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From Paper Standards to Classroom Practice: An *Amanah*-Anchored Quality Loop for Islamic Elementary Schools

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Abstract

Written quality standards are common in Islamic schools, yet their influence on classroom practice is often weak. This study examined how learning quality in Islamic education is managed in an uncertified Islamic elementary school, using ISO 21001:2018 and the Baldrige Excellence Framework as complementary lenses. The study used a qualitative single-case design and drew on in-depth interviews with seven informants, classroom observation, and document analysis in January 2026. The data were coded inductively and mapped against both frameworks. The findings show that lesson plans served as compliance documents rather than working tools. Lesson quality depended on individual teachers because supervision examined paperwork instead of teaching. Assessment results stopped at the report card and did not return to planning. Character outcomes were visible in daily life but absent from the school's records. These patterns reveal three breaks in the quality cycle: between documentation and enactment, between valued and recorded outcomes, and between measurement and improvement. The study proposes the *Amanah*-Anchored Quality Loop, a model in which ISO 21001 guides the learning process, Baldrige connects it to leadership and results, and the ethic of *amanah, ihsan, and itqan* drives improvement. The findings imply that madrasahs can raise learning quality by building routines that turn existing evidence into decisions rather than by producing more documents or pursuing certification.

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INTRODUCTION

Quality in Islamic education is judged on two registers at once. Families and the state expect measurable academic attainment, while the Islamic tradition asks schools to form *akhlak*, religious practice, and social responsibility in their students. Indonesian schools and madrasahs are now expected to run internal quality assurance systems built on written standards, lesson plans, and quality documents, and most institutions have learned to produce these documents on schedule **(Khairiah & Ismail, 2023; Taufik & Istikomah, 2026)**. Producing documents, however, is not the same as changing classroom practice. Evaluations of school performance in Indonesia show that institutions can meet formal requirements while still falling short in the processes that drive learning **(Fitriani et al., 2025; Jannah & Izati, 2026)**. The tension is sharper in small, uncertified madrasahs, where a few teachers carry both teaching and administrative duties. The problem facing these schools, therefore, is less the absence of standards than the distance between written standards and daily learning.

Research on quality management in schools has developed along three lines that seldom meet. The first examines ISO-based management systems and finds that they strengthen documentation and evaluation routines, although teachers often report heavier administrative workloads and a top-down culture **(Khan, 2026)**. The second applies the Baldrige Excellence Framework and confirms that leadership shapes organizational systems, which in turn shape

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results **(Ali et al., 2025; Alkelani & Ataalah, 2023)**. Much of this evidence, however, comes from higher education or from surveys of school leaders alone **(Mommers et al., 2024)**, and Indonesian applications have often used the criteria mainly as a scoring instrument for institutional performance **(Samsuddin et al., 2023)**. The third line, situated in Islamic education, brings religious values and quality principles together but usually treats those values as institutional context or as hoped-for outcomes **(Fatmawati et al., 2026)**. Read together, these studies explain why quality systems succeed or stall. Yet they analyze each framework in isolation and rarely ask how moral and spiritual outcomes can become evidence of quality.

These limitations leave three gaps that this study addresses. In terms of context, existing studies concentrate on universities and on schools that already hold certification **(Madkur et al., 2024)**, so little is known about uncertified Islamic elementary schools where standards exist mainly on paper. In terms of method, studies that apply a single framework cannot show where process discipline ends and organizational performance begins. Reading one case through ISO 21001:2018 and the Baldrige Excellence Framework together makes that boundary visible. In terms of focus, prior research has not treated character and worship as quality results that require documented evidence, even though these are the outcomes Islamic schools most often promise families. The novelty of this study lies in the combination of these three elements. From this combination, it develops the concept of a value–evidence gap and proposes a model in which the ethic of *amanah*, *ihsan*, and *itqan* becomes the institutional engine of the quality cycle rather than a private virtue of individual teachers.

The purpose of this study is to examine how learning quality in Islamic education is managed at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Nurul Mun'im, Probolinggo. Specifically, it seeks to describe how the planning, implementation, and evaluation of Islamic education learning are carried out and to identify what results this management produces for academic learning, character formation, and stakeholder experience. A third aim is to explain how ISO 21001:2018 and the Baldrige Excellence Framework can be combined into a quality system suited to the scale and values of a *madrasah*. By pursuing these aims, the study extends the literature from certified institutions to uncertified elementary schools and from single-framework analysis to an integrated reading. Its academic relevance lies in clarifying where the gap between standards and practice opens. Its practical relevance lies in offering *madrasah* leaders a low-cost route to quality improvement that does not depend on certification.

The central argument of this study is that the gap between quality standards and classroom practice does not originate in planning. Instead, it originates in the second half of the quality cycle, where assessment data should be analyzed, discussed, and turned into decisions about the next round of teaching. If this argument holds, then improving a *madrasah* requires less new documentation and more routines that connect evidence to action. The qualitative exploration therefore focuses on how the head of the *madrasah*, teachers, administrative staff, and parents understand and enact quality in their daily work. It gives particular attention to supervision, to the use of assessment results, and to the ways character development is observed and recorded. This depth of understanding cannot be reached through surveys of perceptions alone, so the study adopts a case study design that combines interviews, observation, and document analysis, as described in the following section.

The question also carries some urgency for Indonesian madrasahs at present. Character education is now expected to be woven into everyday learning rather than treated as a separate program **(Bahri et al., 2025)**, and recent work argues that character formation depends on deliberate institutional structures rather than goodwill alone **(Fatmawati et al., 2026)**. Schools that cannot document character outcomes will find it increasingly difficult to show that they meet these expectations, regardless of how well they actually form their students. At the same time, resource constraints remain one of the main obstacles to adopting ISO-based management systems in education **(Ali et al., 2025; Alkelani & Ataalah, 2023)**, and small private madrasahs feel these constraints most acutely. A study that locates precisely where quality practice breaks down, and that proposes a workable model for repairing it, therefore responds to a pressing need in both policy and practice.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a single-case study design **(Belardo, 2025; Tlaka et al., 2026; Zahra et al., 2026)**, which suited the aim of understanding how learning quality is managed in its natural setting, where the boundary between written standards and daily practice cannot be specified in advance. The case was Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) Nurul Mun'im, a private Islamic elementary school in Probolinggo, East Java, with 14 teachers and 186 students in the 2025/2026 academic year. The madrasah was selected purposively because it maintained formal learning standards and lesson-plan requirements but held no external quality certification, which made it a typical example of the uncertified madrasah in which written standards and classroom practice may diverge. Informants were also selected through purposive sampling based on their role in planning, delivering, supporting, or receiving Islamic religious education **(Olea, 2026; Suryani & Herianti, 2023)**. They comprised the head of the madrasah (HM), the curriculum coordinator (CC), three Islamic education teachers (T1, T2, and T3), an administrative staff member (AS), and a parent (P1). Recruitment ended when additional interviews no longer produced new categories. All informants gave informed consent, and codes replace their names throughout the article.

Data were collected in January 2026 through three complementary techniques, as summarized in Table 1. First, semi-structured in-depth interviews lasting 45–60 minutes were conducted with each informant between January 12 and January 22, 2026. The interview guide followed the stages of planning, implementation, evaluation, and improvement and was informed by the seven categories of the Baldrige Excellence Framework. All interviews were recorded with the informants' permission and transcribed verbatim. Second, non-participant observation covered six Islamic religious education lessons (two sessions per teacher across T1, T2, and T3), including the two contrasting lessons highlighted in the findings: a Grade IV lesson on January 19 and a Grade V lesson on January 21, 2026. A structured observation sheet recorded lesson opening, teaching methods, use of media, student engagement, integration of religious values, and lesson closure. Third, document analysis examined the *madrasah*'s vision and mission, learning standards and quality policy, lesson plans (*Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran* / RPP) from the 2024/2025 and 2025/2026 academic years, academic supervision checklists, score ledgers (*leger nilai*), attendance records, and any records of student character or worship. The documents served both to corroborate interview and observation data and to reveal practices that informants did not mention.

Table 1. Informants, data collection techniques, and data focus

Informant role	Technique	Data focus
Head of *madrasah*	Interview; document analysis	Quality direction, purpose of standards, follow-up of evaluation
Islamic education teacher	Interview; observation	Lesson plan preparation, recording of character development
Curriculum coordinator	Interview; document analysis	Teacher competence, consistency of lesson delivery
Islamic education teacher	Interview; observation	Academic supervision and feedback
Islamic education teacher	Interview; observation	Values-based teaching practice (*amanah*, *ihsan*, *itqan*)
Administrative staff	Interview; document analysis	Compilation, storage, and use of assessment data
Parent	Interview	Valued outcomes, channels for feedback
Student	Non-participant observation	Methods, media, engagement, value integration
Madrasah documents	Document analysis	Standards, lesson plans (*Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran* / RPP), supervision checklists, score ledgers, attendance records

Data were analyzed using the interactive model, which proceeds through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification **(Palabrica, 2025; Suryani & Herianti, 2023)**. During condensation, transcripts, observation notes, and documents were coded in two passes. The first pass was inductive and stayed close to the informants' own words, producing initial codes such as *"plans for submission," "supervision of folders,"* and *"character remembered, not recorded."* The second pass was deductive and mapped these codes against ISO 21001:2018 Clauses 5 to 10, **Bahri et al. (2025)**, and the seven Baldrige categories **(**Botting, 2025**)**. Related codes were then grouped into the four themes reported in the results. During data display, the themes were organized into matrices that linked each stage of the learning cycle to its supporting evidence, and these matrices became the basis for Table 2. Conclusions were drawn and verified by checking each theme against all three data sources. The trustworthiness of the findings was established through source and technique triangulation, member checking of interview summaries with the head of the *madrasah* and the curriculum coordinator, and an audit trail documenting coding decisions **(Laxamana, 2025; Mosch et al., 2024)**.

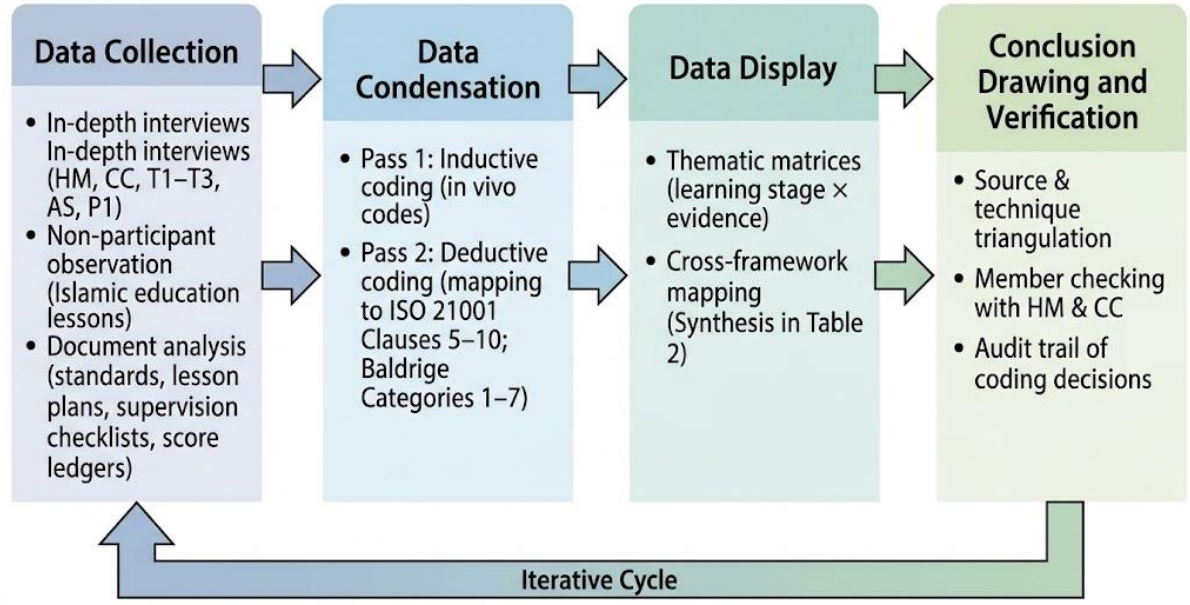


Figure 1. Data analysis procedure

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

The analysis of interviews, classroom observations, and documents produced four themes. Together they trace the learning cycle at MI Nurul Mun'im from planning through delivery and evaluation to the results the *madrasah* achieves. The themes are presented in that order and are followed by a synthesis table that reads the findings against the two analytical frameworks used in coding.

Lesson Plans as Compliance Documents Rather Than Working Tools

A lesson plan can serve two very different purposes in a school. As a working tool, it guides what a teacher does in the classroom and is revised when a lesson does not go as intended. As a compliance document, it is prepared because someone above the teacher will check that it exists. At MI Nurul Mun'im, the planning documents were complete and orderly, yet the evidence consistently pointed to the second purpose. Every Islamic education teacher submitted lesson plans (*Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran*, RPP) at the start of the semester. The plans reviewed for this study contained learning objectives, materials, strategies, media, and assessment items aligned

with the national curriculum. The madrasah also maintained written learning standards and quality policy documents approved by the head of the madrasah. On paper, the planning stage therefore met the formal expectations of an ISO-oriented quality system. The more revealing question was how the people who wrote and approved these documents understood them, and whether the documents shaped teaching once the semester began. The head of the madrasah explained their purpose as follows:

> "We already have learning standards and require every teacher to submit complete teaching devices at the beginning of the semester. However, we must admit that our focus is still heavily oriented toward fulfilling administrative completeness for madrasah supervision and accreditation demands, so these quality standards have not fully become a daily working culture in classroom learning." (HM, interview, January 12, 2026)

Teachers described the same orientation from their side of the process. One Islamic education teacher recounted how the plans were actually produced:

> "Before the new semester starts, we usually adapt the lesson plans from the previous year's files or standard working group templates so that they can be submitted on time to the curriculum section. Once they are collected and signed, we rarely open them again during the semester; in the classroom, we teach mostly following the flow of the student textbook." (T1, interview, January 14, 2026)

When read together with the documents, these two accounts reveal a planning process whose audience lay outside the classroom. The head of the *madrasah* framed the plans in terms of what external parties would examine. The teacher's account indicates that the plans were finished in order to be submitted rather than written in order to be used. A comparison of lesson plan archives from the 2024/2025 and 2025/2026 academic years supports this reading. Several plans repeated identical learning objectives, methods, and media with only the dates and signature blocks changed. A further pattern emerged in the treatment of religious and moral aims. Objectives such as honesty (*kejujuran*), responsibility (*tanggung jawab*), discipline, and proper worship (*ibadah*) appeared consistently in the plans. None of them, however, was accompanied by a measurable indicator or an observation rubric that could show whether students had internalized these values. The plans recorded the *madrasah*'s character aims without translating them into anything a teacher could act on or evaluate systematically. The planning stage thus satisfied documentary requirements while remaining only loosely connected to the *madrasah*'s stated vision, to the varying abilities of individual classes, and to the lessons that followed.

Classroom Quality Carried by Individual Teachers

Two Islamic education lessons observed in the third week of January 2026 illustrate the second theme. In the Grade IV lesson on January 19, the teacher opened with a short contextual story about honesty (*kejujuran*) and social care (*kepedulian sosial*). She then asked students to discuss a situation from their own daily lives, guided them through the practical steps of ablution (*wudhu*) and prayer, and closed with a brief moral reflection. In the Grade V lesson on January 21, which addressed a comparable topic in character and jurisprudence, students copied a passage from the textbook while the teacher read aloud from the desk. The lesson ended with a set of routine written questions. Both teachers worked under the same learning standards and had submitted lesson plans of similar administrative quality. The difference between the two classrooms therefore came from the teachers rather than from the documents. The curriculum coordinator attributed this variation to teachers' uneven preparation and competence:

> "The quality of our teachers is indeed not yet uniform. There are quite noticeable differences in pedagogical competence, professional mastery, digital skills, and the ability to conduct evaluations. Because of this gap, even though the lesson plans on paper look well-structured, the actual delivery of methods, media usage, and classroom interaction is still far from consistent across classes." (CC, interview, January 15, 2026)

Academic supervision might have narrowed this gap, but teachers described it as a check on paperwork rather than on teaching. Supervision took place once per semester. Its checklists focused on the completeness of teaching administration, such as syllabi, attendance lists, and lesson plans, rather than on classroom methodology. A teacher described what typically followed a supervision visit:

> "When supervision takes place, the assessment mostly checks whether our administrative folders, syllabi, and lesson plans are complete. There is rarely any written or oral feedback regarding how we deliver the material or manage student engagement in class, and it is not followed up with targeted training or mentoring to improve our teaching methods." (T2, interview, January 16, 2026)

Where good teaching did occur, teachers attributed it to their own sense of religious obligation rather than to any institutional requirement. One teacher expressed this in explicitly religious terms:

> "When I try to combine conceptual explanations with role modeling, discussions, and direct worship practice, it is not because of the ISO standards or administrative checklists. As an Islamic education teacher, I view teaching as an *amanah* (trust) and strive to apply *ihsan*—doing the best possible work—and *itqan*—working professionally—because I am morally accountable for shaping the students' *akhlak*." (T3, interview, January 17, 2026)

Taken together, the observation and interview data show that the quality of a lesson at MI Nurul Mun'im depended on who taught it. The standards described what a good lesson should contain, but no organizational routine connected those standards to what happened once the classroom door closed. Supervision was the one mechanism positioned to make that connection, yet it examined documents and seldom offered feedback on methods.

The third account adds an important qualification. Personal religious commitment, expressed through *amanah*, *ihsan*, and *itqan*, was a genuine and productive resource that sustained the strongest teaching observed in this study. Because it rested on individual conviction rather than on a shared institutional mechanism, however, it could not be relied on across all classes. Nor could it be passed from one teacher to another through collaborative training or peer review. No teacher interviewed reported that formal supervision or any institutional quality program had changed their classroom practice.

Assessment Data That Stop at the Report Card

"Every semester we compile all the scores from daily assessments, mid-semester tests, and final examinations into the master ledger and print the report cards. Once the report cards are distributed to parents and the archives are stored in the administration office, our task is finished; there is no special session to re-analyze those score sheets to change next semester's teaching." (AS, interview, January 20, 2026)

> This account from the administrative staff member captures the third theme. Assessment at MI Nurul Mun'im generated a large volume of data that traveled in one direction only. Students sat daily tests, mid-semester tests, and end-of-semester examinations, and their scores were entered into report cards and archived by the administration. The documents examined for this study included complete score ledgers (*leger nilai*) and attendance records for the 2024/2025 academic year and the first semester of 2025/2026. These records show that the *madrasah* was capable of systematic administrative measurement.

What the documents did not contain was any evidence that teachers had analyzed these scores collectively, discussed them to trace the causes of learning difficulties, or used them to revise the following semester's lesson plans. The madrasah's files held no meeting minutes, item-analysis sheets, or improvement plans based on the Plan–Do–Check–Act (PDCA) cycle. Remedial support existed for students who fell below the minimum mastery criterion (*Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal*, KKM). Observations and teacher accounts showed, however, that remediation usually meant re-

administering the same test questions rather than providing adapted instruction or additional materials. A student who had not understood a topic the first time was therefore tested again without necessarily being taught differently. The head of the madrasah was candid about this gap:

> "Our evaluation is still largely conducted to fulfill final grading and administrative reporting requirements. We have not yet built a systematic routine where assessment data, student engagement records, and supervision findings are reviewed jointly by teachers to formulate a written continuous improvement plan for the next semester, partly due to time and resource constraints." (HM, interview, January 12, 2026)

This acknowledgment confirms that leadership recognized the absence of follow-up rather than overlooking it. Across this theme, the evidence points to an evaluation stage that measured carefully for administrative purposes but did not complete the quality cycle it was meant to serve. Scores were produced, recorded, and reported to parents and to the Ministry supervisor, which fulfilled the *madrasah*'s formal accountability obligations. They did not return to the teachers who planned the next lessons, however, and they prompted no documented decision about instructional methods, learning media, or targeted support for struggling students. In practice, evaluation functioned as final reporting rather than as an evidence base for improvement. This finding connects directly to the first two themes. Systematic evaluation could have corrected plans written for submission and lessons that varied by teacher. The information needed for such correction, however, stopped at the report card.

Visible Character, Invisible Evidence

The madrasah's strongest outcomes lay in the domain it measured least. Report cards documented academic results thoroughly but concentrated on cognitive test scores. These figures were the only results the madrasah could present in a form that allowed comparison across classes or semesters. Character and worship outcomes were handled very differently. Through daily school culture and habituation (*pembiasaan*), teachers observed students' congregational prayer, honesty, politeness (*sopan santun*), discipline (*kedisiplinan*), and responsibility every day. They spoke about these behavioral outcomes with greater conviction than they did about test scores. When asked how they knew whether a student's character had developed, however, teachers relied entirely on memory and personal impression. One teacher explained:

> "We can see students' character and worship development every day—whether they pray on time, speak politely to teachers, act honestly when doing assignments, and show discipline. However, we only observe this naturally through daily habits and remember it in our heads; we do not have specific observation rubrics, reflection journals, or written daily logs to record each student's spiritual and moral progress." (T1, interview, January 14, 2026)

Parents identified the same character and religious outcomes as their primary reason for valuing the *madrasah*. They emphasized its religious atmosphere, its habituation routines, and the moral example (*keteladanan*) set by teachers. They raised concerns or suggestions mainly through informal conversations at pick-up time or during occasional school committee meetings rather than through any structured evaluation channel. One parent described this relationship:

> "What makes us satisfied with this madrasah is the religious environment and how the teachers guide our children's daily worship, politeness, and akhlak at home. If we have questions or suggestions about our child's learning difficulties or school communication, we simply talk directly to the teacher when picking up our child; we have never filled out a formal parent satisfaction questionnaire." (P1, interview, January 22, 2026)

The contrast between what the *madrasah* recorded and what its community valued lies at the core of this theme. On one side were cognitive test scores, carefully measured, archived, and reported, yet capturing only a narrow part of what Islamic education promises families. On the other side were character formation (*pembentukan akhlak*), spiritual habituation, and parental trust.

Teachers and parents alike recognized these outcomes, yet they existed only as personal impressions and informal conversation. The document review confirmed that the *madrasah* kept no character observation rubric, worship monitoring book, student reflection journal, or stakeholder satisfaction survey among its quality records. As a result, the *madrasah* could not demonstrate its most valued spiritual and moral outcomes to supervisors, to accreditors, or even to itself. It also had no objective means of determining whether these outcomes were improving, holding steady, or declining over time. The outcomes were real and visible in daily interaction. Without documented evidence, however, they could not inform lesson planning, guide supervision, or enter the improvement cycle described in the previous theme.

Discussion

The central finding of this study is that the gap between quality standards and classroom practice at MI Nurul Mun'im did not stem from a lack of standards. It arose in the second half of the quality cycle, where measurement should feed analysis and analysis should feed improvement. This pattern partly confirms and partly qualifies earlier research on ISO-based systems in schools. Like the schools examined by Awad and Abu Samra (2023), the *madrasah* gained orderly documentation and experienced the system largely as administrative workload. Unlike those schools, however, it did not convert documentation into evaluation and improvement, which were the areas where they reported their clearest gains. A second comparison is equally instructive. **Fauziah et al. (2025)** found that documentation can play a positive role when it gives schools strategic focus and a foundation for planning. At MI Nurul Mun'im, documents were written for supervisors and accreditors rather than for internal use, so they never acquired that strategic function. The contrast suggests that bureaucracy in itself is neither the problem nor the solution. What matters is whether documents are tied to a decision that someone inside the school must make.

The finding that lesson quality depended on individual teachers also differs in an important way from comparable cases. In the institution examined by **Khan et al. (2024)**, the quality system was used to assess teacher performance and to organize training and workshops. In the school studied by **Bahrin et al. (2026)**, the principal's commitment drove competency development and assessment systems. Compared with these schools, MI Nurul Mun'im possessed the leadership position and the supervision routine but directed both toward administrative folders rather than teaching methods. As a result, the leadership driver that the Baldrige framework places at the start of the causal chain **(Co & Soriano, 2022)** never reached the classroom. This reinforces the argument of **Dahrani and Mahnun (2026)** that principal leadership must target teacher competence directly. The study also adds a dimension that these studies did not emphasize. The strongest teaching observed was sustained by teachers' personal ethic of *amanah*, *ihsan*, and *itqan*. This resonates with evidence that spiritual leadership can raise service quality in Islamic institutions **(Fu'ad et al., 2026; Sopian et al., 2026; Syihabuddin & Kholqi, 2026)**. In this case, however, the ethic operated privately and therefore could not spread beyond the teachers who already held it.

The broken loop between assessment and planning is the most consequential finding, and the comparison with related studies clarifies why. In schools with mature quality systems, the strongest effects on teaching have appeared precisely in evaluation and classroom methodology, and these effects were larger in smaller schools **(Alrabai, 2021; Bulling, 2026)**. This suggests that a small *madrasah* is not inherently disadvantaged in building a data-driven improvement routine. **Manomenidis et al. (2026)** reached a similar conclusion in a setting with limited resources, where simple progress-tracking tools and periodic evaluation allowed teachers to adjust instruction. MI Nurul Mun'im already held the raw material for such a routine in its complete score ledgers. In contrast to these cases, it lacked the practice of reviewing those records collectively and turning them into written decisions. Leadership acknowledged this gap, which distinguishes the case from

one of neglect. It points instead to a missing structure that ISO 21001 Clauses 9 and 10 explicitly require **(Bashir et al., 2024)** and that the Baldrige measurement category is designed to assess.

The treatment of character outcomes reveals a problem that is specific to Islamic education and remains underexamined in the quality management literature. Studies of ISO 21001 in Islamic institutions have reported gains in service quality and participatory improvement **(Syarnubi et al., 2026)**, and reviews identify leadership, culture, and resources as the conditions for successful adoption **(Syahid et al., 2025)**. Neither line of research, however, addresses how a school should evidence the moral and spiritual outcomes it promises. Compared with the school studied by **Narot and Kiettikunwong (2024)**, which measured parental satisfaction through a structured survey, MI Nurul Mun'im relied entirely on informal conversation and teacher memory. The result was a paradox. The outcomes that teachers and parents valued most were the ones the *madrasah* could least demonstrate, so its formal quality record defaulted to test scores. This study names this condition the value–evidence gap. It also supports the view that character formation is a structural achievement rather than a by-product of goodwill **(Agus & Farisatma, 2025; Vidad, 2026)**. Closing the gap does not require reducing *akhlak* to a single score. It requires a small set of observable behaviors, teacher notes, and student reflections that are reviewed alongside academic data each semester.

Synthesizing the four themes, this study proposes the *Amanah-Anchored Quality Loop*. The model identifies three gaps that interrupt the quality cycle in an uncertified Islamic elementary school: a documentation–enactment gap between written standards and classroom practice, a value–evidence gap between valued outcomes and recorded outcomes, and a measurement–improvement gap between assessment data and subsequent planning. Each gap is closed by a specific bridge: practice-focused supervision, holistic evidence capture, and a semester-based joint review that ends in a written improvement plan. ISO 21001 governs the process logic of each bridge, while Baldrige links the bridges to leadership, workforce development, stakeholder listening, and results. The model's distinctive element lies at its center. Existing applications of ISO and Baldrige in Islamic schools tend to treat Islamic values as context or as a desired outcome. In contrast, this model treats *amanah*, *ihsan*, and *itqan* as the institutional engine of the loop. The personal ethic that sustained the best teaching in this case is converted into a shared obligation to plan, enact, evidence, and improve.

Figure 1. The Amanah-Anchored Quality Loop

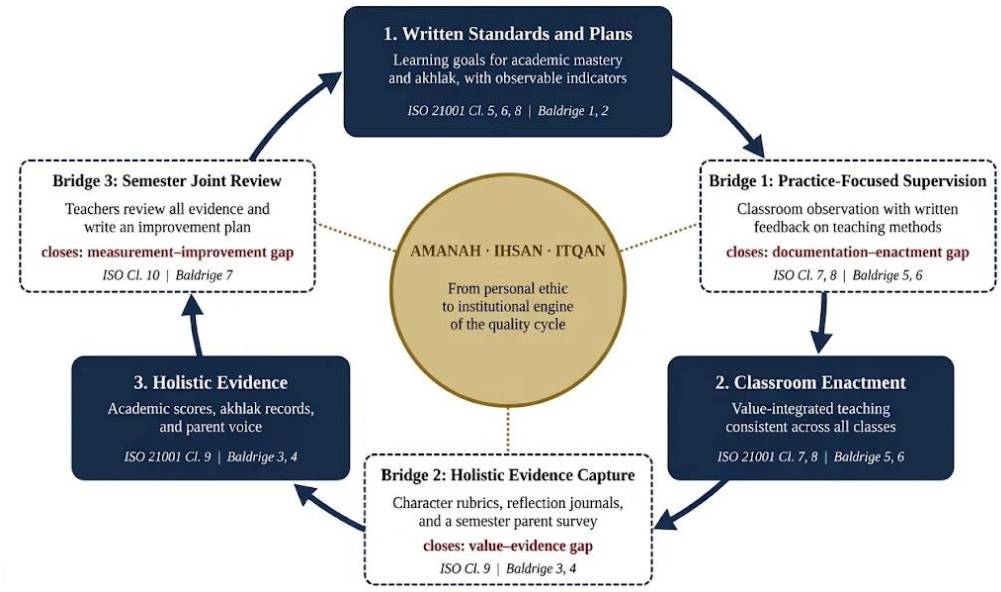


Figure 2. The Amanah-Anchored Quality Loop: a synthesis of the findings
Note. Developed by the authors from the four themes of this study.

Figure 2 presents the model as a single cycle. The three blue boxes represent the stages of learning quality, and the arrows show how each stage should feed the next. The dashed boxes mark the bridges that the findings of this study identify as missing, and each is labeled with the gap it closes and the ISO 21001 clauses and Baldrige categories that govern it. At the center, the ethic of *amanah*, *ihsan*, and *itqan* connects all three bridges, which indicates that the loop depends on this shared moral commitment rather than on procedure alone.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explain how learning quality in Islamic education is managed at MI Nurul Mun'im and why written standards had limited influence on classroom practice. The analysis showed that the weakest points lay in turning evidence into decisions rather than in preparing standards. These conclusions come with several limitations. The study examined a single uncertified *madrasah* over one month of fieldwork, so its findings describe one case in depth and cannot be generalized to madrasahs of different sizes, resources, or accreditation status. Parental perspectives came from only one informant, and students were not interviewed. The link between process quality and learning outcomes was also inferred analytically rather than measured over time. Future research should test the *Amanah*-Anchored Quality Loop across several madrasahs using multiple-case or mixed-methods designs. Longitudinal studies that follow one school through repeated improvement cycles would show whether the model changes teaching practice and student outcomes. Researchers could also develop and validate instruments for recording character formation that serve as quality evidence without reducing *akhlak* to a single score.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest regarding the research, authorship, or publication of this article. None of the authors has any financial or personal relationship with Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Nurul Mun'im that could have influenced the findings.

USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGY

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used Claude (Anthropic) to assist with structuring the article, drafting and revising sections of the text, and editing language for grammar and clarity. The research design, fieldwork, data collection, coding, and interpretation of the findings were carried out entirely by the authors. All interview quotations come from the authors' own transcripts. After using this tool, the authors reviewed, verified, and edited all content and take full responsibility for the accuracy and integrity of the published article. The AI tool is not listed as an author because it cannot take responsibility for the work.

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