

Navigating Tradition and Standardization: A Case Study of Majelis Masyayikh's Quality Assurance Framework in Traditional Pesantren

Muhammad Adib

Universitas Al-Qolam Malang, Indonesia

Email: adib@alqolam.ac.id

Abstract

This study is motivated by the increasing demands for educational quality standardization, which have significant implications for traditional Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), particularly in the implementation of the quality assurance framework established by the Majelis Masyayikh. The study aims to analyze institutional preparedness, forms of cultural and structural responses, and the initial impact of implementing the quality framework on governance and instructional practices in traditional pesantren. This research employs a qualitative approach with a case study design, utilizing in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Data were analyzed using an interactive model consisting of data condensation, data display, and verification. The findings indicate that pesantren undertake gradual adaptation through the legitimization of kiai leadership, the establishment of quality assurance teams, administrative restructuring, and the integration of formal evaluation instruments without altering the substantive curriculum based on classical Islamic texts. The responses are adaptive-integrative, combining bureaucratic rationality with the collective ethics of pesantren. This study contributes to strengthening a conceptual model of institutional hybridity in Islamic education and offers practical implications for dialogical and contextual quality policy formulation.

Article History

Received : January 2025

Revised : February 2025

Accepted : March 2026

Keywords:

Traditional Pesantren, Quality Assurance, Majelis Masyayikh, Institutional Change, Educational Standardization.

How to Cite:

Adib, M. (2026). Navigating Tradition and Standardization: A Case Study of Majelis Masyayikh's Quality Assurance Framework in Traditional Pesantren. *JIWO: Journal of Islamic Worldview*, 1 (1), 1-15

INTRODUCTION

Amid the currents of globalization and increasing demands for public accountability, educational institutions are confronted with the need to balance the preservation of tradition with the implementation of measurable quality standards (Ahsan, 2024; Paradeise & Thoenig, 2013). The central premise of this study is that the transformation of quality governance in traditional pesantren is not merely an internal institutional issue, but a broader social concern with significant societal implications. Historically, pesantren have served for centuries as centers for the transmission of Islamic knowledge, character formation, and the reproduction of socio-religious leadership (Abdurrahman, 2020). Empirical evidence shows that millions of students in Indonesia pursue their education in pesantren (Fikri & Sugiono, 2025; Romadlan et al., 2026), meaning that any shift in quality policy will affect the national education ecosystem. Furthermore, increasing social mobility and the need for formal diploma recognition (Roshan & Rahman, 2025) have compelled pesantren to engage with the national standards-based education system. Therefore, examining the quality assurance framework of the Majelis

Masyayikh is crucial to understanding how traditional institutions respond to standardization pressures without losing their epistemological and cultural identity.

The general problem underlying this research is the tension between the traditional autonomy of pesantren and state regulatory demands for educational quality standardization (Husna & Arifin, 2025). On the one hand, pesantren operate with curricula, methodologies, and scholarly authority rooted in sanad (chains of transmission) and the charismatic authority of the kiai (Ibrahim & Adam, 2025). On the other hand, the state, through various education policies, requires standardized competency benchmarks, learning evaluations, and uniform accreditation mechanisms (Spillane, 2009). This tension raises concerns about the potential erosion of traditional values when pesantren adapt to modern administrative frameworks. Society also faces a dilemma between preserving the authenticity of religious education and obtaining formal recognition that facilitates access to higher education and broader labor markets. The absence of a clear and specific quality assurance mechanism for traditional pesantren may create disparities in quality and public perceptions regarding graduate credibility. Thus, an in-depth study is required to analyze how the Majelis Masyayikh framework is designed to address these challenges.

Field phenomena reveal diverse adaptive dynamics among traditional pesantren. Some institutions welcome standardization policies as opportunities for formal legitimacy and strengthened governance. However, others adopt a cautious stance, fearing that administrative intervention may undermine the autonomy of the kitab kuning curriculum and the relational patterns between kiai and students (Firdaus & Mardiana, 2024; Sjoraida et al., 2025). The implementation of the Majelis Masyayikh quality assurance framework has introduced new practices such as written curriculum documentation, outcomes-based evaluation systems, and structured administrative reporting, which were previously not central priorities. At the same time, pesantren continue to preserve traditional learning methods such as halaqah, sorogan, and bandongan as the core pedagogical practices. This diversity of responses reflects ongoing negotiation between traditional values and standardization demands. The transformation process is therefore non-linear, characterized by compromise, resistance, and innovation. Such conditions call for academic analysis to understand institutional navigation patterns within a changing regulatory environment.

Previous studies have examined the transformation of pesantren from various perspectives. Research on Islamic education modernization highlights the integration of general and religious curricula (Chotimah & Zainul, 2021; Imamah, 2023; Pitriani et al., 2024), while other studies focus on governance and quality-based management in Islamic educational institutions (El-Yunusi et al., 2025; Husna & Arifin, 2025). Some scholars emphasize the importance of accreditation and standardization as instruments for quality improvement (Al-Worafi, 2024; Kumar et al., 2020; Woodcock et al., 2010), while others critique the bureaucratization that may reduce institutional autonomy (Flom, 2020). There are also studies on the authority of kiai and the transmission of sanad as epistemological foundations of pesantren (Ibrahim & Adam, 2025), as well as research on state policies toward religious education (Alwi et al., 2025; Sjoraida et al., 2025). However, most of these studies focus either

on modern pesantren or on macro-level policy issues, rather than on the specific quality assurance framework formulated by the Majelis Masyayikh. Moreover, existing approaches tend to be normative or descriptive, lacking in-depth analysis of implementation dynamics at the institutional level. This gap highlights the need for a comprehensive examination of the design and operationalization of quality frameworks within traditional pesantren.

Although prior research has addressed standardization issues in Islamic education, including total quality management, competency-based evaluation, and harmonization between national and local curricula (El-Yunusi et al., 2025; Lathifah et al., 2025; Malizal, 2025; Sudir et al., 2025), a significant limitation lies in the insufficient focus on institutional actors who mediate between the state and pesantren, such as the Majelis Masyayikh. Few studies explore how quality frameworks are formulated in consideration of pesantren's epistemic traditions or how pesantren respond culturally and structurally to their implementation. This gap is critical, as the success or failure of standardization depends heavily on social and theological legitimacy within the pesantren community. Without addressing this dimension, quality policies risk becoming mere administrative formalities. Therefore, this study positions itself as a synthesis of policy analysis, institutional studies, and examinations of pesantren scholarly traditions.

The novelty, or state of the art, of this research lies in its in-depth analysis of the Majelis Masyayikh quality assurance framework as a hybridization between tradition and standardization. This study does not merely describe policy provisions but also examines epistemological logic, implementation mechanisms, and adaptive strategies employed by traditional pesantren. Through a case study approach, the research explores how quality standards are translated into practice without eliminating the distinctive characteristics of pesantren. Another innovative aspect is the emphasis on symbolic and administrative negotiations among kiai authorities, pesantren administrators, and regulators. Addressing this issue is crucial, as the future of pesantren education depends on the ability to formulate contextual yet accountable quality systems. The findings are expected to provide a conceptual model for developing Islamic education policies that are sensitive to tradition while responsive to modern demands.

Based on this background, the study formulates three primary research focuses. First, how do traditional pesantren prepare institutionally to face the Majelis Masyayikh quality assurance framework? Second, what forms of cultural and structural responses emerge in response to the implementation of these standards? Third, what are the initial impacts of the quality framework on governance and instructional practices? The preliminary argument of this research is that the success of implementing the Majelis Masyayikh framework depends on the pesantren's ability to engage in selective adaptation—integrating administrative standards without sacrificing traditional scholarly authority. This study contributes by offering a conceptual understanding of how institutions navigate between tradition and standardization, as well as providing policy recommendations grounded in empirical findings. Thus, the research enriches academic literature on pesantren while offering practical foundations for strengthening quality assurance systems in Islamic education in Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative design with a case study approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of the Majelis Masyayikh quality assurance framework in a traditional pesantren (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2018). The selection of this design is based on the consideration that the issue under investigation is contextual, complex, and meaning-laden, and therefore cannot be reduced to isolated quantitative variables. A case study enables the researcher to explore processes, actor interactions, and institutional dynamics holistically within their natural setting. The research site was purposively selected at Pesantren Raudlatul Ulum 1 Malang, which has implemented or is preparing to implement the Majelis Masyayikh quality assurance framework. The selection was based on variations in institutional responses and the availability of data access. Additional considerations included the pesantren's reputation, its active involvement in formal diniyah education policies, and its representativeness of salaf (traditional) pesantren characteristics. Thus, the site was expected to reflect concretely and comprehensively the negotiation process between tradition and standardization.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews with the kiai, institutional administrators, teachers, and related stakeholders; participant observation of instructional practices and governance processes; and document analysis of curricula, quality guidelines, and internal policy archives. The collected data were analyzed using an interactive model consisting of data condensation or reduction to select and focus relevant information, data display in the form of matrices and thematic narratives to facilitate interpretation, and verification or conclusion drawing conducted gradually and continuously. The analysis process was carried out cyclically from the beginning of data collection to the final stage of the study (Miles et al., 2014). To ensure data validity, the research applied source and method triangulation, prolonged engagement in the field, member checking with key informants, and an audit trail to guarantee transparency in the research process and consistency in the interpretation of findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

Institutional Preparation of Traditional Pesantren in Responding to the Majelis Masyayikh Quality Assurance Framework

Institutional preparation in this finding refers to a series of systematic steps undertaken by traditional pesantren to adjust their structure, governance, curriculum, and administrative instruments before and during the implementation of the Majelis Masyayikh quality assurance framework. Such preparation is not merely technical—such as drafting curriculum documents and standard operating procedures—but also cultural, involving efforts to build shared understanding among the kiai, asatidz, and administrators regarding the meaning of standardization. In practice, this preparation includes the formation of an internal quality assurance team, mapping classical kitab kuning texts into learning outcomes, and providing administrative training for teachers. Thus, institutional preparation is understood as a planned

adaptation process linking pesantren traditions with formal accountability demands. This operational definition emphasizes that readiness is not simply about document completion, but about structural, cultural, and epistemological preparedness in responding to the introduced quality framework.

An interview with a kiai caretaker revealed that “we do not want quality to become merely administrative, but must preserve the spirit of talaqqi and sanad.” This statement reflects caution in responding to standardization. The informant explained that before adopting formal quality document formats, the pesantren conducted internal deliberations to ensure that core kitab materials were not reduced. The researcher interprets that institutional preparation begins with symbolic legitimization by the kiai’s authority. Acceptance of the Majelis Masyayikh framework depends heavily on its alignment with traditional values. The deliberation process serves as a normative filtering mechanism so that standardization is not perceived as an external intervention threatening pesantren identity. The data confirm that institutional readiness is top-down in terms of legitimacy, yet grounded in collective consensus as the foundation for accepting quality policy.

Another informant, serving as head of the madrasah diniyah, stated that “we began mapping the taught kitab into learning outcomes to make them understandable for assessors.” He added that teachers were mentored to prepare written evaluation instruments without abandoning the sorogan method. The researcher interprets that institutional preparation at the operational level focuses on epistemic translation—translating traditional learning systems into the language of quality standards. This reflects a strategy of selective adaptation: preserving classical methods while integrating formal evaluation tools. The head of the madrasah functions as a technocratic mediator bridging the kiai’s vision with administrative requirements. The data indicate that readiness does not occur spontaneously but through technical processes involving document restructuring, teacher training, and gradual adjustment of evaluation systems.

Observations show that the pesantren established an internal quality assurance unit consisting of senior ustaz and administrative staff. In the administrative office, curriculum documents were neatly organized, including learning outcome matrices and evaluation instruments. However, classroom learning continued in the halaqah format with direct interaction between the kiai and students. The researcher interprets this as a duality of spaces: an administrative space representing standardization demands and a pedagogical space preserving tradition. This duality is not contradictory but a strategy of coexistence. Observations also revealed internal training on completing quality forms, followed by discussions on the relevance of indicators to kitab substance. Institutional readiness is thus realized through the institutionalization of quality instruments without eliminating traditional relational learning patterns.

Overall, the data indicate that institutional preparation involves three main dimensions: normative legitimization by the kiai, technical-administrative adjustments by management, and teacher capacity strengthening. The findings reflect an integrative rather than resistant effort. The pesantren does not reject standardization but negotiates it to align with sanad and talaqqi

traditions. Institutional readiness therefore represents recontextualization rather than radical change. Adaptation is selective and controlled, maintaining epistemological identity while meeting formal accountability demands. The key to readiness lies in balancing commitment to tradition with willingness to pursue administrative innovation.

The pattern emerging from the data shows both hierarchical and collaborative relationships in preparation. Legitimization begins with the *kiai* as symbolic authority, is translated into technical policy by the madrasah head, and implemented by teachers in classroom practice. This layered adaptation model assigns specific yet interconnected roles at each level. Additionally, dual integration patterns are evident: integration of values (preserving tradition) and integration of systems (meeting quality standards). No open resistance was observed; instead, a dialogical and selective tendency prevailed. Institutional preparation thus follows constructive negotiation rather than confrontation, reinforcing the argument that successful implementation depends on synthesizing traditional authority with modern administrative rationality.

Table 1. Responses in the Form of Institutional Preparation

Informant Position	Interview Excerpt	Indicator
<i>Kiai Pengasuh</i> (Head of Pesantren)	"Quality is important, but the essence of <i>sanad</i> (lineage) and <i>talaqqi</i> (face-to-face learning) must not be lost."	Normative and cultural legitimacy
Head of <i>Madrasah</i>	"We map the <i>kitab</i> (traditional books) to learning outcomes so they align with the standards."	Translation of curriculum to standards
Senior <i>Ustaz</i>	"We are trained to develop written evaluations without abandoning <i>sorogan</i> (individual recitation)."	Adaptation of evaluation methods
Administrative Staff	"Now all learning documents are documented and neatly archived."	Institutionalization of administration

The table above demonstrates that ideal influence in institutional preparation is multidimensional and involves multiple actors with distinct functions. The *kiai* safeguards normative legitimacy, ensuring that standardization does not contradict tradition. The madrasah head acts as a policy translator, linking classical *kitab* language with learning outcome formats. Senior *ustaz* implement pedagogical adaptation, while administrative staff institutionalize documentation systems. Institutional readiness is therefore shaped by synergy between structural and cultural roles. Success depends on balancing symbolic authority with technocratic capacity: legitimacy without administrative support would be formally weak, while administration without *kiai* legitimacy would lack social acceptance. Ideal influence is achieved when tradition serves as the foundation and the quality system functions as a supporting instrument.

Cultural and Structural Responses of Pesantren to the Implementation of Majelis Masyayikh Standards

Cultural and structural responses in this finding refer to the patterns of attitudes, strategies, and organizational changes undertaken by traditional pesantren after the

implementation of quality assurance standards. Cultural responses relate to how pesantren interpret, accept, or negotiate the standards within the framework of sanad traditions and kiai authority. Structural responses involve formal changes in organizational systems, task distribution, administrative governance, and curriculum and evaluation adjustments. In practice, these responses are intertwined. Cultural response determines internal legitimacy, while structural response ensures administrative functionality. Thus, this sub-finding highlights how pesantren respond not only symbolically but also through concrete institutional adjustments observable in daily practice.

A kiai stated that “standards may be applied, but the pesantren must remain a place of tafaqquh fiddin, not merely a formal school.” This indicates efforts to maintain the epistemological orientation of the pesantren amid administrative demands. Standards are understood as tools rather than ultimate educational goals. The researcher interprets the cultural response as both protective and adaptive—protective in safeguarding identity as a sanad-based institution, and adaptive in not rejecting quality standards outright. Acceptance depends on perceived alignment with the pesantren’s scholarly mission. If standards align with this mission, they are embraced; if perceived as shifting orientation, symbolic resistance may arise. The data highlight the centrality of cultural meaning in shaping institutional response.

The head of curriculum noted that “we created a new structure to ensure each class has learning achievement reports, but teaching methods remain under the kiai’s direction.” This demonstrates a structural response involving new mechanisms to meet standards. The researcher interprets this as organizational differentiation. Previously centralized administrative functions now include specialized roles such as quality coordinators and evaluation teams. Yet pedagogical decisions remain under kiai authority, reflecting dual structures: formal-administrative and traditional-pedagogical. These are complementary rather than antagonistic. Quality standards promote governance modernization without displacing scholarly authority. Thus, structural response is accommodative, meeting regulatory demands while preserving traditional hierarchy.

Curriculum documentation reveals the addition of written components such as learning outcome formulations, evaluation indicators, and matrices aligning kitab content with graduate competency standards. Teaching materials remain classical kitab kuning, supplemented with summary sheets and written assessments. The researcher interprets this as formalization without substantive change. Adaptation occurs mainly at the level of format and documentation rather than instructional content transformation. Continuity of tradition is maintained within a new administrative framework. In other words, the response to standards is instrumental rather than substantive, ensuring that the core of classical scholarship remains intact.

The figure 1 illustrates the pesantren’s response process, beginning with the socialization of standards by administrators, followed by internal deliberation with the kiai and asatidz, the formation of a technical team, the preparation of documents, and finally classroom implementation. The initial stage is deliberative, aimed at ensuring value alignment, while the subsequent stages are technical-operational in nature. The researcher interprets this flow as

demonstrating a gradual and controlled response model. No changes are implemented instantly; each adjustment undergoes a process of legitimization and clarification of meaning. This pattern indicates that the culture of *musyawarah* (collective deliberation) functions as the primary mechanism for reducing potential conflict between tradition and standards. The implementation of standards is not the result of unilateral pressure, but of internal consensus built gradually. Thus, the response flow reflects an integration of bureaucratic rationality and the collective ethics of the *pesantren*.

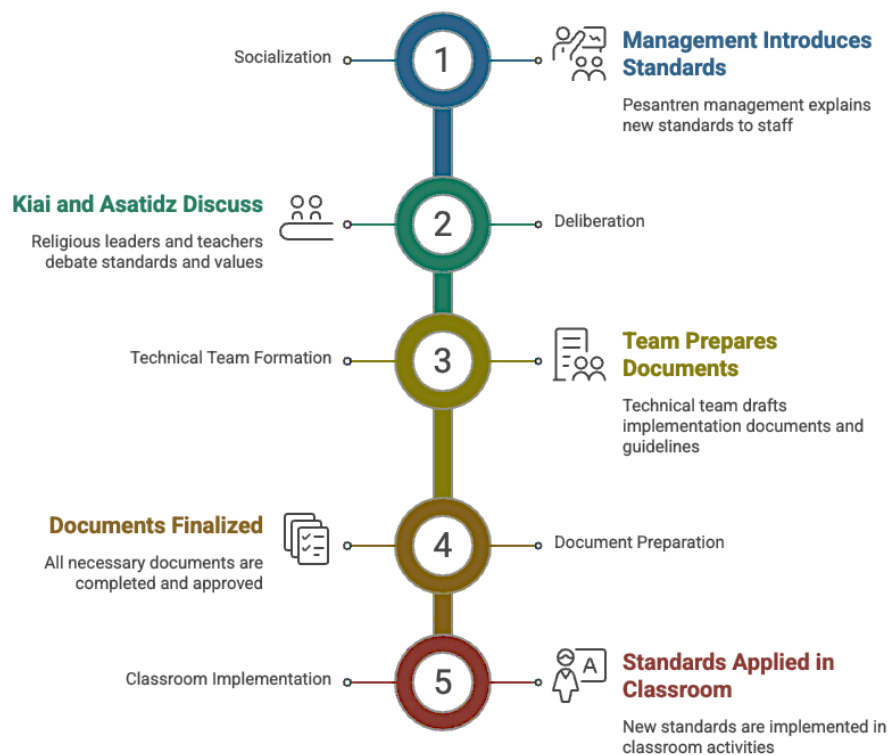


Figure 1. Pesantren Responses to the Implementation of MM Quality Standards

Classroom observations indicate that although more systematic written evaluation formats have been introduced, the *sorogan* and *halaqah* methods remain dominant. Teachers continue to provide in-depth oral explanations and directly assess students' understanding. Meanwhile, administrative offices show routine archiving of grades and reporting in accordance with standards. The researcher interprets this as a separation of space between pedagogical practice and administrative practice, yet both are complementary. Structural responses do not directly intervene in classroom dynamics but provide a documentation framework. Cultural responses, on the other hand, preserve the traditional teacher-student relationship. These findings suggest that the implementation of standards has expanded administrative functions without displacing deeply rooted instructional interaction patterns.

Overall, the data indicate that *pesantren* responses to the implementation of *Majlis Masyayikh* standards are adaptive-integrative. Culturally, the *pesantren* maintain their identity as institutions of *tafaquh fiddin* by reaffirming the *kiai's* role and sustaining classical teaching methods. Structurally, they establish documentation systems, new organizational structures,

and formal evaluation instruments. The emerging pattern is one of coexistence between tradition and administrative modernization. No radical changes were found in curriculum substance; rather, adjustments occurred in format and governance. This pattern shows that pesantren develop selective strategies: accepting standards as instruments of accountability while preserving epistemological autonomy. The resulting response is neither resistance nor total assimilation, but a pragmatic synthesis of traditional values and modern regulatory demands.

Initial Impacts of the Implementation of the Quality Framework on Governance and Learning Practices

The initial impacts identified in this finding refer to observable changes in institutional governance and instructional practices following the implementation of the Majelis Masyayikh quality framework. These impacts are not necessarily transformational, but rather early adjustments that can be observed in administrative systems, task distribution, evaluation mechanisms, and classroom interaction dynamics. At the governance level, initial impacts are reflected in increased documentation, clearer organizational structures, and more systematic academic reporting. In learning practices, impacts appear in the preparation of written lesson plans, the use of more structured evaluation instruments, and periodic reflection on students' learning achievements. This operational definition clarifies that the analysis focuses not on long-term outcomes, but on early changes that indicate the direction of institutional transformation after the implementation of quality standards.

Table 2. Directly Perceived Impacts

Interview Excerpt	Indicator	Informant
"Now every learning activity must be reported in writing."	Strengthening academic administration	Administrative Staff
"We have started to develop lesson plans before teaching."	Systematic lesson planning	Senior Ustaz
"The task structure is clearer, there is a person in charge of quality."	Organizational restructuring	Head of Madrasah
"Students (<i>Santri</i>) receive written evaluations more frequently in addition to oral ones."	Diversification of evaluation methods	Class Teacher

The table above indicates that the most visible initial impact of implementing the quality framework lies in the strengthening of administrative systems and instructional planning. The administrative staff's statement suggests an increase in formal accountability through mandatory written reporting. This marks a shift from a culture of minimal documentation toward a more systematic recording system. Meanwhile, the senior ustaz's statement reflects change at the pedagogical level, particularly the growing awareness of the importance of lesson planning prior to teaching. The researcher interprets these changes as evidence of the internalization of quality management principles into daily practice. Although the substance of instruction remains rooted in classical texts, its management has become more structured. Thus, the initial impacts are primarily managerial and procedural rather than ideological or substantively curricular.

Furthermore, the madrasah head's statement regarding clearer task structures indicates functional differentiation within the pesantren organization. The appointment of a quality assurance officer reflects the institutionalization of roles that were previously informal. This development can be understood as a shift toward system-based governance rather than figure-based leadership. Meanwhile, the diversification of evaluation methods described by classroom teachers demonstrates a direct impact on students' learning experiences. Written assessments complement traditional oral methods, providing greater variation in competency measurement. However, the researcher notes that these changes remain at an early stage and are complementary rather than substitutive. In other words, the initial impact represents an addition to the system rather than a replacement of traditional instructional methods.

Observational findings reinforce the interview data. In the administrative office, learning archives were neatly organized in standardized formats, including attendance lists, lesson plans, and grade summaries. In classrooms, teachers brought written lesson plans while continuing to teach using the halaqah method. The researcher observed that students had begun to complete short written tests at the end of certain sessions. This phenomenon indicates that the quality system has begun to influence the rhythm of instruction without altering the core interaction pattern between teacher and students. Observations also revealed regular evaluation meetings discussing learning outcomes. The researcher interprets the initial impact as administrative-pedagogical in nature, strengthening management structures and reflective practices without eliminating the distinctive character of the pesantren.

Overall, the data demonstrate that the initial impact of implementing the quality framework centers on strengthening governance and learning evaluation systems. The observed changes include improved documentation, clearer organizational structures, more systematic lesson planning, and diversified evaluation methods. The emerging pattern is one of administrative formalization running parallel with the continuity of pedagogical tradition. No drastic changes were found in curriculum substance or primary instructional methods; rather, quality instruments have been integrated into the existing system. Thus, the initial impact can be understood as a phase of managerial consolidation that paves the way for long-term transformation. This pattern indicates that the implementation of the quality framework reinforces institutional systems without displacing the epistemological foundations of the pesantren.

DISCUSSION

The findings on institutional preparation indicate that pesantren undertake gradual adaptation through kiai legitimization, the formation of technical teams, and the formalization of quality documents. This pattern aligns with the theory of gradual institutional change proposed by (Couvreur, 2025; Marienfeldt et al., 2025) which suggests that change does not occur in a revolutionary manner but through processes of layering and conversion. Similarly, (Fullan, 2016) in *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, emphasizes that successful educational reform depends on internal capacity and moral leadership. These findings are also consistent with studies by (Bunea et al., 2026; Bush, 2003) on educational leadership, which

highlight the importance of symbolic legitimacy in value-based organizations. However, unlike Western school reform models that tend to be managerial in orientation, pesantren readiness is more strongly shaped by the cultural authority of the kiai. In this context, the findings extend the discourse of (Hallinger, 2010; Hallinger et al., 2020) on instructional leadership by demonstrating that religious leadership plays a central role in tradition-based institutions.

The adaptive-integrative cultural and structural responses of pesantren correspond with the institutional logics theory proposed by (Thornton et al., 2012), which explains that organizations often combine the logic of tradition and the logic of bureaucracy simultaneously. (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) study on institutionalized organizations is also relevant, particularly in explaining how formal structures may be adopted to gain external legitimacy without substantially altering core practices. In the pesantren case, quality documents and new administrative structures reflect a form of ceremonial conformity, while the substance of learning remains grounded in classical texts. However, unlike the extreme decoupling described by (Bromley & Powell, 2012) pesantren do not completely separate formal structures from core practices; instead, they integrate them selectively. Thus, the pesantren response demonstrates a model of partial coupling, where tradition and standardization adjust to each other within certain limits.

The initial impacts on governance and instructional practices reveal strengthened accountability and evaluation systems without substantive curricular change. This finding aligns with (Harvey & Green, 1993), concept of quality assurance in higher education, particularly the dimensions of accountability and fitness for purpose. (Stensaker, 2003) similarly notes that early-stage implementation of quality systems tends to reinforce administrative procedures before significantly affecting pedagogical practice. However, unlike Western university contexts that often experience managerialism (Deem, 2003), pesantren maintain the personal relational foundation between teacher and student. These findings enrich the literature on Islamic education, as discussed by (Hefner, 2021; Tan, 2014), which emphasizes that modernization in Islamic institutions is often selective and contextual. Therefore, the initial impact reflects managerial consolidation rather than epistemological transformation.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of a model of institutional hybridization within tradition-based educational contexts. The findings suggest that theories of institutional change and quality assurance must be interpreted contextually when applied to religious institutions. The concepts of gradual change (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010) and institutional logics (Thornton et al., 2012) are relevant but need to be complemented by the dimension of religious authority as a key variable. Practically, the study implies that policies for standardizing Islamic education should consider cultural legitimacy and internal deliberative mechanisms. Reforms that neglect symbolic dimensions risk generating resistance. Therefore, quality policy design should be dialogical and adaptive rather than uniform and coercive.

Overall, this discussion demonstrates that pesantren do not occupy an antagonistic position toward standardization but instead develop integrative strategies combining bureaucratic rationality and collective ethics. The alignment of these findings with international literature on educational reform confirms that institutional change tends to succeed when it is

participatory and gradual. The key difference lies in the central role of the *kiai* as a source of legitimacy, a factor seldom addressed in Western literature. Thus, this study contributes to the global discourse on quality assurance by introducing the perspective of traditional Islamic educational institutions. Practically, an effective quality assurance model in *pesantren* should be consensus-based, respectful of *sanad* traditions, and allow gradual adaptation to ensure sustainable transformation in governance and learning practices.

The discussion section is where the author can interpret the results that have been obtained. Here, the author needs to compare the findings with existing literature, analyze whether the research results are by previously stated theories or hypotheses, and explore the implications of the findings. The author also needs to explain the limitations of this study and how these limitations may affect the results or generalization of the findings. In addition, the discussion should lead to a discussion of the relevance of the findings to theory or practical applications, as well as suggestions for further research. This section is an opportunity to dig deeper into the results' meaning and provide a broader view of the topic being studied.

CONCLUSION

This study finds that the navigation between tradition and standardization in traditional *pesantren* is not dichotomous, but rather integrative and gradual. The most significant finding shows that the successful implementation of the *Majlis Masyayikh* quality assurance framework is largely determined by the cultural legitimacy of the *kiai*, the deliberative tradition of *musyawarah*, and strategies of selective adaptation at structural and pedagogical levels. The primary insight of this research is that institutional transformation in tradition-based institutions requires a dialogical approach that respects symbolic authority and deeply rooted epistemological values. Standardization should not necessarily be perceived as a threat to identity, but rather as an instrument for strengthening governance when internalized through consensus-based mechanisms. Thus, an important lesson from this study is that the sustainability of Islamic education reform depends on the ability to integrate bureaucratic rationality with collective ethics and *pesantren* scholarly traditions.

From an academic perspective, the strength of this work lies in its contribution to enriching the discourse on institutional change and quality assurance within the context of traditional Islamic educational institutions. The study proposes a conceptual model of layered adaptation, demonstrating how normative legitimacy, organizational restructuring, and pedagogical innovation can operate simultaneously without undermining epistemological foundations. Nevertheless, this research has limitations, particularly its focus on a single case study context, which requires careful consideration in generalizing the findings. Moreover, the study concentrates on the initial impacts of implementation and therefore cannot yet assess long-term effects on graduate quality or substantive curriculum transformation. Future research is recommended to conduct comparative studies across multiple *pesantren*, undertake longitudinal analyses, and further explore the impact of quality policies on students' learning outcomes in greater depth.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author expresses sincere gratitude to the kiai, asatidz, pesantren administrators, and all informants who generously dedicated their time and shared their experiences throughout the research process. Appreciation is also extended to the academic team and reviewers for their constructive feedback, which greatly contributed to the successful completion of this study.

REFERENCES

- Abdurrahman, A. (2020). Sejarah Pesantren di Indonesia: Sebuah Pelacakan Genealogis. *Jurnal Penelitian Ilmiah INTAJ*, 4(1), 84–105. <https://doi.org/10.35897/intaj.v4i1.388>
- Ahsan, M. N. (2024). ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL CURRICULUM CONTROVERSY AND CHALLENGES IN BUILDING EDUCATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD: FINDING A BALANCE BETWEEN TRADITION AND MODERNIZATION. *Proceedings of International Conference on Educational Management*, 2(2), 253–269.
- Alwi, W., Akasyah, D., Furqon, M., Marhamah, M., & Puadah, P. (2025). Central Analysis of Education Policy In Islamic Boarding School: Challenges and Development Strategies. *Islamic Management: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 8(01), 379–390. <https://doi.org/10.30868/im.v8i01.8115>
- Al-Worafi, Y. M. (2024). Quality and accreditation: Overview. *Handbook of Medical and Health Sciences in Developing Countries: Education, Practice, and Research*, 1–21.
- Bromley, P., & Powell, W. W. (2012). From smoke and mirrors to walking the talk: Decoupling in the contemporary world. *Academy of Management Annals*, 6(1), 483–530.
- Bunea, E., Elias, M., & Stolin, D. (2026). Leadership Skills in Corporate Director Biographies: Substance or Impression Management? *Corporate Governance: An International Review*, 34(1), 41–70.
- Bush, T. (2003). *Theories of educational leadership and management*. sage.
- Chotimah, C., & Zainul, M. (2021). The Implementation of the Integration Curriculum on Religion and General. *Multidiscipline International Conference*, 1(1), 6–10.
- Couvreur, S. (2025). Inside the European union's trade machinery: Institutional changes in an Age of geoeconomics. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 63(1), 284–301.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Deem, R. (2003). New managerialism in UK universities: manager-academic accounts of change. *Globalization and Reform in Higher Education*, 55–68. <https://pure.royalholloway.ac.uk/en/publications/new-managerialism-in-uk-universities-manager-academics-accounts-o/>
- El-Yunusi, M. J., Maimun, A., & Kawakip, A. N. (2025). Quality management of Islamic boarding schools in improving the quality of educators. *Qalamuna: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial, Dan Agama*, 17(1), 157–170. <https://doi.org/10.37680/qalamuna.v17i1.6744>
- Fikri, A. R., & Sugiono, S. (2025). Islamic Boarding Schools as Pillars of Transformative Education Towards A Golden Indonesia. *Proceeding of International Conference on Education, Society and Humanity*, 3(1), 445–449. <https://ejournal.unuja.ac.id/index.php/icesh/article/view/12844>

- Firdaus, W., & Mardiana, D. (2024). Development of Islamic boarding school curriculum through equalization policies. *Attarbiyah: Journal of Islamic Culture and Education*, 9(1), 59–73. <https://doi.org/10.18326/attarbiyah.v9i1.59-73>
- Flom, H. (2020). Controlling bureaucracies in weak institutional contexts: The politics of police autonomy. *Governance*, 33(3), 639–656. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gove.12445>
- Fullan, M. (2016). *The new meaning of educational change*. Teachers college press.
- Hallinger, P. (2010). Developing instructional leadership. In *Developing successful leadership* (pp. 61–76). Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11192-020-03360-5>
- Hallinger, P., Gümüş, S., & Bellibaş, M. Ş. (2020). 'Are principals instructional leaders yet?' A science map of the knowledge base on instructional leadership, 1940–2018. *Scientometrics*, 122(3), 1629–1650. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-9106-2_5
- Harvey, L., & Green, D. (1993). Defining quality. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 18(1), 9–34. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0260293930180102>
- Hefner, R. W. (2021). Islam and institutional religious freedom in Indonesia. *Religions*, 12(6), 415. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12060415>
- Husna, F., & Arifin, M. (2025). From Tradition to Transformation: The Role of Accreditation in Improving the Quality of Education in Islamic Boarding Schools. *Jurnal Penelitian Dan Evaluasi Pendidikan*, 12(2), 87–95. <https://doi.org/10.64540/szwvkg97>
- Ibrahim, A. I., & Adam, S. (2025). A Literature Review Exploring the Effectiveness and Challenges of Charismatic Leadership of Kiai in the Transformation and Preservation of Islamic Educational Values. *International Journal of Health, Economics, and Social Sciences (IJHESS)*, 7(3), 1686–1693. <https://doi.org/10.56338/ijhess.v7i3.8209>
- Imamah, Y. H. (2023). Integration of Religious Moderation in Developing an Islamic Religious Education Curriculum. *Scaffolding: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Dan Multikulturalisme*, 5(3), 573–589. <https://doi.org/10.37680/scaffolding.v5i3.3841>
- Kumar, P., Shukla, B., & Passey, D. (2020). Impact of accreditation on quality and excellence of higher education institutions. *Investigación Operacional*, 41(2), 151–167. <https://revistas.uh.cu/invoperacional/article/view/9120>
- Lathifah, Z. K., Fauziah, R. S. P., Rusli, R. K., Roestamy, M., Martin, A. Y., Indra, S., & Suherman, U. (2025). Quality Assurance in Pesantren: Modernization, Adaptability, and Integration into Indonesia's Education System. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 11(1), 101–114. <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v11i1.43951>
- Mahoney, J., & Thelen, K. (2010). A theory of gradual institutional change. *Explaining Institutional Change: Ambiguity, Agency, and Power*, 1(1), 1–37. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511806414.003>
- Malizal, Z. Z. (2025). Islamic education and globalization: Curriculum, identity, and digital integration. *Sinergi International Journal of Islamic Studies*, 3(2), 70–82. <https://doi.org/10.61194/ijis.v3i2.711>
- Marienfeldt, J., Wehmeier, L. M., & Kuhlmann, S. (2025). Top-down or bottom-up digital transformation? A comparison of institutional changes and outcomes. *Public Money & Management*, 45(5), 456–465. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540962.2024.2365351>
- Meyer, J. W., & Rowan, B. (1977). Institutionalized organizations: Formal structure as myth and ceremony. *American Journal of Sociology*, 83(2), 340–363. <https://doi.org/10.1086/226550>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis A Methods Sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.

- Paradeise, C., & Thoenig, J.-C. (2013). Academic institutions in search of quality: Local orders and global standards. *Organization Studies*, 34(2), 189–218. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840612473550>
- Pitriani, L., Hadistia, M., & Basyari, A. M. (2024). *Integration of General Knowledge and Religion: Strategies for Building Holistic Education in a Multidisciplinary Era*. <https://doi.org/10.54801/vj2ccc16>
- Romadlan, F. A., Prasetya, B., & Suprpto, F. (2026). The Transformation of Islamic Boarding Schools (Pesantren) Education: A Bibliometric Overview. *Immortalis Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 2(1), 154–179. <https://doi.org/10.37600/96kbkh32>
- Roshan, S., & Rahman, F. (2025). Education and social mobility: A pathway to economic and social empowerment. *Global Social Sciences Review*, 10(1), 124–133. [https://doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2025\(X-I\).11](https://doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2025(X-I).11)
- Sjoraida, D. F., Bakti, I., Nugraha, A. R., Nurwitasari, D., & Lubis, M. (2025). Vernacular-Hybrid Deliberation: Dialectics of Political Communication Between Indigenous Wisdom and Pesantren Traditions in Indonesia's Governance. *Lex Localis*, 23(10), 688–703. <https://doi.org/10.52152/c7qnr430>
- Spillane, J. P. (2009). *Standards deviation: How schools misunderstand education policy*. Harvard University Press.
- Stensaker, B. rn. (2003). Trance, transparency and transformation: The impact of external quality monitoring on higher education. *Quality in Higher Education*, 9(2), 151–159. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13538320308158>
- Sudir, S., Hidayatullah, M. F., Yusuf, M., & Subagya, S. (2025). Total Quality Management (TQM) in Islamic boarding schools: Teacher and principal perspectives. *Educational Process: International Journal*, 14(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.22521/edupij.2025.15.136>
- Tan, C. (2014). Educative tradition and Islamic schools in Indonesia. *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.5617/jais.4638>
- Thornton, P. H., Ocasio, W., & Lounsbury, M. (2012). *The institutional logics perspective: A new approach to culture, structure, and process*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199601936.001.0001>
- Woodcock, S., Fine, G., McClure, K., Unger, B., & Rizzo-Price, P. (2010). The role of standards and training in preparing for accreditation. *American Journal of Clinical Pathology*, 134(3), 388–392. <https://doi.org/10.1309/AJCP03TFPBKEYYNT>
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case Study Research and Applications* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.