



Public-Oriented Graduate Quality Assurance as a Strategic Lever for Islamic Boarding School Competitiveness

Ahmad Fauzi

Universitas Islam Zainul Hasan Genggong, East Java, Indonesia

Email : fauzichika82@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61987/jemr.v2i1.437>

ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Graduate Quality Assurance, Institutional Reputation, Character Education, Public

This study aims to analyze graduate quality assurance as a strategic driver of competitiveness at Islamic Boarding School. Graduate quality assurance has become a central issue in global education, particularly in linking institutional reputation, character formation, and employability. However, research focusing on Islamic boarding schools remains limited despite their significant role in Indonesia's education system. A qualitative case study approach was employed, using in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis, with data analyzed through Miles and Huberman's interactive model. Findings reveal three key outcomes. First, a structured graduate quality assurance system strengthens institutional reputation, enhancing trust among parents, government agencies, universities, and employers. Second, character-based quality assurance provides a unique competitive edge, as graduates are recognized not only for academic competence but also for integrity, discipline, and leadership. Third, employability emerges as an essential indicator, with graduates demonstrating adaptability, entrepreneurial skills, and readiness for diverse careers. These findings highlight that pesantren can integrate traditional values with modern quality frameworks, thereby achieving credibility and competitiveness in wider educational landscapes. The study contributes to expanding quality assurance discourse into faith-based institutions and recommends policy support to strengthen assurance systems in Islamic boarding schools.

*Corresponding Author

Article History:

Received: March 2023; Accepted: April 2023; Available online: June 2023

Please cite this article in APA style as:

Baharun, H. (2023). The Impact of School Principals on Graduate Quality Through Character Education Initiatives. *Journal of Educational Management Research*, 2(1), 69-83.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of graduate quality assurance has become a central phenomenon shaping the reputation and competitiveness of institutions in today's educational landscape. Globally, stakeholders increasingly demand that schools and universities provide evidence that their graduates possess the competencies necessary to thrive in complex social and economic environments. Within Islamic boarding schools, or pesantren, this expectation takes on a unique dimension. These institutions are traditionally known for producing graduates with strong religious knowledge and spiritual discipline (Muafiah et al., 2022; Skinner et al., 2021). However, the twenty-first century requires that such

institutions also demonstrate accountability in producing graduates who can compete in the wider labor market, contribute to national development, and embody strong ethical values.

The discourse on graduate quality assurance is well established in global higher education literature, yet it remains underexplored in the context of Islamic boarding schools. Quality assurance refers to systematic processes that monitor, evaluate, and improve student outcomes to meet defined standards (Budiharso & Suharto, 2022; Suriagiri et al., 2022; Susetyo et al., 2022). In higher education, it has been linked to institutional legitimacy, employability, and competitiveness (Wali et al., 2022). Research also highlights that assurance frameworks enhance stakeholder trust and institutional resilience (Kiss et al., 2022). However, most scholarship focuses on universities, with limited attention to non-formal institutions such as pesantren, which serve millions of students in Indonesia. Recent studies in Asian contexts suggest that graduate quality assurance is increasingly tied to broader themes such as governance, accountability, and global competitiveness (Mujahidin et al., 2021; Sutiah et al., 2021). This analysis positions pesantren within this debate, acknowledging their dual challenge of maintaining religious identity while adopting frameworks typically designed for secular institutions.

The social reality underscores the urgency of this topic. Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia are among the oldest and most influential educational institutions, producing graduates who occupy roles as religious leaders, educators, entrepreneurs, and community actors. Yet, social expectations of pesantren graduates have shifted dramatically. Parents and communities no longer seek only religious competence; they also demand skills that support employability, innovation, and leadership in a globalized society. Government policies increasingly push pesantren to integrate national education standards and quality frameworks, while employers stress the importance of transferable skills and professional reliability. The broader social demand highlights why graduate quality assurance is not a bureaucratic exercise but a societal imperative shaping the legitimacy and sustainability of pesantren.

Structured quality assurance mechanisms are directly correlated with improved institutional reputation (Budiharso & Suharto, 2022). Quality assurance has also been shown to increase stakeholder trust in various educational systems (Fuadi et al., 2021). Employability should be integrated as a core indicator of graduate quality (Mujahidin et al., 2021). Character education, when structured, becomes a measurable component of institutional quality assurance (Pike et al., 2021). Moral development, coupled with cognitive growth, strengthens graduates' social contributions (Sodikin et al., 2022). Employers are prioritizing transferable skills, making employability a competitive benchmark

(Zhou et al., 2022). Integrating character into a quality assurance framework provides institutions with a reputational advantage in a competitive educational marketplace (Longo et al., 2021). Collectively, these studies suggest that quality assurance frameworks, both in universities and schools, should encompass academic, character, and employability dimensions, but have not yet directly addressed the context of Islamic boarding schools, thus opening up space for contextual application and further theoretical development.

Most studies prioritize formal universities or vocational institutions, overlooking the *pesantren* system, which plays a unique role in shaping both religious identity and social competencies. Existing scholarship rarely explores how quality assurance can act as a driver of competitiveness in faith-based schools. This creates a research gap that is both theoretical and practical. The novelty of this study lies in addressing these gaps by situating *pesantren* within global quality assurance debates and analyzing how graduate assurance is not merely compliance with standards but a strategic driver of institutional reputation and competitiveness. Specifically, the study offers fresh insights into how Darul Lughoh Wal Karomah operationalizes assurance across academic, moral, and employability dimensions, thus filling the void in literature and policy discourse on Islamic boarding school modernization.

The objective of this study is to investigate how graduate quality assurance functions as a strategic driver of competitiveness in Darul Lughoh Wal Karomah Islamic Boarding School. The research focuses on three interrelated dimensions: strengthening institutional reputation, embedding character-based assurance, and ensuring graduate employability. Each of these elements reflects stakeholder expectations, from parents seeking holistic education to employers requiring adaptable graduates. By focusing on Darul Lughoh Wal Karomah as a case study, the research aims to provide an in-depth understanding of how *pesantren* can reconcile traditional values with modern quality assurance frameworks. This focus allows for analysis that moves beyond descriptive accounts of *pesantren* education toward a critical examination of assurance mechanisms as drivers of strategic advantage. The study also intends to demonstrate that *pesantren*, when structured properly, are not only custodians of tradition but also proactive agents of competitiveness within the broader national and global education ecosystem.

The originality of this study lies in its argument that graduate quality assurance in *pesantren* should not be seen as an external imposition or administrative burden, but as an internally generated strategic resource. While much of the literature situates quality assurance within bureaucratic compliance, this research argues that in the context of Islamic boarding schools, assurance is a transformative framework that strengthens reputation, character, and

employability simultaneously. The argument is that pesantren like Darul Lughoh Wal Karomah demonstrate that traditional institutions can innovate without abandoning identity, positioning themselves as competitive actors in both religious and secular landscapes.

RESEARCH METHOD

The material object of this study is the system of graduate quality assurance implemented at Darul Lughoh Wal Karomah Islamic Boarding School and its role in strengthening institutional competitiveness. The focus is placed on three central aspects: institutional reputation, character-based quality assurance, and graduate employability. Given the complexity of these themes, the research adopts a qualitative approach, which is suitable for capturing in-depth meanings, values, and processes embedded within educational practices. This study is designed as a case study, emphasizing contextual analysis within a single pesantren environment (Williams, 2021). The case study method was selected because it allows exploration of phenomena in their natural setting and provides a holistic understanding of graduate quality assurance as a lived institutional practice. The research does not aim for statistical generalization but seeks to generate analytical insights that can inform broader discussions about quality assurance in Islamic boarding schools.

Data collection was conducted using multiple qualitative techniques to ensure credibility and richness of findings. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with pesantren leaders, teachers, alumni, parents, and external stakeholders such as employers and representatives from local universities. These interviews focused on perceptions, experiences, and evaluations of the graduate quality assurance system, particularly its effects on reputation, character development, and employability. Observations were carried out to record everyday practices within the pesantren, including routines, learning activities, and character-building exercises. This enabled the researcher to document how assurance practices were embedded in daily life rather than being abstract concepts. In addition, document analysis was employed to examine internal reports, alumni tracer studies, curriculum outlines, and institutional policy documents related to quality assurance. Triangulation was applied by comparing findings from interviews, observations, and documents, ensuring that the data were consistent and reliable.

Data analysis followed the interactive model developed by Miles and Huberman (Mulisa, 2022), which emphasizes iterative processes of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. In the first stage, data reduction was carried out by transcribing interviews, coding recurring themes, and filtering relevant information connected to reputation, character

assurance, and employability. This process allowed the researcher to focus on essential elements while eliminating irrelevant details. In the second stage, data display was implemented through the use of matrices, charts, and narrative summaries that organized information in a systematic manner, making patterns and relationships across stakeholders visible. The displays facilitated comparisons between perceptions of parents, alumni, and employers, highlighting convergences and divergences. The final stage involved conclusion drawing and verification, where emerging interpretations were tested against the evidence collected through triangulation. Continuous reflection and consultation with participants were undertaken to validate the findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Strengthens Institutional Reputation

Quality assurance here refers to systematic mechanisms that monitor, evaluate, and improve the competencies of graduates so that their output aligns with both internal standards and external expectations. Unlike ad hoc assessments, this system involves continuous processes such as curriculum evaluation, alumni tracking, and feedback loops with stakeholders. When such a system is consistently implemented, the school builds a reputation as a credible and trustworthy institution. Parents feel assured that their children will not only gain religious knowledge but also graduate with tangible skills that can be recognized by universities and employers. Government bodies also perceive the institution as aligning with national education quality frameworks. In effect, quality assurance becomes a driver of trust and legitimacy. This finding highlights how Darul Lughoh Wal Karomah, by adopting structured practices, can reposition itself not only as a traditional center of Islamic learning but also as a modern educational actor with measurable credibility in the broader academic and professional ecosystem.

During field observations, it became evident that Darul Lughoh Wal Karomah has initiated several structured efforts to ensure the consistency of its graduate quality. One notable example is the use of regular curriculum reviews where both religious and modern academic subjects are adjusted to meet evolving needs. Teachers are encouraged to document student progress in detailed portfolios, which provide a transparent record of competencies achieved. Additionally, alumni data is systematically collected to identify employment trends, higher education enrollment, and social contributions. These practices indicate that the pesantren is not only concerned with the short-term performance of its students but also the long-term outcomes of its graduates. Parents interviewed during the study expressed higher levels of trust in the school because of these measures. They reported that the clarity of learning

outcomes made it easier to evaluate whether their investment in education was worthwhile. Similarly, representatives from local universities acknowledged that graduates from the pesantren displayed consistent preparedness compared to peers from institutions without such assurance systems. These observations confirm that quality assurance practices translate directly into improved perceptions of credibility and reliability among multiple external audiences.

Table 1. Impact of Graduate Quality Assurance

Stakeholder Group	Perceived Impact of Graduate Quality Assurance	Evidence from Field Observation
Parents	Increased trust in pesantren education outcomes	Testimonials highlighting transparency of learning achievements
Government Agencies	Alignment with national quality standards	Recognition in local education reports
Universities	Higher academic preparedness of pesantren graduates	Positive feedback during admission processes
Industry & Employers	Confidence in graduate skills and work readiness	Early recruitment of pesantren alumni
Community at Large	Enhanced reputation and moral legitimacy of pesantren	Public perception surveys and informal interviews
Stakeholder Group	Perceived Impact of Graduate Quality Assurance	Evidence from Field Observation

Table 1 summarizes the multi-stakeholder perception of the school's reputation following the implementation of structured graduate quality assurance practices. Restating the finding, the data collected consistently confirms that structured graduate quality assurance acts as a reputational anchor for Darul Lughoh Wal Karomah Islamic Boarding School. The interpretation goes beyond surface perception: stakeholders respond positively because assurance provides predictability, and predictability builds confidence. In a landscape where educational quality is often inconsistent, pesantren with a clear and measurable system of quality assurance stand out as reliable. The interpretation suggests that reputation is not built merely on tradition or charisma of leadership but is sustained through evidence-based systems that guarantee graduate competence. Parents, universities, and industry partners are essentially making rational choices when they prefer institutions with visible accountability measures. This finding implies that reputation in education is less about symbolic image and more about demonstrable outcomes that are systematically produced. Hence, Darul Lughoh Wal Karomah's reputation gains durability precisely because it anchors itself on the ongoing, institutionalized process of guaranteeing quality. The result aligns with the broader educational principle that quality

assurance is not simply a bureaucratic requirement but a strategic investment in long-term institutional credibility.

Educational institutions that build transparent systems of outcome monitoring will inevitably gain greater trust from stakeholders. Whether in pesantren, secular schools, or higher education institutions, the principle remains: reputation is anchored in measurable graduate outcomes. This generalization contributes to the academic discourse by situating Islamic boarding schools within the same quality assurance frameworks used globally, showing that traditional institutions can align with modern practices without losing identity. Therefore, pesantren are capable of competing within the broader education sector if they adopt systematic graduate quality assurance. This generalization points toward a strategic roadmap: if Islamic boarding schools across Indonesia institutionalize such systems, their collective reputation could be elevated nationally and internationally. It reinforces the idea that “quality reputation” is no longer subjective but can be objectified through structured assurance processes, making Islamic education more credible in modern educational ecosystems.

Quality assurance functions simultaneously on symbolic and practical levels. Symbolically, it communicates seriousness, accountability, and modernity, attributes that resonate strongly with parents and policymakers. Practically, it ensures that graduate competencies are consistently monitored and improved. The dual function explains why institutional reputation increases significantly: stakeholders do not have to rely on faith alone but can base their trust on documented systems. The analysis also shows that reputation is cumulative (Pratiwi, 2022). Each cycle of graduates who meet quality standards reinforces the school’s credibility, creating a virtuous cycle of trust, enrollment, and further institutional development. Without such assurance, reputation becomes fragile and dependent on anecdotal success stories rather than sustained performance. The case of Darul Lughoh Wal Karomah demonstrates that pesantren can transform reputation management from being passive (based on history and tradition) to being proactive (based on measurable quality). In essence, quality assurance converts intangible cultural capital into tangible reputational capital, strengthening the school’s position in both religious and secular educational landscapes.

Comparing these findings with three relevant scholarly works adds depth. Systematic quality assurance frameworks enhance institutional reputation by signaling reliability to stakeholders. This aligns with the pesantren’s case where structured systems built trust among parents and universities. Educational standards are varied, institutions that adopt transparent quality assurance gain competitive legitimacy (Asiyai, 2022). Again, Darul Lughoh Wal Karomah’s

structured approach mirrors this phenomenon. Quality assurance becomes critical in traditional institutions seeking modern recognition. This resonates with pesantren, which are historically traditional but seek broader legitimacy in modern contexts. Collectively, these studies support the finding that graduate quality assurance is universally tied to reputation strengthening, regardless of the type of institution. The pesantren case provides additional cultural context, demonstrating how Islamic boarding schools adapt global quality assurance principles to reinforce their unique institutional identities while simultaneously expanding their competitive position in the educational landscape.

Character-Based Quality Assurance

The quality of graduates from Darul Lughoh Wal Karomah Islamic Boarding School is not measured solely in academic terms but also encompasses the cultivation of religious and moral character. This character-based quality assurance becomes a distinctive competitive advantage compared to other educational institutions. In conventional schools, quality assurance often emphasizes grades, standardized tests, and technical competencies. In contrast, the pesantren environment embeds moral, spiritual, and behavioral dimensions into its assurance framework. Character is not treated as an incidental outcome but as a structured component of graduate quality that is monitored, evaluated, and nurtured throughout the educational journey. For example, ethical discipline, communal responsibility, and spiritual integrity are established as indicators of success alongside mastery of curriculum content. By institutionalizing character as part of its quality assurance, the pesantren provides graduates with unique attributes that are increasingly valued in a globalized society where integrity, adaptability, and ethical leadership are in high demand. This elevates the pesantren's competitiveness because it produces not only competent individuals but also trustworthy leaders who can serve as moral anchors in diverse professional and social contexts.

Daily routines such as communal prayers, group study circles, and collective chores function as integrated mechanisms for nurturing discipline and accountability. Teachers and mentors consistently emphasize honesty, humility, and perseverance, reinforcing that academic excellence must go hand in hand with moral conduct. Evaluation is not restricted to exams but extends to monitoring daily behavior, punctuality, and respect for peers and teachers. Parents interviewed during the study expressed confidence that their children emerged from the pesantren with both intellectual skills and strong ethical grounding. Alumni corroborated this by highlighting that character-based formation prepared them not only for careers but also for leadership roles in society. Employers also noted that pesantren graduates demonstrated resilience,

responsibility, and loyalty at levels that distinguished them from graduates of mainstream institutions.

Table 2. Practices Positions Character

Quality Dimension	Structured Practice at Pesantren	Stakeholder Perception
Discipline & Responsibility	Daily prayer routines, group chores, punctuality	Parents view graduates as reliable and respectful
Integrity & Honesty	Behavioral monitoring, moral guidance	Employers report strong ethical behavior
Leadership & Service	Student leadership roles, community involvement	Alumni seen as trusted leaders in communities
Spiritual Resilience	Quranic memorization, religious reflection	Universities note strong moral orientation

Table 2 highlights how character is operationalized as part of graduate quality assurance at Darul Lughoh Wal Karomah. The evidence strongly supports that character-based quality assurance constitutes a distinctive competitive edge for Islamic boarding schools. Interpretation of the data suggests that stakeholders value not just knowledge acquisition but also moral formation. In educational markets where academic excellence is increasingly commoditized, character becomes a rare differentiator. For parents, assurance of moral growth justifies investment in pesantren education. For universities and employers, graduates with ethical consistency signal lower risk and higher reliability. The interpretation underscores that in the context of Islamic boarding schools, character is not only a theological imperative but also a strategic asset. Thus, Darul Lughoh Wal Karomah leverages its religious traditions to meet contemporary demands for ethical professionals. In effect, character-based assurance ensures that pesantren graduates possess a unique form of human capital: the fusion of knowledge and values. This integration enhances the school's reputation and competitiveness, bridging traditional Islamic pedagogy with modern institutional expectations.

The finding can be generalized that character-based quality assurance is a replicable model for institutions that seek to differentiate themselves in competitive educational markets. While rooted in the cultural and religious context of pesantren, the principle applies broadly: institutions that embed values and ethics into their quality assurance frameworks produce graduates with distinctive advantages. In secular universities, this could take the form of civic responsibility programs or ethical leadership curricula. In vocational schools, it might involve training that pairs technical skills with ethical workplace conduct. The generalization positions pesantren not as exceptions but as innovators in holistic education. Their practice of structuring character development provides a model that global education systems can adapt to

counterbalance the overemphasis on test scores and technical outputs.

The pesantren's approach shows that ethics and academic competencies are not mutually exclusive but mutually reinforcing. From a systems perspective, character-based assurance builds institutional resilience. Graduates with moral integrity reduce the risk of misconduct that could damage institutional reputation, while simultaneously increasing trust from stakeholders (Muhammad Yusuf et al., 2020). The analysis also highlights that such assurance is sustainable because it is woven into everyday practices rather than delivered as an add-on. This ensures that the values persist long after graduation (Umar et al., 2021). Furthermore, character-based assurance aligns with broader societal demands for ethical leadership, especially in contexts plagued by corruption, moral crises, and social fragmentation. By operationalizing character within their assurance systems, pesantren demonstrate a foresight often missing in mainstream education. Thus, character-based assurance is not merely cultural ornamentation but a strategic framework that strengthens both reputation and competitiveness.

Character education must be intentional, comprehensive, and integrated into all school activities. Darul Lughoh Wal Karomah's structured routines embody this principle. Moral development, when aligned with cognitive growth, produces individuals better prepared for democratic and professional life. This resonates with alumni testimonies on leadership roles acquired post-graduation. Character as part of quality assurance gain reputational advantages in competitive education systems (Pike et al., 2021). This mirrors how pesantren graduates are perceived as ethically reliable in workplaces. Collectively, these studies affirm the research finding that character-based assurance is not only a moral or religious choice but a practical strategy. Darul Lughoh Wal Karomah extends this literature by demonstrating that religious institutions can structure character formation into measurable assurance systems, thereby transforming traditional pedagogy into a modern framework for competitiveness.

Graduate Employability

Employability as a critical indicator in measuring the effectiveness of graduate quality assurance at Darul Lughoh Wal Karomah. Employability is defined here not merely as the ability to secure a job but as the broader readiness to engage in work, entrepreneurship, and social innovation. This includes skills such as communication, adaptability, problem-solving, and entrepreneurial initiative. In contemporary labor markets, academic knowledge alone is insufficient; institutions are increasingly evaluated by how well their graduates transition into meaningful careers. For the pesantren, integrating employability into its quality assurance system represents a strategic adaptation. By doing so,

it redefines its role from producing purely religious scholars to producing multifaceted graduates who can thrive in both spiritual and secular domains. This finding demonstrates that employability is not a departure from pesantren identity but an extension of its mission to prepare graduates who are capable of contributing effectively to society. Thus, employability assurance bridges tradition and modernity, enabling pesantren to remain relevant in a rapidly evolving educational and labor landscape.

Workshops on entrepreneurship, vocational training, and digital literacy have been introduced alongside the traditional curriculum. Alumni tracking showed that many graduates pursued careers in diverse sectors such as education, small business management, and information technology. Several alumni also reported founding their own enterprises, crediting the pesantren with instilling values of resilience and innovation. Employers interviewed for this study confirmed that pesantren graduates demonstrated strong adaptability and willingness to learn, which made them desirable hires despite coming from non-mainstream institutions. Furthermore, the pesantren has begun to develop partnerships with local industries and universities to provide internship opportunities. These initiatives are indicative of an intentional strategy to embed employability into the assurance process. Importantly, employability training is not framed as secondary to religious studies but as complementary, reinforcing the idea that work is part of holistic service to society.

Employability emerges as an essential outcome in the pesantren's quality assurance system. Interpretation of the data suggests that employability is not only a measure of practical skills but also a manifestation of the pesantren's holistic philosophy. Graduates are taught that livelihood is inseparable from religious values, thus framing employability as both an economic and spiritual obligation. This interpretation challenges the misconception that pesantren education is disconnected from real-world demands. On the contrary, by embedding employability, pesantren demonstrate their adaptability to modern economic realities while preserving religious identity. The pesantren effectively transforms the narrative from being a producer of religious elites only, into a generator of versatile professionals who serve multiple roles in society. This dual framing of employability—as both career readiness and social contribution—enhances institutional relevance and attractiveness to stakeholders.

Employability should be considered a universal component of graduate quality assurance frameworks. While the case of Darul Lughoh Wal Karomah highlights its application in Islamic boarding schools, the principle is transferable to higher education globally. Institutions that neglect employability risk producing graduates who struggle in modern economies, thereby undermining institutional reputation. Conversely, those who integrate employability as part

of assurance frameworks enhance stakeholder trust and long-term competitiveness. The generalization is that employability is not a peripheral consideration but a central measure of institutional success. For pesantren, this generalization challenges stereotypes by demonstrating their capacity to produce graduates who are not only spiritually competent but also economically resilient. Globally, it points to a paradigm shift where employability becomes a defining metric of graduate quality, positioning education as a direct contributor to economic development and social stability (Bauman & Lucy, 2021). Thus, employability is both a strategic necessity and a social responsibility for all educational institutions.

The integration of vocational and entrepreneurial training does not dilute religious identity but rather enhances it by preparing graduates to fulfill their social responsibilities in practical domains. Analysis of alumni trajectories indicates that employability assurance increases institutional adaptability, enabling pesantren to respond to fluctuating labor market demands. This contributes to sustainability, as schools with employable graduates attract more students, funding, and partnerships. The analysis also indicates that employability has reputational spillovers: alumni success stories reinforce institutional credibility, creating a cycle of trust and competitiveness. Without employability assurance, institutions risk producing graduates who are marginalized in labor markets, weakening both reputation and stakeholder confidence. Thus, employability is both a micro-level outcome for graduates and a macro-level strategy for institutional resilience. For Darul Lughoh Wal Karomah, this means that employability is no longer optional but central to its long-term competitiveness in the education sector.

Employability is not synonymous with employment but with the development of adaptive capacities that enable graduates to succeed across contexts. This aligns with alumni experiences at Darul Lughoh Wal Karomah. Employability as a multidimensional construct involving career identity, personal adaptability, and social capital, dimensions mirrored in pesantren training. Employers prioritize transferable skills such as communication and teamwork over technical expertise alone (Mertler et al., 2021). This resonates with employer feedback in this study regarding pesantren graduates. Together, these studies validate that employability assurance is a legitimate and necessary aspect of graduate quality. The pesantren case contributes novelty by demonstrating how employability can be contextualized within religious institutions, challenging assumptions that traditional education is incompatible with modern labor demands. Instead, Darul Lughoh Wal Karomah shows that religious values can reinforce employability, creating graduates who are both competent and principled.

Graduate quality assurance is a strategic driver of institutional competitiveness at Darul Lughoh Wal Karomah Islamic Boarding School. Structured assurance strengthens reputation by demonstrating accountability and reliability to stakeholders. Second, character-based assurance differentiates the institution by producing ethically grounded graduates who embody values alongside skills. Third, employability assurance ensures that graduates are not only prepared for spiritual service but also economically resilient and professionally adaptable. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that Islamic boarding schools are capable of bridging tradition with modernity, integrating religious pedagogy with contemporary quality frameworks. The implication is that pesantren can no longer be perceived merely as traditional institutions but as competitive actors in national and global education landscapes.

CONCLUSION

Assurance mechanisms at Darul Lughoh Wal Karomah Islamic Boarding School not only enhanced institutional reputation through credibility and accountability but also differentiated graduates by embedding character as a measurable quality dimension, while simultaneously equipping them with employability skills that ensured relevance in modern labor markets. These outcomes indicate that pesantren, traditionally viewed as guardians of religious knowledge, can reposition themselves as competitive educational institutions capable of producing graduates with intellectual, moral, and professional strengths. More broadly, the findings affirm that quality assurance frameworks must move beyond bureaucratic compliance toward holistic models that integrate reputation, values, and employability. Such a paradigm can be replicated in both faith-based and secular institutions, signaling that the strategic application of graduate quality assurance is not confined to specific cultural or institutional settings but represents a critical pathway for sustaining credibility and contributing to human capital development in the global education landscape.

REFERENCES

- Asiyai, R. I. (2022). Best practices for quality assurance in higher education: implications for educational administration. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 25(5), 843–854.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2019.1710569>

- Bauman, A., & Lucy, C. (2021). Enhancing entrepreneurial education: Developing competencies for success. *International Journal of Management Education*, 19(1), 100293. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2019.03.005>
- Budiharso, T., & Suharto, T. (2022). A New Paradigm of Pesantren Management in the Perspective of Social Change in the Globalization Era. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 2022(100), 90–103. <https://doi.org/10.14689/ejer.2022.100.007>
- Fuadi, D., Susilo, A., & Wahyono, B. (2021). Self-Governance: Internationalization Management of Distinctive Higher Education Towards The World Class University. *Indonesian Journal on Learning and Advanced Education (IJOLAE)*, 3(2), 96–113. <https://doi.org/10.23917/ijolae.v3i2.11754>
- Kiss, B., Sekulova, F., Hörschelmann, K., Salk, C. F., Takahashi, W., & Wamsler, C. (2022). Citizen participation in the governance of nature-based solutions. *Environmental Policy and Governance*, 32(3), 247–272. <https://doi.org/10.1002/eet.1987>
- Longo, F., Padovano, A., Cimmino, B., & Pinto, P. (2021). Towards a mass customization in the fashion industry: An evolutionary decision aid model for apparel product platform design and optimization. *Computers and Industrial Engineering*, 162. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cie.2021.107742>
- Mertler, C. A., Vannatta, R. A., & LaVenita, K. N. (2021). Advanced and Multivariate Statistical Methods: Practical Application and Interpretation, Seventh Edition. In *Advanced and Multivariate Statistical Methods: Practical Application and Interpretation, Seventh Edition*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003047223>
- Muafiah, E., Sofiana, N. E., & Khasanah, U. (2022). PESANTREN EDUCATION IN INDONESIA: Efforts to Create Child-Friendly Pesantren. *Ulumuna*, 26(2), 447–471. <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v26i2.558>
- Muhammad Yusuf, S., Mohd Yusoff, M. Z., Kasa, M. D., Don, Y., & Mohd Zain, W. H. W. (2020). Contributing factors in academic ethics practices among lecturers of Islamic higher education. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 8(5), 2123–2128. <https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2020.080551>
- Mujahidin, E., Syamsuddin, Hafidhuddin, D., Bahruddin, E., & Endri, E. (2021). Importance performance analysis model for implementation in national education standards (SNPs). *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 10(5), 114–128. <https://doi.org/10.36941/ajis-2021-0127>
- Mulisa, F. (2022). When Does a Researcher Choose a Quantitative, Qualitative, or Mixed Research Approach? *Interchange*, 53(1), 113–131. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10780-021-09447-z>
- Pike, M. A., Hart, P., Paul, S. A. S., Lickona, T., & Clarke, P. (2021). Character development through the curriculum: teaching and assessing the understanding and practice of virtue. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 53(4), 449–466. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2020.1755996>

- Pratiwi, D. P. (2022). Principal Management in Improving the Professionalism of Teachers in MA Muhammadiyah Rejang Lebong. In *Journal of Quality Assurance in Islamic Education (JQAIE)* (Vol. 2, Issue 2, pp. 87–98). IAIN Sorong. <https://doi.org/10.47945/jqaie.v2i2.703>
- Skinner, B., Leavey, G., & Rothi, D. (2021). Managerialism and teacher professional identity: impact on well-being among teachers in the UK. *Educational Review*, 73(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2018.1556205>
- Sodikin, O., Wasliman, I., Sauri, S., & Sauri, R. S. (2022). Implementation of Integrated Quality Management Private Character Education in Improving Discipline of Students. *IJGIE (International Journal of Graduate of Islamic Education)*, 3(1), 120–134. <https://doi.org/10.37567/ijgie.v3i1.1183>
- Suriagiri, S., Akrim, A., & Norhapizah, N. (2022). The influence of school principal supervision, motivation, and work satisfaction on teachers' performance. *Cypriot Journal of Educational Sciences*, 17(7), 2523–2537. <https://doi.org/10.18844/cjes.v17i7.7684>
- Susetyo, B., Soetantyo, S. P., Sayuti, M., & Nur, D. (2022). The Innovation and the Transformation of Indonesian Schools Accreditation Management System. *Indonesian Journal on Learning and Advanced Education (IJOLAE)*, 4(2), 128–139. <https://doi.org/10.23917/ijolae.v4i2.17113>
- Sutiah, Purba, A. S., Kholid, A., & Slamet. (2021). Improving the Competitiveness of Islamic Higher Education: Study Approaches to Development of Human Resource Competencies (HR). *Review of International Geographical Education Online*, 11(3), 477–493. <https://doi.org/10.33403/rigeo.800513>
- Umar, Setyosari, P., Kamdi, W., & Sulton. (2021). Exploration of moral integrity education and superior cadre leadership at madrasah boarding school indonesia. *International Journal of Instruction*, 14(4), 753–774. <https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2021.14443a>
- Wali, M., Umam, K., & Hefniy, H. (2022). The Influence of Quality Assurance Institutions on Employee Performance at Nurul Jadid University. *JUMPA : Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.33650/jumpa.v3i1.5389>
- Williams, H. (2021). The meaning of “Phenomenology”: Qualitative and philosophical phenomenological research methods. *Qualitative Report*, 26(2), 366–385. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2021.4587>
- Zhou, Q., Li, Y., Zhao, D., Li, J., Williams, H., Xu, H., & Yan, F. (2022). Transferable representation modelling for real-time energy management of the plug-in hybrid vehicle based on k-fold fuzzy learning and Gaussian process regression. *Applied Energy*, 305. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apenergy.2021.117853>