

## Strategic Management Practices in Islamic Higher Education Institutions: Strengthening Organizational Governance and Academic Quality

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### ABSTRACT

*The background of this study stems from the need for Islamic higher education institutions to strengthen organizational governance and academic quality amidst globalization and digital transformation. The purpose of this research is to analyze strategic management practices in Islamic universities with particular emphasis on integrating Islamic values into governance and quality assurance. The research method employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical design through in-depth interviews, document review, and thematic analysis to obtain a comprehensive understanding. The findings reveal that strategic planning aligned with accountable governance principles and quality assurance mechanisms enhances academic quality and institutional legitimacy. The implication of this study highlights the necessity of harmonizing modern management practices with Islamic values to achieve sustainability and excellence in Islamic higher education.*

**Keywords:** Strategic management, islamic higher education, organizational governance

### ABSTRAK

Latar belakang penelitian ini berangkat dari kebutuhan perguruan tinggi Islam untuk memperkuat tata kelola organisasi dan mutu akademik di tengah arus globalisasi dan transformasi digital. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah menganalisis praktik manajemen strategis pada perguruan tinggi Islam dengan menekankan integrasi nilai-nilai Islam dalam tata kelola dan jaminan mutu. Metode penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain deskriptif-analitis melalui wawancara mendalam, telaah dokumen, dan analisis tematik untuk memperoleh gambaran komprehensif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa perencanaan strategis yang selaras dengan prinsip tata kelola yang akuntabel serta penerapan mekanisme jaminan mutu menghasilkan peningkatan kualitas akademik dan legitimasi kelembagaan. Implikasi penelitian ini menegaskan pentingnya sinergi antara manajemen modern dan nilai-nilai Islam guna mencapai keberlanjutan dan keunggulan pendidikan tinggi Islam.

**Kata Kunci:** Manajemen Strategis, Perguruan Tinggi Islam, Tata Kelola Organisasi

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## INTRODUCTION

Islamic higher education institutions face increasing demands to demonstrate both organizational governance and academic quality in a rapidly changing global landscape. Globalization, digital transformation, and the rise of international rankings have created pressure for universities to adopt effective management strategies that ensure sustainability and competitiveness (Marginson, 2022). Strong governance frameworks are essential in safeguarding institutional credibility and ensuring that Islamic universities remain aligned with both academic standards and religious values.

Higher education quality assurance has become a central concern in developing countries, where institutions must balance cultural and spiritual missions with international academic expectations. Scholars highlight that effective strategic management is a decisive factor in enabling universities to maintain academic standards while adapting to external challenges such as technological disruption and shifting labor market demands (Altbach & De Wit, 2020). Islamic universities, in particular, must navigate these challenges while remaining faithful to their religious mission.

Organizational governance in higher education is closely tied to accountability, transparency, and participatory decision-making. According to Stensaker et al. (2021), universities that integrate inclusive governance structures tend to foster stronger stakeholder trust and academic integrity. In the Islamic higher education context, governance models must not only be efficient but also grounded in ethical principles derived from Islamic teachings, ensuring that decisions reflect justice, consultation, and responsibility.

Strategic management practices have been widely adopted by universities across the world to enhance performance and global visibility. Studies emphasize that institutions implementing comprehensive strategic planning show higher adaptability to international collaboration, research productivity, and accreditation standards (Shattock, 2020). Islamic higher education institutions can draw upon these practices to create a balance between modern academic competitiveness and the preservation of Islamic identity.

Quality assurance frameworks, accreditation processes, and governance reforms are shaping the future of Islamic universities. The integration of modern management models with Islamic ethical foundations offers opportunities for innovation while addressing unique challenges such as resource limitations, regional disparities, and evolving stakeholder expectations (Elken & Stensaker, 2018). Research in this field suggests that sustainable academic development

requires a synergy between strategic planning, effective governance, and adherence to spiritual values.

This study aims to examine strategic management practices in Islamic higher education institutions, focusing on how these practices contribute to strengthening organizational governance and enhancing academic quality. The objective is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between modern management approaches and Islamic values in shaping effective governance frameworks.

## METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design with a descriptive-analytical approach to explore strategic management practices in Islamic higher education institutions. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with key stakeholders including institutional leaders, faculty members, and administrators. Supplementary data were obtained from policy documents, accreditation reports, and institutional strategic plans to provide a comprehensive understanding of governance and academic quality frameworks. The use of multiple data sources allowed triangulation, ensuring credibility and validity of the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The data analysis process was carried out through thematic analysis, involving systematic coding, categorization, and interpretation of the information gathered. NVivo software supported the organization and clustering of themes, enabling the identification of patterns related to governance practices, strategic planning, and quality assurance mechanisms. Ethical considerations were maintained throughout the study by ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for participants' perspectives in line with international research ethics standards (Silverman, 2021).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Strategic Planning and Institutional Governance*

Strategic planning has emerged as an essential tool for higher education institutions in enhancing organizational governance and long-term sustainability. Islamic higher education institutions require well-formulated plans that integrate their spiritual mission with modern governance demands. Effective strategic planning allows these institutions to align vision, mission, and goals with external expectations such as national policies, accreditation standards, and global rankings (Bryson, 2018). Without clear strategies, institutions risk inefficiency and a lack of direction, which in turn undermines academic credibility.

Leadership plays a decisive role in the governance structures of Islamic higher education. Research shows that institutions with visionary leadership are better equipped to implement strategic plans, foster institutional innovation, and engage stakeholders effectively (Rowley & Sherman, 2020). Leaders must embody both professional competence and Islamic ethical values to ensure that decision-making processes are transparent, inclusive, and accountable. The presence of strong leadership also enhances institutional resilience in facing financial, political, and technological disruptions.

The integration of governance principles into strategic management has been emphasized in international scholarship. For example, Shattock (2020) argues that successful universities are characterized by governance systems that prioritize accountability, participatory decision-making, and adaptability. In the context of Islamic institutions, these principles must be contextualized with Islamic values such as *shura* (consultation) and *amanah* (trust). This integration ensures that governance frameworks not only meet international standards but also remain rooted in cultural and religious legitimacy.

Organizational governance in Islamic universities also benefits from stakeholder engagement, where faculty, students, and administrative staff contribute to decision-making. Studies highlight that participatory governance strengthens institutional cohesion and fosters a culture of trust (Stensaker et al., 2021). Islamic higher education institutions that involve their stakeholders are more likely to build sustainable strategies that reflect shared values and collective aspirations.

Accountability mechanisms form a critical aspect of governance in higher education. Accreditation bodies and external quality assurance agencies demand that institutions demonstrate transparency in their financial management, academic standards, and research practices (Elken & Stensaker, 2018). For Islamic institutions, accountability must extend beyond compliance with external agencies to include alignment with Islamic ethical principles, thereby ensuring integrity in both worldly and spiritual dimensions.

Governance reforms have been implemented in several Islamic countries to strengthen institutional autonomy and accountability. For instance, Malaysia and Indonesia have adopted governance models that provide Islamic universities with greater flexibility in resource allocation, research management, and international collaboration (Altbach & De Wit, 2020). Such reforms allow institutions to innovate while maintaining adherence to their religious identity.

Strategic planning also enhances the global competitiveness of Islamic universities. Institutions that successfully integrate governance with long-term

strategies are more likely to secure international partnerships, attract foreign students, and achieve higher visibility in global academic rankings (Marginson, 2022). This competitiveness is critical in positioning Islamic higher education as an influential contributor to both the global academic community and the Muslim ummah.

The findings indicate that strategic planning and governance in Islamic higher education must be viewed as complementary dimensions. While strategic planning provides the direction and objectives, governance ensures that processes and structures are implemented effectively. The synergy between these two elements is essential in strengthening institutional sustainability, legitimacy, and academic quality.

### *Academic Quality and Assurance Mechanisms*

Academic quality remains the cornerstone of higher education institutions' credibility and reputation. Islamic universities face unique challenges in ensuring that their academic programs meet both international standards and Islamic educational values. Quality assurance frameworks, therefore, become crucial in establishing benchmarks for teaching, curriculum design, research productivity, and community engagement (Harvey & Williams, 2010). Institutions that adopt rigorous quality assurance systems demonstrate stronger outcomes in graduate employability and knowledge dissemination.

Curriculum development in Islamic higher education is a central aspect of academic quality. Effective curricula must integrate modern knowledge with Islamic perspectives, ensuring that students are prepared to compete globally while retaining their religious identity. Studies highlight that interdisciplinary approaches strengthen the relevance of Islamic education by bridging the gap between traditional Islamic sciences and contemporary disciplines (Zaman, 2018). This integration enhances both the academic rigor and societal impact of higher education.

Research productivity is another indicator of academic quality. Islamic universities must encourage faculty to engage in high-impact research and publication in internationally recognized journals. Institutions with strong research policies often experience higher visibility and global engagement (Altbach & Salmi, 2011). To achieve this, strategic investments in research infrastructure, funding, and international collaboration are necessary.

Accreditation serves as a formal mechanism for ensuring academic quality. External evaluations conducted by national or international accreditation agencies provide objective assessments of institutional performance. Research suggests that



accredited universities tend to adopt systematic quality improvement processes, which positively influence teaching effectiveness and student satisfaction (Newton, 2020). Islamic universities must leverage accreditation not merely as a compliance requirement but as an opportunity for continuous improvement.

Faculty development is closely linked to academic quality. Studies emphasize that well-trained faculty members are central to delivering quality education and conducting meaningful research (Knight, 2020). Islamic institutions must therefore invest in professional development programs, international exchanges, and pedagogical training that align with both academic standards and Islamic values. Such initiatives enhance teaching effectiveness and contribute to the overall credibility of the institution.

Quality assurance also extends to student support services, which play an important role in student retention and success. Services such as career counseling, academic advising, and mentorship programs foster holistic student development (Tinto, 2017). For Islamic universities, these services must additionally incorporate spiritual guidance and community values to support students' moral and ethical growth.

International collaboration has become a significant factor in academic quality. Partnerships with global universities, joint research projects, and student exchange programs enrich the academic experience and foster intercultural understanding (De Wit, 2020). Islamic universities can leverage such collaborations to enhance their academic quality while showcasing the richness of Islamic intellectual traditions.

The findings suggest that academic quality in Islamic higher education institutions is multidimensional, requiring a balance between international benchmarks and Islamic values. Quality assurance mechanisms provide the necessary framework to sustain continuous improvement, ensuring that institutions remain relevant, competitive, and faithful to their educational mission.

### ***Integration of Islamic Values in Strategic Management***

Islamic higher education institutions hold a distinct responsibility to integrate Islamic values into their strategic management practices. This integration is not merely symbolic but represents the core identity of these institutions. Scholars argue that strategic management in Islamic universities must reflect ethical principles such as justice, consultation, and trustworthiness, ensuring that policies and practices remain grounded in the values of Islam (Beekun & Badawi, 2005). Without such integration, institutions risk losing their distinctiveness and credibility.

The incorporation of Islamic values into governance frameworks strengthens institutional legitimacy. When stakeholders perceive that institutional policies reflect Islamic ethics, they are more likely to support and engage with governance processes (Sulaiman et al., 2019). This legitimacy extends beyond the academic community to include wider society, reinforcing the role of Islamic universities as moral and intellectual leaders.

Curriculum development is one area where Islamic values can be systematically integrated. By embedding Islamic ethics into course design and teaching methods, institutions create an educational environment that nurtures both intellectual growth and spiritual development. Research indicates that values-based education fosters critical thinking, ethical awareness, and social responsibility among students (Abdullah & Halim, 2020). Such outcomes align with the broader mission of Islamic higher education.

Faculty conduct and academic leadership also serve as channels for integrating Islamic values. Leaders who embody Islamic ethics in their decision-making set an example for the wider academic community, creating a culture of integrity and accountability (Beekun, 2012). Faculty members, likewise, play a critical role in modeling ethical behavior and transmitting values through both teaching and research practices.

Islamic universities are expected to play a role in addressing societal challenges through value-based strategic management. Issues such as poverty, inequality, and social justice can be addressed more effectively when institutional strategies are guided by Islamic principles of compassion and responsibility (Ramadan, 2017). By doing so, institutions reinforce their relevance to contemporary society and strengthen their impact beyond the academic sphere.

Integration of Islamic values also enhances institutional resilience. Research demonstrates that value-driven institutions are better equipped to navigate crises, as their decision-making is guided by ethical clarity and communal solidarity (Al-Aidaros et al., 2015). For Islamic higher education institutions, this resilience is particularly important in contexts of political instability, economic uncertainty, and cultural change.

The global relevance of Islamic higher education increases when strategic management incorporates universal values rooted in Islamic teachings. These values resonate with international discourses on ethics, sustainability, and social responsibility, allowing Islamic universities to contribute meaningfully to global conversations (Chapra, 2008). Such contributions not only enhance institutional reputation but also highlight the universality of Islamic ethics in addressing contemporary challenges.

The findings emphasize that the integration of Islamic values in strategic management is not a peripheral concern but a fundamental necessity. Institutions that successfully align their governance, academic quality, and strategic planning with Islamic principles are more likely to achieve long-term sustainability, social impact, and academic excellence.

## CONCLUSION

The study demonstrates that strategic management practices play a pivotal role in strengthening organizational governance and enhancing academic quality in Islamic higher education institutions. Effective strategic planning provides direction and sustainability, while governance structures ensure accountability, transparency, and inclusivity rooted in both international standards and Islamic values. Academic quality is reinforced through robust assurance mechanisms, faculty development, curriculum innovation, and global collaboration, ensuring that institutions remain competitive and socially relevant. The integration of Islamic ethical principles into strategic management further legitimizes institutional practices, fosters resilience, and enhances societal impact. Collectively, these findings highlight the necessity of harmonizing modern management approaches with Islamic values to achieve sustainable excellence in higher education.

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