

Management of Change in Islamic Educational Institutions Based on Kitab Memorization Program Innovation for Enhancing Santri Quality in Al-Istiqomah Islamic Boarding Schools

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Abstract:

This study aims to analyze change management at Pondok Pesantren Al-Istiqomah through the innovation of the book memorization program, identify supporting and inhibiting factors, and examine its impact on improving student quality. A qualitative approach with a case study design was employed. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation studies, which were then analyzed using data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results indicate that Pondok Pesantren Al-Istiqomah implements change management in a planned and systematic manner through four main stages: consensus-based planning, organization of a specialized management team, tiered execution (I'dadi and mustawa classes), and multi-layered evaluation (daily to annual) aligned with the Graduate Competency Standards (SKL). This program innovation faces challenges regarding differences in students' initial abilities and time constraints due to a dense formal curriculum schedule. However, intensive guidance interventions and mass memorization events (talaran akbar) successfully minimized resistance. This study proves that well-managed change management enhances student quality holistically across academic aspects (book mastery) and character traits (discipline and responsibility) without eroding the traditional identity of the pesantren.

Keywords: *wise economy, sustainability, social justice*

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis manajemen perubahan di Pondok Pesantren Al-Istiqomah melalui inovasi program hafalan buku, mengidentifikasi faktor pendukung dan penghambat, serta meneliti dampaknya terhadap peningkatan kualitas santri. Pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus digunakan. Data dikumpulkan melalui

wawancara mendalam, observasi langsung, dan studi dokumentasi, yang kemudian dianalisis menggunakan reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Pondok Pesantren Al-Istiqomah menerapkan manajemen perubahan secara terencana dan sistematis melalui empat tahap utama: perencanaan berbasis konsensus, pembentukan tim manajemen khusus, pelaksanaan bertahap (kelas I'dadi dan mustawa), dan evaluasi bertingkat (harian hingga tahunan) yang selaras dengan Standar Kompetensi Lulusan (SKL). Inovasi program ini menghadapi tantangan terkait perbedaan kemampuan awal siswa dan keterbatasan waktu karena jadwal kurikulum formal yang padat. Namun, intervensi bimbingan intensif dan acara menghafal massal (talaran akbar) berhasil meminimalkan resistensi. Studi ini membuktikan bahwa manajemen perubahan yang dikelola dengan baik meningkatkan kualitas siswa secara menyeluruh, baik dari aspek akademik (penguasaan kitab) maupun karakter (disiplin dan tanggung jawab) tanpa mengikis identitas tradisional pesantren.

Kata Kunci: *ekonomi bijak, keberlanjutan, keadilan sosial*

INTRODUCTION

Islamic educational institutions, particularly *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), play a strategic role in shaping a generation that is not only intellectually superior, but also spiritually and morally strong. Since their inception, *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) have been known as centers for transmitting classical Islamic knowledge, building character, and developing Islamic values rooted in tradition. However, the demands of the modern era characterized by technological advancements, social shifts, and rising expectations for human resource quality require Islamic Boarding School to undergo planned adaptation and change. The challenges of globalization, the modernization of education, and increasingly high public expectations regarding the quality of Islamic Boarding School graduates highlight the need for implementing effective change management.

Change management is key to enabling *pesantren* to maintain their existence while enhancing educational quality without losing their Islamic identity. Change within a *pesantren* environment is not merely about administrative aspects, but encompasses organizational culture, learning patterns, and the development of innovative educational programs. One form of innovation relevant to the character of a *pesantren* is the strengthening of the classical Islamic texts (*kutub al-turath*) memorization program. The book memorization program serves not only as a means of preserving tradition, but also as a strategy for enhancing student quality—cultivating memory capacity, discipline, perseverance, and a deep understanding of Islamic teachings. However, for this program to operate optimally, structured change management is required, ranging from planning and implementation to evaluation.

The success of change management in educational institutions is strongly influenced by leadership factors and organizational culture, where successful change within Islamic environments is executed incrementally and aligned with religious values (Mulyasa, 2017). In line with this, (Anshori, 2018) revealed that educational program innovations managed with sound planning and evaluation systems are proven effective in improving student quality. Specifically within the *pesantren* environment, (Rohman, 2020) found that book memorization not only impacts academic knowledge mastery, but also shapes students' sense of

responsibility and discipline.

Pondok Pesantren Al-Istiqomah is one of the institutions striving to implement change management through the innovation of a book memorization program. This innovation holistically integrates the memorization, comprehension, and practical application of the texts' values. Nevertheless, in practice, this transition process faces real challenges, such as variations in students' initial capabilities, resistance to system changes, limited time allocations, and the adaptation of learning methods. Based on this context, this article aims to comprehensively analyze the implementation of change management based on book memorization program innovation in enhancing student quality at Pondok Pesantren Al-Istiqomah, along with its supporting and inhibiting factors.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design to gain a deep and contextual understanding of the change management phenomenon. The research was conducted at Pondok Pesantren Al-Istiqomah in January 2026. Research informants or subjects were selected through purposive sampling, comprising the leadership of the *pesantren*, the memorization coordinator (Deputy Head of Curriculum), and the *asatidz* (teachers) directly involved in the program.

Data collection techniques were carried out through triangulation using three main methods:

1. In-depth interviews: Conducted with the leadership, program managers, and *asatidz* to explore data regarding planning procedures, policies, operational constraints, and program evaluation.
2. Direct observation: Conducted by observing the students' (*santri*) memorization recitations (*setoran*), guidance interactions between the *asatidz* and students, and the implementation of supporting programs such as collective review (*muroja'ah*) and grand recitations (*talaran akbar*).
3. Documentation study: Used to gather supplementary documents such as activity schedules, handbooks, student memorization monitoring books, Graduate Competency Standards (*Standar Kompetensi Lulusan / SKL*) documents, and written policy archives of the *pesantren*.

Data analysis was performed systematically following the qualitative interactive model, which includes data reduction (selecting and focusing raw data on the change management focus), data display (organizing information into descriptive narratives), and drawing conclusions and verifying data validity iteratively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Stages of Change Management Implementation at PP Al-Istiqomah

The implementation of change management at Pondok Pesantren Al-Istiqomah was not carried out spontaneously or radically; rather, it was executed through a gradual, participatory, and values-based approach grounded in *pesantren* traditions. The transition process from an unstandardized traditional memorization system to a measurable innovative memorization system was implemented through four main stages:

1. **Change Planning** The initial stage began with an urgent need (*urgency*) recognized by the management to establish a structured and accountable memorization system. Although the book memorization program had been running, it lacked clear performance benchmarks. The *pesantren* leadership, together with the council of *asatidz*, subsequently held intensive discussions (*musyawarah*) to formulate new policy guidelines. During the planning phase, agreements were reached regarding the determination of mandatory book targets, the development of a schedule integrated with daily activities, the provision of control media in the form of memorization logbooks and handbooks, and the synchronization of memorization targets with the *pesantren*'s Graduate Competency Standards (*Standar Kompetensi Lulusan / SKL*).
2. **Change Organizing** To ensure the program's effectiveness, the *pesantren* established a dedicated team structure tasked with independently managing the book memorization program. This structure is directly led by the *pesantren* leadership as policy directors, the memorization coordinator (Deputy Head of Curriculum) as the technical executive, and an appointed group of *asatidz* serving as *munadzil* (memorization tutors). Each *munadzil* is assigned the responsibility of intensively monitoring the progress of 10 to 15 students (*santri*). This well-defined division of roles successfully minimized overlapping work instructions.
3. **Change Implementation** Curriculum innovation was realized through a tiered learning method tailored to the students' (*santri*) capacities. Implementation commenced with a placement test (*mustawa*) during the new student admissions process to map initial reading, writing, and basic religious understanding abilities. Students who did not meet the basic standards were grouped into a preparatory class (*I'dadi*) focused on strengthening foundational skills, whereas those who passed were placed into regular classes. The memorization method utilized daily recitation techniques (*setoran*), consistent review (*muroja'ah*), and learning acceleration for students with above-average progress. The level of texts ranged from foundational books such as *Al-Jurumiyyah* to advanced levels such as *Alfiyyah Ibn Malik*.
4. **Evaluation and Change Control** The evaluation system at PP Al-Istiqomah was designed in a multi-layered and comprehensive manner, encompassing daily, weekly, monthly, and annual evaluations. Monthly evaluations are recorded in progress monitoring books, while annual evaluations assess the material absorption rate holistically—covering knowledge, skills, and memorization—based on the *pesantren*'s Graduate Competency Standards (*Standar Kompetensi Lulusan / SKL*). The results of these evaluations serve as an operational database for conducting follow-up consultations (*musyawarah*) to refine subsequent teaching methods.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Change Management

The process of organizational change within a *pesantren* institution continuously intersects with the internal dynamics of human resources and facility

availability. The results of the data analysis identified several determining factors as follows:

1. Supporting Factors:

- a) Strong Leadership Commitment: The *pesantren* leadership plays a central role in persuasively communicating the vision of change to the academic community, thereby reducing resistance driven by tradition.
- b) Stimulating Supporting Programs: The organization of routine activities—such as weekly grand reviews (*muroja'ah akbar*) and monthly grand recitations (*talaran akbar*) attended by the entire council of *asatidz*—has successfully fostered a healthy competitive atmosphere among the students (*santri*).
- c) Reward System (Appreciation): The conferral of awards in the form of certificates and prizes for students who successfully complete their text targets is proven to boost the intrinsic motivation of other students to memorize more diligently.

2. Inhibiting Factors:

- a) Heterogeneity of Students' Initial Capabilities: The highly diverse backgrounds of students (*santri*) regarding age, previous school background, and classical text literacy make it challenging for the *asatidz* to standardize classical memorization targets.
- b) Time Allocation Constraints: The dense internal *pesantren* schedule, which directly overlaps with formal school hours, serves as a primary concern. Students are forced to exert extra effort to balance their cognitive focus.
- c) Student Indiscipline: Some students still demonstrate a lack of commitment, such as being absent or wandering around during scheduled memorization recitation hours.

To address these challenges, the management implemented data-driven curriculum innovations, such as readjusting study schedules, providing supplementary tutoring sessions with dormitory mentors, and offering personalized guidance for students performing below the minimum standards.

Impact of Book Memorization Program Innovation on Student Quality

The implementation of change management based on this innovation has significant implications for the quality profile of graduates at Pondok Pesantren Al-Istiqomah. Student quality is no longer measured solely by cognitive scores, but encompasses character development in an integrated manner. Academically, students demonstrate a dramatic improvement in the mastery, essential comprehension, and contextualization of classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*) through the process of *tadabbur* (reflective contemplation) guided by the *asatidz*. The academic culture within the *pesantren* environment has become more vibrant, religious, and scholarly.

In non-academic and character development aspects, the implementation of regular recitation rules cultivates life discipline among students (*santri*), builds resilient character, fosters a high commitment to learning, and nurtures a sense of

moral responsibility toward completing their scholarly duties. Overall, this innovation has successfully elevated graduate quality to align with external societal standards without degrading the noble values of *pesantren* tradition.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Pondok Pesantren Al-Istiqomah has successfully implemented change management in a planned, systematic, and sustainable manner through the innovation of a book memorization program. This change management is managed through a structured, data-driven approach, ranging from initial capability mapping (*mustawa*), preparatory class grouping (*I'dadi*), and proportional workload distribution for *munadzil* (tutors), to a multi-layered evaluation system fully aligned with the Graduate Competency Standards (*Standar Kompetensi Lulusan / SKL*). Despite facing time constraints due to curriculum dualism (formal and *pesantren*) as well as differences in students' academic capacities, strong leadership commitment and program innovations – such as grand recitations (*talaran akbar*) and intensive tutoring – have successfully minimized these obstacles. The implementation of this change has delivered a tangible positive impact on enhancing student quality, both in mastering religious literacy (academic) and internalizing the values of discipline and responsibility (character). The successful organizational transition at PP Al-Istiqomah offers theoretical and practical recommendations indicating that modernizing *pesantren* governance does not require sacrificing classical Islamic roots; rather, these traditions can be strengthened through systematic quality management.

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