

The Architecture of Strategic Decision-Making in Islamic Education: Leadership, Governance, Values, and Institutional Transformation

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Abstract

Strategic decision-making is increasingly recognized as a critical component of institutional development in Islamic education, particularly amid changing educational demands, organizational complexity, and growing expectations for effective governance. However, existing scholarship remains fragmented, with leadership, governance, Islamic values, and institutional development often examined as separate dimensions. This systematic review aims to reconstruct the architecture of strategic decision-making in Islamic education by examining how leadership capability, participatory governance, Islamic values, and institutional context interact to shape strategic choices and institutional transformation. The study employed a systematic literature review guided by the PRISMA 2020 framework, using Scopus and Web of Science as the principal databases. Relevant literature was identified through combinations of keywords related to strategic decision-making, Islamic education, educational leadership, governance, Islamic leadership, strategic management, and institutional development. The selected literature was analyzed through thematic synthesis to identify recurring concepts, relationships, and explanatory patterns. The review indicates that strategic decision-making in Islamic education is not merely a rational managerial process but a context-sensitive, participatory, and value-oriented organizational process. Leadership provides strategic judgment and sense-making, while participatory governance strengthens deliberation, stakeholder engagement, and accountability. Islamic values, particularly *amanah*, *‘adl*, *shūrā*, *maslahah*, and *mas’uliyah*, provide an ethical architecture for evaluating institutional choices. The review further shows that strategic decisions contribute to institutional transformation only when supported by strategic alignment, implementation capacity, organizational action, and organizational learning. Based on these findings, the study proposes an integrated architecture connecting institutional challenges, leadership and governance, strategic decision-making, implementation, organizational learning, and institutional transformation. The framework offers a conceptual foundation for strengthening strategic management in Islamic educational institutions.

Keywords: Strategic Decision-Making, Islamic Education, Educational Leadership, Participatory Governance

Article History:

Received: July 2025; Revised: September 2025; Accepted: November 2025

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61987/edsojou.v3i2.3096>

How to Cite:

Rahmawati, Y. T. N. (2025). The Architecture of Strategic Decision-Making in Islamic Education: Leadership, Governance, Values, and Institutional Transformation. *Education and Sociedad Journal*, 3(2), 194-209.

INTRODUCTION

Strategic decision-making has become an increasingly important dimension of educational management as educational institutions face complex organizational environments, changing societal expectations, technological transformation, resource constraints, and growing demands for institutional accountability (Ahmad et al., 2025). Educational leaders are no longer responsible merely for maintaining routine administrative functions; they are expected to determine institutional priorities, allocate resources, manage organizational change, respond to external

pressures, and establish long-term directions for institutional development (Alsyabani et al., 2024). In this context, strategic decision-making represents a central managerial process through which educational institutions interpret their internal capabilities and external environments and translate these considerations into organizational choices. Strategic decisions consequently influence not only immediate institutional performance but also the capacity of educational organizations to adapt, innovate, and sustain their educational missions.

The significance of strategic decision-making becomes more complex in Islamic educational institutions because these institutions operate within a distinctive normative and organizational environment. Unlike organizations whose strategic orientation may be primarily defined by efficiency, competitiveness, or financial performance, Islamic educational institutions are expected to pursue educational, moral, spiritual, and social objectives simultaneously. Strategic decisions must therefore accommodate institutional sustainability and educational effectiveness while remaining consistent with Islamic values and the broader mission of Islamic education. Faqih argue that conventional strategic management cannot simply be transferred from business organizations into Islamic educational institutions because its assumptions are frequently associated with competitiveness and organizational returns that do not fully correspond to the normative purposes of Islamic education. This suggests that strategic decision-making in Islamic education requires an expanded conceptual framework capable of integrating managerial rationality with ethical and religious considerations (Faqih et al., 2025).

Leadership represents one of the most important determinants of strategic decision-making in educational institutions. Leaders are responsible for interpreting organizational circumstances, identifying strategic priorities, mobilizing stakeholders, managing competing interests, and determining the direction of institutional development. In educational settings, strategic leadership extends beyond formal authority because institutional decisions are implemented through teachers, administrative personnel, students, parents, governing bodies, and wider communities. The quality of strategic decisions therefore depends partly on the capacity of leaders to communicate institutional goals, encourage participation, negotiate differences, and build collective commitment (Fonsén & Soukainen, 2020). A recent systematic review of Islamic educational leadership demonstrates that Islamic leadership incorporates both an internal spiritual dimension and observable administrative principles, including *amanah*, honesty, compassion, patience, justice, and *shūrā* (Fadillah & Miftahussurur, 2025). These principles provide an important foundation for reconsidering how strategic decisions are formulated and implemented within Islamic educational organizations.

Strategic decision-making is also closely connected with governance. Governance determines how authority is distributed, how institutional decisions are legitimized, how stakeholders participate, and how accountability is maintained. Effective governance can create institutional structures through which strategic decisions are informed by diverse perspectives rather than being concentrated exclusively in the hands of formal leaders (Fatmawati et al., 2024). In Islamic educational institutions, governance may involve school or madrasah leaders, teachers, foundations, parents, community representatives, religious authorities, and government agencies. Such plurality creates opportunities for collaborative decision-making but can also generate competing interests and institutional tensions. Consequently, strategic decision-making requires governance mechanisms capable of balancing participation, authority, accountability, and institutional coherence.

Recent literature reinforces the relationship between leadership, governance, and organizational development in Islamic education. Research on strategic management in Islamic educational institutions indicates that strategic planning, leadership commitment, and stakeholder

involvement are important for strengthening organizational effectiveness and educational quality, while Islamic principles such as *amanah*, *shūrā*, and *mas'uliyah* can provide an ethical foundation for institutional governance (Abas Hidayat et al., 2021). The integration of these dimensions suggests that strategic management in Islamic education should not be conceptualized as a purely technical process of formulating plans (Miftahussurur et al., 2025). Instead, it is a governance process through which institutional actors collectively determine priorities and translate institutional values into organizational practices.

The relationship between strategic decision-making and institutional development is particularly important. Institutional development encompasses changes in organizational capacity, human resources, educational programs, governance structures, infrastructure, institutional culture, and educational quality. Strategic decisions become meaningful when they are translated into concrete institutional actions and sustained over time. A well-designed strategic plan, for example, may have limited impact if leaders lack the organizational capacity to implement it, if stakeholders do not share the institutional vision, or if governance structures do not support coordinated action. Recent research on Islamic educational institutions similarly identifies a continuing challenge in translating strategic plans into consistent operational practices (Göçen, 2021). This indicates that strategic decision-making should be analyzed as part of a broader cycle connecting strategic formulation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and institutional learning.

Another important issue concerns the relationship between rational decision-making and Islamic ethical orientation. Conventional strategic management often emphasizes environmental analysis, resource assessment, goal formulation, alternatives evaluation, and performance outcomes. These mechanisms remain relevant to Islamic educational institutions, but their application requires contextual adaptation. Strategic decisions in Islamic education must also consider whether institutional choices are consistent with principles of justice, trustworthiness, consultation, responsibility, and public benefit. Recent research on Islamic school planning suggests that decision quality can be strengthened by integrating technical managerial rationality with Islamic principles such as *shūrā*, *amanah*, *'adl*, and *maslahah* (Adawiyah et al., 2024). Such an approach positions Islamic values not as supplementary moral language but as an integral component of the decision-making framework.

Shūrā is particularly significant because it introduces deliberation and collective participation into the strategic decision-making process. Rather than positioning strategic decisions exclusively as outcomes of hierarchical authority, *shūrā* encourages leaders to consider diverse perspectives before determining institutional priorities. This does not imply that leadership authority disappears; rather, authority is exercised through a process of consultation, accountability, and responsible judgment. The principle of *amanah* similarly establishes that institutional authority should be exercised as a responsibility rather than as personal privilege. *'adl* requires decision-makers to consider fairness in the distribution of opportunities, resources, responsibilities, and institutional benefits, while *maslahah* directs strategic choices toward broader educational and social benefit (A'la & Makhshun, 2022). These principles can provide a normative architecture through which strategic decision-making becomes both organizationally rational and ethically responsible.

Nevertheless, the existing literature remains fragmented. Studies of Islamic educational leadership frequently focus on leadership styles, principal competencies, organizational culture, or teacher performance, while studies of strategic management tend to emphasize planning, institutional competitiveness, and organizational effectiveness. Governance research, meanwhile, often examines accountability, participation, and institutional structures independently from the

strategic decision-making process. A recent systematic review of educational leadership and management research in Muslim societies found that much of the international literature has concentrated on leadership, principals, organizational behavior, climate, and culture, demonstrating the richness of the field but also the fragmentation of research themes (M. A. Abdullah, 2017). More recent reviews of madrasah management similarly indicate that leadership, culture, and innovation are often examined as separate constructs, producing fragmented understandings of institutional governance (Alfiyanto et al., 2024).

This fragmentation creates an important research gap. Existing studies provide valuable insights into leadership practices, governance mechanisms, strategic management, and Islamic values, but there remains limited synthesis explaining how these dimensions interact specifically through strategic decision-making to shape institutional development. In other words, the literature has established that leadership matters, governance matters, and Islamic values matter, but the mechanisms through which these dimensions converge in strategic institutional decisions remain insufficiently conceptualized. This gap is particularly important because strategic decisions are the point at which leadership intentions, governance arrangements, organizational resources, contextual realities, and normative commitments are translated into institutional choices.

The issue is also increasingly relevant in the context of rapid institutional transformation. Islamic educational institutions are confronted with technological change, shifting demographic and social conditions, demands for educational quality, increasing competition, financial pressures, and expectations for greater transparency and accountability. These conditions require institutions to make decisions under uncertainty while preserving their educational identity. Strategic decision-making therefore becomes a mechanism through which Islamic educational institutions can reconcile continuity and change: maintaining their normative foundations while adapting organizational structures and practices to new challenges. Recent scholarship on Islamic educational governance has consequently proposed more integrated frameworks that connect normative-ethical foundations with structural and operational governance mechanisms (A. Z. Abidin et al., 2024).

Against this background, this study aims to systematically review and synthesize the literature on strategic decision-making in Islamic education, with particular attention to the interaction among leadership, governance, and institutional development. The study addresses three central questions: how strategic decision-making is conceptualized and practiced in Islamic educational institutions; what leadership and governance factors shape strategic decision-making; and how strategic decisions contribute to institutional development. By bringing these dimensions together, the study seeks to move beyond fragmented discussions of leadership, governance, and strategic management and develop an integrated understanding of strategic decision-making in Islamic education.

The study contributes theoretically by conceptualizing strategic decision-making as a multidimensional process located at the intersection of leadership capability, governance mechanisms, organizational context, and Islamic ethical values. Rather than treating Islamic principles as an external normative addition to conventional management, the review positions them as part of the institutional logic through which strategic choices are evaluated and legitimized. Practically, the study provides a framework that can assist leaders of madrasahs and other Islamic educational institutions in strengthening strategic planning, stakeholder participation, resource allocation, organizational adaptation, and institutional development. Ultimately, the study argues that effective strategic decision-making in Islamic education requires more than technically rational choices; it requires the integration of strategic leadership, participatory governance, contextual judgment, organizational capacity, and Islamic ethical responsibility. Such integration provides a

foundation for developing Islamic educational institutions that are adaptive, accountable, sustainable, and faithful to their educational mission.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a systematic literature review (SLR) to identify, evaluate, and synthesize scholarly evidence concerning strategic decision-making in Islamic education, with particular attention to the roles of leadership, governance, and institutional development. The SLR approach was selected because the literature on strategic decision-making in Islamic educational institutions is conceptually diverse and distributed across several research domains, including educational leadership, Islamic educational management, organizational governance, strategic management, and institutional development. A systematic approach was therefore considered appropriate for integrating fragmented findings and identifying conceptual patterns across existing studies (Snyder, 2019). The review process was guided by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 framework to enhance transparency, consistency, and reproducibility (Moher et al., 2009).

The literature search was conducted using Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) as the principal bibliographic databases. These databases were selected because they provide extensive coverage of peer-reviewed international literature and facilitate systematic identification of scholarly publications relevant to educational management and leadership. The search strategy was developed around four conceptual clusters: strategic decision-making, Islamic education, leadership and governance, and institutional development. Search terms included “strategic decision-making,” “strategic decision making,” “strategic management,” “decision-making in education,” “Islamic education,” “Islamic educational institutions,” “madrasah,” “Islamic school,” “educational leadership,” “Islamic leadership,” “educational governance,” “institutional governance,” “organizational development,” and “institutional development.” Boolean operators AND and OR were applied to combine the terms and identify publications addressing intersections among the principal concepts.

The eligibility criteria were established prior to the screening process. Studies were included when they were published as peer-reviewed journal articles, addressed strategic decision-making or closely related strategic management processes, examined educational institutions or organizations within an Islamic education context, and contained substantive discussion of leadership, governance, organizational development, institutional effectiveness, or educational quality. Studies examining Islamic educational institutions indirectly were also considered when their findings provided relevant theoretical or empirical insights into strategic decision-making. Studies were excluded when they focused exclusively on technical issues without managerial relevance, dealt with non-educational organizations, consisted of editorials, book reviews, conference abstracts, opinion pieces, or other non-peer-reviewed materials, or lacked sufficient information for analytical synthesis. Duplicate records retrieved from multiple databases were identified and removed before subsequent screening.

The study selection process followed four sequential stages consistent with PRISMA 2020: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. During the identification stage, all records retrieved from Scopus and WoS were compiled into a single bibliographic dataset. Duplicate publications were subsequently removed. During the screening stage, titles and abstracts were examined against the predefined eligibility criteria. Publications considered potentially relevant were then subjected to full-text assessment. At the eligibility stage, articles were examined in greater depth to determine whether they provided substantive evidence concerning the relationship between strategic decision-making, leadership, governance, and institutional

development. Articles satisfying all criteria were included in the final qualitative synthesis. The numbers of records identified, duplicates removed, articles screened, full texts assessed, excluded studies, and included studies will be reported in a PRISMA flow diagram.

A structured data-extraction matrix was developed to ensure consistency across the selected studies. The extracted information included author, publication year, country or geographical context, research design, institutional setting, theoretical framework, conceptualization of strategic decision-making, leadership dimensions, governance mechanisms, stakeholder involvement, organizational factors, Islamic values or principles, institutional development outcomes, major findings, and identified limitations. Particular attention was given to the mechanisms through which leadership and governance influence strategic decision-making and the ways in which strategic decisions are subsequently translated into institutional development.

The analysis employed thematic synthesis because the expected literature was characterized by substantial conceptual, methodological, and contextual heterogeneity. The selected studies were initially coded according to recurring concepts associated with strategic decision-making, leadership, governance, institutional capacity, organizational culture, stakeholder participation, Islamic values, strategic implementation, and institutional development. Related codes were subsequently grouped into broader analytical themes. The synthesis then compared relationships among these themes to identify convergences, differences, and conceptual gaps across the literature. Particular emphasis was placed on identifying mechanisms rather than merely summarizing individual studies.

Finally, the synthesized findings were integrated into a conceptual framework explaining strategic decision-making in Islamic education. The framework considers leadership capability, governance mechanisms, organizational context, and Islamic ethical values as interconnected dimensions shaping strategic decision-making. Strategic decisions are subsequently conceptualized as mechanisms through which institutions translate leadership intentions and governance processes into strategic implementation and institutional development. This analytical approach enables the review to move beyond a descriptive account of previous research toward a theoretically informed reconstruction of strategic decision-making as a central management process in Islamic educational institutions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Strategic Decision-Making in Islamic Education

The synthesis of the literature indicates that strategic decision-making in Islamic education is best understood as an interconnected organizational process rather than as an isolated managerial activity. Educational institutions operate within increasingly complex environments in which leaders must respond simultaneously to educational demands, resource limitations, technological developments, accountability pressures, institutional competition, and changing expectations from communities. Under such conditions, strategic decisions determine not only the allocation of existing resources but also the direction of institutional development and the capacity of Islamic educational organizations to adapt to changing circumstances. Strategic decision-making therefore occupies a central position within educational management because it connects institutional interpretation, leadership judgment, governance arrangements, organizational values, and future-oriented action (Z. Abidin, 2020).

The literature further suggests that strategic decision-making should be distinguished from routine administrative decision-making. Administrative decisions are generally concerned with maintaining existing organizational processes, whereas strategic decisions involve choices that have significant implications for institutional direction, priorities, resource allocation, and long-term

development. In educational organizations, strategic decisions may concern curriculum orientation, teacher development, institutional restructuring, resource mobilization, technological transformation, quality assurance, partnership development, and responses to changing educational environments (Akdon, 2006). This distinction is particularly important in Islamic education because institutional leaders must simultaneously preserve the identity and mission of Islamic education while responding to contemporary demands. Strategic management in Islamic educational institutions therefore requires an approach that combines managerial rationality with normative and educational considerations (M. A. Abdullah, 2017).

Leadership constitutes the first major component of this architecture. The reviewed literature indicates that strategic decision-making is strongly influenced by the ability of educational leaders to interpret institutional conditions, formulate priorities, evaluate alternatives, mobilize organizational resources, and establish a shared direction. Leadership is consequently not simply an antecedent to decision-making but an interpretive mechanism through which organizational circumstances acquire strategic meaning (Dausat & Rosid, 2025). Leaders determine which problems are regarded as urgent, which opportunities are considered feasible, and which institutional objectives deserve priority. This interpretive function makes leadership judgment particularly important when institutions face uncertainty or conflicting demands.

In Islamic educational settings, however, leadership judgment cannot be separated from the normative responsibilities attached to institutional authority. Recent scholarship on Islamic educational leadership identifies principles such as *amanah*, justice, compassion, honesty, patience, and *shūrā* as important foundations of leadership practice (Miftahussurur et al., 2025; Aziz et al., 2025). These principles imply that strategic authority should not be exercised merely as a mechanism for achieving organizational efficiency. Instead, authority constitutes a responsibility that requires leaders to consider the consequences of institutional choices for students, teachers, communities, and the broader educational mission. Consequently, leadership within the strategic decision-making architecture has both managerial and ethical dimensions.

The second component concerns governance. Strategic decisions rarely emerge exclusively from individual leaders. They are shaped by institutional structures that determine who participates, how information circulates, how competing interests are negotiated, and how decisions acquire legitimacy. Governance therefore provides the institutional architecture within which strategic choices are discussed and implemented (Akhyar, 2024). Effective governance can strengthen the quality of decision-making by incorporating diverse perspectives and ensuring that strategic choices reflect broader institutional needs rather than the preferences of a single decision-maker. Conversely, highly centralized governance may accelerate decisions but potentially reduce participation, ownership, and organizational learning.

This governance dimension is particularly significant in Islamic educational institutions because authority is often distributed among multiple actors, including principals, teachers, foundations, governing boards, religious leaders, parents, community representatives, and government agencies. Such pluralism can enrich strategic decision-making but can also create competing expectations and institutional tensions. Strategic governance therefore requires mechanisms for balancing authority, participation, accountability, and institutional coherence (Díez et al., 2020). Research on educational governance consistently emphasizes that institutional effectiveness depends partly on the ability of organizations to establish structures through which stakeholders can contribute to planning, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation.

Within Islamic education, *shūrā* provides a particularly important conceptual foundation for participatory governance. *Shūrā* should not be interpreted simply as a procedural meeting or consultation mechanism. In a strategic management context, it represents a principle of

deliberative decision-making through which relevant perspectives are considered before institutional choices are finalized. The principle does not eliminate leadership authority; rather, it provides an ethical and relational framework within which authority is exercised responsibly (DwiYama et al., 2025). Through *shūrā*, strategic decision-making can become a process of collective sense-making in which leaders and stakeholders examine institutional problems, evaluate alternatives, and develop shared commitment to selected strategies. This interpretation is consistent with recent research emphasizing the importance of integrating participatory governance and Islamic values within educational management (Cook & Cook, 2024).

The third component of the architecture is Islamic values. The literature suggests that Islamic values should not be positioned as an external moral supplement to an otherwise conventional management system. Rather, they can function as an internal logic through which strategic alternatives are evaluated. In this framework, *amanah* provides a foundation for responsible exercise of institutional authority; *ʿadl* establishes considerations of fairness and equity; *shūrā* encourages deliberation and participation; *maslahah* directs decisions toward educational and social benefit; and *masʿuliyah* reinforces responsibility for the consequences of institutional choices (Akdon, 2006; Anshori et al., 2025). These principles influence not only the final decision but also the criteria by which alternatives are considered legitimate and appropriate.

The integration of values into strategic decision-making is important because rational organizational decisions may produce different outcomes depending on the normative framework through which they are evaluated. For example, a decision to allocate resources to one institutional unit may be justified on the basis of efficiency but questioned from the perspective of equity (Dausat & Rosid, 2025). Similarly, a strategy that improves short-term institutional performance may be reconsidered if it undermines teacher well-being, student development, or the institution's long-term educational mission. Islamic values therefore broaden the meaning of strategic rationality. Strategic decisions are expected to be effective and feasible, but they must also be ethically legitimate and aligned with the purposes of Islamic education (Eferi, 2016).

The fourth component concerns institutional context. The synthesis indicates that strategic decision-making cannot be separated from the circumstances in which institutions operate. Islamic educational institutions differ considerably in terms of organizational size, financial resources, leadership capacity, teacher competencies, geographical location, community characteristics, technological infrastructure, and governance structures (Halimah et al., 2024). Consequently, strategic choices that are appropriate in one institution may not be feasible in another (Akhyar, 2024). Context affects the availability of strategic alternatives and determines the resources and capacities required for implementation. Strategic management in Islamic education therefore requires contextual judgment rather than universal application of standardized management models.

The interaction between leadership, governance, values, and context produces what can be conceptualized as strategic sense-making. Leaders interpret institutional conditions, governance mechanisms provide opportunities for deliberation, Islamic values establish normative boundaries, and contextual realities determine the feasibility of alternative courses of action (Avelar et al., 2019). Strategic decision-making subsequently emerges from the interaction of these dimensions rather than from any single factor. This interpretation extends conventional approaches to strategic management by recognizing that institutional decisions are simultaneously cognitive, organizational, relational, contextual, and ethical (Bush, 2020).

The literature also reveals that strategic decision-making is influenced by the quality of organizational information and institutional learning. Although strategic decisions may begin with leaders' perceptions of institutional conditions, effective organizations increasingly rely on multiple

sources of evidence, including performance indicators, stakeholder feedback, financial information, teacher evaluations, student outcomes, and environmental analysis (Buchori et al., 2023). However, evidence does not determine decisions automatically. It must be interpreted through organizational dialogue and leadership judgment. This observation connects strategic decision-making with the broader literature on evidence-informed educational management, which emphasizes that evidence becomes useful when organizational actors collectively interpret its implications and translate it into strategic action (Apiyani, 2024).

An important implication of this synthesis is that strategic decision-making in Islamic education should be understood as a dynamic process rather than a single event. Institutions continuously encounter new information, changing circumstances, emerging opportunities, and unexpected constraints. Strategic choices must therefore be monitored and reconsidered as implementation generates new evidence. This creates a cyclical process in which institutional conditions inform strategic interpretation, strategic interpretation informs decisions, decisions produce organizational responses, and organizational responses generate new information for subsequent strategic reflection. Such a cycle provides the foundation for organizational learning and long-term institutional adaptation.

Based on the reviewed literature, the architecture of strategic decision-making in Islamic education can therefore be reconstructed around four interconnected dimensions: leadership capability, governance mechanisms, Islamic values, and institutional context. Leadership provides strategic direction and judgment; governance structures facilitate participation, deliberation, and legitimacy; Islamic values provide the ethical logic through which strategic alternatives are evaluated; and institutional context determines the feasibility and appropriateness of strategic choices (Allui & Sahni, 2016; Greany & Kamp, 2024). These dimensions converge in strategic decision-making, which subsequently becomes the mechanism through which institutional priorities are established and organizational resources are mobilized.

The resulting synthesis suggests that strategic decision-making in Islamic education should not be conceptualized as a purely rational selection among alternative organizational strategies. It is better understood as an institutional choice process in which leadership, governance, values, and context interact to determine what an institution considers desirable, legitimate, and feasible. The quality of strategic decision-making cannot be evaluated solely by the rationality of the decision itself but also by its ethical legitimacy, stakeholder ownership, contextual appropriateness, implementation capacity, and contribution to the long-term development of the Islamic educational institution.

Institutional Transformation

The synthesis of the literature indicates that strategic decision-making acquires its organizational significance only when strategic choices are translated into coordinated institutional action. A strategic decision may establish a direction, but it does not by itself produce institutional transformation. The distance between deciding what an institution should pursue and achieving meaningful organizational change constitutes an important implementation challenge in educational management. In Islamic educational institutions, this challenge is particularly significant because strategic initiatives must operate within complex organizational structures, diverse stakeholder expectations, resource constraints, and distinctive educational and religious missions (M. M. Abdullah et al., 2024). Consequently, institutional transformation should be understood as a process through which strategic choices are aligned with organizational capacities, translated into practical interventions, evaluated through institutional learning, and continuously adjusted to changing circumstances.

Strategic decisions are more likely to contribute to institutional development when they are connected coherently with institutional vision, mission, objectives, and available resources. Strategic management is therefore not simply concerned with determining desirable future conditions but with establishing alignment between institutional aspirations and organizational capabilities. Fanani et al. (2024) argue that strategic management in Islamic educational institutions requires attention to institutional mission and the distinctive purposes of Islamic education rather than merely adopting managerial models derived from commercial organizations. Institutional transformation should begin with clarity regarding what the institution seeks to preserve, develop, and achieve (Fanani & Pohl, 2024).

Strategic alignment also requires leaders to translate broad institutional visions into identifiable priorities. An institution may aspire to improve educational quality, strengthen teacher professionalism, develop digital learning, or expand community engagement, but these ambitions require prioritization. Strategic decision-making determines which objectives should receive attention first and how institutional resources should be organized around them (Day & Dragoni, 2015). In this respect, strategic decisions function as mechanisms for converting institutional aspirations into manageable organizational priorities. Without such alignment, strategic initiatives may become fragmented, producing multiple programs that compete for resources without generating coherent institutional development (Bush & Glover, 2014).

The second pattern concerns implementation capacity. The literature demonstrates that the effectiveness of strategic decisions depends substantially on whether institutions possess sufficient human, financial, organizational, and infrastructural capacity to implement them. A strategically appropriate decision can fail when institutional actors lack the competencies, resources, authority, or coordination mechanisms required to translate it into action. This observation highlights an important distinction between strategic quality and implementation feasibility. Effective strategic management must therefore consider not only what should be done but also whether the institution is capable of doing it, under what conditions, and with which resources (Bush, 2020).

In Islamic educational institutions, implementation capacity is closely connected with human resource management. Teachers and educational personnel are the principal actors through whom many strategic initiatives become operational. Decisions concerning curriculum development, instructional improvement, technology integration, student support, or quality assurance ultimately require changes in professional practice. Strategic leadership must therefore connect institutional priorities with teacher development, professional learning, supervision, and performance support (Aziz et al., 2025). When strategic decisions are disconnected from human resource development, implementation may remain superficial because organizational actors do not possess the competencies or commitment required to enact the intended changes.

Teacher professional development consequently represents one of the most important pathways between strategic decision-making and institutional transformation. Evidence from the broader literature on educational improvement suggests that sustainable organizational change depends on teachers' capacity to understand, adopt, and adapt new practices. Data-informed professional development can strengthen this process by identifying specific institutional and instructional needs and aligning professional learning with strategic priorities (Aderibigbe et al., 2023). In Islamic education, this alignment can be extended by connecting professional development with the institution's educational philosophy, ensuring that teacher development encompasses not only technical competence but also pedagogical, ethical, and spiritual dimensions.

Strategic implementation should not be viewed as a one-time process in which leaders formulate a decision and organizational members simply execute it. Institutions operate in environments characterized by uncertainty, and strategic interventions may produce outcomes that

differ from initial expectations. Organizational learning therefore becomes essential because institutions need mechanisms through which implementation experiences are reviewed, mistakes are recognized, and strategies are modified. Dwiyama demonstrate that collaborative data use can facilitate organizational learning by enabling educational actors to examine evidence collectively and identify opportunities for improvement. This insight is highly relevant to strategic management because monitoring and reflection transform implementation from a linear process into a learning cycle (Dwiyama et al., 2025).

Organizational learning also changes the meaning of institutional development. Development is not simply an accumulation of new programs, facilities, or administrative procedures. It involves an institution's increasing capacity to understand its environment, respond to emerging challenges, coordinate its resources, and improve its practices over time. Strategic decision-making contributes to institutional development when it strengthens these organizational capabilities (Arifin et al., 2024). Consequently, the long-term value of a strategic decision may lie not only in the immediate outcome it produces but also in the institutional learning and capacity that emerge from its implementation.

Strategic decisions often require coordination across organizational boundaries. A principal may formulate a strategic priority, but its implementation may depend on teachers, administrative staff, governing bodies, foundations, parents, community organizations, and government agencies. Effective governance ensures that responsibilities are clearly distributed, communication is maintained, and stakeholders understand the rationale underlying strategic choices. Participatory governance can also strengthen ownership because stakeholders who participate in decision-making are more likely to perceive implementation as a shared institutional responsibility rather than as an externally imposed directive.

This dimension reinforces the significance of *shūrā* within Islamic strategic management. Consultation should not end when a decision is made; it can continue throughout implementation and evaluation. Stakeholder participation enables leaders to identify implementation barriers, obtain feedback, and adjust strategies in response to changing conditions. Thus, *shūrā* can function as a continuous governance mechanism rather than a single pre-decision procedure. This interpretation expands the conventional understanding of participatory management by positioning consultation as part of an ongoing cycle of strategic learning and institutional adaptation (Miftahussurur et al., 2025).

The fifth pattern concerns the role of Islamic values in determining the direction and legitimacy of institutional transformation. Institutional development in Islamic education cannot be evaluated exclusively through organizational efficiency or performance indicators. Strategic change must remain connected to the educational and moral purposes of the institution. The principles of *amanah*, *ʿadl*, *shūrā*, *maslahah*, and *masʿuliyah* provide a normative framework for determining whether institutional changes are appropriate and responsible. *Amanah* requires leaders to exercise authority responsibly; *ʿadl* requires fairness in distributing institutional opportunities and resources; *shūrā* encourages participatory deliberation; *maslahah* directs decisions toward broader educational and social benefit; and *masʿuliyah* emphasizes accountability for consequences (Ali & Halim, 2023).

This ethical dimension is particularly important when strategic priorities involve competing institutional interests. For example, resource allocation decisions may require leaders to choose between infrastructure development, teacher professional development, student services, and technological investment. A purely efficiency-oriented framework might prioritize interventions according to measurable returns, whereas an Islamic framework requires consideration of fairness, institutional responsibility, educational necessity, and broader benefit (Apiyani, 2024). Islamic

values therefore do not eliminate strategic rationality; rather, they broaden the criteria through which strategic rationality is exercised (Dancer, 2018).

The sixth pattern concerns contextual sensitivity. The synthesis indicates that institutional transformation cannot be achieved through standardized strategies applied uniformly across Islamic educational institutions. Madrasahs and other Islamic educational organizations differ in institutional history, geographical location, financial resources, leadership capacity, teacher competence, student characteristics, community relationships, and governance arrangements. Strategic decisions must therefore be adapted to local circumstances. A strategy that produces positive results in a well-resourced urban institution may require substantial modification in a rural or resource-constrained institution (A. H. Abdullah et al., 2025).

Context-sensitive strategic management requires leaders to distinguish between the strategic objective and the particular pathway used to achieve it. The objective of strengthening teacher professionalism, for example, may remain consistent across institutions, while the mechanisms for achieving it may differ depending on financial resources, teacher availability, technological infrastructure, and geographical accessibility. This distinction allows institutions to maintain strategic coherence while adapting implementation to local realities. It also prevents strategic management from becoming a rigid process in which institutional actors are expected to reproduce standardized models regardless of contextual differences.

The seventh pattern concerns the implementation gap between strategic decisions and institutional transformation. The reviewed literature suggests that this gap may emerge when strategic choices are not accompanied by sufficient organizational capacity, stakeholder commitment, resource support, or monitoring mechanisms. Strategic plans can therefore become symbolic documents rather than instruments of institutional change (Aydarova, 2021). Effective strategic management requires mechanisms for translating priorities into responsibilities, timelines, resources, performance indicators, and feedback processes. Monitoring and evaluation are particularly important because they allow leaders to determine whether strategic interventions are producing intended outcomes and whether modifications are necessary (Halimah et al., 2024).

Institutional transformation should consequently be conceptualized as a cumulative process rather than a single organizational event. Strategic choices establish direction; implementation mobilizes organizational resources; monitoring generates evidence; reflection produces learning; and learning informs subsequent strategic decisions. This creates a recursive relationship between decision-making and institutional development. New institutional conditions may challenge previous assumptions, requiring leaders to revise strategies. Institutional transformation therefore becomes both an outcome of strategic decision-making and a source of new knowledge for future decision-making (Baker, 2011).

The process begins with strategic sense-making, through which leaders and stakeholders interpret institutional challenges and opportunities. Leadership judgment and participatory governance then shape strategic choices, while Islamic values provide an ethical basis for determining their legitimacy and desirability. Strategic choices are subsequently translated into organizational action through resource alignment, human resource development, coordination, and implementation capacity. The results of implementation generate new evidence and experience, which contribute to organizational learning and subsequent strategic adjustment (Al-Turabi & Auda, 2025).

The proposed framework conceptualizes institutional transformation as a dynamic process that begins with the interaction between institutional context and strategic challenges. These conditions shape how educational leaders and governance structures interpret organizational needs, identify priorities, and formulate strategic responses. Leadership and governance

subsequently influence the quality and direction of strategic decision-making by integrating leadership judgment, stakeholder participation, deliberation, and institutional values. Strategic decisions are then translated into strategic alignment and implementation capacity, ensuring that institutional priorities are consistent with the organization's vision, mission, available resources, and operational capabilities. This alignment provides the foundation for coordinated organizational action, through which strategic decisions are transformed into concrete institutional practices and initiatives. As these actions are implemented, institutions generate experiences and feedback that contribute to organizational learning, enabling them to evaluate outcomes, adjust strategies, and develop more adaptive practices. Over time, the interaction between strategic decision-making, implementation, organizational action, and organizational learning contributes to broader institutional transformation. Throughout this process, Islamic values such as *amanah*, *'adl*, *shūrā*, *maslahah*, and *mas'uliyah* function as an ethical architecture that continuously guides institutional judgment, action, accountability, and the pursuit of educational and organizational improvement (Arifin et al., 2024).

Across this process, Islamic values function as an ethical architecture that influences the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of strategic choices. This framework differs from conventional strategic management models because institutional transformation is not conceptualized simply as the result of effective planning. Instead, transformation emerges through the interaction of strategic choice, governance, organizational capacity, contextual adaptation, ethical orientation, and institutional learning.

The strategic decision-making in Islamic education should be understood as a dynamic bridge between institutional choice and institutional transformation. Leadership determines strategic direction, governance creates mechanisms for participation and legitimacy, Islamic values establish ethical boundaries and purposes, and institutional context determines what can realistically be implemented. However, the decisive stage is the translation of strategic choices into coordinated organizational action and sustained learning. Institutional development therefore depends not only on making appropriate strategic decisions but also on developing the organizational capacity to implement, evaluate, and continuously refine those decisions. The architecture of strategic decision-making in Islamic education represents an integrated management process through which institutions seek not merely to respond to current challenges but to build the capacity for sustainable, ethical, and contextually appropriate transformation.

CONCLUSION

This systematic review demonstrates that strategic decision-making in Islamic education is a multidimensional process shaped by leadership capability, participatory governance, Islamic values, institutional context, and implementation capacity. Rather than being a purely rational managerial activity, strategic decision-making connects institutional challenges with organizational choices and long-term transformation. Effective leaders interpret institutional conditions, identify priorities, evaluate alternatives, and mobilize resources, while participatory mechanisms such as consultation and *shūrā* strengthen collective responsibility and accountability. Islamic values, including *amanah*, *'adl*, *shūrā*, *maslahah*, and *mas'uliyah*, provide an ethical foundation for evaluating decisions beyond efficiency and performance. However, strategic decisions only contribute to institutional transformation when supported by adequate resources, strategic alignment, governance effectiveness, organizational learning, and implementation capacity. Accordingly, this review proposes an integrated framework in which institutional challenges stimulate strategic sense-making, leadership and governance shape strategic judgment, Islamic values provide ethical direction, and implementation translates decisions into organizational action and learning. This

framework contributes theoretically by integrating leadership, governance, values, context, implementation, and organizational learning, while practically emphasizing the need to strengthen strategic leadership, participatory governance, institutional learning, and value-based evaluation in Islamic educational institutions.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to all individuals and institutions who contributed to the completion of this study.

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