

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT TO CULTIVATE ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOLS' EDUCATIONAL QUALITY : BLENDING MODEL IMPLEMENTATION

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ABSTRACT

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This study aims to explore strategic management of Islamic Boarding School in order to cultivate educational quality. The present study employed a qualitative study by using descriptive analytical approach. Two Islamic boarding schools were selected as the research sites namely Sabilunnajat and Al-Ulfah Islamic boarding schools, Ciamis Regency, West Java, Indonesia. The findings revealed that these two Islamic boarding schools were deemed capable to survive in a fairly tight competition. Moreover, there were several strategic steps undertaken by these two Islamic boarding schools to survive and contribute to the society. This alteration attempt is a conceptualization of Islamic boarding school management system referred to, in other words, as management strategy. After obtaining the results of field data from two research sites, the researcher will subsequently analyze and attempt to improve the management system in the two research sites. A good boarding school and the survived one is considered capable to answer the needs of the society which is in line with the terms where quality is something that meets needs. Afterwards, this study proposed a model knowledge of Islamic boarding school management system particularly the Blending Model of Management of Islamic Boarding Schools.

KEYWORDS

Strategic managements, Islamic boarding school, educational quality, blending model

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INTRODUCTION

Education plays a prominent role to shape the nation's sustainability and advancement. The nation's intellectuality has been considered as a benchmark of how a country can progress and develop rapidly. The goal is that this nation is able to follow the flow of the times. Education must be comprehensive in all aspects of life. What is the goal of education is contained in the ideals of national education that must be realized by every institution and component of society.

Despite the numerous systems of education in Indonesia, Islamic boarding school are deemed as the oldest institutions in this country. Regardless various benefits and shortcomings of Islamic boarding school. Islamic boarding school has been considered successful to maintain their existence for the nation and state. Islamic education has been capable to show its contribution in shaping the idealism of national education, not only in terms of the quality of human resources in the context of science, but also able to shape the character of the nation's children who have added value specifically good morals.

(Raharjo, 1988) delineates that Islamic boarding school is a religious institution that teaches and initiates advancements in developing and disseminating Islamic knowledge. Islamic boarding school is a site where young and old people expand their religion insights by acquiring sources from Arabic books or any other sources written in Arabic.

Amidst the struggle of informational society, Islamic boarding schools should really enter the contestation stage and compete with other educational institutions especially with the massive spread of foreign-labeled education which increases competition for the educational output quality. The progressively tight competition puts Islamic boarding schools to risk the quality of their graduates in order to remain superior and become the people's preference. The aforementioned occurrence indicates that Islamic boarding schools should really implement numerous internal improvements and new innovations in order to remain capable to improve the quality of their education.

The existence of the National Education System Law Number 20 of 2003 article 30 paragraph 4 is a good thing for Islamic boarding school. In line with National Education System Law as aforementioned, it says that Islamic boarding school is an institution that puts an emphasis on the field of religious science, hence, institutional discrimination is slightly reduced by the existence of this policy prescribed in the aforementioned constitution. Moreover, inside the circumstance of the use of information technology, the Islamic boarding school nowadays are strong and literate enough in using this facility, hence, the leverage of the Islamic boarding school is encouraged by the ease of undertaking various kinds of publications about their institutions. The public will be much easier to access information about Islamic boarding school institutions, therefore, they will become an important reference for public education.

In the era of globalization and freedom of accessing information nowadays, Islamic boarding school must be able to possess competitiveness and also have excellent programs to survive and compete with other institutions both locally and internationally that offer various kinds of quality. The era of intense rivalry has forced Islamic boarding schools to have qualified graduates, hence, they can meet the needs of society in a comprehensive Islamic field. Conventional Islamic boarding school management will not be able to sustain the institution if it is not supported by accelerated steps as a form of endeavor and advancements.

A number of traditional Islamic boarding schools have historically altered their institutions into modern educational institutions for instance YLPI *Buntet Pesantren* (current name). Since established in 1785 by K.H. Muqoyyim (Mbah Muqoyyim), it had

undergone a number of alterations from traditional to modern Islamic boarding school. This modern pioneering began when the *Buntet Pesantren* was led by K.H. Abbas Abdul Jamil in 1919, started by combining the two education systems in Buntet Pesantren, namely the classical religious education system (*diniyyah*) and *madrasah* (school) education system (Olman Dahuri, 2015). This is an evidence of the transformation of a boarding school from classic to modern.

During its initial establishment, modern Islamic boarding schools were considered as a solution to draw near the demands contextual with situation nowadays. However, lately, it turns out that modern Islamic boarding schools are not fully a solution to meet the demands of society. The management system and the curriculum presented are entirely based on modernity, hence, the community will remain difficult to differentiate whether it is Islamic boarding schools or ordinary schools.

Irrelevant with the positive impact of Islamic boarding schools modernity, it is revealed that there are some impacts that are considered less positive for this alteration in pattern. One of them is the output of modern Islamic boarding schools is occasionally less blending and does not meet the needs of the community in the context of religious traditions including the aspect of adding value in meeting people's needs in religious services, for example in turning on the mosque, the death of residents and so on. This is a serious issue because Islamic boarding schools, despite whether they are modern or classic, bear a heavy burden because they are expected to produce products that have high intellectual quality and have friendly morals and have the knowledge of *amaliyah* to be accepted by the community appropriately.

Therefore, according to the aforementioned issues, this study puts an emphasis on scrutinizing the strategic managements of Islamic boarding schools. These strategic managements are expected to assist Islamic boarding schools to respond the community needs particularly the quality of Islamic boarding school education. This study also comprises; the strategic managements of Islamic boarding schools, the strategic management functions of Islamic boarding schools, the stages of strategic management of Islamic boarding schools, the characteristics of strategic management of Islamic boarding schools, the Islamic boarding school education institutions quality, the process of quality assurance of education in Islamic boarding schools and Strategic Management through a Blending Model of Islamic Boarding School Management.

RESEARCH METHOD

The present study employs a qualitative research. (Creswell, 2002) defines a qualitative as a process of inquiry to recognize a social or human problem based on the creation of a complete holistic picture formed by scientific narratives, reporting the results of information from informants in detail, and arranged in a natural setting. Qualitative research is more holistic and comprehensive in examining a problem, hence, the main problem will be holistically and comprehensively revealed until eventually presented in a scientific narrative. The data were obtained from two research sites namely Sabilunnajat and Al-Ulfah Islamic boarding schools located in Ciamis Regency, West Java, Indonesia. These two research sites were selected based on the uniqueness of preliminary observation found by the researchers. There were three data collection techniques utilized in this study namely documentation, literature review, and observations. Data analysis technique is the process of systematically searching and compiling data obtained from the results of observations, interviews and documentation by organizing data into categories, describing them into units, synthesizing, compiling into patterns, choosing which ones are important

and will learn and make conclusions, hence, they are easily understood by themselves and others (Sugiyono, 2013). Nasution has a theory in data analysis by reducing data, displaying data, drawing conclusions and verification, analyzing data, making summary sheets, and using matrices in data analysis (Nasution, 2003).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This strategy formulation stage is very essential as it is associated with the perfection of vision and mission. Subsequently, in this stage, a SWOT analysis is initiated to eventually determine the precise strategy and alternative plan just in case the initial plan does not work out.

a) **Strategy Implementation**

Strategy Implementation is the manifestation and implementation of the approved strategy. In this stage, the essential thing to prioritize is the process of internalizing the vision and mission.

b) **Strategy Evaluation**

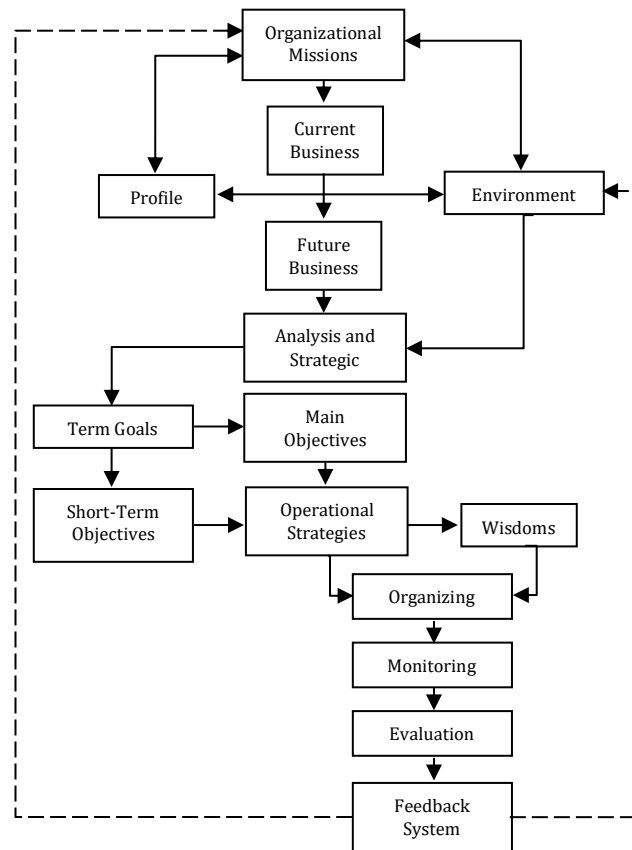
After initiating numerous efforts with the approved strategies in the implementation section, the final part is considered as evaluation. This section measures the level of success of a strategy in terms of internal and external aspects. What is measured is the effectiveness in an effort to achieve or succeed in the process implemented whether it is in line with the objectives or vice versa.

On the other hand, (Siagian, 1995): delineates that there are 12 stages in the process of strategic managements. They are as follows:

- a. Formulating organizational missions
- b. Determining organizational profiles
- c. Analysis and strategic choices
- d. Maintaining long-term objectives
- e. Defining main objectives
- f. Establishing operational strategy
- g. Maintaining short-term objectives i.e. annual goals
- h. Formulating a set of wisdoms
- i. Strategy organization
- j. Forming monitoring system
- k. Developing evaluation system
- l. Emerging feedback system

The aforementioned stages can be seen through the schema as follows:

Figure 1: The Stages in the Strategic



The process of strategic management consist of several important thing that must be considered (Müller et al., 2020):

a. Participation and motivation

Motivation will significantly influence the process that occurs in any activity, particularly in the management process. The existence of motivation will increase participation in the management and completion of various kinds of work. Some important things in the management of institutions require active participation for instance decision making. If this is done in a sense of togetherness based on joint decision making, good and transparent decisions will be created. Islamic boarding school has always been recognized for its rigidity in terms of deliberation. It is because the frame in society still remains robust in which the decision is based on kyai. Therefore, the spirit of togetherness is expected to be more flexible mainly for collegial aspects.

b. Information and communication

Information is an instrument utilized to enhance participation. There is no such thing as good cooperation initiated by the stakeholders if the good communication is nonexistence.

c. Defining goals and, if necessary, specifying them more precisely using key data.

A subsequent essential aspect that needs to be taken into account in the Islamic Boarding School organization is to determine the objectives as well as the directions concerning how to achieve the aforesaid objectives.

1. The Functions of Islamic Boarding School's Strategic Managements

There are several functions of Islamic boarding school's managements. They are as follow:

- a) Generating an Islamic boarding school management institution that puts an emphasis on goals by maximizing the process that always relying on a rational and realistic vision and mission.
- b) Assisting to control the implementation of the Islamic boarding school's strategic plans and operational strategies dependent upon the management function with various stages, hence, the process would be more measurable and efficient.
- c) Possessing a systemic strategy to easily implement certain work programs in order to achieve comprehensive goals.
- d) Allowing existing managements to be more contextual, therefore, it will swiftly respond to alterations in line with the times' demands without changing the main objectives of the institution.
- e) Emboldening stakeholders in Islamic boarding school to optimize their potential based on their professionalism, henceforth, it will further reinforce the Islamic boarding school institution itself.

2. The Characteristics of Islamic Boarding School's Managements

- a) Universally acknowledged, from the structure with the highest position to the lowest. However, the implementation of this strategic management is the responsibility of the highest authority.
- b) Flexible: meaning that strategic policy will take effect for a certain period of time. However, it can be altered and adjusted if considered ineffective during its implementation process.
- c) Advanced-oriented: meaning that strategic management must be able to consider institution's prospect projections.
- d) It will be affecting entire institution elements despite the fact that strategic management is merely realized to a single part of the institution.
- e) Possessing openness and transparency: meaning that this sort of management will be dependent upon either internal or external conditions.

3. The Education Institutions Quality of Islamic Boarding School's Managements

Abdul Jawad asserts that management initially derives from English '*to manager*' which means managing, manage, or managing. In Arabic, 'management' comes from the word '*nazama*' which means to organize, '*an-nizhaam*', '*at-tazhiim*' means the activity of arranging, arranging the things around to be compatible with others (Muhammad Abdul Jawwad, 2004).

In Arabic or English and other languages, the word 'management' has almost the similar meaning. In Arabic, the essence of management is '*al-tadbir*' (arrangement)(Saefullah, 2012). It is also in line with the Word of Allah in the Al-Qur'an Surah Al-Sajdah Verse 5 as follows:

يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ يَعْرُجُ إِلَيْهِ فِي يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهُ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ مِمَّا تَعُدُّونَ

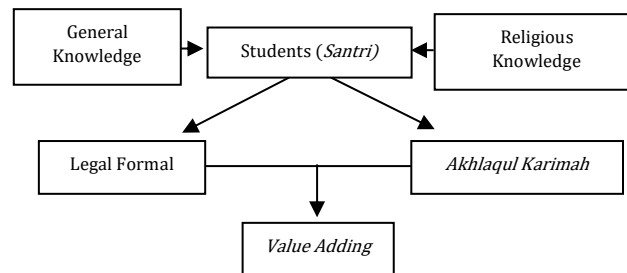
Translation: *He directs the ordinance from the heaven unto the earth; then it ascends unto Him in a Day, whereof the measure is a thousand years of that you reckon.* (Al-Qur'an Surah Al-Sajdah Verse 5) (Yunus, 1984).

The verse emphasizes that Allah is the one who controls everything throughout the universe. On the other hand, the term 'management' in educational circumstance refers to activities combined with educational resources to accomplish prescribed educational objectives (Pidarta, 2011).

According to the aforementioned literatures, this study abridges the interpretation of management quality as an effort to manage the institutions' accomplishment quality by textually and contextually advancing its management system relevant with its needs. Islamic boarding school or well-recognized as *pesantren* in Indonesia is now capable of altering into an educational institution acknowledged by the state or country to produce formal education graduates. Furthermore, needless to say that maximum quality is critical even though it would become a tough challenge. Therefore, implementing strategic management in its management system is fundamental as one effort to accomplish the best quality of Islamic boarding school or *pesantren*.

An Islamic boarding school is considered qualified when the graduates are relevant with the needs or demands of the society. The needs and demands are indeed different from one region to another. Nevertheless, the main emphasis is that the graduates have to be able to possess complete intellectual abilities along with good morals attached as well. As devout Muslim students (read: *santri*), they have to be knowledgeable and capable of scientific endeavors. Besides, they have to also possess a formal legal certificate functioning in entire government and private sectors or institutions. The concept of a qualified Muslim student is drawn by the Figure 2 as follows:

Figure 2 the Concept of a Qualified Muslim Student



4. The Quality Assurance of Islamic Boarding School's Managements

There are three concepts of quality assurance managements in education as proposed by (Muhaimin, Suti'ah, 2012). They are as follows:

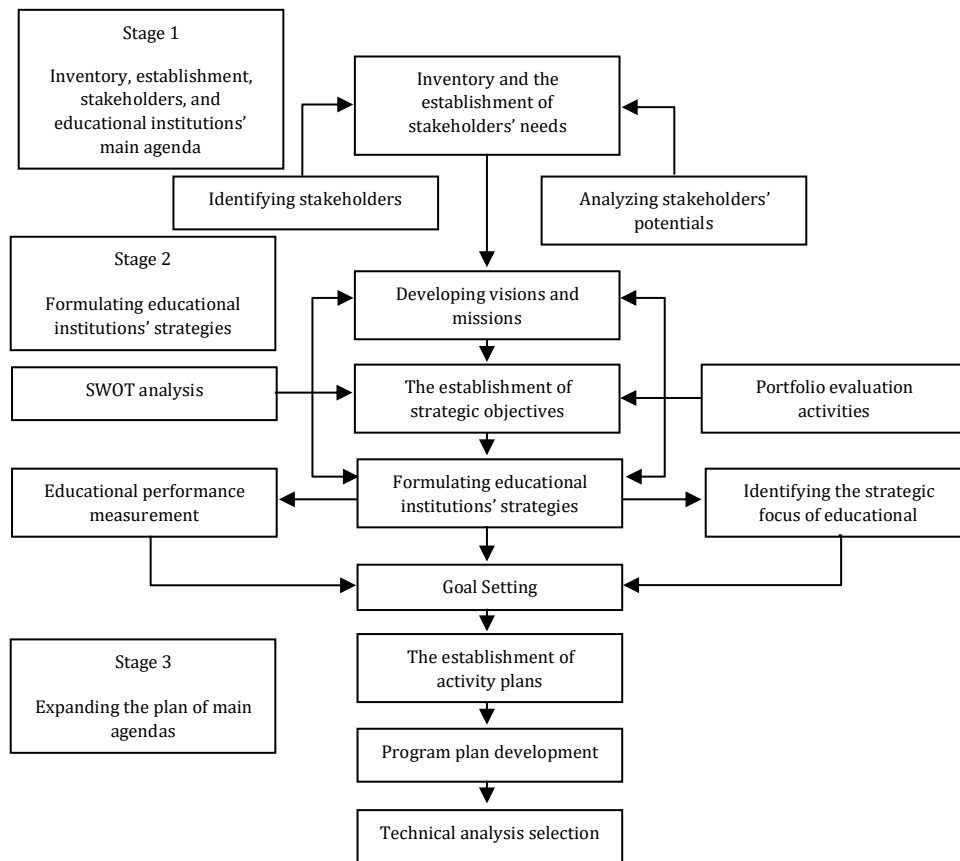
Stage 1 : Inventory, establishment, stakeholders and educational institutions' main agendas.

Stage 2 : Formulating educational institutions' strategies.

Stage 3 : Expanding the plan of main agendas.

The concept of quality assurance as proposed by Muhaimin (Muhaimin, Suti'ah, 2012) is shown by the Figure 2.3 as follows:

Figure 3 the concept of quality assurance



Educational quality education must qualify the following stages: (1) decision-making; (2) planning; (3) organizing; (4) communicating; (5) coordinating; (6) monitoring; (7) Assessing/Evaluating. Decision-making process is carried out through discussion or negotiation. Planning is initiated to make sure that the program implementation runs systematically, effective, and efficient. Organizing is intended to make sure that every single program implementation is well-organized. Communication is referred as an effort to develop synergy which is open and transparent with information. Monitoring means that each program implementation is well-monitored. Finally, assessing is stated as an evaluation agenda to measure the success rate of program implementation (Ibrohim, 2007).

The important thing related with the quality to get sustainability is user's satisfaction. This TQM aims to improve sustainability to create satisfaction and excellence in an organization (Khurniawan et al., 2021). Simply, when excellent service and good quality assurance are provided in an Islamic Boarding School, it will automatically create satisfaction from the users towards its graduates. It will get an impact on the sustainability of the institution because naturally and surely the institution will continue to be filled with students. The results of public trust have been well formed. The things as abovementioned are the premises that can be agreed upon that the existence of each other is important. As for quality because of the support of a good process, then the creation of a good process is the creation of good

management. Management is certainly a progressive science, in other words, strategic steps will be needed in its implementation hence the term strategic management emerges.

5. Strategic Management through Blending Model

The education management system of Islamic boarding schools can generally be identified from the various patterns of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. The difference as aforesaid is categorized into two namely the management of traditional and modern Islamic boarding schools. A lot of literatures have explained how the concepts of managing traditional Islamic boarding schools and managing modern Islamic boarding schools work, but the phenomenon is that both traditional and modern concepts have not answered the challenges of the times.

For instance, regardless of exceedingly maintaining Islamic values in a cultural way with the output of producing students who sustain the local wisdom values of Islamic boarding schools, traditional Islamic boarding schools still encounter several problems particularly the nonexistence of a learning management system. Consequently, it is difficult to evaluate and draw a parameter to achieve the goals of educational institutions. Conversely, modern Islamic boarding schools are more recommended for parents to educate their children. This phenomenon is due to the fact that modern Islamic boarding schools offer more solution through boarding school modern educational system management.

Reflecting on this occurrence, this study attempted to propose a scientific proposal as a problem solving namely the formulation of strategic management through a Blending Model of Islamic boarding schools' management. The blending models as above-mentioned does not simply mean combining or merging the models but rather integrating them as a whole. The researchers are concerned with the polarization or categorization among Islamic boarding schools in the society. In spite of offering advantages, the dichotomy or polarization into two models is deemed to have shortcomings that should be at least answered by the academicians.

Strategic management through a blending model of Islamic boarding school managements is a model of integrating Islamic boarding school management that combines the two categorizations. Upholding and internalizing the values of local wisdom of Islamic boarding schools whose output is the students' attitude (morals, and devotion) who are also managed using a systematic and measurable modern education system. There are several things that become a common thread to implement the blending model of Islamic boarding school management, including; first, formulating goals both on a micro and macro scale. Micro scale is to ensure that learning activities / transfer of knowledge run with a measurable and systematic way. While the macro scale must be able to answer the big mission of how Islamic boarding schools can produce students who are knowledgeable in *amaliyah*, doing scientific deeds by taking into account the needs of the times, which is then called the achievement of quality education. Second, Islamic boarding schools must prepare systems and rules in running the organization for the Islamic boarding schools' management, hence, they have objectives every year such as revamping the curriculum, scheduling system, education level, financial system, conducive environment and evaluation of achievement. Third, Islamic boarding schools must have human resources with the fields of religious scholarship and modern education. They must even be able to classify the fields of science, both in the field of religious science on the kyai council and in the field of modern science on professional human

resources. Fourth, maintain the wisdom of the Islamic boarding school. The point is that Islamic boarding schools that carry a blending model must be able to maintain good old values and apply new, better values.

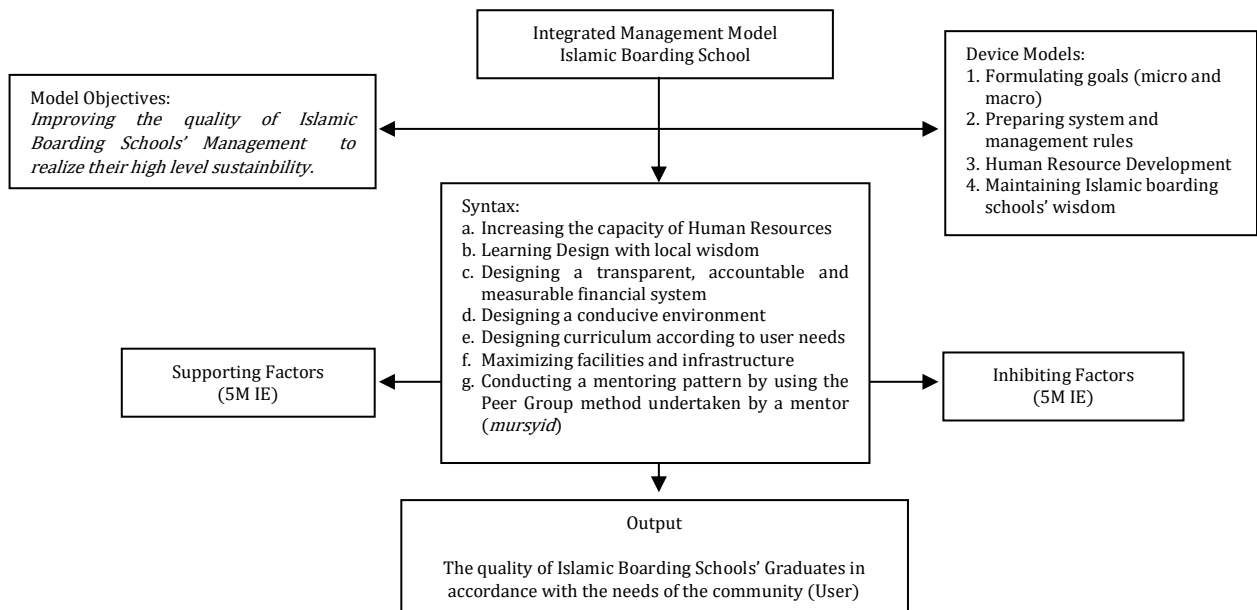
From the purpose of the model and the tools as aforesaid, a syntax or steps will appear to get to the achievement of the model's goals. In an effort to obtain quality human resources, of course, processes and maintenance are required that lead to the development of human resources in a sustainable and systematic manner. Islamic boarding schools as an educational institution that has extraordinary uniqueness and comprehensive educational goals, indeed, requires truly improvised human resource management techniques. Human resource management is a very vital right because without good human resources it is impossible for an institution to run optimally. Then to create effective learning, a systematic learning design and local wisdom are also compulsory. The point is that learning needs must be adapted to the latest conditions and situations but must also maintain the local wisdom of the Islamic boarding school, for instance with modern learning with local wisdom. The next important step is to ensure a measurable, effective and efficient financial management system. A good institution is one that is able to demonstrate sound financial performance with the principles of transparency and fairness. Then related to the next step that must be met is ensuring a conducive environment. Environmental issues are sometimes neglected, even though environmental factors become very vital, especially if they are associated with the achievement of the learning process outcomes. When an educational institution is to be established, one of the considerations that must be ensured is the existence of a conducive environment, both internal to the institution and external. Next is the availability of a curriculum that is in accordance with the objectives of Islamic boarding schools, namely to produce graduates who are in accordance with the needs of the community. The curriculum is a tool for stakeholder guidance in Islamic boarding schools, therefore, they do not get out of the main goal of the institution. As for the aspect of infrastructure, of course, is a part that cannot be ignored. No matter how good the learning planning is contained in the curriculum, it is felt that it will not be optimal if it is not supported by qualified facilities and infrastructure. Then the last step is to have an intensive cadre polarization (mentoring) by way of focused mentoring with the concept of peer group mentoring. In terms of going to Islamic boarding schools, probably what is meant is the murshid pattern.

On this occasion, this study needs to underline that the accreditation of educational institutions is so important. Unfortunately, accreditation of educational institutions is only implemented to formal educational institutions hence all schools are competing to improve the education management system. In this case, according to the researcher, it is important to pay attention together, even though the government does not review and accredit Islamic boarding schools, the managers of Islamic boarding schools should gradually begin to formulate their respective institutional systems for improving the quality of Islamic boarding school education. The researcher expects that through the concept of a combination of Islamic boarding school management models, there will be an improvement in the education system in Islamic boarding schools that is more measurable, systematic and leads to morality.

With the steps as aforesaid, as the final output of strategic management through the blending model of management of educational institutions is the achievement of maximum quality of education. Hence, if we conclude that when education is able to guarantee quality, of course, another impact that will be obtained

is the sustainability of the educational institution as a result of the quality obtained. Public trust will be very well maintained if Islamic boarding schools are able to prove the quality or quality of their graduates. Therefore, when trust is formed and finally the sustainability of Pesantren is increasingly guaranteed. In simple terms, the strategic management in question can be seen in the section below:

Figur 4 the concept of blending model



CONCLUSION

The management system of Islamic boarding schools in the two research sites is a traditional pattern that has undergone various alterations. The modification process was carried out as an effort to maintain pesantren education, hence, it could survive and contribute to community development. Over the years, there has been a dichotomy and categorization of Islamic boarding school educational institutions. This polarization of categorization becomes a model for managing traditional and modern Islamic boarding schools.

The existence of Islamic boarding school educational institutions that places a different system of management patterns is unique because they are considered capable of surviving and contributing to society. Placing the management system of Islamic boarding schools in one type of management model in its development is considered to have shortcomings in each of these systems. Various program improvisations are needed in the management system of Islamic boarding schools in order to improve the quality and quality of education.

Based on the results of field research and various literatures review, the researchers initiated a new model as a strategic management application namely the blending model of Islamic boarding schools' management. There are four important points in the blending model. They are: (1) Islamic Boarding Schools must formulate goals both on micro and macro scale; (2) Islamic boarding schools must prepare systems and rules in running the organization for Islamic boarding schools' management, hence, they will have targets each

year such as curriculum reform, scheduling systems, educational levels, financial systems, and conducive environment and evaluation of achievement; (3) managers must develop human resources progressively and sustainably; (4) maintaining Islamic boarding schools' wisdom. It can be elucidated that that Islamic boarding schools that rely on blending management model must be able to maintain good older values and implement the new ones.

Islamic boarding school educational institutions must be able to put forward the principles of renewal with local wisdom. Becoming a boarding school educational institution that is able to be competitive, sustainable and maintain the quality of its education is not easy. There will be many challenges, both internal and external. To face these challenges requires expertise and courage therefore answers and solutions to these challenges are found. When Pesantren educational institutions are capable enough to carry out strategic management of the institutions they manage, the potential to be sustainable and maintain quality becomes a necessity.

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