



## Value Based and Modern Management Governance in Islamic Higher Education: A Field Experience Practice at Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali (UNISSA) Brunei Darussalam

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### ARTICLE INFO

*Keywords: Educational Management, Islamic Higher Education, Good Governance, Quality Management, UNISSA*

*Received: 19, October*

*Revised: 20, November*

*Accepted: 30, December*

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### ABSTRACT

This article aims to analyze the governance practices of Islamic higher education at Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali (UNISSA) in Brunei Darussalam based on the Field Experience Practice Program of students in the Master's Program in Educational Management at Mulawarman University. The study uses a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collected through observation, academic participation, and document analysis. The findings indicate that UNISSA successfully integrates Islamic values with modern management systems through the application of good governance and total quality management principles. Transparent, accountable, and quality oriented governance is reflected in academic and administrative services as well as the campus organizational culture. These findings support the view that Islamic higher education institutions can adapt to global demands without losing their Islamic identity. The article is expected to serve as a conceptual and practical reference for the development of governance in Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Higher education in the era of globalization faces increasingly complex demands (Mesiono et al., 2024). Universities are not only expected to produce graduates who excel academically, but also those who possess character, integrity, and the ability to adapt to social, technological, and cultural changes (Adriansyah et al., 2025; Megawati & Prahmana, 2024). In the context of Islamic higher education, these challenges become more specific, as institutions are required to preserve their Islamic identity while simultaneously meeting global standards of educational quality (Fuad et al., 2023).

Islamic higher education institutions are often confronted with a dichotomous perception between religious values and managerial modernity. In practice, however, Islamic values are strongly aligned with the principles of modern management (Dahrul Salihin, 2025). Therefore, empirical studies on the governance practices of Islamic universities that successfully integrate these two aspects are important to develop.

Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali (UNISSA) in Brunei Darussalam is one example of a relatively young Islamic higher education institution that has developed rapidly. UNISSA positions itself as an internationally oriented center of Islamic scholarship, supported by a structured and quality-based governance system. Through the field experience practice program, students of the Master's Program in Educational Management at Mulawarman University had the opportunity to observe higher education management practices at UNISSA directly.

This field experience is relevant to be examined further in the form of a scholarly article, as it provides a concrete picture of how Islamic values can be operationalized in the policies, systems, and organizational culture of higher education institutions. This article seeks to describe and analyze the findings of the field experience program using the perspectives of educational management, good governance, and total quality management.

In light of this background, the article aims to describe and analyze governance practices in Islamic higher education at Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali (UNISSA) in Brunei Darussalam, particularly in relation to the integration of Islamic values into modern higher education management systems. The analysis focuses on the application of good governance principles, quality management, and the management of resources and organizational culture in supporting the improvement of higher education quality. Through this study, the article seeks to explain how UNISSA operationalizes Islamic values in modern higher education management practices, as well as the extent to which principles of good governance and quality management are implemented within the university's governance system.

The findings and analysis are expected to offer both conceptual and practical contributions as references for the development of governance in Islamic higher education institutions, especially in the Indonesian context.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1. Higher Education Management

Higher education represents the highest level of formal education and therefore requires educational management in its implementation (Usman et al., 2022). Higher education management encompasses the entire process of planning, organizing, implementing, and controlling educational resources to achieve institutional goals effectively and efficiently. Modern universities are expected to have management systems that can adapt to changes in both internal and external environments, including technological developments, labor market demands, and global policies (Indriastuti et al., 2023).

From a strategic management perspective, universities need to formulate clear visions, missions, and objectives and translate them into measurable operational policies (Khalilov et al., 2024). Failures in governance often stem from weak management systems, a lack of transparency, and low accountability.

### 2. Governance of Islamic Higher Education Institutions

Islamic higher education institutions carry a dual mandate: the development of knowledge and the formation of character based on Islamic values (Suhartini & Fajri, 2025). The value of *tawhid* serves as the primary foundation guiding all activities of Islamic higher education institutions (Nurlinda, 2025). The principles of *adab* (proper conduct), *amanah* (trustworthiness), and integrity serve as the ethical foundation for decision-making and policy implementation.

The concept of governance in Islamic higher education emphasizes the integration of spiritual, moral, and professional dimensions. Thus, the success of an Islamic university is measured not only by academic achievements but also by the quality of its ethics and organizational culture.

### 3. Good Governance in Higher Education

Good governance in higher education refers to an institutional management system that upholds the principles of transparency, accountability, participation, effectiveness, and fairness. (Risanty & Kesuma, 2019). The application of these principles is believed to enhance institutional performance, service quality, and stakeholder trust.

In the context of Islamic higher education, good governance aligns with Islamic principles. Transparency corresponds to honesty, accountability reflects *amanah* (trustworthiness), and participation is in line with *musyawarah* (consultation).

### 4. Total Quality Management

*Total Quality Management* (TQM) is a management approach that emphasizes continuous improvement to enhance customer satisfaction through the involvement of all members of the organization (Snongtaweepon et al., 2020). The implementation of TQM in the education sector has been proven to improve the quality of teaching and overall educational standards (Susanto et al., 2024). Integrating TQM with Islamic values can strengthen the ethical commitment to educational quality (Iqbal, 2025).

## METHODOLOGY

This article employs a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected through a Field Experience Practice Program conducted from October 15–22, 2025, at UNISSA in Brunei Darussalam. Data collection techniques included direct observation of academic and administrative activities, participation in academic lectures, and document studies.

The data were analyzed thematically by linking field findings to concepts of educational management, governance in Islamic higher education, and quality management. This approach was used to gain a deeper understanding of UNISSA's governance practices.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Governance and Good Governance

Observations indicate that UNISSA implements a relatively mature and consistent university governance system. The organizational structure is arranged hierarchically yet functionally, with clearly defined responsibilities across the rectorate, faculties, research centers, and academic support units. Each unit has a documented work mandate aligned with the institution's vision and mission.

The principle of transparency is reflected in the availability of academic and administrative information accessible through the university's internal system. Academic, financial, and personnel procedures are carried out according to clear operational standards. Accountability is realized through performance reporting mechanisms for each unit and regular evaluations of academic programs and student services.

The participation of the academic community is also an integral part of UNISSA's governance. Faculty members and staff are involved in various academic forums and strategic decision-making, particularly in areas related to curriculum development and research. This practice demonstrates how the Islamic principle of *musyawarah* (consultation) is operationalized within a modern management system.

### 2. Organizational Culture Based on Islamic Values

UNISSA's organizational culture is built upon a strong internalization of Islamic values. The principle of *tawhid* serves as the ethical foundation for both academic and administrative activities. This is reflected in professional behavior, punctuality, responsibility for tasks, and ethical interactions among members of the academic community.

A well-ordered, clean, and well-managed campus environment reflects an awareness of the values of *amanah* (trustworthiness) and *adab* (proper conduct). The work culture focuses not only on performance achievements but also on the development of personal character and integrity. In the context of educational management, such an organizational culture serves as an important social capital for maintaining institutional quality and sustainability.

The academic culture at UNISSA is also characterized by a strong appreciation for knowledge and scholarly discourse. Seminars, academic

lectures, and discussions serve as platforms to strengthen a culture of critical thinking that remains rooted in Islamic values.

### **3. Digitalization and Academic Information Systems**

Digitalization is a key aspect of UNISSA's management. The academic information system is used to manage student data, learning processes, assessments, and other administrative services. The use of information technology enhances work efficiency, reduces manual bureaucracy, and strengthens service transparency.

Digital transformation at UNISSA is not only technical but also strategic. Digitalization is positioned as a means to enhance service quality and institutional competitiveness. This aligns with global demands for universities to adapt to technological advancements and modern learning methods.

Nevertheless, digitalization is implemented within the framework of Islamic values, emphasizing ethical use of technology, data security, and academic responsibility. This approach demonstrates that technological modernization can coexist with moral and spiritual principles.

### **4. Human Resource Management**

Human resource management at UNISSA emphasizes capacity building and professionalism. Faculty and staff are encouraged to enhance their competencies through training, career development, and participation in international academic activities.

A disciplined and structured work culture is supported by a clear performance evaluation system. Assessments are based not only on work output but also on ethics, commitment, and contributions to the institution. This approach aligns with the concept of human resource empowerment in total quality management.

Value and competency-based human resource management is a key factor supporting the success of UNISSA's governance. Human resources are viewed as strategic assets that play a direct role in achieving high-quality higher education.

### **5. Governance of Islamic Higher Education Institutions and Good Governance**

Research findings indicate that UNISSA's governance aligns with the principles of good governance, particularly transparency, accountability, participation, and effectiveness. From an educational management perspective, a clear organizational structure and division of authority are essential prerequisites for effective institutional management. UNISSA demonstrates that this structure is not standalone but is anchored in Islamic values such as *amanah* (trustworthiness) and moral responsibility.

The principle of transparency, implemented through the academic information system and documented work procedures, strengthens institutional accountability. This aligns with the view that good higher education governance must ensure information openness and clarity in decision-making processes. In the context of Islamic higher education, this practice demonstrates that the values of honesty and openness can be translated into modern managerial mechanisms.

## **6. Organizational Culture as a Capital for Educational Quality**

UNISSA's organizational culture, based on Islamic values, serves as an important capital in maintaining consistent educational quality. In educational management theory, organizational culture is considered a key factor in the successful implementation of policies and management systems. Research findings show that the internalization of values such as *tawhid*, *adab*, and *amanah* fosters a disciplined and professional work ethic.

A work culture that focuses not only on performance achievements but also on integrity and moral responsibility creates a conducive academic environment. This aligns with the concept of quality management, which emphasizes the importance of value commitment in building a sustainable quality culture. Thus, the organizational culture at UNISSA is not merely symbolic but functions as a mechanism to regulate organizational behavior.

A vibrant academic culture expressed through seminars, academic lectures, and intellectual discourse shows that Islamic values do not restrict academic freedom but rather provide an ethical framework for knowledge development. This finding is important in addressing the perception that Islamic universities tend to be closed off from global scholarly dynamics.

## **7. Digitalization in the Perspective of Educational Management**

Digitalization at UNISSA can be understood as part of a strategy to enhance the quality and efficiency of educational services. In educational management literature, the use of information technology is considered an important tool to support institutional transparency, accountability, and responsiveness. Research findings show that UNISSA's digital system functions not only as an administrative tool but also as a reinforcement of governance.

The integration of digitalization with Islamic values is evident in the emphasis on ethical technology use and academic responsibility. This approach demonstrates that digital transformation does not need to be value-neutral but can be directed to strengthen moral principles and professionalism. In this context, UNISSA provides an example of how technological modernization can go hand in hand with reinforcing institutional identity.

Digitalization also contributes to reducing manual bureaucracy and improving work efficiency. This aligns with the principle of effectiveness in good governance and supports the creation of academic services that are user-oriented.

## **8. Human Resource Management and Empowerment**

Human resource management at UNISSA reflects the concept of human resource empowerment in total quality management. Research findings show that faculty and staff are regarded as strategic assets that need to be developed continuously.

The performance evaluation system, which considers both professional and ethical aspects, reflects a holistic management approach. From an educational management perspective, this approach is essential to ensure that performance improvement is measured not only by quantitative output but also by the quality of individual contributions and integrity.

Competency development through training and participation in international academic networks strengthens the institution's capacity to face

global competition. These findings indicate that strengthening human resources is a key prerequisite for the sustainability of governance in Islamic higher education institutions.

### **9. Academic Implications of Research Findings**

Overall, this discussion confirms that UNISSA's governance practices represent an integrative model between Islamic values and modern educational management. The research findings contribute to the development of Islamic educational management studies by demonstrating that Islamic values can serve both as an ethical foundation and as a reinforcement of managerial effectiveness.

In the context of Islamic higher education in Indonesia, these findings have significant academic implications, particularly for the development of governance models that are adaptive, quality oriented, and value based. This discussion also opens opportunities for further comparative and analytical research to enrich the discourse on governance in Islamic higher education institutions.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The research findings confirm that governance in Islamic higher education is not inherently opposed to the principles of modern management. The study at Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali (UNISSA) demonstrates that Islamic values actually serve as a normative framework that strengthens the practice of good governance and quality management in higher education. The integration of *tawhid*, *amanah*, *adab*, and integrity is operationally reflected in the organizational structure, decision-making mechanisms, and institutional work culture.

From an educational management perspective, UNISSA presents a model of adaptive and systemic governance. The implementation of transparency, accountability, participation, and effectiveness is not merely formal but internalized within work systems and the behavior of the academic community. This supports the argument that the effectiveness of university governance is strongly influenced by the alignment between managerial systems and the values upheld by the organization.

An organizational culture based on Islamic values has proven to be an institutional capital that sustains quality and organizational continuity. Discipline, work ethic, and respect for knowledge directly contribute to the quality of academic and administrative services. In this context, organizational culture functions not only as a supporting element but as a core part of higher education management strategy.

Digital transformation at UNISSA serves as a strategic instrument to strengthen governance and service quality. Digitalization not only improves operational efficiency but also expands access, enhances transparency, and supports data driven decision making. The integration of technology with Islamic ethical values shows that higher education modernization can proceed without undermining moral and spiritual dimensions.

In terms of human resources, UNISSA positions faculty and staff as strategic assets directly contributing to the achievement of the institution's vision. Competency, ethics, and development based human resource management aligns with total quality management principles and is a key factor in the successful governance of Islamic higher education institutions.

Overall, this study enriches the discourse on Islamic higher education management by showing that integrating Islamic values with modern management can create an effective, adaptive, and globally competitive governance system. In this framework, cross national academic experiences, such as field experience programs, have the potential to serve as important mediums for the development of educational management knowledge when positioned as sources of empirical data and theoretical reflection. The findings also indicate that strengthening networks and academic collaboration between institutions, through exchanges and joint research, has strategic implications for the sustainable development of governance models in Islamic higher education at both regional and international levels.

#### **FURTHER STUDY**

This research opens opportunities for comparative studies among Islamic higher education institutions in different countries to identify variations in the integration of Islamic values and modern management within diverse social, cultural, and policy contexts. Future research could also employ more diverse methodological approaches, such as multiple-case studies or mixed methods, to gain deeper insights into the relationships between governance, organizational culture, digital transformation, and institutional performance. Additionally, future studies could focus on measuring the long-term impact of value-based governance implementation on graduate quality, institutional reputation, and the sustainability of Islamic higher education institutions at the global level.

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