



Program Management of the Language Department in Teaching Arabic Language

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Abstract:

In Islamic educational institutions, Arabic language programs often encounter challenges in harmonizing traditional pedagogical values with contemporary instructional reforms. This research aims to analyze the strategic management of Arabic language instruction at an Islamic secondary school through a case study of the Language Department's leadership practices. Employing a qualitative approach, the study gathered data through interviews, documentation analysis, and participatory observation. Thematic analysis based on the Miles and Huberman model was used to uncover key patterns related to planning, leadership behavior, and stakeholder engagement. The findings reveal that the department effectively integrates managerial functions planning, organizing, leading, and controlling into its instructional management. The head of the department plays a dual role as both academic leader and cultural mediator, bridging traditional Arabic teaching methods with modern communicative approaches. Additionally, the department institutionalizes student feedback through structured forums and evaluation instruments, fostering participatory reform. These results highlight that sustainable improvement in Arabic language teaching is shaped not only by systematic planning but also by relational leadership and inclusive evaluation practices. The study contributes to a contextual framework for managing language programs in faith-based educational settings.

Keywords: *Arabic Language Instruction, Faith-Based School Management, Managerial Practices, Participatory Evaluation.*

Abstrak:

Di lembaga pendidikan Islam, program bahasa Arab sering menghadapi tantangan dalam menyelaraskan nilai-nilai pedagogis tradisional dengan reformasi pengajaran kontemporer. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis manajemen strategis pengajaran bahasa Arab di sekolah menengah Islam melalui studi kasus praktik kepemimpinan Departemen Bahasa. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, penelitian ini mengumpulkan data melalui wawancara, analisis dokumentasi, dan observasi partisipatif. Analisis tematik berdasarkan model Miles dan Huberman digunakan untuk mengungkap pola-pola utama yang terkait dengan perencanaan, perilaku kepemimpinan, dan keterlibatan pemangku kepentingan. Temuan tersebut mengungkapkan bahwa departemen tersebut secara efektif mengintegrasikan fungsi manajerial perencanaan, pengorganisasian, kepemimpinan, dan pengendalian ke dalam manajemen pengajarannya. Kepala departemen memainkan peran ganda sebagai pemimpin akademis dan mediator budaya, menjembatani metode pengajaran bahasa Arab tradisional dengan pendekatan komunikatif modern. Selain itu, departemen tersebut melembagakan umpan balik siswa melalui forum terstruktur dan instrumen evaluasi, yang mendorong reformasi partisipatif. Hasil-hasil ini menyoroti bahwa peningkatan berkelanjutan dalam pengajaran bahasa Arab dibentuk tidak hanya oleh perencanaan sistematis tetapi juga oleh kepemimpinan relasional dan praktik evaluasi inklusif. Studi ini berkontribusi pada kerangka kontekstual untuk mengelola program bahasa di lingkungan pendidikan berbasis agama.

Kata Kunci: *Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab, Manajemen Sekolah Berbasis Agama, Praktik Manajerial, Evaluasi Partisipatif.*

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INTRODUCTION / المقدمة

In the context of Islamic education, the mastery of Arabic is a central component in supporting students' ability to access religious texts and develop communicative competence in a global context. As an international language of Islam and a medium of intellectual heritage, Arabic language instruction requires systematic planning, structured pedagogy, and institutional management that is responsive to learners' needs (Khraim et al., 2023; Talaat et al., 2023; Wicaksono et al., 2023). However, many language departments in madrasahs and Islamic schools still face management challenges in implementing Arabic programs effectively. These include curriculum rigidity, lack of teacher development strategies, and insufficient coordination between departments and school leadership (Chahdi et al., 2023; Daass-Iraqi et al., 2023; Hempler et al., 2023). Consequently, the teaching of Arabic remains fragmented and less adaptive to pedagogical innovation and student-centered learning. This calls for a more comprehensive approach to language program management, particularly in organizing, planning, and monitoring the teaching of Arabic within educational institutions.

Language departments play a pivotal role in shaping the academic ecosystem and driving the success of Arabic language learning in madrasahs. In several institutions, the establishment of language departments is a response to the need for specialized, coordinated, and sustainable language education programs (Imam, 2023; Zolezzi et al., 2023). Nonetheless, these departments often lack clear strategic frameworks for managing teaching resources, evaluating performance, and ensuring quality assurance. At the same time, the rapid development of technology, shifting student preferences, and the increasing demand for multilingual skills require a more adaptive and integrative model of program management (Alwehebi, 2023; Ghazy et al., 2023). Therefore, managing the Arabic language teaching program is not only a matter of instructional design but also of institutional governance that bridges pedagogical vision and administrative support.

Recent studies have highlighted the importance of effective program management in enhancing the quality of Arabic language education. Abdullahi et al. (2023), tell that well-managed programs tend to result in clearer learning objectives, improved teacher coordination, and better student outcomes. Moreover, leadership commitment and strategic planning have been found to significantly influence the success of Arabic instruction, particularly in multilingual and multicultural environments. A successful program requires not only a well-designed curriculum but also sustained supervision, resource allocation, and teacher professional development aligned with institutional goals (Elshahat & Moffat, 2020; Mohammed et al., 2021). Thus, program management serves as the backbone for integrating policy, pedagogy, and practice in the teaching of Arabic.

The urgency to improve program management in language departments is especially relevant in Islamic schools that aim to balance religious identity with educational excellence. With Arabic functioning as both a liturgical and academic language, its teaching must be supported by institutional mechanisms that ensure continuity, coherence, and quality. However, existing research has not sufficiently

explored how language departments operationalize their management strategies, particularly in non-native Arabic learning environments. There remains a gap in understanding how planning, organizing, leading, and controlling (POLC) functions are applied to the management of Arabic teaching programs. This study seeks to fill that gap by providing an in-depth case analysis of how program management is implemented in the Language Department of an Islamic educational institution.

The originality of this research lies in its integrated focus on the managerial dimensions, rather than purely pedagogical aspects, of Arabic language teaching, specifically analyzing how institutional strategies influence classroom practices. This differs from previous studies that tend to focus on student performance or textbook analysis. By highlighting the role of language department management, this study contributes to a more holistic understanding of quality assurance in Arabic education. Therefore, this study addresses the following main question: How is program management implemented in the language department to support the teaching of Arabic language in Islamic educational institutions? The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for institutional leaders, policymakers, and Arabic educators seeking to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of their language programs.

RESEARCH METHOD / المنهجية

This study was conducted at Darussalam Islamic Boarding School, Jombang that has formally established a Language Department responsible for overseeing the planning and implementation of Arabic language instruction. The institution was purposively selected based on its structured language management system and its active efforts in developing Arabic language programs for non-native speakers. The research adopted a qualitative method with a case study approach. This design is appropriate for capturing the complexity and contextual nuances of how the language department manages the Arabic language program in practice (Cole, 2024; Scharp, 2021; Tasci et al., 2020). A case study approach enabled an in-depth exploration of institutional strategies, managerial practices, and their influence on Arabic language teaching in a real educational setting.

Key participants in this study included the Head of the Language Department, Arabic language teachers, curriculum coordinators, administrative staff, and students. The Head of the Language Department was selected as a key informant due to their leadership role in planning, supervising, and evaluating the Arabic language teaching program. Several Arabic teachers were also involved to gain insight into classroom practices, teaching resources, and professional development activities. In addition, the Vice Principal for Curriculum Affairs provided data on the integration of the language program within the school's academic framework. The Head of the School served as a strategic informant offering a broader perspective on institutional policy and support for the language department. Finally, student representatives were interviewed to capture learner experiences in the Arabic language classes managed by the department.

The selection of informants was carried out using purposive sampling, with an emphasis on information-rich participants who are directly involved in or impacted by the management of the Arabic program. This approach ensured the collection of comprehensive data from various organizational levels, aligning with the principles of triangulation and trustworthiness in qualitative research (Byrne, 2022; Campbell et al., 2021; Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Informants were selected based on their roles, availability, and relevance to the core research questions, particularly regarding the planning, organizing,

leading, and controlling (POLC) aspects of language program management.

Data were collected through multiple techniques: semi-structured interviews, direct observations, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to explore participants' perceptions, experiences, and challenges in implementing Arabic teaching strategies under departmental management (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Observations were conducted in classrooms and departmental meetings to understand actual practices and interactions among stakeholders. Documents reviewed included annual work plans, syllabi, teacher performance reports, and evaluation tools used by the Language Department to monitor the Arabic teaching program. This triangulation strategy contributed to the depth and credibility of the findings.

The data analysis was carried out using thematic analysis techniques, involving three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Ikotun et al., 2023; Saura, 2021; Yang et al., 2020). In the reduction stage, raw data were filtered and organized based on the main themes of program management: planning, organizing, leading, and controlling. The display stage involved compiling relevant excerpts and organizing them into matrices and narrative patterns. In the final stage, conclusions were drawn and verified by cross-checking findings from different sources to ensure consistency and internal validity. Member-checking and peer debriefing were also conducted to enhance the reliability and confirmability of the study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION / نتائج البحث و المناقشة

Findings

Integration of Managerial Functions (POLC) in Arabic Language Teaching

The results of in-depth interviews with the Head of the Language Department, Arabic teachers, and curriculum staff revealed that the department has effectively integrated the core elements of managerial functions Planning, Organizing, Leading, and Controlling (POLC) in managing Arabic language instruction. According to the Head of the Language Department, the academic calendar and teaching plans are designed annually through a needs-based analysis, ensuring alignment between curriculum targets and student competencies. He stated, "We start every academic year with a curriculum workshop, where we assess last year's outcomes and set teaching targets for each level of Arabic proficiency." This structured planning reflects the department's proactive stance in ensuring curriculum relevance and goal-oriented instruction.

Further interview findings show that the organizing function is manifested in how responsibilities are distributed among teachers based on their expertise. For instance, teachers are assigned to specific language domains such as nahwu, sharaf, and muhadatsah, allowing for specialization and clearer instructional focus. One Arabic teacher remarked, "I focus on syntax and sentence structure, while another colleague handles morphology. This division helps us go deeper and be more effective in our teaching." This strategy enhances both instructional quality and teacher confidence while minimizing overlap and confusion in lesson delivery. The structured division of tasks demonstrates the department's effective organizational management tailored to language instruction.

The leading function was identified through the leadership practices of the department head, who regularly holds coordination meetings and provides motivational guidance to teachers. Teachers mentioned that they feel empowered through open communication and decision-making opportunities. One participant shared, "Our

department head often asks for our input before making decisions, especially when it comes to selecting materials or adjusting class formats. That makes us feel included and appreciated.” Such inclusive leadership helps build a collaborative atmosphere and reinforces the team’s commitment to instructional excellence. It also supports the formation of a shared vision among the Arabic teaching team.

Lastly, the controlling function was evident in the department’s routine evaluation and supervision practices. The Head of the Department, along with the Deputy for Curriculum, conducts classroom observations using internal evaluation instruments developed to assess lesson delivery, student engagement, and alignment with learning goals. One teacher commented, “We are given clear indicators and feedback after each observation it’s not punitive but developmental. It helps us reflect and improve.” This evaluation model not only serves as a quality assurance mechanism but also fosters professional growth. The department’s ability to adapt general management models into a subject-specific educational context represents a unique contribution to language education management, especially within Islamic school environments.

Overall, these findings demonstrate that the Language Department’s application of POLC principles offers a comprehensive and context-sensitive framework for managing Arabic language instruction. By embedding planning, organizing, leadership, and evaluation into its daily operations, the department ensures sustainable teaching quality while empowering its educators. This integration represents an innovative approach in managing foreign language programs within faith-based education systems.

The Dual Role of the Head of the Language Department as Academic Leader and Cultural Mediator

The analysis of internal documents including meeting minutes, departmental policy memos, curriculum revision reports, and teacher communication logs revealed a distinct dual function carried out by the Head of the Language Department. These documents illustrate how the department head strategically embodies the roles of academic leader and cultural mediator in the process of reforming Arabic language instruction at the institution.

From curriculum workshop notes and policy memos dated January to June 2024, it is evident that the Head of the Language Department consistently advocated for a methodological shift from traditional grammar-translation approaches using *kitab kuning* and classical *qawā'id* to more communicative, learner-centered strategies. However, rather than enforcing this transition top-down, the department head facilitated a series of consultative forums that included Arabic teachers, general subject teachers (e.g., English, Religion), and school management. Documentation shows that during one forum, the department head presented a comparative framework of teaching models, bridging the traditional logic of *taqlid al-nahwi* (grammatical imitation) with communicative paradigms rooted in authentic dialogue and situational language use.

Meeting minutes from cross-departmental sessions (especially between Language and Curriculum units) also highlight how the Head of Department negotiated curriculum structures. For instance, adjustments were made to allow a parallel track where classical texts are taught in senior classes, while junior levels focus on conversational Arabic. This compromise, documented as a formal policy, illustrates the cultural mediation function balancing institutional values with educational innovation. Furthermore, the Head of the Language Department often acted as a liaison between teachers and school leadership.

Evidence from administrative reports shows that he relayed concerns about teacher readiness and proposed solutions, such as in-house peer mentoring and progressive training modules. His interventions were pivotal in aligning language program reforms with broader school policies without provoking friction.



Figure 1. The Dual Role of the Head of the Language Department as Academic Leader and Cultural Mediator

Figure 1 summarizes the documented actions and strategic functions of the Language Department Head. As an academic leader, he ensured the Arabic curriculum evolved in line with modern methodologies. As a cultural mediator, he safeguarded the values and teaching traditions cherished by Arabic educators. His strategic negotiation allowed the coexistence of classical and modern approaches, while his liaison role bridged communication gaps between teaching staff and institutional leadership. From these documentation sources, it is concluded that the effectiveness of Arabic language reform in this Islamic educational setting was not solely based on policy design but on relational leadership and cultural negotiation. The Head of Department's ability to navigate both academic and cultural domains stands out as a key driver of sustainable pedagogical transformation.

Student Involvement in the Program Evaluation Process through Structured Feedback Forums

The research findings indicate that the Language Department has implemented a structured student feedback mechanism as part of its program evaluation system. Unlike conventional evaluation systems in many madrasahs, which are typically top-down and instructor-driven, this department actively involves students in evaluating teaching quality and curriculum relevance. At the end of each semester, students are required to fill out standardized evaluation forms covering several key aspects, such as teaching methods, media utilization, clarity of material presentation, and the pace of learning. These feedback forms are compiled and reviewed by the department's quality assurance team, and the findings are discussed in internal meetings. The uniqueness of this approach lies in the institutionalization of student voice in instructional improvement a rare phenomenon in traditional Islamic education contexts.

In addition to written feedback, selected students are invited to participate in open discussion forums facilitated by the Head of the Language Department. These forums, held once every semester, allow for direct communication between students and management about learning challenges and suggestions for curriculum adjustments. According to observational notes, the forums are held in a semi-formal setting and are attended by department staff, several Arabic language instructors, and around 10 student

representatives per level. One student participant shared, “We are usually shy to speak out, but when the head of department opens the floor like this, it feels like our opinion matters.” Another said, “After the last forum, our muhadatsah sessions became more interactive they listened.” These statements reveal that the feedback loop is not only symbolic but also results in pedagogical and curricular changes.

Table 1. Implementation of Structured Student Feedback in the Arabic Language Department

Aspect	Implementation	Impact
Feedback Forms	Standardized end-of-semester evaluations by all students covering teaching quality	Identification of effective teaching practices and specific learning obstacles
Forum Participation	Semesterly feedback forums involving selected student representatives	Strengthening of mutual trust between students and educators; responsive curriculum updates
Curriculum Adjustment	Curriculum and method revision based on aggregated student input	Increased engagement in speaking classes and improved satisfaction with learning materials
Documentation & Review	Archiving of all feedback and follow-up actions	Transparency and an evidence-based evaluation system

Table 1 above illustrates how structured student involvement in program evaluation is operationalized in the Arabic Language Department. The use of standardized feedback forms ensures that student perspectives are captured systematically, while open forums offer qualitative insight that enriches administrative decision-making. Furthermore, the adjustment of curriculum content and methods based on student suggestions shows that feedback is not only collected but also acted upon. From the data and observations analyzed, it can be concluded that this participatory evaluation model enhances both the quality of instruction and the sense of ownership among students toward their learning journey. This approach represents an innovative shift in Islamic school culture, transforming students from passive recipients to active stakeholders in educational quality management.

Discussion

This study sheds light on innovative practices in the management of Arabic language instruction at an Islamic secondary school by analyzing three key findings: (1) the integration of managerial functions (POLC), (2) the dual role of the Head of the Language Department, and (3) student involvement in program evaluation. Together, these findings demonstrate how educational leadership, managerial precision, and participatory culture intersect to create a responsive and sustainable Arabic language program.

First, the integration of Planning, Organizing, Leading, and Controlling (POLC) principles into the department’s daily operations reflects a strong application of general management theories into the realm of subject-specific education. The structured yearly planning process ensures that curriculum development is aligned with both institutional goals and student needs (Blignault et al., 2022; Sali, 2020). The specialization of teaching roles based on expertise enhances instructional clarity and depth, an organizational decision that improves pedagogical consistency. Leadership in the form of collaborative engagement and routine communication demonstrates how inclusive practices contribute to a motivated teaching team (Abdullah, 2024). Finally, the systematic internal evaluation

not only promotes quality assurance but also drives ongoing professional growth. This indicates that when managerial models are contextualized to fit the linguistic and cultural demands of Arabic instruction, they become powerful tools for academic improvement.

The next finding is the dual role of the department head as both academic leader and cultural mediator, which reveals a nuanced form of leadership that extends beyond technical management. In Islamic educational settings where tradition holds a strong influence, the transition to modern teaching approaches often meets resistance. The Head of Department navigates this tension not by imposing reforms but by building consensus through dialogue, comparative curriculum frameworks, and negotiated curricular adjustments (Arifin et al., 2024; Hidayah, 2024; Hina, 2024). This demonstrates a form of leadership that is both relational and transformational, as it values both heritage and innovation. The ability to safeguard pedagogical tradition while introducing methodological reform exemplifies effective cultural mediation (Omar, 2021). It underscores that successful academic leadership in such contexts must integrate emotional intelligence, negotiation skills, and an understanding of institutional identity.

Lastly, the active involvement of students in the evaluation process represents a cultural and pedagogical breakthrough. Unlike conventional top-down approaches common in traditional Islamic institutions, the department's practice of gathering student feedback through standardized forms and open forums illustrates a student-centered ethos (Allam et al., 2020; An & Zheng, 2022). The documentation of real-time changes based on student input, such as adjustments in muhadatsah class formats, demonstrates that student voices are not only heard but acted upon. This participatory model enhances the quality of learning, builds mutual trust, and empowers students as co-constructors of the educational experience. In the broader framework of quality management, this aligns with Total Quality Management (TQM) principles, which emphasize stakeholder involvement in continuous improvement processes (Efendi, 2022; Hazimeh et al., 2023).

Thematically, all three findings converge on the idea of adaptive, inclusive, and strategically managed Arabic instruction. The POLC framework ensures operational efficiency, while the department head's dual role enables ideological coherence and smooth reform implementation. Meanwhile, student feedback mechanisms function as an internal control and innovation trigger. Together, these approaches challenge the conventional perception of Arabic teaching in Islamic schools as static and traditional, and instead present a model that is dynamic, dialogical, and data-informed.

In conclusion, this research not only provides empirical insight into how Arabic language programs can be effectively managed in faith-based institutions but also contributes a framework for broader application. The synthesis of general management principles, relational leadership, and participatory evaluation represents a context-sensitive model of educational leadership. This model can serve as a reference for other departments and schools seeking to enhance the quality and responsiveness of their language programs, especially within environments where cultural heritage and modern educational demands must be thoughtfully balanced.

CONCLUSION / الخلاصة

This study concludes that the successful management of Arabic language instruction in the Language Department is driven by the strategic integration of core managerial functions (POLC), the dual role of the department head as both academic leader and cultural mediator, and the incorporation of structured student feedback into

program evaluation. These findings highlight the importance of adaptive leadership and participatory governance in transforming traditional language instruction into a more communicative, relevant, and responsive model. Scientifically, this research contributes a context-sensitive framework for managing subject-specific programs in Islamic educational institutions, demonstrating how general management principles can be effectively localized. However, the study is limited to a single institutional case and primarily draws on internal documentation and stakeholder interviews; thus, further comparative studies across different institutions and educational levels are needed to validate the applicability and scalability of this managerial model.

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