



ABSTRACT

Collaboration between Islamic Boarding Schools and Islamic Universities in
Producing Creative and Globally Competitive Talents

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Amidst globalization and digital transformation, Islamic educational institutions in Aceh must implement new strategies for management and learning within the institutional system. Collaboration between Islamic boarding schools and Islamic universities is an important way to produce noble and competitive human resources throughout the world. The purpose of this study is to see how Islamic boarding schools and Islamic universities in Aceh work together to develop creative talents. In addition, this study also attempts to identify the challenges and opportunities faced today. This study uses a qualitative approach with case studies on several Islamic boarding schools. Some of them are Dayah Ruhul Islam Anak Bangsa Aceh Besar and Dayah MUDI Samalanga, which collaborate with UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh and IAIN Lhokseumawe. The results of the study show that this collaboration has created an integrated education model between tafaqquh fiddin (deepening religious knowledge) and the development of contemporary skills such as entrepreneurship, digital skills, and foreign language proficiency. The development of pesantren-based creative economy, digital business training, and exchange programs for santri-students to Islamic educational institutions abroad are some of the flagship programs resulting from this collaboration. However, there are still several obstacles. These include limited technological infrastructure in Islamic boarding schools, differences in management systems between Islamic boarding schools and universities, and a lack of regional policy support for collaborative funding. According to this study, the integration of Islamic boarding schools and Islamic universities in Aceh has become an important foundation for producing a young generation that is innovative, flexible, and competitive worldwide without compromising Islamic values. This collaboration shows that Islamic boarding schools are not only places for teaching religious knowledge, but also catalysts for social and economic progress among the people. As a result, to strengthen the position of Islamic education in Aceh at the national and international levels, local governments and Islamic philanthropic institutions must help expand the network of collaboration between Islamic boarding schools and universities.

Keywords: Islamic Education, Collaboration, Islamic Boarding School (Pesantren), Islamic University, Creative Talent, Global Competitiveness.



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Introduction

Globalization and the 4.0 industrial revolution have changed education systems around the world, including Islamic education. Schools must adapt to changes in learning paradigms that are more creative, innovative, and collaborative due to the demands of the fast-paced digital age. Islamic educational institutions such as Islamic boarding schools and Islamic universities play an important role in developing human resources rooted in Islamic spiritual and moral principles and excelling in intellectual fields. Islamic boarding schools have long been known as institutions that focus on character building and good morals. On the other hand, Islamic universities contribute to the development of contemporary science and technology. As a result, collaboration between these two institutions is a strategic necessity to produce innovative and competitive individuals worldwide. (Dinata & Kuswadi, 2025)

Studies show that collaborative efforts between Islamic boarding schools and Islamic universities in Indonesia face many challenges. Dinata et al. (2025) say that various institutional orientations, limited human resources, and a lack of collaborative policy systems often hinder effective synergy. Conversely, (Mursal, 2024) argues that opportunities for innovation in Islamic economics and community empowerment are limited due to suboptimal collaboration. As a result, Islamic educational institutions have great potential to produce a generation that excels worldwide. Collaboration between Islamic boarding schools and Islamic universities in Indonesia has the potential to increase opportunities for student self-actualization, improve research capabilities, and broaden understanding of Islam in a context that reflects contemporary developments.

Therefore, this study aims to comprehensively examine the various forms of collaboration that exist between Islamic boarding schools and Islamic universities in an effort to produce innovative talent that can compete globally.



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Literature Review

Collaboration between Islamic boarding schools and Islamic universities is becoming increasingly important in discussions about improving Islamic education in Indonesia and Southeast Asia. Many studies emphasize the importance of combining traditional education systems based on Islamic principles with modern higher education systems that emphasize progress, technology, and mastery of science. A sustainable partnership model between Islamic boarding schools and Islamic universities includes community service, human resource development, and research collaboration. According to the study, Islamic education can become more relevant in responding to global challenges by working together in the long term through an interdisciplinary and value-based approach.

Using collaboration between Islamic boarding schools and universities in Wonosobo and found that this cooperation can broaden students' academic experiences and strengthen the relationship between education and the community. Islamic boarding schools serve as strategic partners in the development of community service programs, Islamic values, and applied research. However, they also found that different management structures and funding systems hindered sustainable synergy. (Juhdi et al., 2025)

Three main trends can be identified based on the literature review. First, there is a general theoretical agreement that collaboration between Islamic boarding schools and Islamic universities is an important way to combine Islamic values with modern skills. Second, there are methodological differences: most previous studies have used a descriptive qualitative approach, which lacks strong quantitative evidence. Third, collaboration depends on culture and institutional leadership rather than a systematic policy framework. (Machsun et al., 2025)

As a result, numerous studies have shown that collaboration between Islamic boarding schools and Islamic universities has great potential to produce creative and



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competitive students worldwide. This study attempts to fill this gap by analyzing the mechanisms of collaboration, sustainability factors, and governance that support strategic partnerships between Islamic boarding schools and Islamic universities in the media.

Methods

Descriptive qualitative methods were used in this study to examine patterns of collaboration between Islamic boarding schools and Islamic universities in developing innovative and competitive students worldwide. Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. Informants were selected based on their participation in cooperation programs. The Miles and Huberman interactive model was used to analyze data through the stages of reduction, presentation, and repeated conclusion drawing. Through triangulation of sources and methods, as well as confirmation of results with key informants (member checking), data validity was ensured. Each stage of the research was conducted in accordance with scientific ethical principles, such as participant consent, confidentiality of information, and academic integrity.

Result and Discussion

Research conducted in Aceh Province shows that collaboration between Islamic boarding schools and Islamic universities has developed in a more systematic and structured manner. For example, the Open University of Aceh collaborates with the MSBS Jantho Technology Islamic Boarding School in Aceh Besar to provide facilities and internship programs for vocational school students at the boarding school.

This research shows that Islamic boarding schools are not merely traditional religious institutions; they are educational partners that are ready to integrate academic and career skills with universities. The increased readiness of students to enter the world of work and higher education is a result of this collaboration. This points the way toward innovative and competitive talent worldwide. In addition,

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research conducted by Ar-Raniry State Islamic University in Banda Aceh together with Islamic boarding schools shows that PTKIN and Islamic boarding school partnerships contribute to the development of sharia economic human resources.(Hasnita, 2023) The impact is an increase in the capacity of Islamic boarding schools and universities to develop curricula and activities that are relevant to industry and global needs. Normatively, this collaboration is in line with the words of Allah SWT:

“And help one another in righteousness and piety, but do not help one another in sin and aggression...” (QS. Al-Mā'idah 5:2)

This reinforces that the cooperation between the two institutions is an implementation of the value of ta'āwun within the framework of Islamic education that supports progress and talent development.

Overview of Islamic Education Collaboration in Aceh

Aceh has a strong Islamic tradition and long-established Islamic educational institutions, such as dayah and pesantren. In the last ten years, there has been cooperation between pesantren and Islamic universities to address the challenges of globalization, digital transformation, and the need for a creative workforce. This collaboration takes various forms, such as research cooperation, teacher exchanges, sharia-based entrepreneurship training, and integrated curriculum innovation. For example, several large Islamic boarding schools in East Aceh and Pidie Jaya have collaborated with UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh to develop digital literacy and entrepreneurial training programs for santri. (UIN Ar-Raniry Report, 2023)

The local context of Aceh gives this collaborative model its own unique character. Islamic boarding schools continue to play an important role in building the moral and spiritual values of society, while Islamic universities serve to expand modern knowledge. This relationship is very important for building an Islamic education ecosystem that not only focuses on the dissemination of religious



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knowledge but also enhances the innovation and creativity of students so that they can compete at the global level. (Sari, D., & Khalid, 2022)

Pengembangan Talenta Kreatif dan Daya Saing Global

Collaboration between Islamic boarding schools and Islamic universities in Aceh has proven to increase global competitiveness and creative talent development. By combining curricula, teachers and students not only acquire religious expertise but also 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, digital literacy, and business acumen. For example, a number of Islamic boarding schools in East Aceh have collaborated with academics to establish community-based sharia businesses. These include e-commerce businesses selling halal goods and digital platforms for Quran-based education. (Yusuf, A., & Hasan, 2023)

In addition, collaborative education models based on Islamic values have the potential to increase students' creativity by up to 35% compared to conventional education methods. This is because collaborative methods allow students to maximize their potential through entrepreneurial activities, research projects, and social innovation. According to (Zainuddin, 2024), this model will strengthen Aceh's position as a leading center of Islamic education in Southeast Asia.

Challenges and Obstacles to Collaboration

In Aceh, collaboration between Islamic boarding schools and Islamic universities still faces many challenges despite showing positive results. Bureaucracy, limited funding, and institutional separation are the main obstacles. In Aceh, many Islamic boarding schools still use traditional systems with non-standard curricula, while universities use contemporary academic systems that emphasize research and innovation. These differences in paradigms often cause difficulties in planning joint programs (Nurdin & Fauzi, 2023).

In addition, another inhibiting factor is the lack of professional training for Islamic boarding school teachers in collaboration management and educational



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technology(usman, 2022). Furthermore, there is a lack of support from local governments to build collaboration between Islamic educational institutions through incentives or special grants. As a result, a large number of cooperation initiatives are short-term and unsustainable.

However, there is positive evidence that the younger generation of Acehese santri are beginning to show greater interest in innovation. A survey conducted by the Aceh Ministry of Religious Affairs Research and Development Agency in 2024 found that 68% of secondary school students want to study at Islamic universities to acquire technical and professional skills relevant to the world of work. This indicates a great opportunity to enhance cooperation between these two Islamic educational institutions.

Strategies for Enhancing Collaboration and Implementing Sharia Values

To strengthen ongoing collaboration between Islamic boarding schools and Islamic universities in Aceh, a Sharia-based strategy is needed that prioritizes the principles of ta'awun (mutual assistance), ukhuwah ilmiyyah (scientific brotherhood), and maslahah mursalah (public interest). These principles are in line with the words of Allah SWT in QS. Al-Mā'idah (5):2:

“And help one another in righteousness and piety, and do not help one another in sin and hostility.” (QS. Al-Mā'idah (5):2)

There are three main ways to implement these principles. First, the Consortium of Islamic Higher Education and Islamic Boarding Schools in Aceh was established to enhance institutional synergy with the aim of unifying joint research, innovation, and training programs. Second, the Islamic Creative Hub was built to support the creative talents of santri and students in the fields of digital technology, design, and halal entrepreneurship (Hidayat, M., & Rahim, 2025). Third, the involvement of the halal industry sector and zakat or waqf institutions to support collaborative funding.



Using this approach, Islamic boarding schools in Aceh will function as centers for moral and spiritual guidance and incubators of creativity based on Islamic values. Islamic universities can also help with social and economic transformation, making Aceh a model of creative and competitive Islamic education integration throughout the world.

Figures

A strategic collaboration model between Islamic boarding schools and Islamic universities to develop innovative and competitive talents worldwide is illustrated in Figure 1. According to this diagram, effective collaboration between the two institutions depends on three main components. Spiritual values are shaped by Islamic boarding schools, Islamic universities develop science and innovation, and institutional synergy encourages the emergence of innovative and creative human resources. According to this model, education based on Islamic values and modern science must be combined to create a sustainable and responsive educational ecosystem throughout the world. As a result, this collaboration not only improves students' academic and moral abilities, but also contributes to the economic and social development of Aceh based on Islamic values.



Source: Adapted Source: Adapted from field data collected by UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh (2025).



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Tables

The main areas of cooperation between Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) and Islamic universities to develop innovative and globally competitive talent are shown in Table 1. Specific areas of collaboration are listed in the first column, such as curricular integration, collaborative research and innovation, talent development initiatives, exchange programmes, and assistance with careers and entrepreneurship. A thorough explanation of each subject is given in the second column, which also explains how universities and pesantren coordinate their academic programmes, conduct research, plan skill-enhancement activities, facilitate faculty and student exchanges, and offer professional advice. The anticipated results of these partnerships are described in the third column, with a focus on producing graduates with a solid understanding of religion, contemporary academic capabilities, creative problem-solving skills, leadership talents, exposure to the world, and entrepreneurial readiness.

Table 1. Key Areas of Collaboration between Islamic Boarding Schools and Islamic Universities

Collaboration Area	Description	Expected Outcome
Curriculum Integration	Aligning pesantren (Islamic boarding school) curriculum with university programs to foster both religious and academic skills.	Graduates with strong religious understanding and modern academic competencies
Joint Research and Innovation	Collaborative research projects on Islamic education, technology, and social innovation	Development of creative solutions and innovations with global relevance.
Talent Development Programs	Workshops, seminars, and competitions for students to enhance critical thinking, leadership, and entrepreneurial skills.	Students capable of critical problem-solving, innovation, and leadership in global contexts.

(Source: Adapted from Fauzan et al., 2022; Rahman, 2021;)



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Conclusion

This study shows how cooperation between Islamic universities and boarding schools (pesantren) in Aceh has evolved into a calculated strategy for producing innovative and globally competitive talent. Students can get not just in-depth knowledge of Islam but also skills like entrepreneurship, digital literacy, foreign language fluency, and creative thinking by combining religious education with modern academic and professional expertise. A holistic education paradigm that successfully combines spiritual principles with contemporary demands has been established through important collaboration programmes, such as curriculum integration, joint research, talent development initiatives, exchange programmes, and career counselling.

Not with standing these successes, there are still issues, including inadequate teacher professional development, disparities in institutional management systems, a lack of regional governmental support for long-term cooperation, and a lack of technology infrastructure. However, students' enthusiastic reactions and growing interest in creative learning suggest that there are plenty of chances to grow and fortify these collaborations.

The application of Sharia-based principles, such as *maslahah mursalah* (public interest), *ukhuwah ilmiyyah* (scientific brotherhood), and *ta'āwun* (mutual aid), can strategically improve the efficacy and durability of cooperation. Islamic boarding schools and universities may generate a generation that is ethically sound, creative, and competitive on a global level by encouraging institutional synergy, assisting creative centres, and involving industrial and charitable stakeholders.

Author Contributions

In addition to writing the introduction and literature review and helping to conceptualise and formulate the study framework, Putri Nabila Salvia was in charge of gathering, analysing, and interpreting data, including creating tables and figures. Zubaidah oversaw the execution of the study, confirmed the results, and gave the work a critical evaluation for academic integrity. Muhammad Raskia Ramadan



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oversaw the entire project, coordinated author contributions, gave advice on article structure, and edited the final draft. The final manuscript has been read and authorised by all authors, who also pledge to take responsibility for every part of the work.

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