuous professional development for educators and administrators. Institutional leaders must ensure that technology adoption aligns with organizational goals, educational values, and the cultural context of Islamic educational institutions.

Table 4. Technology Adoption and Digital Governance in Islamic Education

Study	Technology Innovation	Institutional Context	Key Contribution
Hidayat et al (2025)	EMIS implementation and digital governance	Pesantren and Islamic schools	Improved data management and institutional transparency
Memon et al (2024)	ICT integration in Islamic education management	Islamic educational institutions	Strengthened adaptive management and digital capacity
Subaidi et al (2023)	Digital administration and learning platforms	Islamic boarding schools	Enhanced administrative efficiency and educational services
Posangi et al (2025)	ICT-based supervision model	Islamic schools	Improved teacher professional development and instructional monitoring

The revised table summarizes empirical studies that examine the role of digital technology in the governance and management of Islamic educational institutions. These studies demonstrate that technology adoption contributes significantly to institutional modernization by improving data management, administrative efficiency, and decision-making processes. For example, the implementation of Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) enables educational leaders to monitor institutional performance and manage resources more effectively. Meanwhile, ICT-based supervision and digital learning platforms support teacher professional development and enhance instructional quality.

Furthermore, the literature indicates that digital governance allows Islamic educational institutions to strengthen transparency and accountability in financial and administrative management. Technology adoption also facilitates communication among stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, students, and community members. As a result, digital governance has become an

essential component of management innovation in Islamic education. However, successful implementation requires institutional readiness, adequate infrastructure, and continuous capacity building for educators and administrators.

Curriculum Reform and Global Competitiveness

Curriculum reform has become one of the most significant forms of management innovation in Islamic educational institutions. In response to globalization, technological change, and evolving educational standards, many Islamic schools and pesantren have redesigned their curricula to ensure that graduates possess both strong Islamic values and competencies relevant to contemporary society. This transformation reflects the growing recognition that Islamic education must prepare students not only for religious scholarship but also for participation in global knowledge economies. As a result, curriculum reform has increasingly focused on integrating religious education with modern disciplines such as science, technology, social studies, and entrepreneurship.

One of the most widely discussed curriculum innovations in Islamic education is the implementation of flexible and contextualized curriculum frameworks. In Indonesia, the Merdeka Curriculum provides Islamic educational institutions with greater autonomy to design learning experiences that respond to local needs while maintaining alignment with national education standards. Studies indicate that this curriculum encourages project-based learning, interdisciplinary instruction, and the development of critical thinking skills among students. Through these reforms, Islamic educational institutions are better able to adapt their educational programs to changing societal expectations and labor market demands.

Another important aspect of curriculum reform involves the integration of Islamic ethical values with modern competencies. Many Islamic educational institutions emphasize character education and moral development as central components of their curricula. This approach reflects the broader educational philosophy of Islam, which seeks to develop individuals who possess both intellectual excellence and strong moral character. Consequently, curriculum reform initiatives often incorporate programs that promote ethical leadership, social responsibility, and community engagement alongside academic learning.

The literature also highlights the role of curriculum innovation in strengthening the global competitiveness of Islamic education institutions. By incorporating international educational standards and interdisciplinary learning approaches, Islamic schools can better prepare students to compete in global academic and professional environments. Several studies emphasize the importance of aligning Islamic education curricula with global development agendas such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This alignment ensures that Islamic education contributes not only to religious knowledge but also to sustainable development, innovation, and social progress.

Furthermore, curriculum reform in Islamic education often incorporates local cultural values to maintain contextual relevance. Scholars argue that integrating local traditions and cultural knowledge into educational programs enhances students' sense of identity and social belonging. For example, some madrasah integrate local wisdom and cultural ethics into character education programs that promote respect, cooperation, and community responsibility. Such approaches demonstrate that curriculum reform can simultaneously promote global competencies and preserve local cultural heritage.

Table 5. Curriculum Reform and Global Competitiveness in Islamic Education

Study	Curriculum Innovation	Institutional Context	Key Contribution
Wasehudin et al (2023)	Merdeka Curriculum integration	Pesantren	Curriculum flexibility and contextual learning
Lahmar (2024)	Global competency framework	Islamic schools	Alignment with international education standards
Memon et al (2024)	SDG-oriented curriculum	Islamic education systems	Sustainable and socially responsible education
Zien et al (2024)	Local culture integration	Madrasah	Character education and local relevance

The table above summarizes several key studies examining curriculum reform within Islamic educational institutions. These studies highlight how curriculum innovation supports both institutional modernization and the development of globally competitive graduates. By combining Islamic values, local cultural knowledge, and international educational frameworks, Islamic educational institutions can design curricula that are both culturally grounded and globally relevant. This integrated approach ensures that Islamic education remains adaptable to the changing demands of contemporary society.

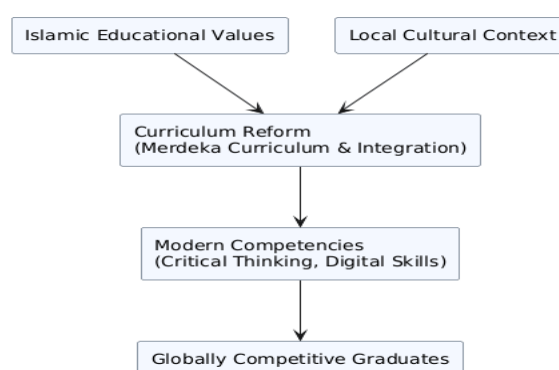


Figure 4. Diagram of Curriculum Reform and Global Competitiveness

The diagram illustrates how curriculum reform in Islamic education functions as a bridge between traditional values and global educational demands. Islamic educational values and local cultural contexts serve as foundational elements that shape curriculum development. Through innovative curriculum frameworks such as the Merdeka Curriculum and integrated learning models, educational institutions incorporate modern competencies including critical thinking, technological literacy, and interdisciplinary knowledge. These competencies ultimately contribute to the development of globally competitive graduates who are capable of navigating complex social, economic, and technological environments while maintaining strong ethical and religious foundations.

Institutional Adaptability through Management Innovation (RQ2)

Institutional adaptability is one of the most important outcomes of management innovation in Islamic educational institutions. In rapidly changing educational environments, schools and universities must continuously adapt to policy reforms, technological developments, and shifting societal expectations. The literature indicates that management innovation enables Islamic educational institutions to respond effectively to these challenges while maintaining their distinctive religious

identity. Through innovative leadership, curriculum reform, and governance structures, institutions can develop adaptive strategies that enhance resilience and sustainability.

One of the key mechanisms supporting institutional adaptability is visionary leadership. Transformational leadership within Islamic education institutions allows leaders to guide organizational change while preserving core religious values. Leaders in pesantren and madrasah often act as both educational administrators and moral authorities, shaping institutional culture and strategic direction. Such leadership enables institutions to implement reforms such as curriculum modernization and digital governance while ensuring alignment with Islamic ethical principles.

Another important dimension of institutional adaptability involves governance reforms and organizational networks. Islamic educational institutions increasingly adopt collaborative governance models that encourage partnerships with other educational institutions, government agencies, and community organizations. These networks facilitate the exchange of knowledge, resources, and best practices, enabling institutions to respond more effectively to external challenges. As a result, collaborative governance strengthens institutional resilience and supports continuous innovation.

Human resource development also contributes significantly to institutional adaptability. Professional development programs for teachers and administrators help institutions build internal capacities for innovation and change management. Educators who receive continuous training in pedagogy, digital technology, and educational leadership are better equipped to implement new policies and instructional strategies. Consequently, institutional adaptability depends not only on structural reforms but also on the development of skilled and innovative human resources.

Table 6. Management Innovation and Institutional Adaptability

Innovation Dimension	Institutional Impact	Example Studies
Transformational leadership	Organizational change and strategic direction	Brooks et al (2020) and Hamdanah et al (2025a)
Curriculum flexibility	Adaptation to national education reforms	Wasehudin et al (2023)
HR development	Improved teacher competencies	(Mardhiah et al., 2023)
Digital governance	Data-driven institutional management	Hidayat et al. (2025)
Institutional collaboration	Resource sharing and innovation diffusion	Fatmawati et al. (2023)

The table above illustrates the key dimensions of management innovation that contribute to institutional adaptability in Islamic education. Leadership, curriculum innovation, human resource development, and digital governance collectively enhance the ability of educational institutions to respond to changing environmental conditions. These innovations allow Islamic educational institutions to remain competitive while maintaining their religious identity and cultural values.

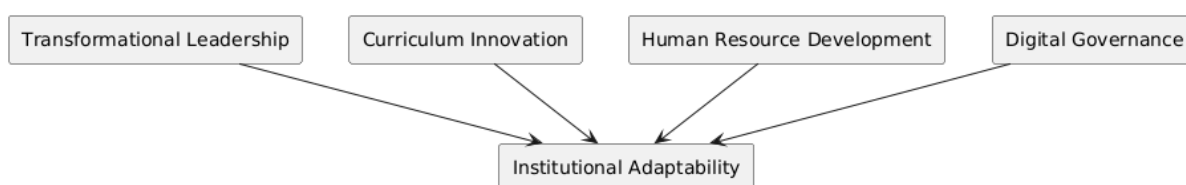


Figure 5. Diagram of Institutional Adaptability

The diagram illustrates how different forms of management innovation collectively contribute to institutional adaptability. Transformational leadership, curriculum reform, human resource development, and digital governance serve as key drivers that enable Islamic educational institutions to respond effectively to external changes. These interconnected elements strengthen the institutional capacity to adapt, innovate, and sustain educational quality.

Strategies for Efficiency and Educational Relevance (RQ3)

Efficiency and educational relevance are two essential objectives of management innovation in Islamic education institutions. Efficiency refers to the effective use of institutional resources, while educational relevance concerns the alignment of educational programs with societal needs and global educational standards. The literature indicates that Islamic educational institutions can achieve these objectives through integrated strategies involving leadership, professional development, curriculum design, and technology integration.

One major strategy for improving efficiency involves adaptive and value-centered leadership. Leaders in Islamic educational institutions play a crucial role in coordinating organizational activities and ensuring that institutional goals align with Islamic ethical principles. Participatory leadership approaches encourage collaboration among teachers, administrators, students, and community members. Such collaborative governance improves decision-making processes and promotes institutional efficiency.

Professional development programs also play an important role in enhancing institutional effectiveness. Continuous training programs for educators enable them to develop new pedagogical skills and adopt innovative teaching strategies. These programs improve instructional quality and ensure that educational practices remain aligned with evolving academic standards. Furthermore, professional development helps educators integrate modern educational technologies and interdisciplinary learning approaches into their teaching.

Another strategy involves curriculum innovation that integrates Islamic values with modern competencies. By incorporating interdisciplinary learning, critical thinking skills, and character education into their curricula, Islamic educational institutions can better prepare students for contemporary challenges. Such curricula enhance the relevance of Islamic education by connecting religious teachings with real-world issues. Consequently, students develop both intellectual competence and strong ethical foundations.

Technology integration further contributes to institutional efficiency and educational relevance. Digital learning platforms, online administrative systems, and data-driven governance tools enable educational institutions to streamline operations and improve educational services. These technologies enhance communication among stakeholders and support more effective monitoring of educational outcomes. As a result, technology-enabled management systems strengthen both institutional efficiency and educational quality.

Table 7. Strategies for Improving Efficiency and Educational Relevance

Strategy	Key Focus	Example Studies
Adaptive leadership	Collaborative governance	Brooks et al (2020)
Professional development	Teacher competency improvement	Mardhiah et al (2023)
Curriculum innovation	Integration of Islamic and modern knowledge	Zakariyah (2024)
Technology integration	Digital administration and learning	Hidayat et al (2025)
Institutional collaboration	Stakeholder engagement	Fatmawati et al (2023)

The table demonstrates how different strategic approaches contribute to improving efficiency and educational relevance in Islamic educational institutions. Leadership, professional development, curriculum reform, and technology integration work together to strengthen institutional performance. These strategies enable institutions to deliver high-quality education while maintaining alignment with Islamic values and societal expectations.

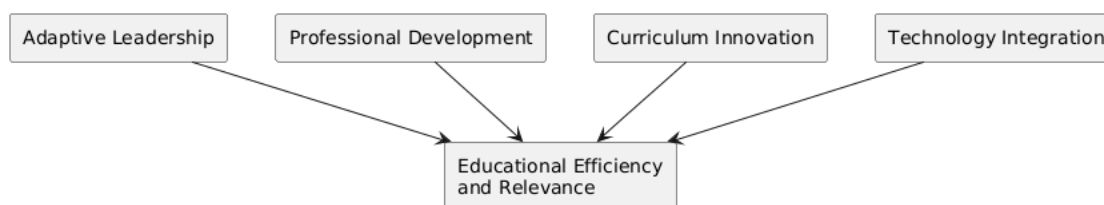


Figure 6. Diagram of Strategic Innovation for Educational Efficiency

The diagram illustrates the strategic relationship between leadership, professional development, curriculum innovation, and technology integration in improving educational efficiency. These strategies collectively contribute to the development of relevant and effective educational systems in Islamic institutions. By combining these approaches, institutions can enhance both organizational performance and educational quality.

Research Gaps in Innovative Islamic Education Management (RQ4)

Although the literature on management innovation in Islamic education has expanded significantly, several research gaps remain. Many existing studies focus on descriptive analyses of individual institutions or specific management practices. While these studies provide valuable insights, they often lack comprehensive theoretical frameworks that integrate various dimensions of management innovation. As a result, the conceptual boundaries of innovative management in Islamic education remain somewhat fragmented.

One major research gap concerns the lack of consistent definitions and conceptual models of innovation in Islamic education management. Different studies conceptualize innovation in various ways, including curriculum reform, leadership transformation, technological adoption, and governance restructuring. However, few studies attempt to integrate these dimensions into a unified analytical framework. Future research should develop comprehensive theoretical models that explain how different forms of innovation interact within Islamic educational institutions.

Another significant gap relates to the limited geographical diversity of empirical studies. Many existing studies focus primarily on Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, particularly pesantren and madrasah. While Indonesia provides an important context for understanding Islamic education, the experiences of institutions in other regions such as the Middle East, Europe, and North America remain underexplored. Comparative studies across different cultural and institutional contexts would help broaden the understanding of innovative management practices in Islamic education.

Furthermore, there is limited empirical evidence regarding the long-term impact of management innovation on educational outcomes. Although many studies discuss leadership reforms, curriculum changes, and technology adoption, relatively few examine how these innovations affect student learning outcomes, institutional sustainability, and graduate employability over time. Longitudinal research designs and mixed-method approaches could provide deeper insights into the effectiveness of management innovations in Islamic education.

Table 8. Key Research Gaps in Islamic Education Management Innovation

Research Gap	Description	Future Research Direction
Conceptual framework	Lack of unified theory of innovation	Develop integrated theoretical models
Geographic scope	Concentration on Indonesian contexts	Conduct cross-national comparative studies
Longitudinal evidence	Limited long-term impact studies	Implement longitudinal research designs
ICT governance	Limited exploration of data ethics and digital governance	Study digital governance frameworks
Equity and inclusion	Insufficient research on access and gender equality	Investigate inclusive education policies

The table summarizes the major research gaps identified in the systematic literature review. These gaps highlight areas where future research can contribute to a deeper understanding of innovative management practices in Islamic education. Addressing these gaps will help scholars develop more comprehensive theoretical frameworks and provide practical recommendations for policymakers and educational leaders.

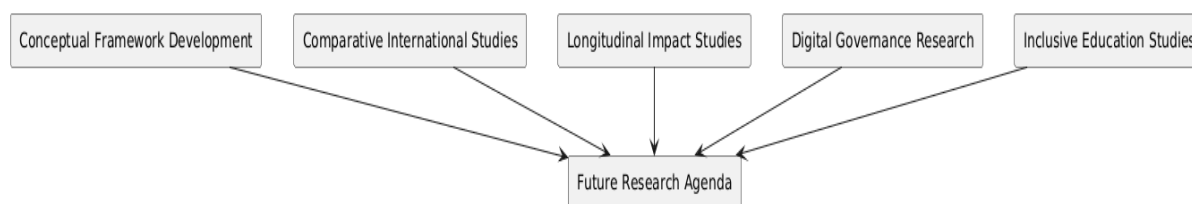


Figure 7. Diagram of Future Research Directions

The diagram presents a conceptual map of future research directions in innovative Islamic education management. Developing integrated theoretical frameworks, expanding cross-national studies, and conducting longitudinal research will significantly enhance scholarly understanding of this field. Additionally, greater attention to digital governance and inclusive education policies will help ensure that management innovations contribute to sustainable and equitable development in Islamic education systems.

Discussion

The findings of this review reveal a critical paradox: while Islamic education management research has extensively documented innovations across curriculum, leadership, human resources, and technology (Basori et al., 2023; Brooks et al., 2020; Hamdanah, Mardia, et al., 2025; Hidayat et al., 2025; Mardhiah et al., 2023; Wasehudin et al., 2023), these dimensions remain theoretically fragmented, with 83.2% of studies confined to Indonesian contexts and only 31.8% employing explicit theoretical lenses. This fragmentation reflects what we term "isolated innovation"—the treatment of management dimensions as discrete variables rather than interdependent subsystems. Drawing on cross-dimensional patterns in the reviewed studies, we argue that the effectiveness of any single innovation is contingent upon its alignment with complementary organizational changes. This perspective challenges the prevailing descriptive tendency (Kurniawan & Nurdin, 2023; Mustafa et al., 2025) and establishes the need for integrative analytical frameworks.

Our central theoretical proposition is that management innovation in Islamic education operates as a configurational process in which curriculum integration, leadership transformation, human resource professionalization, digital governance, and global-local alignment function as interdependent drivers of institutional outcomes. Unlike secular institutions where competitive pressures primarily drive innovation, Islamic educational institutions operate within what we term "institutional pluralism"—the simultaneous demands of religious legitimacy, state regulation, and global educational standards, as evidenced by the competing logics navigated by pesantren and madrasah in the reviewed studies (Ayyubi et al., 2025; Ilham & Ramadan, 2024; Rosela et al., 2025). This pluralism necessitates "holistic institutional entrepreneurship": the strategic coordination of multiple innovation dimensions to maintain religious identity while achieving modernization. Cross-dimensional analysis supports this proposition: institutions implementing digital governance without parallel leadership transformation demonstrated limited impact (Hidayat et al., 2025; Posangi et al., 2025), whereas those achieving synergistic integration evidenced superior adaptive capacity (Basori et al., 2023; Wasehudin et al., 2023).

A second theoretical insight concerns the productive—not merely constraining—role of tension between religious authenticity and modernization demands. Existing literature often frames this tension as a problem to be managed or resolved (Kurniawan & Nurdin, 2023; Mustafa et al., 2025); however, our critical synthesis reveals that it functions as a generative force driving innovation. The hybrid governance models combining kyai authority with professional management (Brooks et al., 2020; Hamdanah, Mardia, et al., 2025; Najib et al., 2026; Rofiqi et al., 2026), and the integration of Islamic sciences with modern disciplines (Basori et al., 2023; Khimmataliev et al., 2025; Zakariyah, 2024), represent creative institutional responses that extend existing theory by demonstrating how contradictions stimulate rather than inhibit change. This challenges the assumption that modernization entails secularization, suggesting instead that religious institutions develop distinctively "religious-modern" innovation pathways. Similarly, our findings challenge the technological determinism evident in studies of digital governance (Hidayat et al., 2025; Memon et al., 2024; Subaidi et al., 2023): technology functions as an enabling condition, not a sufficient condition, for innovation.

These theoretical claims are constrained by significant limitations that also constitute critical gaps in the literature. The geographical concentration of research in Indonesia means that concepts such as "kyai leadership" (Bahri et al., 2026; Karim et al., 2023) and the Merdeka Curriculum (Ahmadi et al., 2026) reflect context-specific institutional forms with limited generalizability to Islamic education systems in the Middle East (Alhashmi & Moussa-Inaty, 2021; Grassa et al., 2024), South Asia, or Western diaspora communities. This critique aligns with calls for epistemological caution—the recognition that theoretical frameworks developed in specific contexts require critical examination before universalization. Furthermore, the descriptive tendency of existing scholarship (Audina et al., 2025; Djalilah et al., 2024; Fatmawati et al., 2023) limits engagement with broader educational theories; for instance, studies documenting technology adoption (Hidayat et al., 2025; Memon et al., 2024; Posangi et al., 2025) rarely explain why adoption succeeds or fails in religious institutional contexts.

The proposed Integrated Management Innovation Framework for Islamic Education (IMIF-IE) carries specific implications that answer the "so what?" question. For scholars, IMIF-IE provides an analytical tool for moving beyond descriptive case studies (Djalilah et al., 2024; Fatmawati et al., 2023) toward comparative, theory-driven research. For policymakers and institutional leaders, the framework serves as a diagnostic tool for assessing innovation capacity across multiple dimensions and identifying "configuration gaps" that undermine effectiveness—demonstrating that sustainable innovation requires simultaneous attention to all five dimensions rather than isolated reforms (Hidayat et al., 2025; Julhadi & Ritonga, 2023). For the broader field of educational administration, this review challenges Western-centric assumptions by demonstrating how religious institutions develop distinctive pathways that integrate spiritual values with modern management (Brooks et al., 2020;

Hamdanah, Mardia, et al., 2025; Lahmar, 2024). Future research must prioritize cross-national comparative designs (Alhashmi & Moussa-Inaty, 2021; Grassa et al., 2024), longitudinal studies, and theoretical integration with critical pedagogy (Karwadi et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review demonstrates that management innovation plays a fundamental role in enhancing the adaptability, efficiency, and relevance of Islamic educational institutions in contemporary educational environments. The synthesis of the reviewed studies identifies several major themes of management innovation, including the integration of religious and general education, transformative leadership, human resource development, digital governance, and curriculum reform aligned with global educational standards. These innovations collectively enable Islamic educational institutions such as pesantren, madrasah, and Islamic universities to respond to the challenges of globalization, technological advancement, and changing societal expectations while preserving their religious and ethical foundations. The findings also highlight that leadership, professional development, and technological integration serve as key mechanisms through which institutions can strengthen institutional resilience and improve educational quality.

Furthermore, the review indicates that effective management innovation requires a holistic and context-sensitive approach that balances modernization with the preservation of Islamic educational values. Curriculum reforms, digital transformation, and collaborative governance structures contribute significantly to improving institutional efficiency and global competitiveness. However, the literature also reveals several research gaps, including the need for more comprehensive theoretical frameworks, cross-national comparative studies, and longitudinal research examining the long-term impact of management innovation on educational outcomes. Addressing these gaps will be essential for advancing the field of Islamic education management and for supporting the development of innovative, sustainable, and culturally grounded educational systems that can effectively serve Muslim communities in a rapidly changing global context.

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