Integrating Tradition and Modernity: Infrastructure Transformation at Al-Ustmani Islamic Boarding School in East Java

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Abstract

This study explores the evolution of infrastructure and facilities at Al-Ustmani Islamic Boarding School in Bondowoso, East Java, focusing on how the institution balances traditional Salafiyah values with modern educational demands. Researchers used a qualitative descriptive method to gather data through semi-structured interviews, on-site observations, and document reviews. Perspectives from caregivers, teachers, administrators, and students were analyzed to reveal how infrastructure advancements relate to educational quality. The findings show a significant transition from basic facilities to modern, well-equipped structures, guided by a strategic approach to enhance learning environments while preserving the pesantren's traditional identity. Improvements such as modernized classrooms, dormitories, libraries, and vocational training centers have led to greater student engagement and academic achievement. This harmonious integration of Islamic traditions with formal education has solidified the school's role in fostering religious, intellectual, and socio-economic progress. Innovative initiatives like independent business units and vocational training programs demonstrate the pesantren's commitment to preparing students for contemporary challenges. Information technology and entrepreneurship training underscores the school's dedication to comprehensive student development. These advancements highlight the institution's ability to adopt globalization and technological innovations without sacrificing its cultural and educational principles. This research contributes to discussions on the evolution of Islamic education by offering a replicable framework for merging traditional values with modernity in pesantren. It emphasizes the importance of holistic management to maintain relevance and excellence in an ever-changing educational landscape.

Keywords: Pondok pesantren; Infrastructure Transformation; Quality Control; Islamic Education

Introduction

Islamic boarding schools (pondok pesantren), as pioneers of education in Indonesia since the time of wali songo,¹ They face significant challenges in maintaining their relevance amidst rapid social changes. Declining public interest in Pondok Pesantren is often attributed to conservative leadership, which hinders progress in facilities and human resource development.² External factors, such as public skepticism about the employability of Pondok pesantren graduates, further exacerbate this decline.³

Mujamil Qomar,⁴ Emphasized Pondok Pesantren's systemic weaknesses in producing graduates equipped for modern demands. Internal challenges, including rigid leadership styles, insufficient regeneration, and politicization of educational objectives, have further impeded their development. Adequate facilities and infrastructure are thus essential for implementing effective quality control in these institutions. To remain relevant, Pondok Pesantren must innovate and adapt to contemporary challenges while preserving its core values.⁵

Globally, transforming educational facilities is a common strategy among traditional institutions to address modern challenges. For instance, madrasahs in South Asia have integrated modern technologies and vocational training to enhance student outcomes while maintaining their religious focus.⁶ Similarly, Middle Eastern seminaries have adopted infrastructure modernization to balance traditional pedagogy with global educational standards.⁷ These examples underscore the global significance of facility transformation in preserving the relevance of traditional educational systems.

Various studies have raised the issue of transformation in Islamic boarding schools from multiple perspectives. Still, this research offers a more holistic and integrative approach, distinguishing it from previous studies. Moh Toriqul Chaer's research

¹ Suwito, Sejarah Sosial Pendidikan Islam (Jakarta: Kencana, 2005).

² Ali Asyhar, "Model Transformasi Pendidikan Pondok Pesantren Di Pulau Bawean Gresik," *JOIES* (*Journal of Islamic Education Studies*) 1, no. 2 (2016): 277–302.

³ A Malik Fadjar, Juanda Abubakar, and H Mustofa Syarif, *Visi Pembaruan Pendidikan Islam* (Lembaga Pengembangan Pendidikan dan Penyusunan Naskah Indonesia, 1998).

⁴ Mujamil Qomar, "Perencanaan: Suatu Proses Yang Terabaikan Dalam Sistem Pendidikan Islam," *Majlah Tarbiyah TulungAgung IAIN Sunan Ampel*, no. 9 (n.d.).

⁵ Zamakhsyari Dhofier, "Tradisi Pesantren: Studi Tentang Pandangan Hidup Kyai," (No Title), 1982.

⁶ A Salim, "Implikasi Aliran Filsafat Pendidikan Islam Pada Manajemen Pendidikan. LITERASI (Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan), 5 (1), 13," 2017.

⁷ S Grynyuk, M Zheludenko, and I Zaytseva, "Readiness of the Digital Infrastructure of Higher Educational Institutions in Ukraine for Mass Distance Learning," *Visnyk Kremenchutskoho Natsionalnoho Universytetu Imeni Mykhaila Ostrohradskoho–Transactions of Kremenchuk Mykhailo Ostrohradskyi National University* 4, no. 129 (2021): 35–40.

identified two models of transformation in pesantren: complete and selective transformation, with an important role played by Kiai in social transformation. Darwanto⁸ highlighted the transformation management model to improve student accessibility and education quality through funding management and infrastructure development. The research approach is more administrative and does not explore integrating physical and functional aspects of infrastructure. Afista and M Bakar's research offers an in-depth analysis of facilities' physical and functional transformation and how these changes are integrated with the traditional values of Islamic boarding schools to support sustainable quality control of education.

While Ridwan's⁹ The Study focuses on managing quality by improving facilities and supervision, but it does not explore the physical transformation process and its impact on the whole education system. Prayogi¹⁰ and Amet,¹¹ Which emphasizes technology-based transformation and does not explore how changes in form, function, and infrastructure management can create synergies between formal and traditional education. This research explicitly integrates the local dimension of Islamic boarding schools, such as Salafiyah Al-Ustmani, with a modern education approach, contributing to developing an Islamic education model balanced between tradition and modernity. Moreover, with a field-based approach, this research can provide rich empirical data, creating a theoretical and practical foundation for transforming Islamic education in Indonesia and beyond.

This study aims to analyze the transformation of infrastructure facilities in Salafiyah Al-Ustmani Islamic Boarding School and evaluate its impact on controlling the quality of education. By exploring the existing facilities, the transformation process, and the resulting output, this research offers a thorough understanding of the strategic role of infrastructure development in improving the quality of education in pesantren. In addition, this research contributes to the management of educational institutions,

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⁸ Agus Darwanto et al., "Transformation of Boarding School Management Models in Enhancing Student Accessibility and Educational Quality," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 21 (June 1, 2024): 145–64.

⁹ Yusup Ridwan et al., "Quality Management Development of Boarding School Education in West Java: Research at Mifathul Huda Manonjaya Islamic Boarding School Tasikmalaya, Suryalaya Islamic Boarding School and Al-Ittifaq Ciwidey Islamic Boarding School," *International Journal of Social Service and Research* 2, no. 5 (2022): 390–408.

¹⁰ Endar Evta Yuda Prayogi, Syaiful Anwar, and A D Yahya, "Management of Madrasa-Based Education Quality Improvement at the Tahfidz Qur'an Islamic Boarding School in Metro City," *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 2022, 7483–96.

¹¹ Amet Amet, "Transformation of Islamic Educational Institutions in Realizing Quality Human Resources in the Global Era," *Enrichment: Journal of Management* 12, no. 6 (2023): 4919–26.

especially in designing and managing facilities and infrastructure effectively to support the sustainability of academic quality.

Methodology

This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach.¹² To explore the transformation of infrastructure facilities at Salafiyah Al-Ustmani Islamic Boarding School in East Java. This approach is suitable for understanding the complex processes and cultural nuances of adapting traditional educational institutions to face contemporary challenges.

Salafiyah Al-Ustmani Islamic Boarding School in Bondowoso, East Java, was chosen for its historical value as one of the oldest Islamic boarding *schools* in the region. The boarding school has maintained its traditional *salafiyah* values despite undergoing significant infrastructure transformation. Its large student population and integration of conventional and formal education systems make it an interesting example of how infrastructure development supports quality control in education.

Informants were purposively selected to ensure that they could provide meaningful insights into the transformation process. The participants included caregivers (*kiai*), teachers, administrators, and students. Selection focussed on individuals who had direct experience or played a significant role in planning, managing, or benefiting from the infrastructure changes. Teachers and administrators with extensive knowledge and students familiar with old and new facilities were prioritized.

Data was collected using three complementary methods to get a comprehensive picture of the transformation: first, Interviews Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore participants' experiences and perceptions. Discussions focussed on the changes in facilities and how these affect daily life and the quality of education; secondly, observations were conducted on-site to assess the condition and utilization of the infrastructure. This includes observing classrooms, dormitories, and other facilities during daily activities; thirdly, Document Review: Institutional records, policy documents, and development plans were examined to provide a deeper understanding of the historical and administrative context of the transformation.

¹³ Lexy J. Moleong, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitati* (PT. Remaja Rosdakary., 2004).

¹² Sugiyono, Metode Penelitian Pendidikan (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2019).

The analysis followed a systematic process that began with organizing and simplifying the data. Themes and patterns were identified to draw meaningful connections between observed changes and their impact on school operations. The analysis emphasized understanding the relationship between infrastructure development and education quality, focusing on how modern facilities were integrated into the traditional system without compromising its values.

Data from interviews, observations, and documents were cross-checked to ensure the reliability of the findings. Feedback from key informants was also sought to ensure the accuracy of interpretations and conclusions. Focusing on the participants' voices and the observable changes in facilities, this study aims to uncover how traditional institutions such as Islamic *boarding schools* can balance modernization with their cultural and educational missions.

Transformation of Al-Ustmani Islamic Boarding School

Al-Ustmani Islamic Boarding School has seen a transformation in the development of salafiyah-based education that accommodates changing times—the caretaker of the pesantren, KH. Ghazali Uthman actively established supporting institutions, including the tarbiyah ma'hadiyah education system, that focuses on teaching the yellow book and tarbiyah madrasiyah and integrating it with formal education. This change accommodates contemporary society's needs without abandoning the principles of Ahl al-Sunnah Wa al-Jama'ah teachings.

Infrastructure modernization is an essential aspect of improving the quality of education. Islamic boarding schools must develop physical facilities, such as renovating mosques, building dormitories, and adding study rooms. ¹⁴ Infrastructure designed with careful planning, such as a three-story building with modern standard study rooms, supports a more effective learning process. The clean, organized, and natural environment creates a conducive learning atmosphere.

Good management of infrastructure facilities is an essential indicator of educational success. In line with Magasari's view, the effectiveness of this management affects the

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¹⁴ Akhmad Irwan Bakhrudin, "Modernisasi Pendidikan Pesantren Di Pondok Pesantren Sunan Drajat Lamongan," *Jes Journal Education and Supervision* 1, no. 2 (2024): 92–102.

overall learning process.¹⁵ Al-Ustmani Islamic Boarding School provides modern facilities, such as a multipurpose hall for santri activities and classrooms with the latest learning technology. This shows the pesantren's commitment to integrating technological advances with traditional values.

Furthermore, this pesantren strengthens religious education and prepares students to face economic challenges. Business units such as the cottage supermarket provide students with entrepreneurial experience and a source of independent income. This strategy reflects the role of Pesantren as a driving force for community empowerment, as mandated by Law No. 18/2019 on Pesantren. ¹⁶

In addition, establishing the Community Vocational Training Center (BLK), which the Ministry of Manpower initiated, strengthens the skills of santri in informatics and technology. This program aims to reduce the competency gap between pesantren graduates and general education institutions, as stated by Djatmiko.¹⁷ Thus, Pesantren graduates not only have spiritual and scientific excellence but also practical skills relevant to the world of work.

This transformation illustrates how Al-Ustmani Islamic Boarding School has successfully responded to the challenges of the times without abandoning its traditional identity. Through a holistic approach, this pesantren is a center of religious education and sustainable socio-economic empowerment, making it a relevant example for developing pesantren in Indonesia.

Transformation of Facilities and Infrastructure of Al-Ustmani Islamic Boarding School

The transformation process of facilities and infrastructure at Al-Ustmani Islamic Boarding School is a long journey that reflects efforts to adapt to changing times and educational needs in the early days of its establishment around the 1960s, under the leadership of KH. Usman, this boarding school only had simple facilities in the form of a small mushola inherited by Kiai Marjani. This facility became the center of learning even

¹⁵ Rika Megasari, "Peningkatan Pengelolaan Sarana Dan Prasarana Pendidikan Untuk Meningkatan Kualitas Pembelajaran Di SMPN 5 Bukittinggi," *Jurnal Bahana Manajemen Pendidikan* 2, no. 1 (2020): 636, 48

¹⁶ Republik Indonesia, "Undang Undang Nomor 18 Tahun 2019 Tentang Pesantren," *Dokumen Negara* (*Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Tentang Pesantren*) 6344 (2019): 48.

¹⁷ Istianto W Djatmiko, "Pendidikan Vokasi Dalam Perspektif Philosopher Tradisional," *Jurnal. Fakultas Teknik Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta*, 2010.

with limited facilities and methods, such as using a blackboard to teach the Safinatunnajah book. At that time, learning was not yet classified by scientific level or age group.

Along with the increasing number of students, KH. Usman began to expand and improve facilities. The renovation of the mushola into a wood and bamboo mosque and constructing a bamboo hut were the first steps in transforming infrastructure. This effort aims to increase efficiency and comfort in teaching and learning activities.

A significant transformation occurred when KH. Hamid, the son of KH. Usman returned from Sidogiri Islamic Boarding School in 1966. Inspiration from Sidogiri led to the establishment of Madrasah Miftahul Ulum in 1967, which marked the beginning of the formal education system at Al-Ustmani Islamic Boarding School. The construction of this madrasah, which began as a simple building, continued to develop, reflecting the geometric and referential transformation patterns outlined by Najon.¹⁸

In 1986, under the leadership of KH. Ghozali Usman, the pesantren education system was developed into two main patterns: *tarbiyah ma'hadiyah*, *which focuses on teaching yellow classical books*, and *tarbiyah madrasiyah* with a formal classical system. This pattern became the foundation for establishing new institutions, such as Madrasah Tsanawiyah in 2010, Senior High School in 2012, and Islamic College in 2019. The presence of these institutions shows the pesantren's commitment to respond to global challenges without abandoning its salafiyah characteristics.

In addition to education, the boarding school's infrastructure transformation continues. Infrastructure facilities such as laboratories, libraries, modern classrooms, proper bathrooms, cottage supermarkets, and vocational training centers (BLK) are part of the effort to meet the needs of students and the surrounding community. The establishment of BLK in 2019, with the support of the Ministry of Manpower, aims to equip students with practical skills, such as information technology, to face the world of work.

This transformation is the result of internal planning and reflects interactions with various external actors, including other pesantren leaders and government policies. As

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¹⁸ Stephanie Jill Najoan and Johansen Mandey, "Transformasi Sebagai Strategi Desain," *Media Matrasain* 8, no. 2 (2011): 117–30.

Subagja explains, ¹⁹ social changes triggered by globalization and technological advances also encourage education transformation in pesantren.

Al-Ustmani Islamic Boarding School has demonstrated the ability to adapt to change without losing its identity. Its infrastructure and facilities management is based on formal education standards, as stated in Article 45 of the National Education System Law.²⁰ Optimizing the function of facilities and infrastructure is realized through maximum utilization of each existing facility, supported by rules that ensure the sustainability and efficiency of its use.

This transformation not only improves the quality of education but also strengthens pesantren's role as community empowerment centers, which can answer the challenges of modernity while maintaining traditional Islamic values.

The Impact of Facilities and Infrastructure Transformation on the Quality of Al-Usmani Islamic Boarding School

Al-Usmani Islamic Boarding School has successfully maintained the salafiyah concept while adapting to the national education curriculum. By continuously transforming facilities and infrastructure, this pesantren can improve the quality of educational services and create a conducive learning environment for students. This transformation is integral to the boarding school's strategy to remain relevant amid competition among academic institutions.

The quality of education in Islamic boarding schools depends on the curriculum, facilities, and infrastructure management. Tilaar emphasizes that infrastructure is essential for supporting the effectiveness of the learning process.²¹ Al-Usmani Islamic Boarding School responds to this need by providing complete, clean, and comfortable facilities, increasing the students' comfort and strengthening the community's trust in the pesantren.

Along with improving facilities, the number of students at Al-Usmani Islamic Boarding School continues to grow until it reaches more than 4,000 students in 2023.

¹⁹ Soleh Subagja, Gagasan Liberalisasi Pendidikan Islam: Konsepsi Pembebasan Dalam Pembelajaran Pendidikan Islam (Madani, 2010).

²⁰ Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia, "Sistem Pendidikan Nasional," *Jakarta: Direktorat Pendidikan Menengah Umum*, 2003.

²¹ Ace Suryadi and Henry Alexis Rudolf Tilaar, *Analisis Kebijakan Pendidikan: Suatu Pengantar*, (*No Title*), 1993.

This increase reflects the community's trust in the pesantren regarding education management and student services. Mulyasa states that the success of educational institutions is measured by their ability to meet customer needs through reliable services, attention to students, and responsiveness to their needs.²²

Facilities such as the work training center (BLK) in informatics are one example of the transformation of facilities that directly impact improving santri skills. This BLK trains Santri in information technology, such as graphic design, website management, and digital content creation, often used as a medium for da'wah. These skills provide added value for santri, strengthen connections with the community, and promote pesantren through digital platforms.

In addition to physical facilities, the boarding school emphasizes the quality of human resources. Teaching staff management is carried out by strict selection based on professional qualifications and dedication. The learning process in Al-Usmani integrates memorization of the yellow classical books, scientific deliberation (syawir), and bashful masail to deepen religious knowledge while answering community problems.

In improving the quality of education, the pesantren implements a strategy based on three main pillars: resource adequacy, enhancing the quality of the teaching and learning process, and strengthening the quality of educational outcomes. By providing adequate facilities, adopting student-based learning methods, and aligning the curriculum with the needs of the times, Al-Usmani Islamic Boarding School can produce graduates who are not only intellectually capable but also have relevant characters and skills for the modern era.

This transformation reflects Al-Usmani Islamic Boarding School's commitment to maintaining its traditional identity while adapting to global developments. The holistic approach that integrates education, technology, and community empowerment makes this pesantren one of Indonesia's leading models of Islamic teaching.

Transformation of Al-Ustmani Islamic Boarding School: Integration of Tradition and Modernity

The transformation of Al-Ustmani Islamic Boarding School is an adaptive response to globalization, modernization, and technological advances while maintaining traditional

²² Enco Mulyasa, "Menjadi Kepala Sekolah Profesional Dalam Konteks Menyukseskan MBS Dan KBK," 2003.

salafiyah values. As stated by Subagja,²³ Which states that pesantren experience gradual changes due to adaptation to social dynamics, economics, and scientific developments. In a global context, the findings of this study corroborate the theory of adaptation of educational institutions proposed by Scott,²⁴ Traditional institutions face external pressures to maintain legitimacy while introducing innovative elements to survive in a changing environment.

The main finding of this study is the importance of facilities and infrastructure management that is integrated with the needs of students as a key element of pesantren success. This management not only improves the quality of learning but also strengthens operational comfort and efficiency. This phenomenon is by Muchlis Anshori's view,²⁵ This emphasizes that the effectiveness of the utilization of educational facilities is a key indicator of creating a quality learning experience. In addition, the strengthening of the economic sector through independent business units, such as supermarkets and Vocational Training Centers (BLK), shows relevance to the social economic theory proposed by Yunus,²⁶ Community-based economic empowerment can create economic sustainability while supporting the main functions of educational institutions.

The transformation of Pondok Pesantren Al-Ustmani is essential in illustrating technology integration into the curriculum and activities. The information technology training organized by this pesantren shows how Islamic education can utilize technology to improve the intellectual and economic skills of santri. This finding supports Pavlova's argument,²⁷ which states that work skills-based education can answer the challenges of a dynamic world of work and is relevant to the needs of the digital era. In a local perspective, this transformation is also in line with Nur Mahmudah's findings²⁸on the

²³Subagja, Gagasan Liberalisasi Pendidikan Islam: Konsepsi Pembebasan Dalam Pembelajaran Pendidikan Islam.

²⁴W R Scott, *Institutions and Organizations: Ideas, Interests, and Identities* (Sage publications, 2013). ²⁵Muchlis Anshori, Slamet Suwarno, and Kasbani Kasbani, "Management of Facilities and Infrastructure in Improving The Quality of Islamic Education," *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 5, no. 3 (2022): 928–39.

²⁶Muhammad Yunus and Karl Weber, "Building Social Business: The New Kind of Capitalism That Serves Humanity's Most Pressing Needs," 2010.

²⁷Margarita Pavlova, "Conceptualisation of Technology Education within the Paradigm of Sustainable Development," *International Journal of Technology and Design Education* 19, no. 2 (2009): 109–32. ²⁸Mahmudah Nur, "Literasi Digital Keagamaan Aktivis Organisasi Keagamaan Di Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) Di Kota Bandung," *Jurnal SMART (Studi Masyarakat, Religi, Dan Tradisi)* 5, no. 1 (2019): 1–14.

importance of digital literacy in Islamic educational institutions as a strategy to improve the competitiveness of graduates.

From the point of view of education management, the transformation of Al-Ustmani Islamic Boarding School shows the application of a holistic approach that includes managing physical facilities, optimizing human resources, improving the curriculum, and strengthening relations with the community. This approach is by the holistic management theory developed by Senge,²⁹ Which emphasizes the importance of synergy between educational elements in achieving institutional sustainability. Integrating kitab kuning teaching with formal education also shows that pesantren can bridge tradition and modernity, as Geertz proposed in his analysis of cultural syncretism in traditional Islamic institutions.³⁰

From the perspective of economic empowerment, business units such as the cottage supermarket and BLK catalyze the empowerment of local communities, strengthening the role of pesantren as agents of socio-economic empowerment. This initiative is in line with recent literature, such as research by M Falikul Isbah,³¹ This shows that pesantren can drive socio-economic development in rural areas through a community-based approach. Thus, Al-Ustmani Islamic Boarding School functions as an educational institution and an agent of social transformation relevant to modern society.

This study emphasizes the importance of strategic collaboration between Pesantren and the government to support transformation initiatives. Support in modern infrastructure development and technology-based training programs will strengthen Pesantren's capacity to meet the needs of contemporary society. In this context, the findings are relevant to Epstein's theory of educational partnerships, where collaboration between the government and academic institutions is necessary to achieve long-term transformation goals.³²

The holistic approach applied at Al-Ustmani Islamic Boarding School can be a model replicated by other pesantren. By integrating education, economic empowerment,

²⁹Peter M Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (Broadway Business, 2006).

³⁰Clifford Geertz, *Agama Jawa, Abangan, Santri, Priyayi Dalam Kebudayaan Jawa*, ed. Aswab Mahasin & Bur Rasuanto, Cet. II (Illinois: KomunitasBambu, 2013).

³¹M Falikul Isbah, "Examining the Socio-Economic Role of Islamic Boarding Schools (Pesantren) in Indonesia" (UNSW Sydney, 2016).

³²J L Epstein, "School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Preparing Educators and Improving Schools," *ADOLESCENCE-SAN DIEGO-* 37 (2002): 435.

and traditional values, pesantren can play a strategic role in community development in the global era. This research enriches the academic literature on pesantren transformation, offers a relevant adaptation model for Islamic education, and provides strategic recommendations for Islamic educational institutions in responding to the challenges of modernity and globalization.

Consultation

The result of this study is a deep understanding of the importance of the responsiveness of the Al-Ustmani Beddian Islamic boarding school to the needs of students and the demands of the times. This study reveals that the role of Islamic boarding school caregivers in responding to the community's needs has resulted in good services supported by adequate infrastructure. Without this research, the extent to which Islamic boarding schools can adapt to changing times and meet the needs of students may not be understood in depth. The theories and concepts used in this study can answer existing problems well. Integrating formal education into the education system of Al-Ustmani Beddian Islamic boarding schools has resulted in a significant transformation in facilities and infrastructure. The addition of facilities, such as buildings, laboratories, libraries, and others, shows that the approach taken in this study can accommodate the development of the Islamic boarding school education system holistically.

Although this study provides a broad understanding of the transformation of the Al-Ustmani Beddian Islamic boarding school, some shortcomings need to be noted. One of them is the focus of research that is more on the description of the transformation than on evaluating its impact in depth. For further study, it is recommended to dig deeper into the effects of the transformation on the quality of education, public perception, and student experience. In addition, further research can also expand the scope of the sample and make comparisons with other Islamic boarding schools to enrich the understanding of the transformation of Islamic boarding schools more comprehensively.

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