

## Rethinking Curriculum Quality Assurance in Islamic Education: A Spiritual-Adaptive Control Model Inspired by Madrasah Babul Azaj

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### ABSTRACT

The increasing digitalization of curriculum and quality assurance in Islamic educational institutions may intensify bureaucratic compliance, administrative fatigue, and value displacement when quality is defined predominantly through externally imposed and procedurally oriented mechanisms. This study addresses this problem by developing a Spiritual-Adaptive Control (SAC) framework that reconceptualizes quality assurance through *amanah* (divine trust and moral accountability before God) as an intrinsic basis for professional responsibility. Using a qualitative textual-conceptual design, the study draws on Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Jailani's *Al-Ghunya* and *Futuh al-Ghaib*, historical accounts of Madrasah Babul Azaj, and contemporary literature on quality management and educational quality assurance. Data were examined through critical comparative content analysis, contrasting principles of secular external control with transcendental and self-regulatory principles derived from the Qadiriyyah tradition. The analysis resulted in three interrelated quality-control instruments: (1) a Spiritual Scorecard, which operationalizes moral-spiritual commitments as quality indicators; (2) a Digital Self-Assessment Dashboard, which institutionalizes *muhasabah* (systematic self-reflection) as an internal quality-monitoring mechanism; and (3) Collaborative Peer Review, which incorporates *mujahadah* (sustained striving) as a basis for collective learning and corrective action. These instruments are integrated into a Spiritual Integration Cycle for Digital Education, incorporating Digital-Tasawwuf into instructional planning, digitally mediated spiritual mentoring (cyber-murabbi), reflective learning rubrics within learning management systems, and structured spiritual preparation preceding digital learning activities. The study contributes conceptually by connecting classical Sufi constructs of *amanah*, *mujahadah*, and *riyadhah* (inner discipline) with contemporary quality-management mechanisms, thereby extending quality assurance beyond compliance-oriented control toward an internally motivated and spiritually accountable model. The framework provides a theoretically grounded alternative for sustaining educational quality while preserving the religious and ethical identity of contemporary Islamic educational institutions.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The current reality on the ground suggests a tendency for the anchors of spiritual values and depth of character to fade in the modern educational landscape amid the massive wave of digital disruption (Setiawan et al., 2026). Many contemporary educational institutions are trapped in a race to meet administrative targets, mechanize technology-based learning, and pursue rigid external quality standardization. These global pressures demanding speed and competitiveness often reduce the essence of education to the mere fulfillment of bureaucratic requirements and the mastery of outward technical skills, so that the space for instilling deep morality and inner discipline becomes increasingly marginalized (Salman Hasan, Rofiatul Hasanah, 2023).

This condition is exacerbated by a global crisis in quality assurance (QA) systems. International empirical evidence shows that conventional QA frameworks that adopt secular industrial models such as Total Quality Management (TQM), ISO, and external bureaucratic accreditation often yield only procedural accreditation without achieving substantial improvements in learning quality (Texeira-Quiros et al., 2022). In the context of Islamic education, field realities indicate that most institutions face a serious dilemma between meeting formal external accreditation standards and maintaining their distinctive moral-spiritual identity (M. Arif Susanto, 2024).

To examine the complexity of this issue scientifically, contemporary international literature was analyzed across five main domains. First, Quality Assurance studies originating with Deming investigate technical standardization, bureaucratic accountability, and operational efficiency within organizations (Deming, 2000). Second, Adaptive Leadership research based on Heifetz's framework examines organizational agility and strategies for responding to external environmental disruptions (Heifetz, 1994). Third, the Spiritual Leadership theory introduced by Fry, which explores the influence of intrinsic motivation, calling, and membership on organizational performance (Fry, 2003). Fourth, Islamic Educational Management literature by scholars such as Tan focuses on philosophical critiques of educational technocracy and the revitalization of Islamic values in institutional governance (Tan, 2012). Finally, Priestley's Curriculum Governance studies analyze material flexibility and the curriculum's ability to adapt to technological advances (Priestley & Biesta, 2013).

A critical synthesis of these five areas reveals a fundamental research gap: while secular management literature provides empirical tools for organizational measurement and agility without a transcendental moral foundation, Islamic education research offers a robust philosophical-spiritual foundation yet lacks concrete, operationalized instruments for internal quality control. Consequently, there is an academic void regarding how modern curriculum flexibility can be operationally regulated through quality assurance mechanisms that are both objective and spiritually grounded. As a result, modern Islamic pesantren and madrasahs remain trapped in the dilemma between adopting rigid secular bureaucratic control or relying on traditional subjective spiritual oversight.

To address this scientific gap, the uniqueness of this research lies in the reconstruction of a Spiritual-Adaptive Control Model, derived from a historical-managerial reflection on Madrasah Babul Azaj, the legacy of Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Jailani. In contrast to previous studies that treat Sufi values solely as moral doctrine, this research transforms the classical concepts of spiritual striving (*mujahadah*) and inner discipline (*riyadhah*) into an organic, measurable internal quality-assurance framework grounded in transcendental accountability (*amanah ilahiah*). Conducting this research is urgently needed to prevent the erosion of institutional identity and bureaucratic fatigue amid the massive wave of digitalization in Islamic education.

This research aims to critically analyze the historical-managerial reconstruction of Madrasah Babul Azaj in responding to contemporary challenges and to formulate a Spiritual-Adaptive Control Model as a measurable internal quality assurance system. Specifically, this study unpacks how the values of *mujahadah* and *riyadhah* are operationalized as concrete managerial instruments, namely the Spiritual Scorecard, Digital Self-Assessment Dashboard, and Collaborative Peer-Review, to support dynamic curriculum governance. This research provides a theoretical contribution to the field of Islamic Educational Management by establishing a new paradigm of Spiritual-Adaptive Quality Governance that harmonizes adaptive leadership with Sufi spirituality. Practically, these findings offer operational tools for pesantren leaders, curriculum developers, and educators to build a sustainable internal quality assurance system (quality sustainability) without sacrificing essential Islamic values.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative, textual-conceptual approach and historical hermeneutics to develop a conceptual framework. Rather than conducting empirical field research, the study applies qualitative content analysis, systematically grounded in a framework, to retrospectively analyze the historical

governance of Sheik Abdul Qadir al-Jailani's Madrasah Babul Azaj and transform it into a modern curriculum management model (Rijali, 2019).

Document search and selection were conducted systematically through two main categories of data. Primary data were extracted from two fundamental classical texts by Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Jailani, namely Al-Ghunya li Thalibi Thariq al-Haqq and Futuh al-Ghaib (Sugiyono, 2013). The inclusion criteria for primary sources comprised chapters that explicitly address self-governance (muhasabah), academic/spiritual striving (mujahadah), inner discipline (riyadhah), and leadership ethics (futuwwah). Meanwhile, secondary sources were obtained through systematic searches in reputable international databases (Scopus and Web of Science) and authentic historical records (Wahidmurni, 2017). Inclusion criteria for secondary literature included peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2021 and 2026 on quality assurance, adaptive leadership, spiritual leadership, and curriculum governance, major educational management textbooks, and classical historiographical references on the governance of Madrasah Babul Azaj, such as the works of Ibn Kathir, Ibn Rajab, and al-Dhahabi. Conversely, exclusion criteria excluded non-peer-reviewed articles, media commentary, and literature lacking direct methodological relevance to educational governance (Becker et al., 2012).

Data processing and textual analysis were conducted in three stages of thematic content analysis. In the initial phase, namely Initial Extraction, key textual units, quotations, and terminology concerning institutional governance, spiritual discipline, and academic rigor were identified and extracted from the primary texts. Subsequently, in the Conceptual Categorization phase, the extracted terms were grouped into contemporary managerial domains. For example, the classical concept of mujahadah was mapped onto curriculum acceleration and adaptability, while riyadhah was categorized into organic internal quality assurance. This analytical procedure concluded with Theoretical Integration, wherein all categorized domains were synthesized into core variables that constitute the Spiritual-Adaptive Control framework (Drisko, 2013).

The operationalization of historical hermeneutics was carried out through a fusion of horizons, bridging the 12th-century historical context of Madrasah Babul Azaj in Baghdad and the contemporary digital-disruption landscape in Islamic education. This dialectic enables the extraction of universal values (haqiqah) while preventing anachronistic interpretative bias. After this hermeneutic process, the conceptual model was synthesized through four interrelated stages of theoretical development. The process began with Mapping, involving the mapping of key historical concepts against contemporary Western management theories; proceeded to Deconstructing to deduce the limitations of secular bureaucratic control and abstract traditional Sufism; moved to Categorizing to crystallize operational variables such as Spiritual Scorecard, Digital Self-Assessment, and Collaborative Peer-Review; and culminated in Integrating, which arranges all elements into the circular scheme of Spiritual-Adaptive Control (Jabareen, 2009).

To establish validity, objectivity, and scholarly rigor in this textual-conceptual research, three qualitative data trustworthiness strategies were applied in an integrated manner. First, Data Source Triangulation was performed by cross-checking the primary classical texts against the independent historical records of Ibn Kathir, Ibn Rajab, and al-Dhahabi, as well as contemporary management literature (Denzin, 2009). Second, Source Criticism was applied to verify the manuscript's authenticity, textual lineage, and editorial credibility, ensuring accurate contextual interpretation (Howell & Prevenier, 2001). Third, Theoretical Persistence was achieved through deep, iterative analysis until reaching theoretical saturation, thereby ensuring that no additional conceptual categories would emerge to alter the structural integrity of the proposed model (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

### 3. RESULTS

Qualitative content extraction from the classical texts of Sheik Abdul Qadir al-Jailani, juxtaposed with references to classical Islamic historiography, yielded four axes of institutional governance. These four axes, namely muhasabah (self-examination), mujahadah (earnest striving), riyadhah (inner discipline), and futuwwah (spiritual chivalry), are transformed from individual inner doctrines into operational variables in modern curriculum governance.

- a. Muhasabah: From Inner Evaluation to Continuous Internal Quality Audit. In the manuscript Al-Ghunya li Thalibi Thariq al-Haqq (Vol. 1, p. 112), muhasabah is emphasized as a form of self-monitoring carried out constantly and continuously over all actions:

فَيَبْغِي الْعَبْدُ أَنْ يُحَاسِبَ نَفْسَهُ فِي كُلِّ لَحْظَةٍ وَوَقْتٍ، وَيَتَفَقَّدَ أَعْمَالَهُ وَأَحْوَالَهُ، فَإِنْ رَأَى خَيْرًا حَمْدَ اللَّهِ، وَإِنْ رَأَى شَرًّا اسْتَغْفَرَ وَتَابَ

"So let a servant audit (reckon) himself at every breath and moment, and examine all his deeds and conditions. If he sees good, he praises Allah, and if he sees evil, he seeks forgiveness and repents." (A. Q. Al-Jailani, 1997)

This principle of internal oversight is reinforced by Al-Dhahabi's historical record in Siyar A'lam al-Nubala' (Vol. 20, p. 442), which documents how the scholarly and fatwa governance at Babul Azaj was carried out independently through daily evaluation, without dependence on external political oversight.

وَكَانَ يَقُومُ بِأَمْرِ الْمَدْرَسَةِ وَالتَّعْلِيمِ وَالْفَتْوَى بِنَفْسِهِ، يَتَعَدَّى لِلْإِفَادَةِ كُلِّ يَوْمٍ، وَلَا يَقُومُ لِأَحَدٍ مِنَ الْعُظَمَاءِ، وَلَا يَأْتِي بَابَ وَزِيرٍ وَلَا سُلْطَانٍ

"He managed the affairs of the madrasah, teaching, and fatwas independently; he would sit providing scholarly benefit daily, never standing before the dignitaries, and never approaching the doors of ministers or sultans..." (Adz-Dzahabi, 1985)

The depth of this internal oversight is also recorded by the contemporary Baghdad historian, Ibn al-Jawzi, in *Al-Muntazam fi Tarikh al-Muluk wa al-Umam* (Vol. 18, p. 183), which demonstrates that oversight at Babul Azaj was directed not only at individuals but also at the operational system and daily teaching methodology:

وَكَانَ يُبِيلُ إِلَى التَّصْحِيحِ وَالتَّقْصِدِ الدَّائِمِ لِأَحْوَالِ مَدْرَسَتِهِ وَأَصْحَابِهِ، لَا يَغْفُلُ عَنْ مُرَاقَبَةِ أَعْمَالِهِمْ وَطَرِيقَةِ تَحْصِيلِهِمْ لِلْعِلْمِ

"He continuously carried out correction (*tashhih*) and continuous oversight (*at-tafaqqud ad-da'im*) over the condition of the madrasah and its students; he was never negligent in supervising their conduct and their methodology in seeking knowledge." (Al-Jawzi, 1995)

The depth of this internal audit is specifically recorded by Ibn al-Mulaqqin in *Tabaqat al-Awwaliya* (p. 211), where daily evaluation was mandated to measure the alignment between the learning process and the practical application of knowledge:

وَكَانَ يُلْزِمُ تَلَامِيذَهُ بِالْمُحَاسَبَةِ وَالْعَمَلِ بِمَا عَلِمُوا، وَيَقُولُ: الْعِلْمُ بِلَا عَمَلٍ حُجَّةٌ عَلَيْكَ لَا لَكَ، فَتَنْقُدُوا أَعْمَالَكُمْ كُلَّ يَوْمٍ

"He obliged his students to practice muhasabah and to act upon what they had learned, saying: 'Knowledge without practice is a claim that burdens you, not one that defends you. So examine your deeds every day.'" (Al-Mulaqqin, 1994)

Qualitatively, the textual synthesis and historical data above demonstrate that muhasabah in the Babul Azaj tradition transcends passive inner reflection. Muhasabah was implemented as a structured, autonomous daily oversight mechanism (*at-tafaqqud ad-da'im*) focused on outcome-based accountability. In the context of modern educational management, Internal Quality Audit (AMI) is defined as a systematic, independent, and documented examination process conducted by an institution to ensure that curriculum operations, learning processes, and graduate outcomes run in accordance with established standards, while simultaneously identifying areas for continuous quality improvement (Munadi & Aisyiah, 2022). The academic correlation between the classical tradition of muhasabah and Internal Quality Audit converges on three main operational pillars:

- 1) Outcome-Based Accountability: Ibn al-Mulaqqin's instruction that "knowledge without practice is a burden" (*al-'ilmu bila 'amalin hujjatun 'alaika*) directly correlates with the philosophy of contemporary AMI, wherein curricular success is not only measured by the attainment of inputs or material memorization (passive cognitive), but by the ability of graduates to apply their competencies in real-world contexts (learning outcomes & real-world application).
  - 2) System and Methodology Audit: Ibn al-Jawzi's account of "continuous oversight of the methodology of seeking knowledge" (*thariqah tahshilihim lil-'ilm*) indicates that the object of audit is not limited to the behavior of students, but also encompasses the effectiveness of instructional methods and the process of knowledge transfer taking place in the classroom.
  - 3) Independence and Autonomy of Evaluation: Al-Dhahabi's account of Babul Azaj's independence from political authority (*la ya'ti baba wazirin wa la sulthan*) reflects the core principle of AMI, namely quality oversight that arises from the sovereign awareness of an institution acting autonomously (self-regulatory mechanism), rather than merely a passive response to pressure from external accreditation bodies (compliance-driven). Thus, the transformation of muhasabah into Continuous Internal Quality Audit explains that effective curriculum quality assurance is rooted in the institutionalization of independent, honest, outcome-oriented self-assessment, carried out consistently by all members of the academic community.
- b. *Mujahadah*: From Spiritual Striving to Curriculum Adaptability and Acceleration. The principle of *mujahadah* is extracted from the text of *Futuh al-Ghaib* (Discourse 28), which emphasizes the importance of earnest striving in facing challenges, enduring hardships, and bringing about the improvement of one's condition (*ishlah al-hal*):

عَلَيْكَ بِالْمُجَاهَدَةِ وَالْمُكَابَدَةِ وَمُحَارَبَةِ النَّفْسِ وَقَهْرِهَا، وَالصَّبْرِ عَلَى الْمَشَاقِّ فِي طَلَبِ الْحَقِّ وَإِصْلَاحِ الْحَالِ

"You must commit to *mujahadah* (earnest striving), endure hardship, battle and subdue the ego, and be patient in bearing difficulties while seeking the truth and improving your condition." The historical manifestation of this ethos of *mujahadah* is recorded in the institutional flexibility and pedagogical agility at Madrasah Babul Azaj. Sibti ibn al-Jawzi, in *Mir'at al-Zaman fi Tarikh al-A'yan* (Vol. 21, p. 175), specifically notes how administrators and teachers responded to the dynamics of students through differentiated learning methodologies:

وَكَانَ يُشَارِكُ الطَّلَبَةَ فِي مَشَاقِّ التَّحْصِيلِ، وَيُعَادِلُ بَيْنَ الْمَتَاجِعِ بِمَا يُنَاسِبُ كُلَّ طَالِبٍ، فَلَا يَثْقُلُ عَلَى الضَّعِيفِ وَلَا يَنْقُصُ فِي حَقِّ الْقَوِيِّ، بَلْ يَسْعَى فِي تَرْقِيَةِ عُلُومِهِمُ بِالْمُجَاهَدَةِ وَالْمُتَابَعَةِ الدَّائِمَةِ

"He shared in the hardships of learning together with the students, and he adapted the curriculum/teaching method according to the abilities of each student. He did not overburden the weak student nor did he diminish the right of the intelligent student; rather, he strove to accelerate their scholarly levels through hard work (mujahadah) and continuous supervision." (Al-Gawzi, 1982).

This adaptive character is reinforced by the record of Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali in Dhayl Tabaqat al-Hanabilah (Vol. 1, p. 291). When a surge in applicants made the initial classroom facilities no longer sufficient, the management responded to the community's needs progressively by temporarily moving the learning location near the city wall of Baghdad until they completed the physical and academic capacity expansion in the year 528 AH:

وَصَافَتْ الْمَدْرَسَةُ الثَّلَاثِ، فَكَانَ يَجْلِسُ عِنْدَ سُورِ بَغْدَادَ... ثُمَّ إِنَّ الْمَدْرَسَةَ وَبِعَتْ... وَكَلَّتْ فِي سَنَةِ ثَمَانٍ وَعِشْرِينَ وَخَمْسِمِائَةٍ، وَصَارَتْ مَدْرَسَةً كَبِيرَةً

"Until the madrasah became too narrow for the people, so he taught near the wall of Baghdad... then the madrasah was expanded... and it was completed in the year 528 AH, becoming a great madrasah." (Al-Hanbali, 2005).

The textual synthesis and historical data above demonstrate that mujahadah at Babul Azaj did not stop at the realm of inner cultivation or individual asceticism, but was manifested as pedagogical agility and organizational resilience. The managers and teachers of Babul Azaj showed professional dedication by proactively responding to surges in student numbers and implementing differentiated learning strategies. This approach ensured that the adjustment of the methodology and the allocation of teachers' attention were flexible; high-achieving students received optimal scholarly enrichment, while students needing extra guidance were supported without being neglected. Within the framework of contemporary curriculum management, the ethos of mujahadah is transformed from physical-spiritual struggle into Curriculum Adaptability and Acceleration. This transformation affirms that compliance with quality standards must not trap curriculum managers into rigid learning schemes. On the contrary, mujahadah demands a continuous commitment from educators to progressively update content and teaching strategies in response to the dynamics of the times, the diversity of students' cognitive backgrounds, and crises of learning capacity or facilities. Thus, curriculum quality is maintained not through passive uniformity, but through planned hard work that balances responsive flexibility with consistent monitoring of learning achievement.

- c. Riyadhah: From Character Habituation to Organic Curriculum Quality Assurance. In the book Al-Ghunya li Thalibi Thariq al-Haqq (Vol. 2, p. 45), Riyadhah is defined as the habituation of professional and spiritual behavior patterns until they become independently internalized character traits:

الرِّيَاضَةُ إِخْرَاجُ النَّفْسِ عَنْ طَبَائِعِهَا وَتَهْدِيبُ أَخْلَاقِهَا، وَالْمُلَازِمَةُ عَلَى الْأَعْمَالِ الصَّالِحَةِ حَتَّى تَصِيرَ لَهَا عَادَةً وَطَبِيعَةً

"Riyadhah is the extraction of the soul from its base dispositions, the cultivation of its character, and the steadfast commitment to righteous deeds until those deeds become ingrained character and second nature." (A. Q. Al-Jailani, 1997)

The operational historiography of Babul Azaj recorded by Ibn Kathir in Al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah (Vol. 16, p. 438) documents the implementation of academic riyadhah through an integrated curriculum structure encompassing 13 multidisciplinary branches of knowledge, precise time allocation management, and the provision of student logistics (ith'am at-tha'am):

وَكَانَ يُقْرَأُ عَلَيْهِ فِي ثَلَاثَةِ عَشَرَ فَنَاءً؛ فِي التَّفْسِيرِ وَالْخِلَافِ وَالْأُصُولِ وَالنَّحْوِ، وَكَانَ يَقْرَأُ بَعْدَ الظُّهْرِ بِالْقِرَاءَاتِ... وَكَانَ يُطْعِمُ الطَّعَامَ، وَيَكْرُمُ الضَّيْفَ، وَيُضِيرُ عَلَى طَلَبَةِ الْعِلْمِ

"And there were taught before him 13 branches of knowledge; among them exegesis (tafsir), comparative school of law (khilaf), principles of jurisprudence (usul), and grammar (nahw). He taught the science of Qur'anic recitations (qira'at) after Zuh'r... and he constantly distributed food, honored guests, and patiently guided the seekers of knowledge." (Ibn Kathir, 1986)

Ibn Khallikan also records the consistency of this routine habituation in Wafayat al-A'yan (Vol. 3, p. 171) and al-Subki in Tabaqat al-Shafi'iyyah al-Kubra (Vol. 6, p. 212). Both historical texts confirm that the ethos of Riyadhah was actualized through the discipline of a constant teaching schedule, the patience to repeat material until students achieved complete understanding (mastery learning), and the inclusive provision of books and food supplies for learners:

وَكَانَتْ أَوْفَاتُهُ كُلُّهَا مَعْمُورَةً بِالْخَيْرِ... لَا يَمَلُّ مِنْ تَكَرُّرِ الشَّرْحِ حَتَّى يَفْهَمَ الطَّالِبُ... وَيُخْرِصُ عَلَى تَبْسِيطِ الْعُلُومِ لَهُمْ، وَمُسَاعَدَةِ الْمُخْتَاجِينَ مِنْهُمْ فِي قُوَّتِهِمْ وَكُنُوتِهِمْ

*"And all his time was filled with goodness... he never tired of repeating explanations until the student understood, he was keen on simplifying the sciences for them, and on assisting those in need among them with their sustenance and their books." (Khallikan, 1978)*

The textual and historiographical analysis above shows that Riyadhah at Babul Azaj was not practiced in an abstract-ascetic manner but was actualized through three operational pillars of the curriculum. First, curriculum diversification and integration, in which the teaching of 13 disciplines reflects the standardization of academic weight by combining instrumental sciences (nahw), methodology (usul), and applied law (khilaf/fiqh). Second, precise time management (time-block management), wherein the specific allocation of time for teaching qira'at after Zuhur demonstrates disciplined workflow and curriculum scheduling. Third, the assurance of a learning ecosystem (support system & welfare), wherein the provision of food logistics (ith'am at-tha'am), book facilities, and patient mentoring indicates that the quality of learning is balanced by the fulfillment of students' physical welfare and psychological comfort.

Within the framework of contemporary curriculum management, Riyadhah is extracted from mere inner discipline into Organic Quality Assurance. This concept restructures the quality control paradigm: compliance with curriculum standards no longer depends on the pressure of rigid external administrative documents (compliance-driven/bureaucratic), but instead becomes a quality habitus that is independently internalized within the daily culture of educators and the institution (Hamami & Zalik Nuryana, 2019). Thus, quality assurance is no longer perceived as a bureaucratic burden but becomes a professional reflex integrated into the entire instructional process and academic services.

- d. Futuwwah: From Service Ethics to Collaborative Leadership and Peer Evaluation. In the text Futuh al-Ghaib (Discourse 42), futuwwah is described as an altruistic leadership ethic that emphasizes service, openness, and the elimination of a centralistic ego:

حَقِيقَةُ الْفُتُوَّةِ أَنْ لَا تَشْهَدَ لِنَفْسِكَ فَضْلًا، وَأَنْ تَكُونَ فِي خِدْمَةِ الْخَلْقِ، وَتُؤَيِّرَ هُمْ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ فِي الْإِضْلَاحِ

*"The essence of futuwwah is that you do not see yourself as having any superiority, that you are constantly in the service of others, and that you give them precedence over yourself in the pursuit of improvement." (S. A. Q. Al-Jailani, 1995).* The historiography of Babul Azaj's governance, as recorded by Ibn al-Jawzi in Al-Muntazam fi Tarikh al-Muluk wa al-Umam (Vol. 18, p. 182) and Al-Tadifi in Qala'id al-Jawahir (p. 48), confirms the application of this futuwwah ethic in a daily academic culture that was non-hierarchical and collaborative:

وَكَانَتْ مَدْرَسَتُهُ مَجْمَعًا لِلْعُلَمَاءِ... يَجْلِسُونَ فِي مَجْلِسِهِ لِلْمَذَاكِرَةِ وَتَصْحِيحِ الْمَسَائِلِ... فَلَا يَنْهَرُ أَحَدًا وَلَا يَسْتَبِدُّ بِرَأْيِهِ، بَلْ يَكْرُمُ الْعُلَمَاءَ وَيَسْتَمِعُ إِلَى مَلَأَ حَظَائِرِهِمْ فِي التَّنْذِيرِ

*"His madrasah was a gathering place for scholars... They would sit in his assembly to discuss and correct issues... He never rebuked anyone nor was he authoritarian with his own opinion; rather, he honored the scholars and listened to their observations on the teaching process." (Al-Jawzi, 1995).* This principle of managerial inclusiveness and humility is reinforced by the testimony of Al-Dhahabi in Siyar A'lam al-Nubala' (Vol. 20, p. 445) and Ibn Kathir in Al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah (Vol. 16, p. 439). Both historians record that the academic culture of Babul Azaj was built upon the foundation of egalitarian service, *Innama nahnu khuddamu hadzal 'ilmi wa ahlih* ("We are but servants of this knowledge and its people") as well as openness in scholarly discussion forums. Leadership in the madrasah was not conducted repressively, but through patient facilitation of dialogue (duna i'na), where corrections of instructional material and methodology were carried out scientifically and courteously:

وَكَانَ يُعَظِّمُ الْفُقَرَاءَ وَالْفُقَهَاءَ... وَيَقُولُ: إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ خُدَّامُ هَذَا الْعِلْمِ وَأَهْلِهِ... وَيَسْتَمِعُ إِلَى مُنَاقَشَاتِهِمْ بِالصَّبْرِ وَالتَّوَاضُّعِ، فَيَصْحَحُ وَيُسَدِّدُ دُونَ إِعْتِنَافٍ

*"He greatly honored the poor and the jurists... saying: 'We are but servants of this knowledge and its people'... He listened to their discussions with patience and humility, then corrected and guided without harshness." (Adz-Dzahabi, 1985; Ibn Kathir, 1986).* The textual and historical exposition above demonstrates that teaching supervision at Babul Azaj was not conducted in an instructive-authoritarian manner but rested on a culture of peer review that was inclusive and open to input. The institutional leader acted as a facilitator, breaking down hierarchical barriers between senior and junior levels for the collective improvement of scholarly quality.

In modern curriculum management, the principle of futuwwah is translated into Collaborative Leadership and Peer Review. The operational implications of this transformation encompass three strategic domains. First, the elimination of authoritarian bureaucratic control, in which teaching evaluation ceases to be an instrument of top-down pressure or judgment by leaders on educators and instead becomes a medium for reflection and mutual growth. Second, egalitarian peer-review, where educators periodically observe each other's learning processes, provide constructive feedback, and

formulate improvements to teaching modules in the spirit of service (*futuwwah*). Third, participatory curriculum development, in which decisions on curriculum improvement are formulated through open dialogue forums (*mudzakarah*) involving the entire teaching team to address learning obstacles at the classroom level collaboratively (Shen et al., 2026).

Through the methodological convergence of the primary spiritual works of Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Jailani and classical Islamic historiographical narratives, this research successfully extracted Islamic governance principles into a solution-oriented managerial transformation framework. The four pillars of Babul Azaj's institutional governance, namely *muhasabah*, *mujahadah*, *riyadhah*, and *futuwwah*, were transformed from inner-spiritual doctrines into operational instruments for modern curriculum management. The matrix below maps the conceptual bridge between the spiritual-historical ethics of Babul Azaj and the four primary functions of contemporary curriculum management.

Table 1. Mapping the Transformation of Classical Values in Modern Educational Management

| Governance Pillars     | Classical Spiritual-Historical Ethics                                                                                                                                                                      | Contemporary Managerial Transformation     | Key Components                           | Operational Implications                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Self-Reflection</i> | Daily self-reflection ( <i>at-tafaqqud ad-da'im</i> ), monitoring of teaching methodologies, and accountability for the outcomes of knowledge ( <i>al-'ilmu bila 'amalin hujjah</i> ).                     | Continuous Internal Quality Audit          | Curriculum Evaluation & Oversight        | Institutionalization of <i>real-time</i> , independent <i>self-assessment</i> of teaching methodologies and graduate learning outcomes (CPL) without relying on pressure from external authorities.                             |
| <i>Mujahadah</i>       | Dedication in facing challenges ( <i>ishlah al-hal</i> ), differentiation of instruction according to student ability ( <i>yū'ādillu baina al-manāhij</i> ), and agility in responding to resource crises. | Curriculum Adaptability & Acceleration     | Curriculum Planning & Renewal            | Implementation of <i>differentiated instruction</i> , flexibility in academic enrichment, and organizational <i>resilience</i> in updating instructional content.                                                               |
| <i>Riyadhah</i>        | Cultivating professional behavior patterns ( <i>habitus</i> ), a curriculum structure comprising 13 branches of knowledge, <i>time-blocking</i> , and ensuring logistics/textbook availability.            | Organic Quality Assurance                  | Curriculum Implementation & Organization | The internalization of quality standards into daily work culture ( <i>quality habitus</i> ), scheduling discipline, and the provision of a <i>support system</i> and physical and psychological well-being for students.        |
| <i>Futuwwah</i>        | Altruistic service leadership, exemplary conduct without authoritarianism, and egalitarian scholarly dialogue (" <i>Innama nahnu khuddamu hadzal 'ilm</i> ").                                              | Collaborative Leadership & Peer Evaluation | Curriculum Governance & Leadership       | Implementation of <i>egalitarian peer review</i> among educators, elimination of repressive <i>top-down</i> bureaucratic control, and formulation of curriculum policies based on participatory dialogue ( <i>mudzakarah</i> ). |

Theoretically and practically, the matrix mapping above confirms that Babul Azaj-based curriculum governance offers an alternative paradigm, namely Internal Strength-Based Curriculum Management. In conventional curriculum approaches, quality assurance is often driven by external bureaucratic and administrative pressures that risk creating mere formalism. In contrast, the Babul Azaj model constructs quality control that arises from autonomous ethical awareness and evolves into a living, organic ecosystem. A detailed elaboration of the functional interrelationships among the four pillars is as follows:

- a) Evaluative Transition: From *Muhasabah* to Continuous Internal Quality Audit. Through the mechanism of *muhasabah*, curriculum evaluation shifts from an external administrative oversight paradigm to a habit of honest self-auditing (a self-regulatory mechanism). As recorded in the accounts of Ibn al-Jawzi and Ibn al-Mulaqqin, oversight at Babul Azaj rested on the examination of instructional methodology and outcome-based accountability of knowledge (*al-'ilmu bila 'amalin hujjatun 'alaika*). In a modern framework, this pillar ensures that the Internal Quality Audit (AMI) instrument is no longer carried out as a periodic formality (e.g., during five-yearly re-accreditation), but is conducted consistently and in real time to measure the effectiveness of the learning process and Graduate Learning Outcomes (CPL).

- b) Planning Transition: From Mujahadah to Curriculum Adaptability and Acceleration. The pillar of mujahadah demonstrates that curriculum planning and renewal require operational earnestness to reject the rigidity of instructional schemes. Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī's historical record on the practice of *yū'ādillu baina al-manāhij* (aligning the curriculum with student profiles) indicates the existence of differentiated learning practices in the medieval period. In modern management, the ethos of mujahadah transforms into pedagogical agility and organizational resilience. Educators are required to proactively update content, accelerate learning for bright students without neglecting slower students, and respond nimbly to changing times and facility crises.
- c) Implementation Transition: From Riyadhah to Organic Quality Assurance. Within the pillar of riyadhah, curriculum implementation focuses on developing professional reflexes and a learning ecosystem. Ibn Kathīr's account of the organization of 13 branches of knowledge, the discipline of post-zuhr qira'at teaching, and the provision of student logistics (*ith'am at-tha'am*) proves that quality depends not only on formal material but also on the supporting ecosystem. Its managerial transformation implements Organic Quality Assurance, wherein compliance with curriculum standards is internalized within the daily work culture. Quality is maintained automatically because it has become integrated with the habits of educators, supported in a balanced manner by the fulfillment of students' physical and psychological welfare
- d) Leadership Transition: From Futuwwah to Collaborative Leadership and Peer Evaluation. The pillar of futuwwah restructures the curriculum governance climate from an instructive-repressive pattern to servant leadership. Al-Dhahabī and Ibn Kathīr's testimony regarding the egalitarian mudzakarah dialogue space and the statement "*Innama nahnu khuddamu hadzal 'ilmi wa ahlih*" proves that Babul Azaj eroded hierarchical barriers for the advancement of knowledge. Its modern operational implications manifest in the implementation of Egalitarian Peer-Review, in which teaching evaluation is conducted among colleagues in a courteous, open, and participatory manner (Paul Fleckney, James Thompson, 2024) to collectively formulate solutions to learning obstacles at the classroom level.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The integration of the four pillars of Babul Azaj (muhasabah, mujahadah, riyadhah, and futuwwah) into contemporary curriculum governance presents an Inside-Out Curriculum Management paradigm, grounded in spiritual-adaptive control, as a solution to the trap of bureaucracy and mere formal compliance (Chotimah et al., 2025). Instead of depending on top-down oversight mechanisms and rigid external accreditation pressures that alienate the essence of learning, this approach transforms quality assurance into an organic ecosystem that grows from within the institution. Through independent internal audit (muhasabah), adaptive flexibility (mujahadah), the formation of quality habits (riyadhah), and collaborative servant leadership (futuwwah), curriculum control is successfully shifted from mechanical administrative routine to ethical-spiritual awareness and a sustainable daily work culture.

The synthesis between the Babul Azaj doctrine and components of modern curriculum management not only identifies conceptual common ground but also triggers a fundamental theoretical clash over the epistemological and ontological foundations of contemporary Western management. This comparison exposes the limitations of the key assumptions underlying conventional management theory while affirming the novelty of the Babul Azaj tradition of institutional governance.

The first ontological clash occurs in the function of quality evaluation, specifically between muhasabah and Total Quality Management (TQM), which W. Edwards Deming and Joseph Juran developed through the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle. TQM relies on statistical process control and the standardization of technical-scalar indicators, assuming that quality can be controlled in a mechanistic, positivist manner through periodic Internal Quality Audits (IQAs). (However, in educational practice, this mechanistic oversight often leads to audit fatigue and administrative manipulation, in which educators become trapped in the formalities of bureaucratic compliance to secure external accreditation, thereby separating the evaluation process from the essence of classroom learning.) (Muhasabah dismantles the mechanistic bias of TQM by infusing it with transcendental accountability.) Grounded in the historical principle of *al-'ilmu bila 'amalin hujjatun 'alaika* (knowledge without action is a legal burden upon its possessor), muhasabah asserts that evaluation without ethical-religious commitment is merely an empty formality. Babul Azaj shifts the focus of auditing from repressive external oversight to an instrument of autonomous self-regulation (self-audit) that occurs in real time and emphasizes the strong impact of learning outcomes (outcome-based focus). (Munadi & Aisyiah, 2022)

In the planning dimension, there is a methodological clash among the mujahadah ethos, the conventional curriculum standardization paradigm, and Ronald Heifetz's theory of Adaptive Leadership. Conventional curriculum management emphasizes standardization (one-size-fits-all), in which efficiency and quality are considered achievable only if all students receive uniform content, course loads, and teaching

methods. Although Heifetz proposes Adaptive Leadership as a response to complex environmental dynamics, this Western literature is prone to pragmatic compromises that may sacrifice academic quality standards to adapt to crisis situations (Heifetz, 1994). The rigidity of Western instructional frameworks stifles pedagogical agility, while pragmatic compromises risk lowering quality. Mujahadah addresses this dilemma through the pillars of professional dedication and the principle of *yū'ādillu baina al-manāhij* (aligning the curriculum with each student's cognitive capacity). (Musthofa et al., 2024) Babul Azaj demonstrates that quality is not maintained through rigid standardization or haphazard compromises, but rather through planned hard work (mujahadah) to accelerate gifted students while simultaneously guiding slower learners without compromising academic standards, which serves as an early manifestation of differentiated instruction and organizational resilience.

Furthermore, an epistemological clash emerges regarding the implementation of the curriculum, specifically among Riyadhah, Coercive Quality Culture, and Pierre Bourdieu's theory of habitus. Classical performance management theory assumes that the formation of a quality culture must be enforced through formal rules and incentive-sanction structures (coercive compliance) (Bourdieu, 2007). This bureaucratic, coercive approach has proven short-lived: as soon as external oversight disappears, educators' performance declines. Meanwhile, although Bourdieu defined habitus as an internalized mental disposition, he viewed it as a reproduction of social structures, which he saw as deterministic and passive. (Wischmann, 2022) Riyadhah Babul Azaj restructured this passive habitus into an active form known as Organic Quality Assurance. Through the integration of 13 branches of knowledge, the discipline of time-blocking (such as post-Zuhr qira'at instruction), and the provision of logistical support and student welfare (*ith'am at-tha'am*), quality standards are instilled through planned habituation until they become a quality habitus. Quality compliance is no longer perceived as a burdensome bureaucratic imposition but has become a reflex of professionalism integrated into the daily culture of educators.

In the realm of governance and leadership, there is an axiological clash among the ethics of futuwah, bureaucratic authoritarianism, and Robert K. Greenleaf's concept of Servant Leadership. Traditional bureaucratic structures place curriculum oversight under hierarchical-authoritarian leadership (autocratic, top-down control), which creates a culture of fear, triggering resistance among educators and blocking channels for feedback from below. On the other hand, although Greenleaf proposed Servant Leadership, its formulation in Western literature often remains at the level of individual leadership styles and has rarely been successfully institutionalized into a concrete curriculum evaluation system. (Futuwwah challenges bureaucratic authoritarianism and refines Greenleaf's concept through the doctrine "*Innama nahnu khuddamu hadzal 'ilmi wa ahlih*" (truly, we are servants of knowledge and its possessors). Futuwwah transforms the ethics of service into operational instruments: Collaborative Leadership and Egalitarian Peer Review. Teaching evaluation is transformed from a repressive, top-down inspection into a forum for scholarly dialogue (*mudzakarah*) among peers, conducted in a courteous (*duna i'naf*), open manner, and focused on resolving learning obstacles through participatory approaches at the classroom level. (Farid & Sarnoto, 2025)

The application of the Spiritual-Adaptive Control framework offers strategic policy implications and practical guidance to counteract the side effects of the mechanization of digital curricula, namely, the secularization of values in modern Islamic boarding schools. Without appropriate managerial intervention, excessive adoption of technology risks reducing the sacred relationship between the *kiai*, teachers, and students to nothing more than a technical transaction between content providers and information consumers. To prevent the emergence of "pesantren without a soul," this model offers four tactical managerial solutions integrated into the Spiritual Integration Cycle in Education:

- a) Institutionalizing Digital-Sufi Integration in Lesson Plans: Educators are required to incorporate a transcendental dimension when teaching technology-related material, such as linking the logic of algorithmic systems to the concept of Al-Khabir (The All-Knowing).
- b) Establishment of the "Cyber-Murabbi": Creating a forum for weekly halaqah sessions for educators to oversee and guide students' cyber-ethics when interacting in the digital world.
- c) Modification of the LMS into a Spiritual-Digital Dashboard: Developing a Learning Management System (LMS) platform equipped with a self-reflection (*muhasabah*) rubric for educators to evaluate the integrity of their intentions and teaching processes.
- d) Enforcement of Spiritual Rituals: Requiring the consistent recitation of *wirid* or specific practices from Babul Azaj before students access computer lab equipment.

To provide systematic implementation guidelines for administrators of Islamic educational institutions in responding to the tide of digital disruption, the practical application stages of the Spiritual-Adaptive Control model are formulated into a circular workflow as presented in Figure 1. Through these four tactical steps, Spiritual-Adaptive Control successfully reconciles the tension between the demands of cyber technology and the noble traditions of the pesantren. Educators no longer act as mechanical software operators but transform into spiritual mentors who ensure that digital learning remains rooted in the purification of the soul (*tazkiyatun nafs*). (The result is intergenerational quality sustainability, which produces graduates who excel digitally while maintaining strong divine integrity.)

Although this study successfully formulated a Spiritual-Adaptive Control framework based on the Babul Azaj tradition, several fundamental limitations warrant consideration. First, methodologically, this study focuses on a qualitative analysis based on a literature review and a historical-hermeneutic approach to the classical texts of Sheik Abdul Qadir al-Jailani (*Al-Ghunya* and *Futuh al-Ghaib*), as well as the historiography of Babul Azaj's governance. Second, the Spiritual-Adaptive Control model and its derivative instruments, such as the Spiritual Scorecard, Digital Self-Assessment Dashboard, and Spiritual Integration Cycle, remain conceptual-theoretical frameworks developed through historical reconstruction. Therefore, the operational effectiveness of these instruments has not yet been empirically tested in modern educational institutions.

These limitations present strategic opportunities for future research. Further research is recommended to adopt an Action Research approach or to conduct comparative case studies that implement the Babul Azaj Matrix in the environments of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), *madrasahs*, and Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKI). In addition, future researchers need to formulate Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and quantitative testing instruments based on a maturity scale. This aims to measure the effectiveness of fostering an organic culture of quality, as well as the impact of applying the pillars of *muhasabah*, *mujadah*, *riyadah*, and *futuwwah* on improving the academic performance and spiritual integrity of the academic community.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The governance model of *Madrasah Babul Azaj* demonstrates that curriculum quality assurance no longer needs to rely on the pressure of documents and rigid, externally imposed bureaucratic control (compliance-driven), but rather is rooted in an ethical-transcendental awareness that grows from within the institution. Through the pillars of *muhasabah*, *mujadah*, *riyadah*, and *futuwwah*, curriculum supervision and development are transformed from burdensome administrative routines into an organic ecosystem internalized as a daily work culture (quality *habitus*). This framework addresses the limitations of pragmatic Western management theories and offers practical solutions for Islamic educational institutions to maintain a balance between technological acceleration and spiritual integrity.

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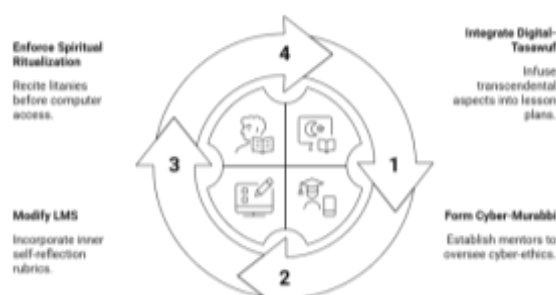


Figure 1. Spiritual Integration Cycle in Education

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