

Navigating Tradition and Modernity in the Strategic Management of Madrasah Aliyah Multicultural: Giddens' Structuring Perspective

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ABSTRACT. This study aims analyzes the process of navigating between tradition and modernity in the strategic management of Madrasah Aliyah at MAN 2 Banyumas, which is multicultural, using Anthony Giddens' structuration theory framework. Through a qualitative case study approach at MAN 2 Banyumas Madrasah Aliyah, which represents different management models, data were collected through in-depth interviews (n=4 informants), participatory observation, and document analysis. The findings reveal the main result supporting the central claim that the strategic management of Madrasah Aliyah at MAN 2 Banyumas is a dynamic process of structuration in which madrasah actors simultaneously reproduce traditional structures that legitimize their existence while transforming them through innovative agency practices to respond to the demands of modernity. The first piece of evidence shows that the duality of signification structures (Islamic scholarly tradition versus national curriculum standards) creates productive tension that encourages hybrid strategic practices. The second piece of evidence reveals that the agency of the head of the madrasah and the madrasah committee in distributing resources and negotiating rules mediates the relationship between traditional structures and the demands of modernity. The third piece of evidence demonstrates that external legitimacy (accreditation, public recognition, and international cooperation) functions as a mechanism of institutional reflexivity that enables the madrasah to maintain its Islamic identity while improving its global competitiveness. This study contributes to the development of Islamic education management theory by integrating a structuration perspective, and it also provides practical implications for madrasah administrators in designing transformation strategies that do not sacrifice traditional identity.

Keywords: Strategic management, tradition and modernity, madrasah aliyah, Giddens' structuring theory, multicultural education

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of tension between the preservation of Islamic scientific traditions and the demands of modernity in the management of Madrasah Aliyah has become a strategic issue in the midst of increasing competition between educational institutions, demands for public accountability, and the transformation of Islamic secondary education in multicultural Indonesia, where madrasahs must maintain religious identity while meeting national and global standards. Previous studies have discussed a lot of strategic management of madrasahs in the context of quality improvement, but there are still shortcomings in terms of the use of theoretical frameworks that are able to explain in depth the dialectical process between traditional structures and the actions of modern agencies in the practice of madrasahs management (Qusairi et al., 2025). This paper responds to these shortcomings by integrating the perspective of Anthony Giddens' structuring theory to analyze the navigation of tradition and modernity in the strategic management of Madrasah Aliyah in multicultural MAN 2 Banyumas, with three specific objectives: (1) identify traditional structures that are reproduced and transformed in the strategic management of

madrasahs; (2) analyze how the agencies of madrasah heads, teachers, and stakeholders mediate the relationship between structure and modernity; and (3) evaluate the role of external legitimacy in facilitating the institutional reflexivity of madrasahs. The main hypothesis that will be tested in this study is that the strategic management of Madrasah Aliyah in MAN 2 Banyumas is a structuring process in which structural dualism (tradition-modernity) is not dichotomous but constitutes each other through reflective agency practices, so that madrasahs are able to maintain Islamic identity while adapting to the demands of modernity (Rahman, 2025).

In the context of madrasah management, Giddens' structuring theory has high analytical relevance because it is able to explain how madrasah heads, teachers, and other stakeholders as actors who reflexively monitor their own actions navigate the tension between Islamic scientific traditions and the standards of modernity simultaneously. The agency of these actors, in Giddens's perspective, does not operate in a vacuum, but rather is constantly forming and reshaping existing structures through repetitive and deliberate social practices. This study takes MAN 2 Banyumas as a case study site because this madrasah represents an analytically important typology: a state madrasah without Islamic boarding schools operating in the midst of a multicultural Banyumas society. This condition makes MAN 2 Banyumas an ideal case to explore how the structuring process takes place when traditional legitimacy based on pesantren and foundations is not available, so that the entire capacity of institutional agencies must be built through formal institutional mechanisms.

METHOD

The selection of the research site was based on the representation criteria of the madrasah management model in MAN 2 BANYUMAS (integrated Modern model in Banyumas Regency), in the diversity of responses to tradition-modernity tensions and multicultural contexts in Central Java Province. This study uses a qualitative approach with a type of multiple case study, where primary data is obtained directly from informants through in-depth interviews and participatory observations, while secondary data is collected through documentation studies related to strategic planning documents, madrasah policies, curriculum, and accreditation reports. The main data sources of this study are the head of the madrasah as a key informant (4 people), the head of the madrasah (1 person), the deputy head of the madrasah for curriculum (1 person), the senior teacher (1 person), the parent representative (2 people), and the student and alumni representatives (6 people), who were selected by purposive sampling based on the criteria of direct involvement in strategic decision-making and the length of experience in the madrasah for at least three years.

The data collection techniques used included: (a) semi-structured interviews to explore the informant's perspective on the structuring process in strategic management; (b) non-participatory observation of strategic meetings, learning activities, and stakeholder interactions; and (c) documentation studies on strategic planning documents (RENSTRA, RKAM), curriculum, and madrasah accreditation reports. Data analysis is carried out through three simultaneous stages, namely data reduction to sort out information relevant to the three key concepts of structuring theory (significance structure, agency, reflexivity), presentation of data in the form of cross-case matrices, and conclusion drawn verified through triangulation of sources, methods, and theories.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

Dualism of Significance Structures: Between Islamic Scientific Traditions and National Curriculum Standards

MAN 2 Banyumas shows that the dualism of the significance structure between the Islamic scientific tradition and the national curriculum standards (KMA 1503, Independent Curriculum, BAN-S/M accreditation standards) creates productive tensions that actually encourage the birth of

hybrid strategic practices.(Rahayuningsih & Hanif, 2024) In contrast to pesantren-based madrassas that inherit the authority of kiai and the legitimacy of the foundation, MAN 2 Banyumas develops a unique synthesis that relies entirely on the institutional capacity of the state where Islamic identity is not constructed through the tradition of the yellow book or the network of scientific sanad, but is reconstructed through curricular mechanisms and school culture that are designed in a bureaucratic manner.(Aditama & Hanif, 2025) This finding is concretely manifested in the statement of the Head of the Madrasah who stated: We do not have kiai, we do not have a foundation that can be a reference for Islamic authorities. So we must build our own identity, through the curriculum, through the culture of the madrasah, through the commitment of every teacher in the classroom. This statement confirms that the absence of traditional legitimacy does not deprive the madrassas of orientation, but rather encourages an active and reflective construction of identity, a manifestation of what Giddens calls reflexive monitoring of institutional practices. The categories of hybrid practices found include: (a) Integrated curriculum which combines Islamic values and content such as faith, morals, and fiqh within the framework of the Islamic Religious Education subject version of the Independent Curriculum, without the adoption of the yellow book as the main source; (b) Blended Learning Methods which combines a contextual religious approach with project-based pedagogy, digital literacy, and differentiated learning as required by the Independent Curriculum; (c) Organizational structure which places the head of the madrasah and the bureaucratic ranks of the Ministry of Religion as the only axis of legitimacy authority, replacing the role of kiai and foundations in curricular and institutional decision-making; and (d) Dual evaluation system which uses indicators of achievement of religious competence according to national standards as well as indicators of Islamic character formation formulated internally by madrasahs.(Asngad & Hanif, 2025)

This productive tension takes place in the context of MAN 2 Banyumas which constantly negotiates between internal demands, namely madrasah heads and senior teachers who seek to maintain Islamic nuances in the midst of the pressure of the state curriculum and external pressure in the form of policies of the Ministry of Religion, parents' demands for academic relevance, and direct competition with surrounding public high schools.(Pathin & Hanif, 2026) The absence of legitimacy based on pesantren and foundations actually makes MAN 2 Banyumas an analytically important case: the hybridity that is formed is not the result of negotiations between the kiai authorities and the state, but is the product of the internal tension of the country's madrasah bureaucracy itself in constructing an authentic and competitive Islamic identity.(Seiser, 2022)

Actor Agencies in Distributing Resources and Negotiating Rules

The head of the madrasah and the madrasah committee at MAN 2 Banyumas play a central role as an actor who is able to read, adjust, and operationalize institutional rules as well as manage the distribution of resources, both material and authoritative, in order to bridge the tension between the demands of Islamic identity and national curriculum standards.(Idris & Duskri, 2024) The peculiarity of MAN 2 Banyumas lies in the fact that without the presence of kiai authorities and foundation structures, the entire capacity of institutional agencies rests on one point, namely the leadership of the head of the madrasah. The head of the madrasah performs its function as the main liaison between the Ministry of Religion's top-down policies and the real needs that take place at the grade level.(Reza & Hanif, 2026) This condition makes the leadership quality of madrasah heads the most decisive variable in the success of madrasah strategic management, as recognized by senior educators who directly feel the influence of leadership on the direction of madrasah development.(Sudrajat et al., 2025). The capacity of the madrasah head agency at MAN 2 Banyumas is not only seen in internal decision-making, but also in the way of building a tiered and participatory negotiation process.(Hanif, 2025) Each strategic policy that will be implemented is first matured through deliberation with the madrasah committee and representatives of students' parents, then communicated to the Ministry of Religious Affairs, so that potential friction can be anticipated

before the policy is actually implemented. The same deliberative pattern is applied in the management of external partnerships: before the formalities of cooperation are signed, partners from universities and industry are first introduced to the vision, mission, and Islamic character of the madrasah. This approach ensures that every form of collaboration that exists remains within the corridor of values that become the identity of the madrasah. (Haningsih et al., 2026)

At the level of resource distribution, MAN 2 Banyumas implements a collective and accountable decision-making mechanism. Budget allocations, both sourced from the government and from committee contributions, are determined through a plenary meeting involving all stakeholders at the beginning of the school year. At the curriculum level, the principle that is firmly held is that national standards are the minimum limit that must not be reduced, while the space for Islamic development is opened up through the addition of lesson hours within the framework of local content. This local content of Islam is understood not as an additional burden, but as an identity marker that distinguishes MAN 2 Banyumas from the surrounding public schools. (Kubro & Hanif, 2025). The distribution of authoritative resources is carried out through a clear division of roles among the madrasah leaders, ranging from the deputy head of curriculum, public relations, infrastructure, to student affairs. (Hanif, 2023) Senior teachers, while not having formal authority in policy formulation, still have a channel to convey input based on their experience in the field. This participation space is facilitated regularly, one of which is through the tazkirah forum which is held every Friday as a forum for open communication between teachers and madrasah heads. The existence of such a forum shows that although the teacher's agency is hierarchically limited, the negotiation mechanism from the bottom up is maintained and functions consistently.

External Legitimacy as a Mechanism of Institutional Reflexivity

The process of acquiring external legitimacy at MAN 2 Banyumas through BAN-S/M accreditation, public recognition of madrasah achievements, and cooperation with universities and regional industrial institutions serves as an institutional reflexivity mechanism that allows madrasahs to critically evaluate their own managerial practices, identify gaps between Islamic identity and the demands of national standards, and make strategic adjustments in a sustainable manner. In the context of MAN 2 Banyumas which does not have legitimacy based on pesantren or foundations, external legitimacy is the only symbolic capital that can be mobilized to build public trust and maintain competitiveness in the midst of competition with surrounding public high schools. (Hanif & Salsabillah, 2024). The head of the madrasah positions accreditation not as the final goal, but as an evaluative instrument that reflects the real condition of the madrasah. Accreditation is understood not as an administrative commodity, but as an institutional mirror that forces madrasahs to unravel the gap between documents and real practices in the field. In line with that, Waka Kurikulum emphasized that accreditation functions as an evaluation venue that includes past achievements as well as future planning, where madrasah administration is a written form of the overall portrait of the activities that take place in the madrasah.

The strategic implication of this external legitimacy for MAN 2 Banyumas is the creation of a dual accountability mechanism: upwards, to the Ministry of Religion through eight national education standards which are an instrument of accreditation assessment and to the side, to the community and parents of students who make the value of accreditation a consideration of trust. This cycle is cumulative in nature of good accreditation that increases public trust, expands external cooperation networks, and in turn strengthens the capacity of madrasahs to maintain and develop their programs. The external cooperation strategy always begins with the introduction of the vision, mission, and character of the madrasah to partners, so that the collaboration that is established does not deviate from the goals and identity of the madrasah. Institutional reflexivity at MAN 2 Banyumas is not completely risk-free. The absence of a traditional legitimacy cushion based on pesantren makes this madrasah structurally more vulnerable to external standardization pressures that can slowly erode its Islamic identity. This risk is responded to through the strategy of

internalizing values not by rejecting modernization, but by making Islamic values a filter that filters every innovation that enters. This approach is reflected in educators' commitment to embed religious values into every learning process, regardless of the method or technology used.(Nasrullah, 2021).

The strategic value of institutional reflexivity through external legitimacy at MAN 2 Banyumas lies in its ability to change the internal orientation from a madrasah that is reactive to national standards to a madrasah that is proactive in using these standards as an opportunity to strengthen identity. MAN 2 Banyumas does not pursue external legitimacy at the expense of its Islam, but uses external legitimacy as a mirror to affirm its strategic position as a state madrasah that is academically superior and at the same time solid in terms of values, a synthesis built not through the authority of the pesantren, but through visionary bureaucratic leadership and consistent institutional deliberation.

Discussion

Dualism of Significance Structures

The finding that the dualism of the significance structure creates productive tension indicates that the traditional structure and modernity in the strategic management of MAN 2 Banyumas are not dichotomous or *mutually exclusive*, but rather constitute each other through reflective agency practices as described in the perspective of Giddens' structuring. Within this framework, the traditional structure of Islam provides the foundation of legitimacy and institutional identity, while the demands of modernity in the form of the Independent Curriculum, BAN-S/M accreditation standards, and the policies of the Ministry of Religion provide adaptive pressures that encourage curricular and managerial innovation in a sustainable manner. The duality of structure in Giddens' sense is manifested in MAN 2 Banyumas: structure not only limits the actor's agency, but at the same time becomes a medium that allows actors to produce new strategic practices that are adaptive to the multicultural context of Banyumas society. The hypothesis that the dualism of traditional structure and modernity is not dichotomous but constitutes each other through reflective agency practices has proven to be relevant in the context of the strategic management of MAN 2 Banyumas.(Naufal & Hanif, 2025) The success of the navigation of tradition and modernity in this madrasah does not lie in the exclusive choice of one of the poles, but in the ability to develop a hybrid synthesis that is in accordance with its context, capacity, and institutional identity in the pluralistic socio-religious landscape of Banyumas. What distinguishes MAN 2 Banyumas from pesantren-based madrasahs is that the hybrid synthesis is not built on the authority of kiai or the legitimacy of the foundation, but rather entirely through bureaucratic leadership capacity and structured institutional deliberation mechanisms, a pattern that in Giddens' structuring perspective can be understood as a form of structural reproduction through repetitive and deliberate social practices(Pahlawi & Hanif, 2025).

The level of integration of tradition and modernity achieved by MAN 2 Banyumas reflects the typical institutional conditions in the multicultural context of Banyumas as a state madrasah without Islamic boarding school roots, this madrasah has a relatively open space for innovation because it is not tied to certain scientific traditions, but at the same time faces greater challenges in building an authentic Islamic identity without the foundation of traditional legitimacy. The result is a pragmatic and adaptive synthesis in which Islamic values are integrated into the framework of national standards through local content, madrasah culture, and pedagogical commitment of teachers rather than through the transmission of classical science such as the yellow book or halaqah.(Nugroho & Hanif, 2024) In Giddens' structuring perspective, this synthesis is proof that the reflective agency of the actors in MAN 2 Banyumas is able to turn structural tensions into strategic resources for strengthening the identity of madrasahs in the midst of the socio-religious dynamics of the multicultural Banyumas society.

Actor Agencies in Distributing Resources and Negotiating Rules

The finding that madrassas heads with transformational visions and high negotiating capacity are more successful in navigating tradition and modernity indicate that agency in Giddens' structuring perspective is not just about the capacity of the individual to "act otherwise" (*act otherwise*), but also about the ability to mobilize collective support, build consensus, and create a negotiation space where various stakeholders of madrasah heads, committees, teachers, parents, and the Ministry of Religion can reach agreement on the desired direction of change. At MAN 2 Banyumas, the collective dimension of this agency is very crucial considering the absence of kiai or foundation authorities that traditionally function as a counterweight and legitimizer of madrasah strategic decisions (Sulfiana, 2024). In the context of the strategic management of MAN 2 Banyumas, the madrasah head's agency has proven to be a determining factor in mediating the tension between traditional Islamic values and the demands of modern educational standards. (Putra & Hanif, 2026) In contrast to madrassas that distribute authority between the head of the madrasah and the kiai or foundation administrators, the leadership structure at MAN 2 Banyumas places the entire burden of negotiation and distribution of resources on a single node, namely the head of the madrasah. This condition reflects what Giddens understands as the practice of reflective agency, where the regulations and policies of the Ministry of Religion are not merely restrictions that must be followed, but are actively used as a strategic resource in building and strengthening the identity of the madrasah. (Marjuki et al., 2024)

The absence of foundation-based legitimacy at MAN 2 Banyumas actually emphasizes how central the role of madrasah heads is as a driving force for institutional transformation. The ability of madrasah heads to formulate transformative visions, build a network of cooperation with external parties, and facilitate the deliberation process involving various stakeholders is the main foundation for the sustainability of madrasah strategic management. (Mahmud, 2021) Moreover, in the context of the multicultural Banyumas society, the capacity of this agency is not only relevant at the internal institutional level, but also at the broader socio-religious level, where MAN 2 Banyumas as a state madrasah without Islamic boarding schools is required to proactively build its legitimacy in the midst of the diversity of the society it serves.

External Legitimacy as a Mechanism of Institutional Reflexivity

MAN 2 Banyumas as a state madrasah operating in the midst of a multicultural Banyumas society does not have the basis of internal legitimacy as is usually owned by pesantren-based madrassas. The absence of kiai authority and foundation structure encourages these madrassas to establish their legitimacy fully through external channels, which include formal state recognition through BAN-S/M accreditation, public trust as a form of legitimacy in the educational ecosystem, and a network of partnerships with universities and industrial institutions at the regional level. Referring to Giddens' structuring perspective, this condition places external legitimacy not as a complementary element, but as a central structure that simultaneously limits and opens up possibilities for the strategic managerial practices that the madrassas run. (Sholeh, 2024). External legitimacy has been shown to perform a significant function of institutional reflexivity. Accreditation and institutional cooperation are not treated as mere procedural obligations, but are used as strategic instruments to affirm and promote the Islamic character of madrassas to the public. The accreditation process is a momentum for madrassas to systematically document their educational practices, identify gaps between ideality and reality, and make planned improvements. This pattern of work is in line with the concept of reflexive monitoring in Giddens' structuring theory, which is the actor's ability to continuously observe and evaluate his own actions as a basis for continuous strategic adjustment. (Romlah et al., 2025)

What distinguishes MAN 2 Banyumas in the Islamic Education landscape in Banyumas is the way this madrasah turns limitations into strengths. Without the authority of the kiai as the anchor of traditional identity, madrassas build their Islamic identity through formal mechanisms that are

measurable and publicly verifiable, including the fulfillment of national education standards, the achievement of accreditation indicators, and the development of external partnerships based on Islamic values. This approach has proven to be relevant in the context of the pluralistic Banyumas society, as the resulting legitimacy not only reaches the Muslim community, but can also be accepted by all levels of society who demand accountability and standardized quality of education. MAN 2 Banyumas shows that institutional reflexivity that relies on external legitimacy is able to carry out functions that are structurally equivalent to traditional pesantren-based legitimacy, while strengthening the position of madrasahs as a competitive and credible Islamic educational institution in the midst of the diversity of Banyumas society. (Segarra et al., 2026)

CONCLUSION

This research successfully demonstrates that the strategic management of MAN 2 Banyumas is a dynamic structuring process that takes place in a productive tension between Islamic tradition and the demands of modernity. Referring to the framework of Giddens' structuring theory, the research findings confirm that the dualism of the structure of significance is not dichotomous, but rather constitutes each other through reflective agency practices. Islamic tradition and modernity standards do not face each other as two poles that negate each other, but interact dialectically and produce an institutional synthesis that is hybrid, pragmatic, and contextual in accordance with the condition of MAN 2 Banyumas as a state madrasah without Islamic boarding schools in the midst of a multicultural Banyumas society. The three main findings of this study corroborate each other and form a cohesive unity of arguments. First, the dualism of the significance structure between the Islamic scientific tradition and national curriculum standards has been proven to create tensions that are actually productive. The absence of pesantren-based legitimacy does not make MAN 2 Banyumas lose its Islamic identity, but rather encourages madrasahs to construct this identity through structured bureaucratic channels, namely through the integration of Islamic values into the framework of the Independent Curriculum, the development of local religious content, and the formation of an Islamic madrasah culture. Second, the agency of the head of the madrasah has proven to be a determining factor in the success of the navigation of tradition-modernity. In the context of MAN 2 Banyumas which does not have a buffer of authority from the kiai or the foundation, the head of the madrasah carries out the dual function of internal mediator and external negotiator through a deliberative and tiered deliberation mechanism. Third, the external legitimacy gained through accreditation and institutional partnerships serves as a reflexivity mechanism that encourages madrasahs to constantly evaluate themselves and make strategic adjustments without sacrificing their Islamic identity.

Theoretically, this research makes an important contribution to the development of Islamic education management theory. The application of Giddens' structuring perspective in the context of madrasahs proves that this theoretical framework is able to explain the dialectical complexity between structures and agencies in Islamic educational institutions in a more profound way than previous approaches that tend to separate structural and individual dimensions. Moreover, this study proposes the concept of "bureaucratic legitimacy as a functional substitute for traditional legitimacy" as a new conceptual contribution: that state madrasahs without Islamic boarding schools can build an authentic and competitive Islamic identity through formal institutional mechanisms, as long as they are operated with visionary leadership and inclusive deliberative processes. The findings of this study also reflect a broader phenomenon in the transformation of Islamic education in Indonesia. MAN 2 Banyumas represents a typology of madrasah that is increasingly relevant in the contemporary era, namely state madrasahs that must prove their Islamic identity not through traditional heritage, but through sustainable active construction. This phenomenon indicates that the dichotomy between "traditional madrasahs" and "modern madrasahs" is increasingly losing its relevance, because what is actually happening is a continuous process of hybridization that cannot be rigidly categorized into one of the poles. In Banyumas'

multicultural landscape, this dynamic is even more meaningful because madrassas are required to be relevant institutions not only for the Muslim community, but also for the wider community with diverse backgrounds and expectations.

At the level of policy implications, this study presents a number of macro strategic recommendations. The Ministry of Religious Affairs needs to formulate policies that explicitly recognize and accommodate the diversity of madrasah typologies, including state madrasas without Islamic boarding schools such as MAN 2 Banyumas, by providing a flexible regulatory framework and encouraging innovation of Islamic identity based on local contexts. The madrasah accreditation system needs to be redesigned so that it not only functions as an administrative quality assurance instrument, but also as an institutional reflexivity mechanism that encourages madrassas to critically evaluate the gap between documents and practices, as well as between the identities that are claimed and those that are actually lived. The development of the leadership capacity of madrasah heads must be a national policy priority, considering that the findings of this study consistently show that the capacity of madrasah head agencies is the most decisive variable in the success of navigating tradition-modernity, especially in madrasas that do not have structural support from foundations or pesantren. This research implies the need for a paradigm reorientation in the development of the madrasah curriculum. The local content of Islam should not be treated as an optional addition, but rather as a strategic instrument of identity development that needs to be supported through clear regulations, adequate resource allocation, and formal recognition within the framework of the national education system. Fifth, in the context of multicultural Indonesia, state madrasas such as MAN 2 Banyumas need to be seen as a social asset that has a function beyond religious education alone, namely as an institution that contributes to the formation of social cohesion in the midst of diversity through education that is at the same time Islamic in character and open to plurality.

This research is inseparable from its limitations. As a single case study, generalization of findings needs to be done with caution. Nevertheless, the depth of analysis generated through a qualitative approach provides a rich understanding of the internal mechanisms of traditional navigation and modernity that cannot be obtained through quantitative approaches. Further research that compares MAN 2 Banyumas with similar state madrassas in other districts or provinces, or that explores the perspectives of students and alumni in more depth, will greatly enrich the understanding of structural dynamics in the strategic management of madrasas in multicultural Indonesia.

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