

## The Integration of Vocational and Soft Skills Education for Santri at Miftahul Ulum Islamic Boarding School, Bangunsirna

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### ABSTRACT

*Educational transformation in the Education 5.0 era requires Islamic boarding schools to not only strengthen the spiritual dimension but also systematically integrate vocational education and soft skills development within the framework of Islamic educational management. However, studies that position the integration of vocational education and soft skills as a structured managerial strategy are still limited. This study aims to analyze the design, implementation, and control of the integration of vocational education and soft skills at the Miftahul Ulum Bangunsirna Islamic Boarding School. The study used a qualitative approach with a case study design, involving the boarding school leadership, educators, program managers, and students as key informants. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies, then analyzed using thematic analysis with data validity maintained through triangulation. The results show that the integration of vocational education and soft skills is not incidental, but is built through coordinated managerial practices, including a competency-based curriculum, collaborative human resource management, and the management of the boarding school's institutional culture as a hidden curriculum. Vocational education is positioned as an inherent part of the Islamic educational mission to actualize the values of knowledge, charity, and morals in the lives of students. This study contributes by formulating a humanistic-integrative Islamic educational management pattern as an empirical description of managerial practices, as well as providing practical references for managing Islamic boarding schools in responding to the demands of contemporary education and the world of work.*

**Keywords:** Islamic education management, vocational education, soft skills, Islamic boarding schools, Education 5.0

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## INTRODUCTION

The transformation of education in the Education 5.0 era demands that educational institutions not only produce academically superior graduates, but also those who are adaptable, possess 21st-century skills, and are prepared to face complex social and work<sup>1</sup>. In this context, the development of vocational and soft skills is seen as a key competency that needs to be systematically integrated into the educational process, not treated as a mere supplement to the curriculum.<sup>2</sup>

Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) are strategically positioned to respond to these demands.<sup>3</sup> In addition to serving as institutions for the transmission of Islamic knowledge, pesantren are also faced with the need to prepare students to adapt to social and economic changes without losing their religious identity.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the development of vocational education in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) is an institutional response to bridge Islamic values with the practical skills and work-readiness needs of students.<sup>5</sup>

From an Islamic educational perspective, the goals of education encompass not only the transfer of knowledge (ta'lim),<sup>6</sup> but also the formation of personality and morals (tarbiyah), and the internalization of social and ethical values (ta'dib).<sup>7</sup> Vocational education and soft skills development are directly relevant to these goals because they enable the integration of technical competence, work ethic, social responsibility, and Islamic character. However, various studies indicate that graduates' readiness for the workforce is often more determined by non-technical skills than by mastery of technical skills alone.<sup>8</sup>

Several previous studies have examined the integration of vocational education and soft skills in the context of Islamic education.<sup>9</sup> Some studies emphasize the integration of vocational curricula through project-based learning and life skills programs, while others highlight the contribution of vocational education to student independence and increased graduate competitiveness.<sup>10</sup> Despite their important contributions, most of these studies still position the integration of vocational and soft skills at the curriculum or learning practice level, and do not position it as an outcome of a structured and sustainable Islamic education management system.

Furthermore, studies that explicitly analyze the role of Islamic education management functions such as strategic planning, human resource management, program organization, and institutional culture formation in shaping the integration of vocational and soft skills education in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) are still relatively limited, particularly in the context of

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<sup>1</sup> UNESCO, *Reimagining Our Futures Together* (Paris: UNESCO, 2021).

<sup>2</sup> Michelle M Robles, 'Executive Perceptions of the Top 10 Soft Skills', *Business Communication Quarterly*, 75.4 (2012), 453–65.

<sup>3</sup> Abuddin Nata, *Pendidikan Islam Kontemporer* (Jakarta: Rajawali Press, 2016).

<sup>4</sup> Muhaimin, *Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2012). Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi, 'Worldview Islam Dan Sistem Pendidikan', *Tsaqafah*, 6.2 (2010), 251–70.

<sup>5</sup> M Ridwan, 'Pesantren Dan Pengembangan Kewirausahaan', *Edukasia*, 13.2 (2018), 315–36.

<sup>6</sup> James M Halstead, 'An Islamic Concept of Education', *Comparative Education*, 40.4 (2004), 517–29.

<sup>7</sup> Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *The Concept of Education in Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1999).

<sup>8</sup> A A Rekan and others, 'Embedding 21st Century Soft Skills', *Nazhruna*, 8.1 (2025), 1–18.

<sup>9</sup> Ridwan.

<sup>10</sup> D M Mufidah, 'Implementasi Program Life Skills Vokasional', *Thawalib*, 5.1 (2024), 55–70.

pesantren with their distinctive institutional character and Islamic.<sup>11</sup> As a result, understanding how managerial decisions, leadership patterns, and institutional management mechanisms influence the success and sustainability of this integration has not been explored in depth.

Miftahul Ulum Bangunsirna Islamic Boarding School is one of the Islamic boarding schools that has developed both religious education and vocational education programs for students. However, in practice, challenges still arise in aligning the management of vocational education with the development of soft skills in an integrated manner, particularly in aspects of program planning, resource management, and evaluation mechanisms.<sup>12</sup> This situation indicates an empirical and conceptual gap that requires further study from an Islamic education management perspective.

Based on this gap, this study aims to analyze the integration of vocational education and soft skills at Miftahul Ulum Bangunsirna Islamic Boarding School within the framework of Islamic education management.<sup>13</sup> This research is expected to provide theoretical contributions by strengthening the conceptual understanding of integrative Islamic education management, as well as practical contributions in the form of reference models for managing vocational education and soft skills that are contextual and adaptive for Islamic boarding schools facing the challenges of Education 5.0.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employed a qualitative case study method, focusing on Islamic educational management practices in integrating vocational education and soft skills development at the Miftahul Ulum Bangunsirna Islamic Boarding School in Ciamis Regency. This design was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the managerial processes, decision-making, and institutional dynamics that shape the integration of vocational education and soft skills within the pesantren context. The research was conducted with the aim of enabling repeated observations of vocational learning activities, soft skills development, and ongoing educational management practices.

The data sources in this study consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained from 12 purposively selected informants, including the pesantren leader, vocational program coordinator, vocational teacher or instructor, student organization supervisor, and student participants in the vocational program, with the number of informants determined based on the principle of data saturation. Secondary data were obtained from curriculum documents, program plans, organizational structures, and reports on pesantren activities. Data collection techniques included semi-structured interviews, limited participant observation, and documentation studies. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña interactive analysis model, which included data reduction through initial coding, grouping themes, analyzing interrelationships between themes, and drawing conclusions. Data validity was maintained through triangulation of sources and techniques, as well as member checking with key informants.

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<sup>11</sup> Wayne K Hoy and Cecil G Miskel, *Educational Administration* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2013).

<sup>12</sup> Husaini Usman, *Manajemen Pendidikan* (Jakarta: Bumi Aksara, 2013).

<sup>13</sup> Tony Bush, *Theories of Educational Leadership and Management* (London: Sage, 2011).

## Data Collection Techniques

Data collection in this study was conducted in a naturalistic manner to gain a deeper understanding of the practice of integrating vocational education and soft skills in educational management at the Miftahul Ulum Bangunsirna Islamic Boarding School.<sup>14</sup> This naturalistic approach was chosen so that the data obtained reflected empirical conditions as they occurred in their natural context.<sup>15</sup> To achieve data depth and accuracy, this study utilized several complementary data collection techniques, namely semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies.<sup>16</sup>

Semi-structured interviews were used to gather in-depth information regarding the planning, implementation, and evaluation of vocational education and soft skills development at the Islamic boarding school.<sup>17</sup> Interviews were conducted with Islamic boarding school leaders, vocational education teachers or instructors, student organization leaders, and students actively involved in vocational education and soft skills development programs. The interview guide was developed based on the research focus but was flexible enough to allow the researcher to develop questions based on the respondents' responses and experiences.<sup>18</sup> Through this technique, the researcher obtained data on the perspectives, experiences, policies, and managerial strategies implemented in integrating vocational education and soft skills within an Islamic educational framework.

Participatory observation was conducted to obtain empirical data on the actual practices of integrating vocational education and soft skills into the daily activities of the Islamic boarding school.<sup>19</sup> The researcher directly observed the vocational learning process, skills practice activities, student organization activities, leadership training, and entrepreneurship activities organized by the Islamic boarding school. These observations enabled the researcher to understand the interaction patterns between educators and students, the learning approaches used, and the process of internalizing soft skills within the Islamic boarding school environment.<sup>20</sup> Observation results were systematically recorded in the form of field notes for further analysis.<sup>21</sup>

Documentation studies were conducted by reviewing various documents related to the management of vocational education and soft skills development in Islamic boarding schools.<sup>22</sup> The documents analyzed included the Islamic boarding school curriculum, syllabi and vocational

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<sup>14</sup> J W Creswell and J D Creswell, 'Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches', *SAGE Publications*, 2020.

<sup>15</sup> Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan: Pendekatan Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, Dan R&D* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2022).

<sup>16</sup> M B Miles, A M Huberman, and J Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (SAGE Publications, 2019).

<sup>17</sup> Lexy J Moleong, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif* (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2017).

<sup>18</sup> John W Creswell and Cheryl N Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2018).

<sup>19</sup> M B Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña.

<sup>20</sup> Hoy and Miskel.

<sup>21</sup> Moleong.

<sup>22</sup> Sugiyono.

learning modules, student organization work programs, activity reports, training schedules, and other institutional policies and archives. Documentation data served as a supporting source to strengthen the findings from interviews and observations, as well as a means of triangulation to increase the validity and credibility of the research data.<sup>23</sup>

### **Data Validation**

To ensure the validity and credibility of the data, this study employed various validation strategies commonly used in qualitative research.<sup>24</sup> The validation process was conducted continuously from data collection to analysis, aiming to minimize potential researcher bias and increase confidence in the research findings.<sup>25</sup> This approach aligns with the characteristics of qualitative research, which places process reliability as the primary foundation for producing meaningful findings.<sup>26</sup>

Data validation was conducted through source triangulation, comparing and confirming information obtained from various informants, such as Islamic boarding school leaders, vocational education teachers or instructors, student organization leaders, and students involved in vocational education and soft skills development programs.<sup>27</sup> Source triangulation allows researchers to obtain a more comprehensive and balanced picture of the integration of vocational education and soft skills practices, while simultaneously strengthening the consistency and depth of understanding of the phenomenon under study.<sup>28</sup>

Furthermore, this study employed method triangulation by combining semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies.<sup>29</sup> The use of various data collection techniques aims to test the consistency of findings across methods and ensure that the research results are not dependent on a single source or data collection technique.<sup>30</sup> Through method triangulation, the data obtained can complement each other and strengthen the validity of the research findings.

To enhance the credibility of data interpretation, this study employed member checking, which involves confirming the preliminary findings and the researcher's interpretations with the research informants.<sup>31</sup> This process is carried out to ensure that the meanings, experiences, and perspectives captured by researchers align with the reality intended by the informants, thereby reducing the risk of misinterpretation. Furthermore, peer debriefing is conducted through discussions with colleagues or academic advisors to obtain critical feedback on the data analysis and interpretation process.<sup>32</sup> This step helps researchers reflect on assumptions, sharpen their analysis, and reduce subjectivity in drawing conclusions.

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<sup>23</sup>Creswell and Poth.

<sup>24</sup> Creswell and Poth.

<sup>25</sup> M B Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña.

<sup>26</sup> Sugiyono.

<sup>27</sup> Creswell and Poth.

<sup>28</sup> M B Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña.

<sup>29</sup> Moleong.

<sup>30</sup> Creswell and Poth.

<sup>31</sup> Creswell and Poth.

<sup>32</sup> M B Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña.

Researchers also maintain an audit trail by systematically documenting the entire research process, from data collection and analysis to conclusion drawing. This documentation allows the research process to be traced back by others and serves to increase the dependability and confirmability of the research results. By implementing the data validation strategy, this research is expected to have an adequate level of credibility, reliability, and transferability, so that it can provide meaningful scientific contributions in the study of Islamic education management, especially regarding the integration of vocational education and soft skills in Islamic boarding schools.<sup>33</sup>

### Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study was conducted interactively, simultaneously, and continuously, from data collection to conclusion drawing.<sup>34</sup> The analysis process aimed to identify patterns, themes, and meanings related to the practice of integrating vocational education and soft skills into educational management at the Miftahul Ulum Bangunsirna Islamic Boarding School. This analytical approach enabled researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon by considering the social, cultural, and institutional context of the Islamic boarding school.<sup>35</sup>

This study employed Miles and Huberman's interactive data analysis model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing and verifying conclusions. Data reduction was carried out through the process of sorting, simplifying, and focusing raw data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation studies.<sup>36</sup> At this stage, researchers transcribed interview results, conducted initial coding (open coding), and grouped data into categories relevant to the research focus, such as vocational education planning, skills learning implementation, soft skills development, and the role of Islamic boarding school management.<sup>37</sup> The data reduction process was carried out iteratively to ensure that the analyzed data had strong relevance and meaning to the research objectives.

The data presentation stage was carried out by organizing the reduced data into descriptive narratives, matrices, thematic tables, and relationship charts between categories.<sup>38</sup> This data presentation aims to help researchers more systematically see the relationships between concepts, managerial practice patterns, and the dynamics of integration between vocational education and soft skills.<sup>39</sup> Through structured data presentation, researchers can conduct in-depth comparative and interpretive analyses to uncover the relationships between elements within the Islamic boarding school education management system.<sup>40</sup>

The final stage of data analysis is drawing and verifying conclusions. At this stage, researchers interpret the research findings by linking them to the theoretical framework of Islamic

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<sup>33</sup> Muhaimin.

<sup>34</sup> M B Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña.

<sup>35</sup> Nana Syaodih Sukmadinata, *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan* (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2015).

<sup>36</sup> Sugiyono.

<sup>37</sup> Azyumardi Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi Dan Modernisasi Menuju Milenium Baru* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2012).

<sup>38</sup> M B Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña.

<sup>39</sup> Creswell and Poth.

<sup>40</sup> Hoy and Miskel.



educational management and the concept of integrating vocational education and soft skills.<sup>41</sup> The conclusions drawn are not finalized from the outset, but are continuously verified through additional data checks, triangulation, and discussions with informants and colleagues. This verification process ensures that the conclusions drawn are consistent, logical, and scientifically sound.<sup>42</sup> Through the application of the interactive data analysis model, this study is expected to be able to produce in-depth, contextual, and valid findings regarding the practice of integrating vocational education and soft skills within the framework of Islamic education management at the Miftahul Ulum Bangunsirna Islamic Boarding School.<sup>43</sup>

### Research Ethics

This research was conducted in accordance with ethical research principles to protect the rights, dignity, and interests of all participants. Prior to data collection, the researcher obtained official permission from the Miftahul Ulum Bangunsirna Islamic Boarding School as the research site.<sup>44</sup>

All participants were provided with an explanation of the research's purpose, benefits, and procedures, as well as their right to participate voluntarily without coercion. Informed consent was obtained from each informant before interviews, observations, or other data collection.<sup>45</sup>

The researcher guaranteed the confidentiality of the identities and personal information of the participants by not including the informants' real names or any data that could lead to the identification of any particular individual or institution. Data obtained during the research were used solely for academic purposes and were stored securely.<sup>46</sup>

In addition, researchers maintain objectivity and scientific integrity throughout the research process, including data collection, analysis, and reporting. Researchers also strive to avoid conflicts of interest and ensure that research results are presented honestly, accurately, and responsibly in accordance with ethical principles of scientific research.<sup>47</sup>

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Field data analysis indicates that the integration of vocational education and soft skills development at the Miftahul Ulum Bangunsirna Islamic Boarding School (PPB) is fostered through structured and sustainable Islamic educational management practices.<sup>48</sup> Based on thematic coding of interview data, observations, and institutional documents, this study identified three key managerial patterns that consistently shape this integration: competency-based curriculum planning, collaborative human resource management, and deliberate control of

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<sup>41</sup> Kamila Shalehah Rahma and others, 'Transformasi Pendidikan Islam Di Era Digital: Rekonstruksi Nilai-Nilai Historis Dalam Menyongsong Masyarakat Virtual', *IHSAN Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 3 (2025).

<sup>42</sup> Sugiyono.

<sup>43</sup> Matthew B Miles, A Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2014).

<sup>44</sup> Moleong.

<sup>45</sup> Creswell and Poth.

<sup>46</sup> Sugiyono.

<sup>47</sup> Creswell and Poth.

<sup>48</sup> Usman.

institutional culture.<sup>49</sup>

At the curriculum level, document and observation data indicate that vocational education is not positioned as an additional program but is formally integrated into the Islamic boarding school's educational structure.<sup>50</sup> Skills programs such as agriculture, mechanics, and multimedia are designed with a competency-based approach and scheduled alongside religious education activities. Observations indicate that vocational practices consistently emphasize discipline, responsibility, and Islamic work ethics. This finding differs from previous studies, which generally place vocational integration at the level of learning strategies, as this study demonstrates that such integration is the result of managerial decisions made during the curriculum planning stage.<sup>51</sup>

The second theme relates to human resource management. Interviews with leaders and educators revealed a flexible and collaborative role arrangement between religious teachers and vocational instructors.<sup>52</sup> Vocational instructors are not only responsible for mastering technical skills but are also directed to instill Islamic work values, while religious teachers are involved in supervising and developing the character of students participating in vocational programs. Unlike previous research that emphasized the competencies of individual educators, these findings indicate that cross-role coordination is a deliberate and structured managerial strategy.<sup>53</sup>

The development of students' soft skills at PPB primarily occurs through the institutional culture of Islamic boarding schools.<sup>54</sup> Observational data from student organizations, entrepreneurial projects, and dormitory life indicate that leadership, cooperation, communication, and discipline are fostered through systematically organized routines. Interviews with Islamic boarding school leaders confirmed that this culture is shaped through leadership policies, role models, and planned activity arrangements. Thus, soft skills do not develop naturally but are the result of cultural management as part of the educational management system.

This study also identified limited facilities and industry networks as key challenges. However, field data demonstrates adaptive managerial responses through the utilization of internal resources, partnerships with job training centers, and local business units as vocational learning spaces. These findings suggest that successful integration is determined more by adaptive managerial capacity than by resource availability alone.

Based on a synthesis of these empirical findings, this study proposes a humanistic-integrative Islamic education management model. Unlike previous studies that focused on curriculum or pedagogical practices, this study's contribution lies in explaining that the integration of vocational education and soft skills is the result of a systematic relationship between planning, human resource management, and the institutional culture of Islamic boarding schools.

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<sup>49</sup> Matthew B Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña.

<sup>50</sup> OECD, *Future of Education and Skills 2030* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2020).

<sup>51</sup> H Hadiwijaya and M Masykuri, 'Pendidikan Karakter Berbasis Budaya Pesantren', *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 6.2 (2017), 245–60. Ridwan.

<sup>52</sup> Tony Bush and David Glover, *School Leadership Models* (Nottingham: NCSL, 2014).

<sup>53</sup> S M Noorhayati, A H Hakim, and A K Fata, 'Pendidikan Life Skills Vokasional Di Pesantren', *At-Turas*, 12.1 (2025), 87–104.

<sup>54</sup> Edgar H Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010).





**Figure 1. Teaching and Learning Activities**



**Figure 2. Graphic Design Practice**



**Figure 3. Practice Setting Up  
Network Devices**



**Figure 4. Welding Practice**



**Figure 5. Farming Activities**

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the integration of vocational education and soft skills development at Miftahul Ulum Bangunsirna Islamic Boarding School is achieved through coordinated Islamic educational management practices, rather than through stand-alone pedagogical programs. This integration results from the systematic linkage between curriculum planning, human resource management, and the management of the Islamic boarding school's institutional culture, which simultaneously aligns technical skills, soft skills, and the internalization of Islamic values. These findings suggest that vocational education can be inherently integrated into the Islamic boarding school education system without obscuring the institution's Islamic identity, as long as such integration is strategically managed at the managerial level. The development of students' soft skills occurs primarily through an institutional culture consciously designed through leadership policies, activity arrangements, and educators' exemplary behavior.

The theoretical contribution of this study is limited but specific, clarifying how the management functions of planning, human resource organization, and cultural management operate in an integrated manner within the context of the integration of vocational education and soft skills in Islamic boarding schools. The term "humanistic-integrative Islamic educational management" is understood as a description of empirical patterns of managerial practice, not as a universal normative framework. Practically, these findings confirm that successful integration depends on the consistency of managerial policies and the adaptive capacity of the institution. Given that this research is based on a single case study, generalizations of the findings should be made with caution, and further research is recommended using a comparative approach in different Islamic boarding school contexts.

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