



Navigating Centralised Regulation and Local Autonomy in Madrasah Governance: A Systematic Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

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Autonomy;
Decoupling

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This study aims to explain how madrasah actors interpret and enact centralised regulations, which constraints they face, and how they balance compliance with local autonomy. Madrasahs are governed through a vertical ministerial hierarchy, yet recent reforms require each institution to plan, budget, and design its curriculum autonomously; little research has examined this tension systematically. The study used a systematic literature review following the PRISMA 2020 guideline. Peer-reviewed articles published between 2021 and 2026 in Scopus-indexed and SINTA 1–2 accredited journals were identified, screened against explicit criteria, and 24 studies were synthesised thematically using implementation and institutional theory. Five themes emerged: a dual regulatory architecture that grants equivalence but retains central control; bounded autonomy, in which curriculum latitude coexists with tightly templated planning and budgeting; thin supervision that drifts from development toward inspection; dual accountability to the state and private foundations; and adaptive strategies of compliance, adaptation, and decoupling. The study proposes a model of negotiated autonomy, in which actors combine formal compliance, selective adaptation, and protective decoupling. The findings imply that policymakers should consolidate reporting platforms, rebuild developmental supervision, and differentiate support according to foundation capacity so that autonomy can be exercised rather than merely granted.

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INTRODUCTION

Across many education systems, governments have spent the past two decades granting schools more autonomy while simultaneously tightening accountability. Principals are asked to plan, budget, and innovate locally, but they must also meet centrally defined targets, report through digital platforms, and compete for funding (Caldwell, 2024; Montecinos & Lira, 2025). Studies of

principals in several countries show that this combination intensifies their workload and pulls them away from educational leadership (Rowe & Langman, 2025; Wang et al., 2022). The general issue is therefore not whether schools should be autonomous but whether the conditions exist for autonomy to be exercised. This issue is particularly important in religious school systems, where communities, religious authorities, and the state all claim a stake in governance.

Madrasahs illustrate this issue on a very large scale. In the 2025/2026 school year Indonesia counted 87,454 madrasahs from early-childhood to senior-secondary level under the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA) (Statistics Indonesia [BPS], 2026), most of them privately run by community foundations (World Bank, 2025), and the senior-secondary madrasah sector alone has continued to grow in the number of institutions and teachers (Wahyudin et al., 2024). Their governance rests on a structural paradox. The National Education System Law (Law No. 20 of 2003) treats madrasahs as equivalent to general schools, whereas the Regional Government Law (Law No. 23 of 2014) classifies religion as an absolute competence of the central government, so madrasahs remain under a vertical ministerial hierarchy while general schools were decentralised (Kosim et al., 2023). At the same time, reforms have asked every madrasah to diagnose its own performance, plan and budget on that basis, and design an operational curriculum suited to its context (Ainissyifa et al., 2024; Haddade et al., 2024). The practical problem for society is visible in persistent quality gaps between state and private madrasahs and in the administrative burden borne by principals and teachers (Kultsum et al., 2022).

Theoretically, this situation exposes a gap in implementation research. Theories of street-level bureaucracy, policy sensemaking, loose coupling, and decoupling explain that frontline actors do not simply execute policy but reinterpret and remake it (Argaman, 2026; Waslander et al., 2023; Witenstein & Abdallah, 2022). These theories, however, were developed and tested mainly in secular public school and higher education systems in which governance is decentralised. They have rarely been applied to religious school systems in which religious education is centralised, most institutions are owned by private foundations, and two lines of accountability, to the state and to the foundation, operate at once. As a result, existing theory cannot yet explain how autonomy is actually negotiated in madrasahs.

Previous research on madrasahs has examined important parts of the problem. Kosim et al. (2023) trace how state policy toward Islamic education moved from domestication to accommodation, bringing formal equivalence while keeping madrasahs in a separate administrative channel. Ihsan et al. (2024) show that madrasahs struggle to comply with national curriculum rules while maintaining religious subjects, and Nurtawab and Wahyudi (2022) analyse how

the Pesantren Law formalises traditional institutions within national governance. Reform instruments have been studied through the Madrasah Reform programme (Haddade et al., 2024), its performance-based and affirmation grants (Kurniawan, 2025), madrasah-based management (Susanto, 2022; Tauhid, 2025), and curriculum autonomy under the Merdeka curriculum (Ainissyifa et al., 2024). Other studies document supervision practices (Sanuri, 2026), discretionary local government support for madrasah teachers (Kurniawati et al., 2026), and the selective adoption of the national curriculum in pesantren-based madrasahs (Ahdi et al., 2025).

International research on policy implementation offers concepts for interpreting these findings. Witenstein and Abdallah (2022) show how faculty in affiliated colleges act as street-level bureaucrats who adapt centrally set curriculum and examination policies, and Alsharefeen (2025) and Bulut-Sahin (2023) document how frontline staff use discretion when rules are unclear or resources are scarce. Waslander et al. (2023) find that schools respond to multiple central policies by choosing the least disruptive response, ranging from symbolic change to restructuring. Studies of autonomy reforms in Chile and Australia show that autonomy granted on paper is bounded by central targets, competitive funding, and reporting duties (Caldwell, 2024; Montecinos & Lira, 2025; Rowe & Langman, 2025). These studies, however, do not address religious schools governed by a centralised ministry.

The novelty of this article lies in bringing these two bodies of literature together through a systematic review. Unlike earlier single-site studies of madrasah management, it synthesises evidence across three policy domains, namely curriculum, planning and budgeting, and staffing and supervision, and restricts its evidence base to peer-reviewed studies in Scopus-indexed and SINTA 1–2 accredited journals published in the last five years. Building on this synthesis, the article proposes a model of negotiated autonomy that connects street-level bureaucracy, sensemaking, and decoupling to the specific governance arrangements of madrasahs, including the role of private foundations.

Accordingly, this study aims to explain how centralised regulation and local autonomy interact in madrasah governance. It addresses three research questions: (1) How do madrasah principals and teachers interpret and enact national regulations? (2) What bureaucratic constraints do they encounter in doing so? (3) What strategies do they use to balance regulatory compliance with local autonomy?.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study used a qualitative approach with a systematic literature review (SLR) design, reported according to the PRISMA 2020 guideline (Page et al., 2021). PRISMA-guided reviews are increasingly used in educational research to synthesise fragmented evidence into explanatory frameworks (Sosa-Díaz et al.,

2022). This design was chosen because the research questions concern recurring patterns of implementation across many institutions, which a single case study cannot capture. A systematic procedure, with explicit eligibility criteria and a documented, stage-by-stage selection process, allows findings from different madrasahs, policy domains, and countries to be compared transparently and reduces the selection bias of narrative reviews.

The research setting of this review is the body of peer-reviewed literature indexed in Scopus and accredited in SINTA (Science and Technology Index) of the Indonesian Ministry of Higher Education. Candidate articles were traced through the reference list of an earlier version of this study, Google Scholar, the Garuda portal, and publishers' and journals' websites, and the indexing status of every journal was checked on the journal's website and against the SINTA and Scopus listings. Scopus was used as a quality benchmark because it covers reputable international journals in education, public administration, and Islamic studies, including the theoretical literature on policy implementation. SINTA was used because most empirical research on madrasah governance is published in Indonesian journals, and its first and second ranks identify the national journals with the highest quality standards. Official statistics and legal documents (BPS, 2026; World Bank, 2025; national laws) were used only to describe the policy context and were not counted as included studies.

Data were collected in October 2026 through a two-route identification procedure following the PRISMA 2020 pathway for identification via other methods. The first route screened the 37 sources cited in an earlier version of this study, and the second route used targeted searches on Google Scholar, Garuda, and publishers' portals with combinations of the keywords madrasah, Islamic school, pesantren, school, governance, policy implementation, autonomy, school-based management, supervision, street-level bureaucracy, decoupling, and accountability. Articles were included if they (a) were published between January 2021 and October 2026; (b) were peer-reviewed journal articles; (c) appeared in Scopus-indexed or SINTA 1–2 accredited journals; (d) examined the governance, management, or policy implementation of madrasahs or Islamic schools, or developed implementation theory in school or university settings; and (e) had a verifiable bibliographic record. Books, news reports, legal documents, sources published before 2021, articles in SINTA 3–6 journals, articles whose journal indexing could not be verified, and studies outside the research questions were excluded. Table 1 shows that 8 of the 37 earlier sources and 16 of the 25 additional articles assessed in full met these criteria, giving 24 included studies.

Table 1. Study selection based on the PRISMA 2020 flow

Stage	n
Route 1: Sources cited in the earlier version of this study	37
Excluded: published before 2021 or not a journal article (books, news reports, laws, statistics)	24
Excluded: journal indexing not verifiable as Scopus or SINTA 1–2	5
Retained from Route 1	8
Route 2: Additional articles identified through targeted searching and assessed in full	25
Excluded: SINTA 4 or unverifiable indexing, outside the research questions, or incomplete bibliographic record	9
Retained from Route 2	16
Studies included in the synthesis (18 Scopus, 6 SINTA 2)	24

Note: Route 2 counts only the articles assessed in full, not every search hit, because targeted searching on Google Scholar and journal portals does not produce a reproducible total number of records. Laws, statistics, and the World Bank report excluded in Route 1 are still cited to describe the policy context.

Data were analysed through thematic synthesis in four steps. First, each included study was extracted into a standard form recording its author, year, journal and index, setting, method, policy domain, and main findings (Table 2). Second, the findings were coded deductively using codes derived from implementation and institutional theory (interpretation, constraint, compliance, adaptation, and decoupling) and inductively to capture patterns that the theory did not anticipate, such as the role of private foundations. Third, codes were grouped into themes and compared across policy domains, institutional status (state and private), and national settings using a cross-study matrix. Fourth, the convergent themes were synthesised into an explanatory model of negotiated autonomy. Coding was carried out by the first author and discussed with the co-authors until consensus was reached, and an audit trail of coding decisions was kept.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Characteristics of the Included Studies

Following the procedure described in the Research Methods (Table 1), the review included 25 studies. These studies were published between 2021 and 2026: one in 2021, two in 2022, six in 2023, six in 2024, seven in 2025, and three in 2026. This distribution shows that scholarly attention to the Qur’anic–Prophetic foundations of education has increased in recent years. Thirteen studies appeared in Scopus-indexed journals, three in international journals outside Scopus, one in a SINTA 1 journal, and eight in SINTA 2 journals. Most studies are conceptual or

textual (exegetical, hermeneutic, or philosophical), while a smaller number are empirical (case studies, surveys, or systematic reviews). Table 2 summarises the included studies.

Table 2. Summary of the included studies (n = 25)

Author (year)	Journal	Index	Focus and main contribution
Abdalla (2025)	Education Sciences	Scopus	Critical review of tarbiyah, ta'līm, tadrīs, and ta'dīb; argues that tarbiyah is the integrative, lifelong framework
Abdul Majid & Aljunied (2023)	Al-Shajarah	Scopus	Critique of the Islamisation of knowledge; all knowledge blends religious and secular elements
Agbaria (2024)	Religions	Scopus	God-centred confessional education that embraces doubt, critical engagement, and teachers as guides
Bin Muhammad Yusoff (2023)	Religions	Scopus	Theory of Qur'anic narrative (qaṣaṣ) pedagogy: truth, beauty, and explication
Budiyanto et al. (2025)	SYAMIL: Journal of Islamic Education	SINTA 2	Systematic review of generative AI in Islamic and moral education; benefits with ethical risks
Chotimah et al. (2026)	Arabiyat	SINTA 2	Directive speech acts in Prophetic discourse as pedagogical strategies
Dardiri et al. (2026)	Edukasia	SINTA 2	Hermeneutic reconstruction of al-Attas's concept of ta'dīb for curriculum design
Fatima & Tasgheer (2022)	Journal of Islamic and Religious Studies	International	Prophetic instructional strategies as a framework for contemporary academics
Fauzi & Chirzin (2023)	Nadwa: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam	SINTA 2	Qur'anic epistemology of Islamic education: revelation, reason, sense, and intuition
Felsenthal & Agbaria (2023)	Religions	Scopus	Arkoun's hermeneutics for reading the Qur'an critically and devotionally in class
Hasyim & Nashrullah (2025)	Ulul Albab: Jurnal Studi Islam	SINTA 1	Maqāṣidī reading of Q. al-'Alaq: tawḥīd-centred literacy and lifelong learning
Hudaya & Barni (2024)	SYAMIL: Journal of Islamic Education	SINTA 2	Patterns of knowledge integration in university learning: informative and complementary models
Intania et al. (2025)	Jurnal Indo-Islamika	SINTA 2	Integration of reason, revelation, and tazkiyat al-nafs in pesantren based on al-Ghazālī
Jalaldeem & Al-Hidabi (2025)	Al-Burhān: Journal of Qur'ān and Sunnah Studies	International	Al-Ghazālī's framework of teachers' professional values

Kistoro et al. (2023)	Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam	SINTA 2	Bibliometric mapping of Islamic character education research
Laabdi & Elbittoui (2024)	Religions	Scopus	Shift from Islamisation to integration of knowledge; institutions lag behind scholars
Mansoor et al. (2025)	Forum for Linguistic Studies	International	Application of Prophetic pedagogy in university language teaching
Ramle & Huda (2022)	Religions	Scopus	Contextual understanding of hadith through asbāb al-wurūd to prevent misreading
Romdlony et al. (2025)	International Journal of Nusantara Islam	SINTA 2	Tawhīdī epistemology uniting rationality, empiricism, and transcendence
Stimpson & Calvert (2021)	Religions	Scopus	Systematic linguistic analysis of the Qur'an: inferential reasoning, orthopractic teleology, recitation
Suddahazai (2023)	Religions	Scopus	Islamic liberatory pedagogy and reflective teaching in Muslim higher education
Suleiman et al. (2024)	Intellectual Discourse	Scopus	Beneficial worldly knowledge as a collective duty against movements that reject it
Suwendi et al. (2024)	Jurnal Pendidikan Islam	Scopus	Uneven implementation of knowledge integration in Islamic higher education
Zacky & Moniruzzaman (2024)	Social Epistemology	Scopus	Anatomy of the evolving debate on "Islamic epistemology"
Zekhnini & Alnakawa (2026)	Millah: Journal of Religious Studies	Scopus	Acceptance of metaverse technology in teaching Hadith and the Prophetic biography

The thematic synthesis produced five themes: (1) knowledge as the foundation of revelation and civilisation; (2) the instruments of learning and an integrated epistemology; (3) ta'līm, tarbiyah, and ta'dīb as one educational system; (4) Prophetic pedagogy; and (5) knowledge, adab, and digital technology. The first two themes answer the first research question, the third and fourth answer the second, and the fifth, together with the discussion, informs the third.

Knowledge as the Foundation of Revelation and Civilisation

The Qur'an places knowledge before every other edifice of religious life. The opening revelation (Q. al-'Alaq 96:1–5) commands reading twice and names God as the One "who taught by the pen" and "taught humankind what it did not know", thereby legitimising literacy, writing, and transmission as theologically grounded media of knowledge. Hasyim and Nashrullah (2025), using a maqāṣidī

reading of the passage, derive from it a tawḥīd-centred conception of literacy in which revelation and reason are co-equal sources and lifelong learning is a moral responsibility. The phrase *bi-smi rabbika* (“in the name of your Lord”) is decisive: reading is oriented toward the Creator and is therefore not value-neutral.

The Qur’an also ranks people by knowledge. Q. al-Mujādalah 58:11 promises that God will raise “those who believe and those who have been given knowledge” by degrees, and Q. al-Zumar 39:9 asks whether those who know and those who do not know are equal, closing with the remark that only *ulū al-albāb* (people of understanding) take heed. The verse links epistemic superiority to reflective capacity rather than to the accumulation of information. This reading is consistent with the systematic analysis by Stimpson and Calvert (2021), who found that the Qur’an repeatedly calls its audience to independent, inferential reasoning and directs knowledge toward righteous action. Finally, Q. Tāhā 20:114 instructs the Prophet to pray, “My Lord, increase me in knowledge”, which classical commentators read as grounding an ethic of continuous learning.

The Hadith turns these principles into explicit norms. The report “Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim” (Ibn Mājah, no. 224), graded authentic by al-Albānī, uses the term *farīdah* and places the pursuit of basic knowledge at the level of an individual obligation. The report “Whoever follows a path in pursuit of knowledge, God will make easy for him a path to Paradise” (Muslim, no. 2699) frames learning as a spiritual journey, and “The scholars are the heirs of the prophets” (Abū Dāwūd, no. 3641; Ibn Mājah, no. 223) assigns the learned the custodianship of the prophetic legacy. Recent scholarship clarifies the scope of this obligation. Suleiman et al. (2024) argue that beneficial worldly knowledge is a collective duty (*farḍ kifāyah*) and that movements rejecting it misread the tradition, which implies that the criterion for valuable knowledge is its benefit and its coherence with tawḥīd rather than the disciplinary origin of a field.

The Instruments of Learning and an Integrated Epistemology

Q. al-Baqarah 2:31–33 narrates that God taught Ādam “the names of all things” and then presented them to the angels. Education (*ta’līm*) is thus depicted at the very beginning of human existence, before any institution, which suggests that learning belongs to human nature (*fiṭrah*). The episode also establishes naming and conceptualisation, the basis of all science, as a distinctively human capacity that qualifies humanity for vicegerency (*khilāfah*). Q. al-Naḥl 16:78 complements this narrative: humans are born “knowing nothing” and are given hearing (*sam’*), sight (*abṣār*), and hearts (*a’īdah*) so that they may be grateful.

The reviewed studies map these three instruments onto three epistemic pathways, namely authoritative transmission, empirical observation, and reflective-intuitive understanding, which correspond to the bayānī, burhānī, and ‘irfānī modes of reasoning (Fauzi & Chirzin, 2023; Romdlony et al., 2025).

Q. Āli ‘Imrān 3:190–191 describes ulū al-albāb as those who remember God in every state while reflecting on the creation of the heavens and the earth. The passage joins reflection on revealed signs (āyāt qawliyyah) with reflection on cosmic signs (āyāt kawniyyah), and Q. al-Naml 27:15 states that God gave Dāwūd and Sulaymān ‘ilm without dividing it into religious and secular categories. Read together, these texts offer no scriptural basis for the dichotomy that later structured Muslim educational institutions. Romdlony et al. (2025) accordingly argue that separating the modes of reasoning produces distortions: bayānī reasoning alone tends toward rigid literalism, whereas burhānī reasoning detached from transcendent grounding tends toward secular rationalism.

The literature, however, also shows that integration remains difficult to institutionalise. Laabdi and Elbittoui (2024) find that the move from “Islamisation” to “integration” of knowledge reflects genuine epistemological renewal among scholars but has not yet been fully implemented by institutions. Suwendi et al. (2024) and Hudaya and Barni (2024) report that Islamic universities hold strong philosophical commitments to integration but implement them unevenly, often by having lecturers attach Qur’anic verses or hadith to general subjects. Critical voices add that both the Islamisation and integration programmes are most persuasive when they avoid a rigid civilisational binary (Abdul Majid & Aljunied, 2023; Zacky & Moniruzzaman, 2024). The convergent finding is that the Qur’an supports an integrated epistemology, whereas the institutional translation of that epistemology is still incomplete.

Ta’līm, Tarbiyah, and Ta’dīb as One Educational System

Three terms dominate the vocabulary of Islamic education. Ta’līm refers to the transmission of knowledge, tarbiyah to the gradual nurturing of human potential, and ta’dīb to the instilling of adab. The reviewed studies disagree about which term is the most comprehensive. Dardiri et al. (2026), using Ricoeur’s hermeneutics, defend the internal coherence of al-Attas’s concept of ta’dīb and translate it into curriculum objectives, content, methods, and assessment. Abdalla (2025), reviewing English- and Arabic-language literature, argues instead that tarbiyah is an integrative, lifelong framework that subsumes the other terms. Intania et al. (2025) show that pesantren still enact al-Ghazālī’s integration of reason, revelation, and the purification of the soul (tazkiyat al-nafs) through mentoring and spiritual discipline.

This disagreement is less sharp than it appears. Both positions agree that education is incomplete if it transmits information without forming character; they differ mainly over which term should name the whole. This study therefore treats the three concepts as interlocking components of one system: ta'lim as ethically anchored transmission, tarbiyah as the process of nurturing, and ta'dib as the formation of adab, which serves as the integrating aim. The principle that adab gives knowledge its value is consistent with Q. al-Mujādalāh 58:11, which joins faith and knowledge as the basis of elevation. Kistoro et al. (2023) show that Islamic character education is an expanding research field, which offers a basis for developing indicators of adab.

Prophetic Pedagogy

The Hadith preserves a coherent pedagogy, and five principles recur across the reviewed literature. The first is facilitation and positive motivation: “Make things easy and do not make them difficult; give glad tidings and do not drive people away” (al-Bukhārī, no. 69; Muslim, no. 1734), which supports gradual and encouraging instruction (Fatima & Tasgheer, 2022). The second is dialogue and inquiry: the Hadith of Jibrīl (al-Bukhārī, no. 50; Muslim, no. 8) models teaching through questions and answers, and Chotimah et al. (2026) show that the Prophet’s directive speech acts were calibrated to context and audience. The third is distributed responsibility for transmission: “Convey from me, even if only one verse” (al-Bukhārī, no. 3461) makes every Muslim an agent of knowledge according to capacity. The fourth is personal mentoring, illustrated by the counsel to the young Ibn ‘Abbās, “Be mindful of God and He will protect you” (al-Tirmidhī, no. 2516). The fifth is exemplary character: how teachers teach cannot be separated from who teachers are, a principle that Jalaldeen and Al-Hidabi (2025) develop through al-Ghazālī’s professional values of sincerity, humility, empathy, and justice.

The reviewed studies extend these principles in three directions. First, Qur’anic narrative offers a distinct pedagogical resource: Bin Muhammad Yusoff (2023) derives a theory of narrative pedagogy from the concept of qasha, organised around truth, beauty, and explication. Second, correct use of Prophetic texts in teaching requires contextual understanding; Ramle and Huda (2022) show that reading hadith through asbāb al-wurūd prevents misinterpretation that can feed radical views. Third, several studies argue that Islamic education should cultivate critical and reflective capacities rather than rote compliance, through hermeneutic reading of the Qur’an (Felsenthal & Agbaria, 2023), a God-centred approach that accepts doubt and inquiry (Agbaria, 2024), and liberatory,

reflective teaching practice (Suddahazai, 2023). Applications in university language teaching (Mansoor et al., 2025) indicate that these principles can be transferred beyond religious subjects. Together, these findings show that Prophetic pedagogy anticipates several tenets of learner-centred practice, including scaffolding, inquiry, and mentoring.

Knowledge, Adab, and Digital Technology

The fifth theme concerns new learning technologies. A systematic review of studies on generative AI in Islamic and moral education reports a moderate positive effect on engagement, critical thinking, and ethical reasoning but calls for ethical oversight (Budiyanto et al., 2025). Research on technology acceptance in teaching Hadith and the Prophetic biography likewise shows growing readiness for immersive technologies such as the metaverse (Zekhnini & Alnakawa, 2026). From a Qur'anic standpoint, these technologies belong to the domain of the *alam* (Q. 96:4): they are media of transmission that are legitimate when oriented by *bi-smi rabbika* and disciplined by *adab*. The literature, however, has not yet linked AI governance systematically to Qur'anic epistemology, which is the gap that the framework below addresses.

Discussion

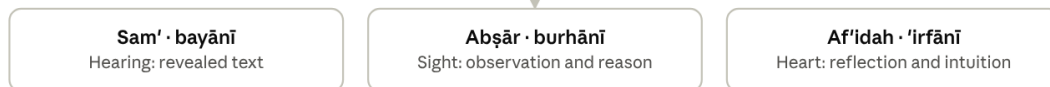
Synthesising the five themes, this study proposes a Revelation–Reason–Adab framework with three layers (Figure 1). The foundational layer consists of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, which define knowledge as oriented toward God (Q. 96:1) and as a lifelong obligation (Ibn Mājah, no. 224). The epistemic layer consists of hearing, sight, and the heart (Q. al-Naḥl 16:78), which operate through *bayānī*, *burhānī*, and *'irfānī* reasoning as complementary rather than competing pathways (Fauzi & Chirzin, 2023; Romdlony et al., 2025). The educational layer consists of *ta'līm*, *tarbiyah*, and *ta'dīb*, with *adab* as the integrating aim (Abdalla, 2025; Dardiri et al., 2026). Prophetic pedagogy supplies the method that links these layers to everyday practice and carries them into four domains of institutional management.

Adab is the aim that unites revelation and reason in education

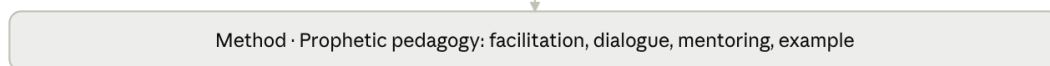
1 · Sources of knowledge



2 · Epistemic instruments (Q. 16:78)



3 · Educational processes



4 · Islamic education management

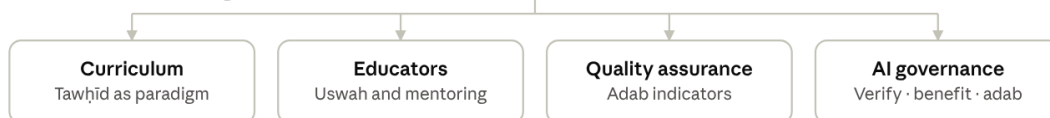


Figure 1. The Revelation–Reason–Adab framework. The two sources feed three epistemic instruments, which inform three educational processes oriented toward adab; Prophetic pedagogy carries them into four domains of Islamic education management.

The finding that revelation places literacy and inquiry at the foundation of faith agrees with the maqāṣidī reading of Q. al-'Alaq by Hasyim and Nashrullah (2025) and with the linguistic analysis of Stimpson and Calvert (2021), who identified inferential reasoning and character-oriented teleology as core Qur'anic educational principles. This review differs in two respects. It shows that the Hadith converts these principles into explicit norms of obligation, and it follows Suleiman et al. (2024) in clarifying that beneficial worldly knowledge is a collective duty (farḍ kifāyah). The criterion of valuable knowledge is therefore its benefit and its coherence with tawhīd rather than the disciplinary origin of a field, which sharpens how Islamic education can define what is worth teaching.

The integrated epistemology reconstructed here supports Fauzi and Chirzin (2023) and Romdlony et al. (2025), and Q. Āli 'Imrān 3:190–191 and al-Naml 27:15 offer no scriptural basis for a dichotomy between religious and general sciences. This agrees with critics who caution against a rigid civilisational binary (Abdul Majid & Aljunied, 2023; Zacky & Moniruzzaman, 2024). The institutional picture, however, is less encouraging, because Laabdi and Elbittoui

(2024), Suwendi et al. (2024), and Hudaya and Barni (2024) report that integration is renewed among scholars but implemented unevenly. The contribution of this study is to specify what a deeper step involves: making tawḥīd the organising worldview of every subject and designing learning outcomes that engage the three epistemic pathways.

The review also speaks to the terminological debate. Dardiri et al. (2026) defend ta'dīb as the most comprehensive concept of education, whereas Abdalla (2025) argues that tarbiyah is the integrative, lifelong framework. Both positions agree that education is incomplete when it transmits information without forming character, and they differ mainly over which term should name the whole. The framework reconciles them by distinguishing the process of education (tarbiyah) from its aim (adab), with ta'lim as ethically anchored transmission. This reconciliation is consistent with pesantren practice, where mentoring and spiritual discipline continue to enact al-Ghazālī's integration of reason, revelation, and the purification of the soul (Intania et al., 2025), and it offers a single vocabulary for institutional policy.

The five Prophetic principles identified here extend Fatima and Tasgheer (2022), Chotimah et al. (2026), and Jalaldeen and Al-Hidabi (2025), whose studies addressed strategies, speech acts, and teachers' values separately. A difference emerges between studies emphasising transmission, memorisation, and the authority of the text (Stimpson & Calvert, 2021) and those stressing critical inquiry, doubt, and hermeneutic reading (Agbaria, 2024; Felsenthal & Agbaria, 2023; Suddahazai, 2023). The framework does not choose one side. It assigns authoritative transmission to the bayānī pathway, critical inquiry to the burhānī pathway, and inner appropriation to the 'irfānī pathway, all governed by adab. Reading hadith through asbāb al-wurūd (Ramle & Huda, 2022) further guards this balance against misinterpretation.

The framework yields implications for four domains of institutional management (Table 3). In curriculum planning, integration should move beyond the informative and complementary models that current practice often follows (Hudaya & Barni, 2024; Suwendi et al., 2024). In educator development, recruitment, appraisal, and professional development should assess exemplary conduct and mentoring alongside qualifications (Jalaldeen & Al-Hidabi, 2025; Suddahazai, 2023). In quality assurance, adab indicators should complement cognitive measures, building on research on Islamic character education and on translating ta'dīb into assessment design (Dardiri et al., 2026; Kistoro et al., 2023). In the governance of AI, policies should require verification of AI-generated religious content, preserve the teacher's role in ta'dīb, and judge tools by benefit (Budiyanto et al., 2025; Zekhnini & Alnakawa, 2026).

Table 3. Managerial implications of the Qur'anic-Prophetic paradigm

Management domain	Normative principle	Managerial action	Supporting studies
Curriculum planning	Unity of knowledge (Q. 3:190–191; 27:15)	Integrate tawhīd as the paradigm of every subject rather than as added religious content; map each course to bayānī, burhānī, and 'irfānī learning outcomes	Hudaya & Barni (2024); Laabdi & Elbittoui (2024); Suwendi et al. (2024)
Educator development	Prophetic character and mentoring (al-Tirmidhī, no. 2516)	Treat exemplary conduct (uswah), mentoring, and reflective practice as assessed competencies alongside subject mastery	Jalaldeen & Al-Hidabi (2025); Suddahazai (2023)
Quality assurance	Adab as the aim of knowledge (Q. 58:11)	Add adab and character indicators to evaluation and accreditation instruments, beyond cognitive attainment	Dardiri et al. (2026); Kistoro et al. (2023)
Governance of AI and digital learning	Verified and beneficial knowledge (Q. 96:4; al-'ilm al-nāfi')	Adopt policies requiring verification of AI-generated religious content, preserving the teacher's role in ta'dīb, and judging tools by benefit	Budiyanto et al. (2025); Zekhnini & Alnakawa (2026)

Digital learning deserves particular attention. Budiyanto et al. (2025) report benefits for engagement and ethical reasoning but call for oversight, and Zekhnini and Alnakawa (2026) show readiness for immersive technologies, yet neither grounds governance in Qur'anic epistemology. This study fills that gap by treating such technologies as media within the domain of the qalam (Q. 96:4), legitimate when oriented by bi-smi rabbika and disciplined by adab. Three principles follow. The Hadith science of verifying transmission (isnād and tathabbut) offers a model for verifying AI-generated religious content; AI can support ta'lim but cannot replace ta'dīb, which depends on the teacher's exemplary presence; and policies should be framed by useful knowledge (al-'ilm al-nāfi'). This is the study's novelty: one sequence from sources to institutional decisions.

CONCLUSION

The most important finding, and the lesson of this review, is that the Qur'an, the Hadith, and recent scholarship present knowledge and education as one integrated system grounded in revelation, operationalised through reason, and oriented toward adab, so that knowledge acquires its value only when literacy and inquiry are joined to faith and character (Q. 96:1–5; 58:11; 39:9). The implications of these results for Islamic education management are that

institutions should adopt tawhīd-based curriculum integration, character-inclusive educator development, adab-sensitive quality assurance, and value-based governance of AI, because the 25 reviewed studies show that integration remains incompletely implemented. The strength of this article lies in its scientific contribution: it triangulates systematically selected literature with a thematic analysis of scripture and proposes the Revelation–Reason–Adab framework, which links normative principles to management decisions. The study is limited to journal articles indexed in Scopus, international databases, or SINTA 1–2, and its corpus is dominated by conceptual studies, so the framework has not yet been tested empirically. Future research should test the framework through field studies in madrasahs, pesantren, and Islamic universities, develop and validate instruments that measure adab alongside cognitive outcomes, and evaluate AI governance policies against the criterion of useful knowledge.

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