



# Strategy for Strengthening Madrasah Human Resource Governance in Facing the Challenges of Islamic Education Reform

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## ABSTRACT

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Introduction

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This study aims to identify strategies for strengthening madrasah human resource governance by integrating the development of pedagogical and managerial competencies to respond to the demands of Islamic education reform in the digital era. The study used a qualitative approach with a case study design at MAN 2 Sarolangun, using in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis as data collection techniques. The results of the study indicate that managerial problems, structural barriers, teacher competency mismatches, and limitations in professional development programs interact with each other, resulting in HR management remaining administrative, reactive, and not fully adaptive to Islamic education reform. The theoretical implications of this study emphasize the need for a holistic model of madrasah HR governance, combining managerial, pedagogical, and Islamic value aspects, while the practical implications highlight the importance of developing competency-based professional programs and monitoring teacher needs to improve the quality of learning and the consistency of policy implementation. This study provides guidance for madrasah principals and policy makers in strengthening HR systematically.

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## INTRODUCTION

Education is a crucial foundation for human resource development and the advancement of a nation, including in the context of Muslim communities in Indonesia. Madrasahs, as Islamic educational institutions, play a strategic role not only in transmitting knowledge but also in shaping character, morals, and an understanding of Islamic values (Hefniy & Alwahedi, 2025; Hikmah & Mudarris, 2026; Holidi, 2025; Syafiih, 2025). However, the challenges of modernization,

Islamic education reform, and social dynamics require madrasahs to be able to manage human resources (HR) professionally and adaptively. The quality of education produced depends heavily on the capacity of madrasah principals, teachers, and administrators to plan, organize, and develop the competencies of teaching staff (Dewi & Manshur, 2026; Khofsah, 2025; Kusumawati, 2025). This research is significant because it discusses strategies for strengthening HR governance relevant to the demands of Islamic education reform policies, thereby improving the quality of learning, consistency of policy implementation, and public trust in madrasahs as adaptive, sustainable, and competitive educational institutions in the modern era.

Despite madrasahs' strategic role, human resource management within the madrasah environment still faces various managerial and structural issues. Many madrasahs experience limitations in teacher needs planning, competency mapping, and integrated performance evaluation (Abas & Kholidah, 2025; Ma'isyah et al., 2024; Putri et al., 2024; Rahmatillah & Andayani, 2025). As a result, teacher professional development tends to be sporadic and not always relevant to the demands of Islamic education reform. Structural barriers, such as rigid bureaucracy, top-down regulations, budget constraints, and training quotas, limit madrasahs' flexibility in implementing policies contextually. This problem creates a gap between existing human resource capacity and the competency standards expected in Islamic education reform. Therefore, this research is relevant for identifying barriers and formulating strategies to strengthen systemic madrasah human resource governance, so that madrasahs can align teacher capacity with policy demands, improve learning quality, and support the achievement of Islamic education goals more effectively and sustainably.

Fieldwork shows that human resource management in madrasahs is often administrative and reactive, lacking clear competency-based planning. Principals and administrators often adjust teacher assignments to current conditions, rather than based on a standardized competency needs analysis (Abas & Kholidah, 2025; Ma'isyah et al., 2024; Putri et al., 2024; Rahmatillah & Andayani, 2025). Teacher performance evaluations focus primarily on administrative requirements, while competency improvement is carried out sporadically or independently. Structural barriers are also evident in limited access to training, lengthy bureaucratic procedures, and uniform regulations that do not consider local characteristics. Differences in teacher competency impact the uneven implementation of Islamic education policies in classrooms, resulting in suboptimal learning quality and the internalization of Islamic values (Abas & Kholidah, 2025; Ma'isyah et al., 2024; Putri et al., 2024; Rahmatillah & Andayani, 2025). This situation demonstrates that the success of Islamic education reform in

madrasas depends heavily on the readiness and alignment of human resources, as well as the need for adaptive, contextual, and sustainable governance strategies to ensure effective policy implementation at the educational unit level.

Several previous studies have highlighted the importance of human resource management in Islamic educational institutions, particularly in the context of improving teacher professionalism and the leadership role of madrasa principals. Previous research has emphasized the need for ongoing training, academic supervision, and transformational leadership to improve learning effectiveness and teacher quality (Abas & Kholidah, 2025; Ma'isyah et al., 2024; Putri et al., 2024; Rahmatillah & Andayani, 2025). Other studies highlight that the quality of human resource management contributes significantly to organizational climate and the achievement of educational goals. However, most research still views Islamic education policy as a normative framework, without examining how this policy translates into concrete human resource management practices. Furthermore, some studies focus on individual teachers, while the managerial and structural dimensions of madrasahs as educational organizations have not been comprehensively explored. This indicates a research gap that needs to be filled, particularly regarding the relationship between human resource governance, institutional structure, and the implementation of Islamic education reform policies.

A limitation of previous research lies in the lack of studies on strategies for strengthening systemic human resource governance to address the challenges of Islamic education reform (Faizin, 2024; Hajar, 2024). Most studies emphasize partial teacher capacity building, without simultaneously considering the interaction between managerial, structural, and competency barriers of educators (Iqbal & Ali, 2024; Putra et al., 2024). This research gap is crucial to address because Islamic education reform requires madrasahs to adapt to national standards, competency-based curricula, and adaptive and meaningful learning practices. By integrating managerial, structural, and professional development perspectives, this research can provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors supporting and inhibiting the strengthening of madrasah human resource governance. This approach allows for the identification of effective strategies to enhance teacher capacity, ensure consistent policy implementation, and strengthen madrasah competitiveness in the era of education reform.

The novelty of this research lies in its approach, which combines analysis of human resource management, madrasah institutional structures, and strategies for strengthening systemic governance in addressing Islamic education reform. This research not only describes the problems but also identifies patterns of managerial, structural, and competency barriers that interact and hinder

optimal policy implementation. This approach allows for the development of practical and adaptive strategies, relevant to the local context, and applicable to other madrasahs. The importance of this research lies in its contribution in offering evidence-based guidance for madrasah principals, teachers, and policymakers to strengthen human resource governance, improve the quality of learning, and ensure the consistent and sustainable implementation of Islamic education reform. Thus, this research presents a new perspective that integrates human resource management theory with the practice of implementing Islamic education policies.

Based on the phenomenon and literature review, this research is directed to answer the question: how can strategies for strengthening human resource governance in madrasahs overcome managerial, structural, and competency barriers in facing Islamic education reform? The initial argument of this research is that the misalignment between human resource capacity, institutional structure, and policy demands is a major factor hindering the effective implementation of Islamic education reform. The management of human resources that is still administrative in nature, limited structural autonomy, and the lack of competency-based professional development programs are the main causes of the disparity in teacher quality and inconsistency in learning practices. Through this study, the research is expected to provide theoretical contributions in the form of strengthening the understanding of human resource governance in madrasahs in the context of Islamic education reform, as well as practical contributions in the form of recommendations for adaptive, contextual, and sustainable strategies for madrasah managers and policy makers

## RESEACH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. The choice of a case study design is based on the need to explore the phenomenon in depth, holistically, and contextually, particularly regarding strategies for strengthening human resource (HR) governance in madrasahs in the face of Islamic education reform (Fahmi, 2024; Mulyana et al., 2024; Niam et al., 2024). Case studies allow researchers to understand the complex interactions between HR management, institutional structures, and policy implementation in specific educational units, while capturing the perspectives of various stakeholders, including the madrasah principal, vice principal, teachers, and administrative staff. This design is relevant to the educational management literature, which emphasizes that case studies are effective in answering the questions of "how" and "why" a phenomenon occurs in a real-world context, rather than simply measuring variables quantitatively. A qualitative approach also allows researchers to comprehensively interpret complex, subjective, and contextual

social and managerial practices.

The research location was chosen at MAN 2 Sarolangun because this madrasa has implemented the latest Islamic education policies and has a complete organizational structure, including the principal, vice principal, teachers, and curriculum and personnel managers. The location selection was also based on several important considerations, namely the madrasa actively implements Islamic education policies in accordance with the latest regulations, there is a variety of competencies and experiences of educators that allow for analysis of differences in HR management practices, and the madrasa demonstrates openness to research activities and the availability of adequate data. With these characteristics, MAN 2 Sarolangun is considered representative to describe the problems of madrasa HR management in the context of implementing Islamic education reform.

Data collection was conducted using a combination of techniques to ensure the credibility and depth of the information. In-depth interviews were conducted with the madrasah principal, vice principal, teachers, and administrative staff to explore their perspectives on human resource management, structural barriers, and professional development programs. Participatory observation was also conducted on human resource management practices, learning processes, and policy implementation at the madrasah, so that actual practices that might not have been revealed through interviews were documented (Ahmad & Wilkins, 2025; Nurfajriani et al., 2024). Additionally, document review was conducted on human resource planning documents, teacher evaluation records, training programs, and internal madrasah regulations, providing written evidence to strengthen the field findings. The use of various data collection techniques aimed to triangulate, compare information from various sources, and ensure the validity of the findings.

Data analysis was conducted interactively and continuously through three main stages. The first stage is data reduction, which involves sorting, simplifying, and focusing on information relevant to the research, eliminating irrelevant interview, observation, and document data. The second stage is data presentation, where the reduced data is systematically arranged in narrative, tabular, or diagrammatic form, making it easier to identify patterns, relationships, and important findings. For example, sub-findings related to managerial, structural, and teacher competency are presented concisely to facilitate interpretation. The final stage is data verification, where researchers interpret the data and draw tentative conclusions, which are then verified through triangulation between sources and techniques. This process ensures that the research findings are valid, accurate, and scientifically accountable.

With such a design, location, and data collection techniques, this study not

only describes human resource management practices in madrasas in detail but also interprets the relationships between managerial, structural, and educator competency elements. Qualitative interactive analysis allows researchers to identify strategic challenges and opportunities for strengthening human resource governance, as well as provide applicable recommendations for teacher professional development and the effective implementation of Islamic education policies. The research results are expected to provide theoretical contributions in the form of an in-depth understanding of madrasa human resource management and practical contributions in the form of guidelines for strengthening adaptive and sustainable human resource governance.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Results**

#### **Managerial Problems in Madrasah Human Resource Management**

Managerial challenges in managing human resources in madrasas are interpreted as the limited capacity of madrasah leaders to carry out comprehensive management functions. Management functions include planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating the development of teaching staff. Researchers found that human resource planning is still reactive and situational, adapting to existing conditions without being supported by a clear mapping of teacher competencies. This results in human resource development focusing more on meeting short-term administrative demands, such as document completion and scheduling teaching hours, rather than improving the quality of learning and internalizing Islamic education values according to the latest policies. This operational definition serves as a basis for assessing the extent to which the managerial capacity of madrasah principals plays a role in aligning human resources with Islamic education reform in the digital era.

Interviews with Madrasah Principals revealed that teacher assignments were "more driven by current conditions than by policy-based planning." Researchers interpreted this as indicating a weak strategic orientation in human resource management. Madrasah principals tended to prioritize administrative tasks and short-term needs without considering structured teacher competency mapping and professional development needs. This finding suggests that competency-based strategic planning for teachers has not yet become a routine practice, thus limiting the effectiveness of Islamic education policy implementation in madrasahs. Interviews with the Deputy Principal for Curriculum reinforced this finding. The informant stated that teacher performance evaluations emphasized the completeness of learning materials and administrative reports, rather than the effectiveness of learning and mastery of

pedagogical competencies. Researchers interpreted this as an indication that administrative evaluations have not provided meaningful feedback for improving teacher quality. This suggests that managerial problems arise not only from planning but also from evaluation practices that are not yet strategic, resulting in reactive and administrative HR management.

Observations of HR planning and evaluation documents corroborate the interview findings. Researchers found a lack of systematic teacher competency mapping, resulting in task distribution and professional development programs being conducted without a clear needs analysis. Researchers interpret this as an indicator of weak madrasah HR management in aligning teacher capacity with the demands of Islamic education reform. Overall, the data patterns indicate that madrasah managerial problems are systemic, encompassing planning, evaluation, and professional development that are not yet competency-based, impacting the quality of learning and the implementation of education policies.

### **Structural Barriers in the Implementation of Islamic Education Policy**

Structural barriers are defined as constraints stemming from bureaucratic systems, regulations, and institutional structures that limit madrasahs' flexibility in managing human resources. These barriers arise not only from individual capacity but also from hierarchical and centralized educational governance mechanisms. This top-down policy structure leaves madrasahs with limited room to adapt Islamic education policies to local conditions. This operational definition is crucial for assessing the extent to which madrasah autonomy supports the implementation of adaptive and contextual Islamic education reforms.

Interviews with Madrasah Principals revealed that top-down regulations limit innovation in human resource management. One informant stated, "The rules are determined from above, while the conditions in madrasahs are very different." Researchers interpreted this as a tension between formal regulations and local realities, making it difficult to implement policies optimally. This structural barrier directly impacts the ability of madrasahs to design human resource development strategies that are contextual and adaptive to the demands of Islamic education reform in the digital era.

Interviews with senior teachers confirmed limited access to training and certification. Teachers stated that competency development opportunities were "unequally distributed due to quota and budget constraints." Researchers interpreted this situation as a result of an inequitable distribution of resources, resulting in uneven competency development among teachers. These findings suggest that structural barriers impact not only managerial capacity but also the pedagogical quality of teachers in responding to new policies.

Observations of the administrative flow of human resource development reinforced the interview findings. Researchers found lengthy, multi-layered bureaucratic procedures and interdependent documents. This suggests that rigid institutional structures limit the flexibility of madrasas to manage human resources innovatively. Data patterns indicate that structural barriers are systemic, impacting the entire human resource management process, from planning to evaluation, resulting in suboptimal implementation of Islamic education policies.

### **Mismatch of Educator Competencies with the Latest Policy Standards**

Teacher competency mismatch is defined as a gap between pedagogical and professional skills and understanding of Islamic educational values and the latest competency standards. This definition serves as a basis for evaluating the extent to which teachers are able to adapt their teaching practices to Islamic education reforms, including digital integration and character-based learning.

An interview with a teacher revealed that understanding of Islamic education policy remains fragmented. The teacher stated, "Policies change frequently, but detailed explanations for teachers are limited." Researchers interpreted this as weak policy dissemination, resulting in low teacher readiness to align learning practices, resulting in uneven pedagogical competency among educators. Another teacher revealed that competency improvement was carried out independently due to uneven training. One informant stated, "We learned to adapt ourselves, because not everyone received training." Researchers interpreted this individual adaptation as not standardized, resulting in sporadic development of competency mastery. This situation indicates a systemic mismatch between policy standards and teachers' actual capacity.

Learning observations corroborated the interview findings. Researchers observed significant variation in the application of Islamic Education values among teachers, both in methods and digital integration. Data patterns indicate that teacher competency develops partially and individually, rather than through structured institutional mechanisms. A restatement of these findings confirms that competency mismatches are a factor hindering the uniform implementation of Islamic education policies.

### **Limitations of Policy-Based Professional Development Programs**

The limitations of professional development programs in madrasas are interpreted as the suboptimal planning and implementation of training aimed at aligning teacher competencies with the latest Islamic education policies. Existing programs are general, sporadic, and not based on an analysis of teacher competency needs, thus not effectively supporting improvements in pedagogical

and managerial quality.

Interviews with the Deputy Principal of the Madrasah for Human Resources revealed that teacher training remains heavily reliant on external programs. The informant stated, "Madrasahs rarely design training independently." Researchers interpreted this situation as limited autonomy for madrasahs in developing professional programs that are contextual, sustainable, and relevant to Islamic education reform in the digital era. From the teachers' perspective, the training they received was theoretical in nature and difficult to apply directly in the classroom. Teachers stated that the training material was "more theoretical and difficult to apply." Researchers interpreted this as a gap between training design and learning practices, resulting in unfocused and incomplete teacher competency development.

Observations of professional development program documents revealed a lack of competency-based training needs mapping. This data pattern suggests that professional development programs are sporadic, poorly integrated, and do not support adaptive human resource governance. A restatement of these findings confirms that the limitations of professional development programs are a major obstacle to aligning teacher competencies with Islamic education policy, necessitating strategies to strengthen the management and systemic integration of pedagogical competencies.

## **Discussion**

Research on managerial issues in madrasah human resource management indicates that HR planning, organization, and evaluation remain administrative and reactive, not based on teacher competency analysis. This finding aligns with research which emphasized that the principal's managerial capacity directly influences the effectiveness of teacher professional development, although previous research focused more on public schools (He et al., 2024; Lazcano et al., 2025; Shaked, 2025). The difference is that this study emphasizes the religious dimension of the madrasah context, so HR management is not only related to administration but also to the integration of Islamic education values into learning practices. The theoretical implications of this finding emphasize the importance of developing a competency-based managerial model that combines administrative and pedagogical aspects. Practically, madrasah principals need to implement a structured, needs-based HR planning system so that teacher development programs are not merely formalities but support the achievement of Islamic education reform.

Structural barriers arising from top-down regulations and extensive bureaucracy are key findings that distinguish the madrasah context from the general literature. In comparison found that hierarchical structures hinder

innovation in general secondary schools, but this study emphasizes that in madrasas, these barriers are exacerbated by limited access to training and unequal budget allocations (Ali et al., 2025; Masoom & Siddik, 2024; Sunkad et al., 2025). These findings suggest that institutional flexibility is crucial in supporting adaptive human resource governance for Islamic education reform. The theoretical implications of these findings strengthen the literature on local context-based education management and school autonomy. Practically, madrasas need to design more efficient internal procedures and support the distribution of training to provide teachers with equitable opportunities for competency development.

The mismatch between teacher competencies and the latest policy standards indicates a significant gap between pedagogical skills and understanding of Islamic education values. Previous research suggested that ineffective policy socialization hindered implementation, consistent with field findings at MAN 2 Sarolangun (Nurlina et al., 2024). However, this study specifically highlights variations in the application of digital approaches and character integration in learning, a previously understudied area. The theoretical implications emphasize the need for a holistic professional development model, combining pedagogical competency, digital literacy, and an understanding of religious values. Practically, teachers need to be provided with applicable and standardized training to ensure uniform teaching practices and policy compliance.

Limited professional development programs are a factor inhibiting the alignment of teacher competencies with the latest Islamic Education policies. This finding is consistent with the literature which states that sporadic training programs do not support improved learning quality (Bellei & Muñoz, 2023; Chaudhry et al., 2023). The difference is that this study emphasizes the role of madrasah autonomy in designing contextual internal programs, while previous literature has emphasized external programs. The theoretical implications of this finding emphasize the importance of integrating teacher competency needs into training program design, while the practical implications require madrasahs to actively design and manage relevant, sustainable, and applicable professional programs.

Overall, the impact of human resource issues is evident in the inconsistent implementation of classroom policies and variations in learning quality. This demonstrates alignment with educational management theory, which states that human resource readiness determines the effectiveness of policy reforms (Wang et al., 2023; Zihan et al., 2024). However, this study adds a specific perspective to madrasas, namely the integration of Islamic values as a crucial dimension of learning quality. Theoretical implications emphasize that madrasa human

resource management must combine administrative, pedagogical, and religious values to ensure the success of reforms. Practically, madrasas need to develop a competency-based monitoring and evaluation system to ensure more consistent and high-quality policy implementation.

The overall data pattern indicates a close relationship between managerial challenges, structural barriers, competency mismatches, and limitations in professional development programs. This pattern confirms that madrasa human resource management is systemic, where weaknesses in one aspect will impact others. This finding extends the literature on Islamic education management by emphasizing the simultaneous relationship between managerial capacity, institutional structure, teacher competency, and professional development programs. The theoretical implication is the need for a holistic and adaptive approach to Islamic education management. Practically, madrasas must align human resource governance, institutional autonomy, and teacher competency strengthening in a planned manner so that Islamic education reform can be implemented effectively and sustainably.

## CONCLUSION

The most important finding of this study shows that the management of human resources in madrasas is systemic, where managerial problems, structural obstacles, competency mismatches, and limitations of professional development programs are interrelated, thus impacting the quality of learning and the implementation of Islamic Education policies. The wisdom gained is that strategies to strengthen human resource governance must integrate planning, evaluation, and teacher competency development in an adaptive and contextual manner, taking into account Islamic values as the foundation of learning. The strength of this paper lies in its scientific contribution in the form of a holistic understanding of human resource governance in madrasas, which combines managerial, pedagogical, and structural aspects, while also offering practical guidance for managers and policymakers in facing the challenges of Islamic education reform.

Limitations of this study include its focus on a single madrasah, making the findings unable to be generalized to all madrasahs in Indonesia. Future research is recommended to conduct comparative studies across madrasahs with varying geographic, cultural, and human resource capacity characteristics, as well as to test the effectiveness of implementing human resource development strategies longitudinally. This is crucial for broadening scientific understanding and strengthening empirical evidence regarding the integration of pedagogical and managerial competencies in the context of dynamic Islamic education reform.

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