

Adaptive Governance of Qur'anic Memorization Curricula in Muslim-Minority Southern Thailand: Integration, Leadership, and Sustainability

Waehamad Kaluape^{1*}, Erfan Soebahar², Fahrurrozi³

¹⁻³ Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo Semarang, Indonesia

Abstract

Qur'anic memorization (Tahfidz) institutions in Muslim-minority settings must preserve religious identity while meeting national educational expectations, yet limited evidence explains how these demands are governed as an integrated curriculum system. This study analyzes Tahfidz Al-Qur'an curriculum governance at Mahad Al-Bi Sat Al-Diniah Jala and Ma'had Darul Aman Litahfidzil Qur'an Krongpinang Jala in Southern Thailand. Guided by an interpretivist paradigm, the study employed a qualitative multiple-case design involving seven purposively selected leaders, teachers, and a student. Data were generated through approximately 60-minute face-to-face interviews, participant observation, and analysis of curriculum, assessment, scheduling, and administrative documents, then examined through iterative thematic coding and interpretive cross-case synthesis. The findings reveal three interdependent governance mechanisms: integration of Tahfidz, Islamic religious education, and Thailand's national curriculum through coordinated scheduling and multilingual practice; leadership-driven collaboration supported by clear organizational roles and social capital from parents, alumni, and community actors; and continuous quality assurance through muroja'ah, periodic assessment, progress monitoring, and teacher development. These mechanisms enable the institutions to maintain religious and Patani Malay identity while responding adaptively to teacher shortages, dual-curriculum workload, facility limitations, policy requirements, and social change. The study concludes that effective Tahfidz governance is not merely instructional administration but an adaptive-integrative institutional process linking curricular coherence, relational leadership, cultural-linguistic mediation, stakeholder support, and continuous improvement. The findings imply that faith-based schools in minority contexts require flexible hybrid-curriculum policies, stronger teacher capacity, and institutionalized stakeholder partnerships to sustain both educational quality and cultural legitimacy.

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CORRESPONDING AUTHOR

*Waehamad Kaluape, Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo Semarang, Indonesia. Email: waehamad.uinwalisongo@gmail.com

Introduction

Qur'anic memorization (Tahfidz Al-Qur'an) has developed from a primarily devotional practice into an increasingly institutionalized form of Islamic education that is expected to combine memorization excellence with character formation, academic competence, and organizational accountability (Ayyusufi et al., 2022; Hasanah et al., 2022; Kosim et al., 2019). This shift has increased the importance of curriculum governance because educational quality depends not only on what students learn, but also on how curriculum goals, instructional time, assessment, teacher roles, and institutional resources are coordinated across the organization (Bush & Glover, 2014; Hallinger, 2018; Leithwood et al., 2020). Research on contemporary Islamic boarding schools similarly shows that institutional sustainability is strengthened when curriculum, leadership, stakeholder

participation, and quality-management practices operate as mutually reinforcing components rather than as isolated administrative functions (Muttaqin, 2025; Rahtikawatie et al., 2021; Suyadi et al., 2022). Accordingly, the governance of Tahfidz programs should be examined as an institutional process that connects pedagogical practice with leadership, organizational culture, social relationships, and long-term adaptation (Hallinger & Chen, 2015; Olesen et al., 2016; Taufikin et al., 2025).

The governance challenge is especially pronounced when Islamic educational institutions operate within Muslim-minority environments. In such contexts, schools are required to maintain religious and cultural legitimacy while simultaneously responding to state regulation, nationally recognized academic standards, linguistic diversity, and wider expectations concerning graduates' social mobility (Liow, 2010; Porath, 2014; Wekke et al., 2019). Studies of Islamic education in Southern Thailand demonstrate that schools in Pattani, Yala, and neighboring provinces negotiate a historically complex relationship among Malay-Muslim identity, Thai state education, religious authority, and modernization (Raihani, 2017; Raihani et al., 2016; Salaeh, 2023). Educational leadership in the region is therefore deeply contextual: principals and teachers do not merely administer formal programs, but also mediate cultural expectations, community trust, conflict-sensitive realities, and institutional continuity (Brooks & Sungtong, 2016; Kulophas & Hallinger, 2021; Raihani, 2017). This contextual embeddedness supports the broader argument that school leadership and curriculum implementation cannot be understood independently of the cultural, political, and institutional environments in which they are enacted (Hallinger, 2018; Hallinger & Kantamara, 2000; Khalifa et al., 2016).

Curriculum integration has become one major strategy through which Islamic schools respond to these competing expectations. Evidence from pesantren and Islamic schools indicates that integrating religious, general, linguistic, technological, and character-oriented learning can broaden students' competencies while preserving the institution's distinctive educational identity (Kosim et al., 2019; Nashruddin et al., 2025; Zakiya et al., 2023). In Thailand, curriculum-management research has similarly identified efforts to align Islamic learning with formal educational requirements through coordinated planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation (Permana et al., 2023; Syarifah & Buerahen, 2023; Wekke et al., 2019). However, integration is not automatically synonymous with coherence, because combining multiple curricular regimes can also create workload pressures, scheduling conflicts, competing assessment priorities, and demands for teachers who are competent across different knowledge traditions (Nashruddin et al., 2025; Syarifah & Buerahen, 2023; Zakiya et al., 2023). Thus, an integrated curriculum should be understood not as a finished structural arrangement, but as a continuing process of coordination and negotiation among educational purposes, institutional capacities, and external requirements (Hallinger, 2018; Muttaqin, 2025; Olesen et al., 2016).

Leadership is central to that process because curriculum coherence is produced through organizational interaction rather than through documents alone. International research consistently associates effective school leadership with goal alignment, instructional coordination, professional collaboration, organizational learning, and the capacity to adapt practice to contextual demands (Gümüş et al., 2018; Hallinger, 2018; Leithwood et al., 2020). In culturally and religiously distinctive schools, leadership also carries symbolic and moral functions because school leaders are expected to embody institutional values, maintain community legitimacy, and translate those values into

routines, expectations, and collaborative practices (Hasanah et al., 2024; Khalifa et al., 2016; Rahtikawatie et al., 2021). Thai leadership studies further show that authenticity, relational trust, cultural sensitivity, and context-responsive decision-making are crucial to how leadership is interpreted and enacted in local institutions (Hallinger & Kantamara, 2000; Kulophas & Hallinger, 2021; Raihani, 2017). Consequently, the governance of a Tahfidz curriculum is likely to depend on how leaders organize collective responsibility among Tahfidz teachers, general-subject teachers, dormitory personnel, students, and external stakeholders (Hasanah et al., 2024; Olesen et al., 2016; Rahmawati et al., 2023).

Community relationships are equally significant because faith-based boarding schools are socially embedded institutions whose legitimacy and resource base frequently extend beyond formal organizational boundaries. Social-capital scholarship conceptualizes networks, trust, norms, and reciprocal relationships as resources that facilitate coordinated action and collective capacity (Coleman, 1988; Olesen et al., 2016; Sulaiman & Ahmadi, 2020). Empirical studies of pesantren show that parents, alumni, religious leaders, and surrounding communities contribute to institutional sustainability through moral support, public trust, resource mobilization, communication, and participation in educational activities (Rahmawati et al., 2023; Rahtikawatie et al., 2021; Sulaiman & Ahmadi, 2020). Such relationships are particularly important in minority settings, where educational institutions must maintain both internal cultural continuity and external social legitimacy (Ives & Kidwell, 2019; Raihani, 2017; Wekke et al., 2019). From this perspective, stakeholder participation should not be treated merely as supplementary support but as part of the governance infrastructure through which curriculum implementation becomes sustainable (Coleman, 1988; Olesen et al., 2016; Rahtikawatie et al., 2021).

Quality assurance represents another critical dimension of Tahfidz governance. Research on Qur'anic memorization programs emphasizes that sustained memorization quality requires systematic planning, repeated review (*muroja'ah*), differentiated guidance, monitoring of student progress, periodic evaluation, and continuous improvement in teaching practice (Ayyusufi et al., 2022; Farida et al., 2021; Taufikin et al., 2025). Studies of Islamic educational quality likewise indicate that effective management depends on cycles of implementation, evaluation, feedback, and institutional learning rather than on end-point assessment alone (Dwaikat, 2021; Harahap et al., 2022; Suyadi et al., 2022). Teacher capacity is especially important because curriculum reform and quality improvement are difficult to sustain when educators experience excessive workload, insufficient professional development, or limited participation in curricular decision-making (Chaaban et al., 2023; Hallinger, 2018; Nashruddin et al., 2025). Therefore, examining how Tahfidz institutions maintain memorization standards while managing a dual curriculum provides insight into the interaction between instructional quality and organizational resilience (Muttaqin, 2025; Syarifah & Buerahen, 2023; Taufikin et al., 2025).

Despite these contributions, the literature remains fragmented in three important respects. First, Tahfidz studies have commonly emphasized memorization methods, program evaluation, character outcomes, or branding, with less attention to the governance architecture connecting those processes at the institutional level (Ayyusufi et al., 2022; Farida et al., 2021; Rahmawati et al., 2023). Second, studies of curriculum management and Islamic schooling in Thailand have documented curriculum integration and institutional change, but have rarely examined how leadership, multilingual practice, organizational coordination, community social capital, and quality assurance

interact within the same governance system (Permana et al., 2023; Syarifah & Buerahen, 2023; Wekke et al., 2019). Third, international leadership scholarship strongly emphasizes contextualization, yet empirical accounts of curriculum governance in Muslim-minority Tahfidz institutions in Southern Thailand remain comparatively limited (Brooks & Sungtong, 2016; Hallinger, 2018; Raihani, 2017). Addressing this gap, the present study aims to analyze how Tahfidz Al-Qur'an curriculum governance is planned, implemented, coordinated, evaluated, and sustained at Mahad Al-Bi Sat Al-Diniah Jala and Ma'had Darul Aman Litahfidzil Qur'an Krongpinang Jala in Southern Thailand. More specifically, it examines how curriculum integration, leadership and organizational coordination, multilingual-cultural mediation, stakeholder support, and continuous quality assurance operate as an interconnected adaptive governance system within a Muslim-minority educational context.

Methods

This study employed an interpretivist qualitative approach with a multiple-case study design to examine how Tahfidz Al-Qur'an curriculum governance is constructed and enacted in everyday institutional practice at Mahad Al-Bi Sat Al-Diniah Jala and Ma'had Darul Aman Litahfidzil Qur'an Krongpinang Jala, Yala Province, Southern Thailand. An interpretivist orientation was appropriate because the study sought to understand governance not as a single objective mechanism, but as a context-dependent configuration of meanings, practices, relationships, religious values, and organizational routines produced by educational actors. The multiple-case design enabled intensive examination of each institution while also allowing cross-case interpretation of recurring governance patterns and contextual differences. Contemporary qualitative scholarship emphasizes that case-based inquiry is particularly appropriate when a phenomenon is inseparable from its institutional and sociocultural setting, while interpretive quality depends on transparent analytical procedures, reflexivity, and a defensible relationship between evidence and claims (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022; Braun & Clarke, 2021; Tracy, 2010).

The two institutions were selected purposively as information-rich cases because both organize Tahfidz as a central institutional program while simultaneously operating within the formal educational environment of a Muslim-minority region in Southern Thailand. Case selection was therefore based on relevance to the research problem rather than geographical convenience. Seven informants were purposively recruited on the basis of direct involvement in curriculum planning, implementation, supervision, learning, or evaluation. They comprised two principals (KY1 and KY2), four teachers (TC1–TC4), and one student (ST1). The sample was intentionally small and role-specific because the study prioritized depth, institutional knowledge, and information power rather than statistical representativeness. In qualitative interviewing, adequacy is better judged by the specificity of the sample, the focus of the research question, the quality of dialogue, and the analytical contribution of each case than by numerical rules alone (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022; Malterud et al., 2016; Tracy, 2010). Data collection was conducted iteratively and ceased when additional field engagement no longer generated substantively new categories relevant to the study's focused questions; this claim is restricted to the present cases and should not be interpreted as universal saturation across Tahfidz institutions (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022; Malterud et al., 2016; Nowell et al., 2017).

Table 1. Informant Profiles

Code	Gender	Institution label in source	Position
KY1	Male	Tahfiz Krongpinan	Principal
KY2	Male	Tahfiz Haji Harun	Principal
TC1	Male	Tahfiz Krongpinan	Teacher
TC2	Male	Tahfiz Krongpinan	Teacher
TC3	Male	Tahfiz Haji Harun	Teacher
TC4	Male	Tahfiz Haji Harun	Teacher
ST1	Male	Tahfiz Haji Harun	Student

Three complementary data sources were used to strengthen evidential depth and triangulation. First, unstructured in-depth interviews were conducted face-to-face in the Malay language, with each interview lasting approximately 60 minutes. Interviews explored curriculum planning, memorization targets, scheduling, teacher coordination, leadership, assessment, stakeholder participation, quality assurance, and perceived challenges. With voluntary informed consent, interviews were recorded using a smartphone, transcribed verbatim in Malay, and subsequently translated into Thai for documentation and cross-language analysis. Second, participant observation was undertaken during Tahfidz learning activities, curriculum-management meetings, evaluation activities, and other institutional routines. Observation focused on how formal curriculum arrangements were enacted in practice, including language use, time allocation, teacher coordination, memorization supervision, and assessment. Third, documentary analysis covered curriculum documents, academic calendars, learning schedules, memorization targets, assessment instruments, student progress records, academic administration, institutional guidelines, activity reports, and other records relevant to the research focus. The combination of interviews, observations, and documents was intended to reduce dependence on retrospective self-report and to allow convergence, complementarity, and contradiction across sources, principles widely recognized as important for qualitative trustworthiness (Nowell et al., 2017; Tong et al., 2007; Tracy, 2010).

Data analysis was iterative and thematic. The researchers first read interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentary materials repeatedly to become familiar with the corpus and identify meaning units related to curriculum governance. Open coding was then used to label relevant practices, experiences, constraints, and institutional responses. Codes were continuously compared and refined through iterative coding, after which conceptually related codes were clustered into higher-order categories. The categories were subsequently synthesized into major themes representing recurrent patterns across the two cases. The interpretive process moved between empirical evidence and conceptual questions concerning curriculum integration, leadership, organizational coordination, social capital, cultural-linguistic mediation, quality assurance, and institutional adaptation. This procedure is consistent with thematic analysis as a flexible method for identifying patterned meaning while requiring explicit attention to coding logic, reflexive interpretation, and coherence between data extracts and analytical claims (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2021; Nowell et al., 2017). Because the study involved two institutions, interpretation also included cross-case comparison to identify which patterns were shared and where contextual variation shaped implementation; however, the purpose was analytical transferability rather than statistical generalization.

Several strategies were applied to strengthen trustworthiness. Credibility was supported through source and method triangulation and through member checking of interpretations with relevant participants. Dependability was strengthened by maintaining an audit trail documenting data collection, coding decisions, category development, and thematic refinement. Confirmability was supported by continuous comparison between interview accounts, observations, documents, and emerging interpretations. The researchers also practiced reflexivity because cultural proximity, proficiency in Malay, and prior experience in Islamic educational environments could facilitate access while simultaneously shaping interpretation. Reflexive memos and academic discussion were therefore used to identify assumptions, consider alternative explanations, and minimize unexamined interpretive bias. These procedures align with established recommendations for transparent, reflexive, and credible qualitative reporting (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Nowell et al., 2017; Tong et al., 2007; Tracy, 2010).

All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, the intended use of the data, confidentiality protections, and their right to withdraw without adverse consequences. Informed consent was obtained before interviews and recording. Participant identities were anonymized using role-based codes, and quotations were reported using those codes rather than personal names. The study also respected the cultural and religious setting of the two institutions during observation and interaction. The reporting of the qualitative design was strengthened with reference to principles embodied in COREQ, particularly transparency regarding participants, data collection, analysis, reflexivity, and the presentation of supporting quotations (Tong et al., 2007).

Results and Discussion

Curriculum Integration, Multilingual Practice, and Identity Negotiation

The cross-case analysis showed that Tahfidz was positioned as a core curricular axis in both institutions rather than as an extracurricular or supplementary activity. Curriculum documents, academic calendars, memorization targets, and daily schedules demonstrated that Qur'anic memorization was planned alongside Islamic religious subjects and subjects required by Thailand's national education system. This arrangement was not achieved by removing one curricular component in favor of another; instead, the institutions allocated time, learning targets, and teacher responsibilities so that religious memorization, kitab-based learning, general education, and character formation could operate within one institutional timetable. The principal of Mahad Al-Bi Sat Al-Diniah Jala described this organizational logic directly:

"The Tahfidz program is not an additional program. From the beginning, we designed the curriculum so that Qur'anic memorization would become the center of education, while students would still participate in religious subjects and subjects required by the Thai government. Everything has been organized according to schedules and targets for each educational level." (KY2)

This statement was consistent with the observed daily routine, in which memorization sessions occurred at designated times established in the academic calendar and were followed or preceded by religious and general subjects. The curriculum therefore operated through temporal coordination: memorization goals were differentiated by educational level, while formal academic requirements remained visible in the same schedule. The second principal similarly emphasized that

institutional identity and national standards were treated as simultaneous commitments rather than mutually exclusive choices:

"We have to ensure that students are able to memorize the Qur'an, but they must also meet national educational standards. Therefore, the curriculum is designed so that both objectives can be achieved in balance without eliminating the identity of the pesantren." (KY1)

The observations and documents indicate that this balance was maintained through continuous adjustment rather than through a rigid division between "religious" and "formal" curricula. Academic calendars, teacher-assignment documents, and learning schedules showed that Tahfidz teachers and general-subject teachers worked within a shared organizational framework. When examinations, school activities, or changes in formal lessons affected the timetable, memorization submission periods and teacher supervision were adjusted accordingly. This means that integration was enacted operationally through coordinated scheduling, shared information, and flexible redistribution of instructional time.

A second dimension of integration concerned language. The learning environment was functionally multilingual: Arabic was used during Qur'anic recitation, memorization guidance, and muroja'ah; Patani Malay predominated in everyday interaction within the pesantren environment; and Thai was used in administration and formal educational activities connected to the national curriculum. A Tahfidz teacher explained how this multilingual pattern had become routine:

"Students use three languages every day according to their needs. During muroja'ah and Qur'anic reading, they use Arabic; when interacting in the dormitory, they use Patani Malay; while formal school matters are conducted in Thai. All of this has become part of their daily routine." (TC3)

The field observations confirmed that the three languages were not used randomly. Each language was associated with a specific institutional function and symbolic domain. Arabic supported the sacred and pedagogical practices of Qur'anic learning, Patani Malay reproduced everyday cultural belonging and interpersonal communication, and Thai enabled participation in state-recognized administration and formal schooling. Multilingualism therefore functioned as a practical form of curriculum mediation: it allowed students to navigate religious, cultural, and national educational spaces without requiring the institution to collapse those identities into a single language regime.

Teacher coordination was crucial to maintaining this integrated arrangement. One Tahfidz teacher described scheduling as a collective rather than individual responsibility:

"We always prepare the schedule together so that the memorization targets can still be achieved while students do not fall behind in their general subjects. Therefore, every schedule change has to be discussed with all teachers." (TC4)

This account was supported by observation of teacher interaction and by documents showing cross-disciplinary allocation of teaching responsibilities. The integration of curriculum was therefore not located only in written curriculum plans; it was reproduced through repeated coordination among teachers. Across both cases, the findings suggest that curriculum integration was sustained through three closely related practices: coordinated allocation of time and targets, flexible cross-teacher adjustment, and differentiated language use. Together, these practices enabled the institutions to preserve Tahfidz as a defining educational identity while remaining aligned with Thailand's formal educational environment.

Leadership, Collaborative Governance, and Community Social Capital

The second theme concerns how leadership, organizational structure, and social relationships translated curriculum plans into coordinated institutional action. In both cases, principals acted as central coordinators who connected memorization targets with religious subjects, general education, staffing, dormitory supervision, and evaluation. Observations showed that principals regularly led meetings involving Tahfidz coordinators, teachers, dormitory supervisors, and general-subject teachers. These meetings addressed memorization progress, teacher workloads, schedule changes, student attendance, assessment, and adjustments required by institutional activities. One principal explained that curriculum development began from a clear statement of institutional identity and was then operationalized collaboratively:

“From the beginning, we established that the Tahfidz program would become the main identity of the institution. Therefore, every curriculum-development process begins with establishing memorization targets, which are then aligned with religious subjects and Thailand’s national curriculum. All teachers are involved so that the direction of learning remains consistent and does not operate separately.” (KY2, interview, May 5, 2026).

This account demonstrates that leadership was not limited to issuing directives. The principal established the strategic priority of Tahfidz, but the practical alignment of curriculum depended on teacher involvement. Curriculum governance thus combined directional leadership with collaborative implementation. The organizational structure clarified who was responsible for memorization supervision, general instruction, student monitoring, and dormitory life, while meetings provided a mechanism through which those differentiated responsibilities could be reconnected.

Teacher communication was especially important when formal school activities disrupted established routines. A Tahfidz teacher described how collective communication was used to protect both memorization targets and general learning:

“Teacher coordination is an important part of curriculum implementation. Whenever there is a school activity or a schedule change in formal education, we immediately adjust the memorization submission schedule so that students can still achieve their targets without disrupting other lessons. All decisions are communicated collectively.” (TC1, interview, May 12, 2026).

Observation supported this statement. Tahfidz and general-subject teachers exchanged information about examination dates, student attendance, memorization progress, and the availability of learning spaces. When a conflict emerged, the response was usually an adjustment of time or supervision rather than cancellation of one curricular component. This pattern indicates that teacher coordination functioned as an operational governance mechanism that absorbed day-to-day disruptions while maintaining the overall direction of the curriculum.

Curriculum sustainability also depended on actors outside the formal organizational chart. Parents, alumni, religious leaders, and community members were described as sources of motivation, material assistance, public legitimacy, and support for institutional activities. One principal emphasized that the school could not sustain the program through internal resources alone:

“The Tahfidz program cannot operate effectively if it relies solely on the school. Parents, alumni, and community leaders often help motivate students, provide learning resources, and support pesantren activities. Their support makes it easier for us to maintain the quality of the program.” (KY1, interview, May 19, 2026).

Field observations documented the presence of parents, alumni, and community representatives in several activities related to memorization assessment, student motivation, facility support, and academic-character development. Their involvement did not replace institutional management, but it expanded the resources available to the schools and reinforced the social legitimacy of the Tahfidz program. In this sense, curriculum governance extended beyond the school boundary and relied on relationships of trust and reciprocity that connected the pesantren with its surrounding social environment.

At the same time, the interviews revealed that collaboration was partly a response to structural constraints. Teacher shortages and the administrative demands of the dual curriculum required staff to distribute attention across multiple responsibilities. A Tahfidz teacher described this pressure as follows:

“Our current challenge is that the number of Tahfidz teachers is still limited while the number of students continues to increase. At the same time, we must comply with Thailand’s national education regulations, so teachers have to divide their attention among memorization targets, school administration, and formal learning. Nevertheless, we continue trying to maintain program quality through cooperation among all parties.” (TC4, interview, May 27, 2026).

The statement clarifies why collaboration was not merely a preferred organizational culture; it was also an adaptive response to limited capacity. When staffing was insufficient, principals and teachers relied more intensively on coordination, role flexibility, and stakeholder support. The sequence of interview, observational, and documentary evidence therefore suggests that governance in the two institutions was relational. Leadership provided strategic direction, organizational structures distributed responsibility, teacher coordination synchronized implementation, and external stakeholders contributed social and material resources. The effectiveness of the curriculum depended on the interaction among these elements rather than on any single managerial actor.

Quality Assurance, Resource Constraints, and Institutional Sustainability

The third theme concerns how the two institutions attempted to preserve memorization quality and institutional sustainability under continuing pressure. Quality assurance was visible in routine practices rather than confined to a single formal evaluation event. Observations showed daily muroja’ah, weekly evaluation, memorization examinations at different educational levels, and the use of progress-monitoring books to record students’ memorization development. Teachers and leaders used these records to determine whether students required additional repetition, modified targets, or changes in supervision. Evaluation meetings also addressed student progress, teaching methods, teacher-development needs, and schedule adjustments.

One principal emphasized that achieving a memorization target was insufficient if retention quality deteriorated over time:

“Our greatest challenge is not only ensuring that students achieve their memorization targets, but also maintaining the quality of their memorization from year to year. Therefore, we conduct regular evaluations, progressive muroja’ah, and teacher development so that teaching methods continue to evolve according to students’ needs without abandoning the pesantren’s standards.” (KY1, interview, May 4, 2026).

This statement captures a quality-assurance orientation focused on continuity rather than short-term completion. The observed combination of repeated review, periodic assessment, record keeping, and teacher development indicates that the institutions attempted to create feedback loops

between evaluation and subsequent instructional action. Memorization quality was therefore managed as an ongoing process in which student performance data informed decisions about repetition, pacing, supervision, and pedagogy.

Nevertheless, quality assurance was constrained by human-resource and facility limitations. In some observed sessions, a single teacher supervised more than one halaqah or adjusted submission times because rooms and instructional spaces were simultaneously used for other learning activities. Teachers also moved between Tahfidz instruction, administrative tasks, and formal school responsibilities. One teacher described the staffing challenge explicitly:

"The number of Tahfidz teachers is not yet proportional to the number of students. Often, one teacher supervises several groups simultaneously, while we also have to complete school administration and comply with regulations from the Thai government. This situation requires more effective time management so that learning quality can be maintained." (TC2, interview, May 11, 2026).

The institutional response was primarily adaptive: schedules were revised, teacher responsibilities were redistributed, and coordination was intensified so that both memorization and formal learning could continue. Such adaptations allowed the program to remain functional but also revealed the limits of integration. A dual curriculum increases the range of competencies available to students, yet it simultaneously creates demands for more instructional time, more specialized teachers, stronger administration, and adequate facilities. The quality challenge was therefore systemic rather than exclusively pedagogical.

A further sustainability issue concerned the preservation of Islamic educational identity and Patani Malay culture amid social change, globalization, and changing expectations among younger generations. The earlier finding on functional multilingualism is relevant here because language use represented one mechanism through which religious and cultural continuity was maintained while students remained connected to Thai formal education. Similarly, the continued involvement of parents, alumni, and community actors provided social reinforcement for the institution's religious identity. The data therefore suggest that sustainability was interpreted broadly: it involved not only keeping the school operational, but also preserving the legitimacy, cultural meaning, and educational distinctiveness of the Tahfidz program while responding to external policy and social change.

Across the two cases, quality and sustainability were produced through an interdependent set of practices: continuous memorization assessment, progressive muroja'ah, monitoring of student progress, teacher development, flexible scheduling, shared problem solving, stakeholder support, and cultural-linguistic continuity. These practices did not remove structural pressures, but they enabled the institutions to absorb them without abandoning either Tahfidz commitments or formal educational obligations. The findings therefore identify adaptive capacity as a central characteristic of curriculum governance in these Muslim-minority institutions.

Discussion

The findings first demonstrate that curriculum integration in the two Southern Thai pesantren is best understood as an ongoing governance practice rather than as the simple coexistence of religious and national subjects. This result is consistent with Syarifah and Buerahen (2023), who found that curriculum management in Thai pesantren requires coordination between institutional goals and formal educational demands, and with Permana et al. (2023), who identified planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation as interconnected managerial processes in a Thai Islamic boarding school. It also resonates with Zakiya et al. (2023), whose study of integrative curriculum management

in a modern pesantren showed that curricular integration can expand educational provision while simultaneously increasing burdens on teachers and students. The present study extends these studies by showing the micro-governance mechanisms through which integration is maintained daily: coordinated scheduling, shared teacher decision-making, differentiated memorization targets, and continuous adjustment when national-curriculum activities change. This finding also supports Nashruddin et al. (2025), who argue for the integration of Tahfidz with languages and contemporary competencies in an Islamic school curriculum in Pattani, but it adds evidence that integration depends on the institution's capacity to negotiate competing temporal and organizational demands rather than on curricular design alone.

A second comparative contribution concerns multilingualism and identity. Previous research on Southern Thailand has emphasized the historical importance of Islamic education in maintaining Malay-Muslim identity while navigating Thai state structures and modern educational expectations (Liow, 2010; Porath, 2014; Wekke et al., 2019). Raihani et al. (2016) further show that Islamic schooling in the region is embedded in questions of religious diversity and confessional identity, while Raihani (2017) demonstrates that leadership practices are shaped by the challenging social and political context of Southern Thailand. The present findings deepen this literature by identifying functional multilingualism as a curriculum-governance mechanism: Arabic organizes sacred-text learning, Patani Malay sustains everyday cultural belonging, and Thai enables administrative and formal educational participation. This pattern is not merely evidence of linguistic diversity. It shows how the curriculum distributes languages across institutional functions so that cultural-religious continuity and national educational participation can coexist. In this respect, the findings support the culturally responsive leadership perspective that effective institutions recognize and organize around the cultural resources of their communities rather than treating local identity as an obstacle to standardized schooling (Khalifa et al., 2016; Kulophas & Hallinger, 2021; Raihani, 2017).

Third, the study confirms that leadership is a central integrative mechanism, but it also qualifies leadership-centered explanations by showing that governance is distributed relationally across organizational actors. International leadership research consistently associates successful school leadership with goal clarity, instructional coordination, professional collaboration, and sensitivity to context (Bush & Glover, 2014; Gümüş et al., 2018; Leithwood et al., 2020). Hallinger (2018) argues that context must be brought into the analysis of leadership, and Hallinger and Kantamara (2000) showed earlier that educational change in Thailand is inseparable from cultural processes. The principals in the present study performed precisely this contextual work: they established Tahfidz as an institutional priority, but implementation depended on meetings, teacher negotiation, schedule adjustment, and shared responsibility. This is comparable to Hasanah et al. (2024), who found that leadership contributes to Qur'anic character formation by integrating spiritual values with organizational practices, and to Rahtikawatie et al. (2021), who identified religious leadership as important to the sustainability of pesantren management. The distinctive finding here is that symbolic leadership and operational coordination are mutually dependent. A principal may define the religious direction of the institution, but curriculum coherence emerges only when that direction is translated into routine collaborative decisions among Tahfidz teachers, general-subject teachers, coordinators, and dormitory personnel.

Fourth, the role of parents, alumni, religious leaders, and community members demonstrates that curriculum sustainability is supported by social capital. Coleman's (1988) formulation of social

capital highlights how networks, trust, obligations, and shared norms can function as resources for coordinated action, while Olesen et al. (2016) demonstrate that social-capital practices can help schools adapt formal management requirements to local organizational conditions. In the pesantren literature, Rahmawati et al. (2023) show how Tahfidz programs can strengthen public trust, and Sulaiman and Ahmadi (2020) describe communication and community empowerment as mechanisms that support institutional harmonization. The present study advances this discussion by showing that community relationships do more than improve reputation: they directly support curriculum implementation through student motivation, facility assistance, participation in educational activities, and reinforcement of institutional legitimacy. This finding is particularly important in a Muslim-minority context because the school's social network helps connect internal religious identity with the external community environment. It also supports Ives and Kidwell's (2019) broader argument that religious institutions should be understood as socially embedded systems whose values become consequential through practices, relationships, and institutional arrangements.

Fifth, the quality-assurance findings strongly align with research emphasizing repetition, evaluation, monitoring, and continuous improvement in Tahfidz education. Ayyusufi et al. (2022) demonstrate the usefulness of systematic program evaluation for identifying strengths and weaknesses in Tahfidz provision, while Farida et al. (2021) show that structured memorization methods require planning, implementation, and evaluation to support student progress. Taufikin et al. (2025) more directly argue that quality management in Tahfiz programs depends on personalized memorization strategies, periodic evaluation, progress tracking, and collaborative stakeholder engagement. The present study confirms these mechanisms in a different national and sociocultural context and adds that quality assurance is inseparable from organizational capacity. Daily muroja'ah, weekly evaluation, memorization examinations, and progress books can generate useful feedback, but their effectiveness is conditioned by teacher availability, timetable pressure, learning space, and the ability of leaders to coordinate follow-up. This interpretation is also consistent with Harahap et al. (2022), who show that Islamic education in Thailand must negotiate policy conditions and institutional adaptation, and with Dwaikat (2021), whose work on educational quality stresses the need for comprehensive rather than fragmented quality systems.

Sixth, the findings complicate an overly optimistic view of integrated curricula. Integration expanded students' access to Qur'anic, religious, linguistic, and formal academic learning, but it simultaneously intensified workload and resource pressures. This tension echoes Zakiya et al. (2023), who identify the burden created by integrative curriculum arrangements, and Nashruddin et al. (2025), who show that curriculum development in Pattani requires meaningful teacher involvement if expanded competencies are to be realistic. It also corresponds with research on teachers' career and professional development showing that organizational conditions shape teachers' capacity to sustain new responsibilities and professional expectations (Chaaban et al., 2023; Hallinger, 2018; Leithwood et al., 2020). The teacher shortages observed in this study mean that a single educator may supervise multiple halaqah while also carrying administrative and formal-school duties. Curriculum integration therefore does not eliminate structural contradiction; it relocates contradiction into questions of time, staffing, facilities, teacher development, and institutional priority. This is an important refinement of the integration discourse because it suggests that hybrid curricula require corresponding investment in organizational capacity.

The findings also illuminate institutional adaptation. Muttaqin (2025) argues that pesantren sustainability depends on selective adaptation that preserves cultural authenticity while responding to contemporary educational pressures, while Muzammil et al. (2022) show that pesantren survival is supported by their capacity to reorganize practices under changing external conditions. Suyadi et al. (2022) similarly link sustainability in Islamic education to institutional reform and organizational responsiveness. The Southern Thai cases show a comparable adaptive logic, but under the additional conditions of Muslim-minority status, multilingualism, and national curriculum compliance. Their adaptive strategy is neither full assimilation into the national system nor isolation within a purely religious curriculum. Rather, it is a negotiated form of institutional hybridity in which religious identity, Patani Malay culture, national standards, and organizational constraints are continuously balanced. The schools remain recognizably Tahfidz institutions precisely because adaptation is selective and anchored in a clear symbolic core.

The principal novelty of this study lies in conceptualizing Tahfidz curriculum management as an adaptive-integrative governance system composed of four mutually dependent mechanisms: curricular integration, relational leadership and organizational coordination, cultural-linguistic mediation, and continuous quality assurance supported by community social capital. Previous studies have often examined memorization methods, character outcomes, leadership, curriculum integration, quality management, or public trust as separate analytical domains (Ayyusufi et al., 2022; Hasanah et al., 2024; Rahmawati et al., 2023; Syarifah & Buerahen, 2023; Taufikin et al., 2025). By analyzing these dimensions together across two institutions, the present study shows that the effectiveness of Tahfidz governance emerges from their interaction. Curriculum integration creates the structural possibility of combining educational goals; relational leadership converts that structure into coordinated practice; multilingual mediation protects cultural and religious legitimacy; social capital expands institutional capacity; and quality assurance supplies feedback for continuous adjustment. The novelty is therefore not the presence of any single component, but the empirical demonstration of their interdependence in a Muslim-minority educational environment.

Theoretical and practical implications follow from this model. Theoretically, the findings support context-sensitive approaches to educational leadership and management by demonstrating that governance effectiveness cannot be separated from linguistic identity, religious legitimacy, community relations, and national policy environments (Hallinger, 2018; Hallinger & Chen, 2015; Khalifa et al., 2016). They also extend social-capital perspectives by showing that external stakeholder networks can become part of curriculum-governance capacity rather than remaining peripheral community relations (Coleman, 1988; Olesen et al., 2016; Sulaiman & Ahmadi, 2020). Practically, Tahfidz institutions should formalize cross-teacher scheduling protocols, maintain transparent memorization-progress systems, institutionalize teacher-development cycles, and create structured roles for parents and alumni in non-instructional support. Given the workload identified in both cases, staffing ratios and protected teacher time should be treated as quality-assurance issues rather than merely administrative concerns. Policy makers should also provide sufficient flexibility for Muslim-minority schools to operate hybrid curricula that meet national standards while protecting legitimate religious, linguistic, and cultural characteristics. Such flexibility is consistent with evidence that culturally responsive and context-aware educational leadership improves institutional fit and community legitimacy (Hallinger & Kantamara, 2000; Khalifa et al., 2016; Kulophas & Hallinger, 2021).

The study has several limitations that delimit the claims. It examined only two institutions in Yala Province and involved seven purposively selected informants, all of whom were male; the sample included only one student and did not directly include parents, alumni, or community leaders even though their contributions emerged as an important theme. Consequently, the findings offer analytical insight rather than statistical representation of Tahfidz institutions across Southern Thailand. The study was also cross-sectional, making it impossible to determine how governance arrangements change over longer periods or how curriculum reforms affect memorization quality and academic outcomes longitudinally. In addition, the interview process involved cross-language transcription and translation from Malay into Thai, which may introduce subtle shifts in meaning despite the researchers' cultural and linguistic familiarity. Finally, the study did not include quantitative measures of memorization retention, academic achievement, teacher workload, or student well-being, so claims about educational effectiveness remain based on qualitative evidence. Future research should employ larger multi-site designs across Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat; include female participants and a broader range of students, parents, alumni, and community actors; use longitudinal or mixed-method approaches; and examine measurable relationships among governance practices, teacher capacity, memorization retention, academic performance, and student well-being. These extensions would test the transferability and explanatory reach of the adaptive-integrative governance model developed here.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Tahfidz Al-Qur'an curriculum governance in Mahad Al-Bi Sat Al-Diniah Jala and Ma'had Darul Aman Litahfidzil Qur'an Krongpinang Jala operates as an adaptive-integrative institutional system rather than as the administration of a stand-alone memorization program. The two institutions sustain Tahfidz as their educational core by coordinating it with Islamic religious education and Thailand's national curriculum, using Arabic, Patani Malay, and Thai for differentiated religious, cultural, and formal functions, and relying on leadership, teacher collaboration, organizational clarity, and stakeholder support to maintain curricular coherence. Quality is pursued through daily muroja'ah, periodic assessment, progress monitoring, teacher development, and flexible follow-up, although teacher shortages, dual-curriculum workload, limited facilities, policy demands, and social change continue to constrain implementation. The study's main contribution is the identification of an adaptive-integrative governance model in which curricular integration, relational leadership, cultural-linguistic mediation, community social capital, and continuous quality assurance operate interdependently. This model explains how faith-based schools in a Muslim-minority environment can respond to national educational requirements without relinquishing religious identity and Patani Malay cultural legitimacy. For practice and policy, the findings underscore the need for flexible hybrid-curriculum regulation, adequate Tahfidz staffing, protected time for teacher coordination and professional development, robust progress-monitoring systems, and institutionalized partnerships with parents, alumni, and communities. Because the evidence is limited to two cases and a small purposive sample, further multi-site, longitudinal, and mixed-method research is required to test the model across diverse Muslim-minority educational settings and to examine its relationship with measurable student, teacher, and institutional outcomes.

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