



CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL IN COUNTERING RADICALISM

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the management of Islamic boarding school curriculum development in countering radicalism, with case studies at Permata Nusantara Madani Islamic Boarding School (Kerinci Regency) and Syekh Daud al-Masrur Islamic Boarding School (Bungo Regency), Jambi Province. The method used in this research was a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data collection techniques were conducted through observation, in-depth interviews with kiai (Islamic scholars), teachers, and students, and documentation studies. The results show that both Islamic boarding schools actively develop a curriculum that emphasizes moderate, tolerant, and patriotic Islamic values. Learning materials are not limited to the yellow books but also include strengthening character education, national insight, and religious moderation. Curriculum development management is carried out in a participatory manner by the pesantren leaders (kiai), teachers, and administrators, taking into account the social context of the surrounding community.

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INTRODUCTION

The historical reality of educational institutions in Indonesia demonstrates that Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) are the primary formal educational institution in Indonesia. They are a cornerstone in the birth of the spirit of nationalism and national cohesion. The dynamic reality of Islamic education in Indonesia also demonstrates that Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) are the foundation of the nation's development. played a role in giving birth to fighters who defended the country from the invaders (Abdullah, 2025).

existence of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) has become an integrated educational facility for the Indonesian people. This certainly indicates the urgent role of kiai (Islamic clerics) and students in defending the homeland and instilling positive values in society. Islamic boarding schools are able to provide their students with an understanding that can help eliminate negative

ideologies within the spirit of nationalism and society, one of which is radicalism. (Hanafi et al., 2021).

Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) symbolize the dynamics of education in Indonesia. The dynamics of education and the teaching of values in these schools require their educators (*kyai*) to create and foster new and creative constructs. This is done to align religious values with the principles of social and national life. (Asmuki & Aluf, 2018). These constructs reflect the creativity of each educational institution in managing and instilling positive values in its students. In the context of this research, the positive value referred to is the spirit of anti-radicalism. However, a constructive and holistic study of Islamic boarding schools is needed. Nowadays, Islamic boarding schools tend to be identified with radical values. (Machfudz, 2020).

The term radicalism, which is defined as the root, source, or origin, in the KBBI is defined as; “ 1) a radical understanding or school of thought in politics; 2) an understanding or school of thought that desires social and political change or renewal by means of violence or drastic means; 3) an extreme attitude in political thought ” . Therefore, radicalism, understood as an understanding (ism), is a behavior inherent in individuals or groups who desire change, both social and political, in a *fundamental (drastic) reform* . It is also understood as a social movement that inclusively rejects the ruling social order. (Madjid, 1997; Sahal, 2023).

The existence of Islamic boarding schools actually forms students who have positive values that are in accordance with the goals of education, namely: "Educating in a positive sense, becoming intelligent, becoming ethical, becoming skilled, and becoming more moral." In the context of Islamic education and countering radicalism, educational institutions do not only target academics, but educational institutions also become institutions that teach universal character values. Character is born from attitudes that are carried out collectively communally, internalized through examples (*uswah*) , taught educationally in the classroom, implemented in Islamic boarding schools, until they become habits until they become character and culture. This process requires a long period of time. Therefore, in the context of management, the development of Islamic boarding school curriculum in countering radicalism requires more constructive, philosophical and holistic research , considering the large role of Islamic boarding schools in the dynamics of education in Indonesia (Azra, 1985; Farid & Lamb, 2020; Nuha et al., 2024).

The historical dynamics of curriculum development in the world of education record that the first curriculum implemented in the world of education in Indonesia was the 1975 curriculum, then switched to the 1984 Curriculum. In its dynamics, the existence of the curriculum continues to experience changes, namely: the 1994 Curriculum and the 2004 Curriculum (KBK Curriculum). Most recently, the 2013 KTSP Curriculum was implemented, which characterized Character Education. In its implementation, the implementation of all curricula has not been fully implemented. This is because when there is a change of government, there is also a change in the curriculum in every educational institution, including the curriculum in Islamic boarding schools. (Iskandar, 2019).

The development of students' knowledge, affective, and psychomotor skills, whether in the formal world of schools, madrasas, or Islamic boarding schools, naturally begins with the

implementation of the curriculum. This is because the curriculum comprehensively lists the various educational objectives within each subject. It is within these subjects that the true purpose of education is revealed. (Rizqia et al., 2019). We realize that not all educational goals are achieved, and many obstacles prevent the educational process from running as expected. For example, lack of funds, facilities and infrastructure, teacher conditions, environmental influences that do not support the implementation of education, the influence of the student's environment, which may make students reluctant to attend school, and even students can become radical, become wild students, and attend school as they please. These are the things that need to be considered in curriculum development (Angga et al., 2021; Eka Retnaningsih & Patilima, 2022; Khotimah, 2020).

Given that Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) are spread throughout Indonesia, they can serve as strategic bulwarks to prevent the spread of radical ideology through curriculum development management. This effort must be based on the philosophy and traditions of the pesantren, as well as on facts. Which found around understand Which develop in Islamic boarding schools and is based on in-depth analysis based on the theory or management factors of developing Islamic boarding school curriculum in countering radicalism (Astriyani et al., 2023; Tolchah, 2015).

In the context of this research, the selection of research sites is based on area considerations, namely representing two districts in Jambi province. In order for the research to be more focused, two Islamic boarding schools were chosen which are divided into two districts in Jambi Province, namely: First, Kerinci Regency is the Permata Nusantara Madani Islamic Boarding School in Sumur Jauh Village, West Kerinci Lake District, Kerinci Regency. Second, Bungo Regency is the Syekh Daud al-Masrur Islamic Boarding School in Padang Palangeh Village, Pelepat Ilir District, Bungo Regency. The two Islamic boarding schools above are two of the many Islamic boarding schools in Jambi province which until now have been able to maintain their existence while still being able to maintain the tolerant religious values which are one of their characteristics.

The determination of the two Islamic boarding schools as research locations was also motivated by significant advantages over other Islamic boarding schools in Jambi Province, including (1) In the context of the age of the Islamic boarding schools, these two Islamic boarding schools are classified as young educational institutions because they are only around 3 years old, but their students have already reached more than 300. In the sense that these two Islamic boarding schools are classified as young Islamic boarding schools and have been able to compete with other Islamic boarding schools in Kerinci Regency and Bungo Regency. (2) In the context of the curriculum, with the growth rate of the number of students which always increases every year, it is proof that the management and administration of the curriculum developed by these Islamic boarding schools is running well, to produce students who are moderate and think positively.

Although it still requires improvement and development of good curriculum development management in order to produce graduates who have moderate thinking who are able to become agents of countering radicalism. (1) In terms of the growth rate and interest of students, the number of students studying at these two Islamic boarding schools has always increased every year. Of

course this has attracted attention, what is special about the management of these two Islamic boarding schools. (2) At the beginning of its establishment, this Islamic boarding school was interrogated by the police, and they asked about the desired character of the Islamic boarding school. Because of this, at the beginning of its establishment this Islamic boarding school became suspicious for the police. Until now, this Islamic boarding school has been able to prove that they are capable of being a moderate Islamic boarding school.

These two Islamic boarding schools are new in Jambi Province. Initially, they were Salafi (traditional), but in their educational dynamics, the pattern of Islamic boarding schools is shifting toward modern Islamic boarding schools. This dynamic is an interesting transformation to examine in a research, along with the re-encouragement of the spirit of "Defending the Nation" by the government. The results of this study are expected to be a discourse by researchers and can be one of the references in "Ideas on efforts to improve the management of Islamic boarding school curriculum as a bulwark to ward off the development of radicalism and actions." This idea is formulated based on three considerations. First, the facts found regarding the ideologies developing in Islamic boarding schools as explored through survey research; second, the philosophy and traditions of Islamic boarding schools; and third, an analysis of the stages and factors that can cause someone with radical ideologies to be dragged into radical actions. The second and third considerations were explored through literature and curriculum research at the two Islamic boarding schools.

METHOD

The research methodology used in this study is qualitative research. Creswell defines qualitative research as methods for exploring and understanding the meaning ascribed to social problems by involving important efforts such as asking questions and procedures, collecting specific data from participants, analyzing data inductively, and interpreting the meaning of the data. This method is one type of method that emphasizes reasoning based on objective social reality and through a phenomenological paradigm. This case study research was conducted at the Permata Nusantara Madani Islamic Boarding School (Kerinci Regency) and the Syekh Daud al-Masrur Islamic Boarding School (Bungo Regency), Jambi Province. Jhon W. Creswell stated that qualitative research, as quoted by Djarm'an, is a process of *inquiry* about understanding based on separate methodological traditions, clearly an examination that explores a social or human problem. Researchers build a complex *holistic picture* by examining words, reports, detailing the views of native speakers and conducting studies in a natural setting (John W. Creswell, 2008).

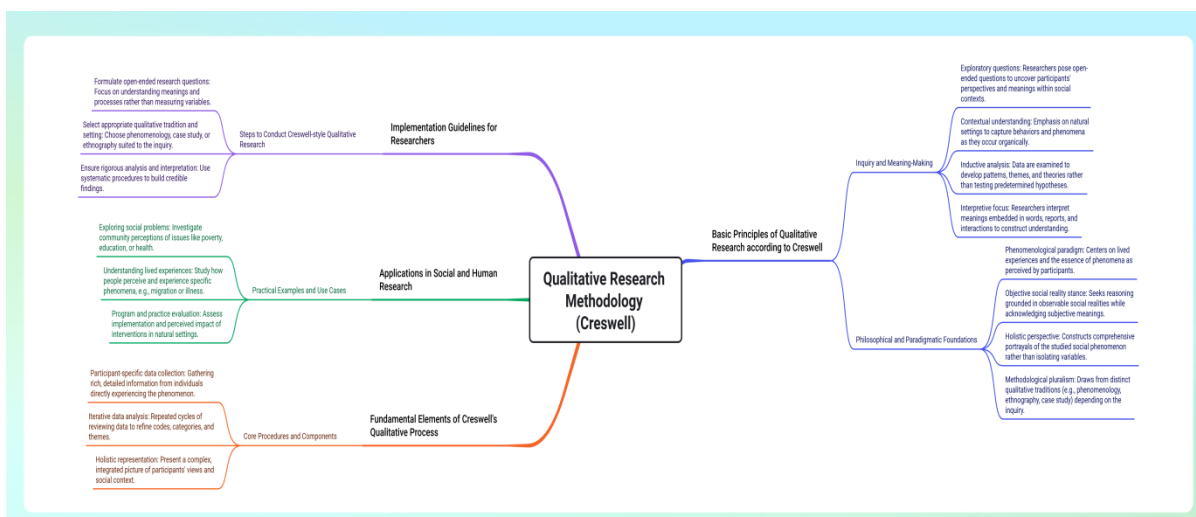


Figure 1. Research methods

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Discourse on The Concept of Radicalism

Radicalism, in the context of contemporary Islamic education, is a phenomenon characterized by a tendency toward rigid, exclusive, and intolerant thinking patterns toward differences (Thohir et al., 2021; van Bruinessen, 2004). Characteristics of this ideology include claims of sole truth regarding religious interpretations, delegitimization of other groups with differing views, and justification for acts of violence in the name of religion. In the context of a multicultural country like Indonesia, the emergence of radical religious ideologies not only threatens the values of Islamic teachings based on compassion and justice (rahmatan lil 'alamin), but can also undermine the foundations of nationality and plurality that have long been the nation's social identity.

This phenomenon raises concerns about the role of Islamic educational institutions, particularly Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), which have historically served as institutions for shaping the Islamic character of the community (Qodir, 1970). Although a small number of individuals with religious educational backgrounds have been involved in extremist networks, it is important to emphasize that generalizing all Islamic boarding schools as hotbeds of radicalism is an unfounded epistemic error. Conversely, Islamic boarding schools have a long history of involvement in the struggle for independence, strengthening nationalist values, and preserving Islamic moderation (wasathiyah) within Indonesia's diverse society (Sidi & Aisenberg Shafran, 2020; Suntana et al., 2023).

This study aims to examine in depth how two Islamic boarding schools in Jambi Province, Permata Nusantara Madani Islamic Boarding School and Syekh Daud Al-Masrur Islamic Boarding School, manage and develop their educational curriculum as a strategic effort to counter radicalism among their students. The research was conducted using a descriptive qualitative approach, with

data collection techniques including participatory observation, in-depth interviews with the boarding school's caretakers, supervising teachers, students, and institutional documentation.

Observations indicate that both Islamic boarding schools have designed curriculum management that integrates traditional Islamic education, such as the study of yellow texts (*kutub al-turats*), Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and classical interpretation, with a contextual learning approach oriented toward strengthening national character and multicultural insight. For example, within the formal and non-formal curriculum structures, subjects on Pancasila, national history, and interfaith tolerance are systematically integrated into various learning forums and extracurricular activities.

Interviews with Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*) leaders and administrators demonstrate a collective awareness of the importance of fostering a peaceful and tolerant Islam among students. The administrators explicitly reject the *takfiri* doctrine (denouncing other groups as infidels) and actively guide students not only to master religious texts but also to understand the socio-political context in which they live. This commitment is reinforced by activities such as national seminars, leadership training based on moderate Islamic values, and student involvement in community service activities (*khidmah*), which foster empathy and social responsibility.

Students, as students, also responded positively to this inclusive educational model. In interviews, they stated that the communal nature of Islamic boarding school life made them more open to differences. They learned to resolve conflicts through deliberation and understood the importance of *ikhtilaf* (differences of opinion) as a blessing, not a source of hostility. Values such as *tawassuth* (moderation), *tasamuh* (tolerance), and *'adl* (justice) were not only taught theoretically but also practiced in daily life within the Islamic boarding school environment (El-Syirazi, 2010; Mustofa et al., 2022).

However, this study also identified several challenges facing the implementation of anti-radicalism education in Islamic boarding schools. These include limited human resources with the pedagogical capacity to deliver national education contextually, as well as limited access to contemporary literature that comprehensively discusses moderate Islam. Furthermore, the influence of social media as a channel for spreading radical narratives among increasingly tech-savvy students is also a challenge that requires special attention.

In response to these challenges, Islamic boarding schools have implemented a number of strategic innovations, such as developing learning modules based on *Islam rahmatan lil 'alamin* (blessing for the universe), conducting teacher training (capacity building), and strengthening collaboration with government agencies, universities, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that share a similar vision of mainstreaming religious moderation. In fact, on several occasions, Islamic boarding schools have actively participated in interfaith dialogue forums and interfaith harmony forums (FKUB) at the local level, demonstrating their involvement in maintaining social harmony beyond the internal environment of the Islamic boarding school (Interview with Islamic boarding school leaders 2025).

Permata Nusantara Madani Islamic Boarding School and Syekh Daud Al-Masrur Islamic Boarding School have demonstrated progressive Islamic educational practices relevant to the

challenges of the times. Through integrative and participatory curriculum management, these Islamic boarding schools have successfully positioned themselves not only as institutions for spiritual development but also as agents of social transformation, actively combating radicalism and cultivating a generation of intelligent, tolerant, and patriotic Muslims.

Efforts and Responses of Islamic Boarding Schools to the Problem of Curriculum Development Management in Islamic Boarding Schools in Countering Radicalism

Radicalism in the context of Islamic education is a serious challenge that must be addressed systematically, especially by traditional educational institutions such as Islamic boarding schools. Through a series of observations and interviews conducted at the Permata Nusantara Madani Islamic Boarding School and the Syekh Daud al-Masrur Islamic Boarding School, it is clear that these two institutions not only recognize the urgency of the dangers of radicalism, but have also taken concrete, structured steps in designing and implementing a curriculum oriented towards religious moderation. Integration of National Values in Religious Learning. In an interview with KHM Zainuddin, the caretaker of the Permata Nusantara Madani Islamic Boarding School, he emphasized that:

"Religious teachings and love of the homeland cannot be separated." Therefore, in tafsir and fiqh classes, teachers not only teach religious laws but also relate them to the context of national and state life. For example, when discussing verses about justice (al-'adl), the ustadz will relate them to the principles of democracy and social justice in Indonesia. Open discussion activities are an important part of the strategy to prevent radicalism. According to Ustadz Hidayat, curriculum coordinator at the Syekh Daud al-Masrur Islamic Boarding School, students are regularly invited to dialogue about contemporary issues such as pluralism, religious diversity, and attitudes toward groups with differing views. Discussions are conducted using a scientific approach and refer to authoritative sources, such as Imam Syatibi's book *al-Muwafaqat* or *al-Maqashid al-Syari'ah*. Meanwhile, extracurricular activities such as leadership training, cross-perspective studies, and community service directly aim to shape the students' inclusive and open character. Field observations revealed that students active in scouting and Pancasila debates demonstrated attitudes far from intolerance or exclusivity. They actively participated in interfaith social collaborations organized in collaboration with village youth organizations (Interview with Islamic Boarding School Leaders, 2025).

Next interview about Training and Workshops for Educators:

"Both Islamic boarding schools have regularly held training for teachers and religious teachers. One workshop, held at Permata Nusantara Madani Islamic Boarding School in collaboration with the Jambi Provincial Ministry of Religious Affairs Regional Office, was titled "Moderate Islamic Learning Strategies for the Millennial Generation." In this training, teachers were provided with materials on critical pedagogy, thematic approaches, and techniques for managing classroom dialogue to avoid being easily influenced by external ideological provocations (Interview with Islamic Boarding School Leaders 2025).

Further interviews on Collaboration with External Institutions:

"In an interview with the Principal of the Syekh Daud al-Masrur Islamic Boarding School, it was stated that they have established partnerships with various institutions, such as the FKUB (Interfaith Harmony Forum), the BPIP (Pancasila Ideology Development Agency), and state Islamic universities. This collaboration has resulted in activities such as interfaith seminars, anti-hoax media literacy training, and the development of a joint module on moderate Islam (Interview with the Head of the Islamic Boarding School 2025)."

Further interviews on the preparation of textbooks and moderate modules:

"Both Islamic boarding schools have developed internal textbooks aligned with the Islamic principles of *rahmatan lil alamin* (blessing for all the worlds). These modules utilize a broad approach based on the *maqashid sharia* (the principle of welfare), which examines the beneficial objectives of each religious law, not just its textual aspects. For example, in the *aqidah* (belief) module, students are encouraged to understand the importance of respecting differences in understanding within Islam, incorporating quotes from prominent figures such as Imam Ghazali and Imam Nawawi (Interview with Islamic Boarding School Leaders, 2025)."

The next interview is about Anti-Radicalism Socialization to the Community:

"Islamic boarding schools are not only active in fostering students but also serve as agents of community education. Activities such as public religious studies, village lectures, and outreach programs explicitly address anti-radicalism themes. According to Ustadzah Rahmi from the Syekh Daud al-Masrur Islamic Boarding School, these activities also include the distribution of pocket books on the dangers of religious-based radicalism and how to identify it (Interview with Islamic Boarding School Leaders 2025)."

The next interview is about Strengthening Alumni Networks as Moderation Agents:

"Alumni from both Islamic boarding schools are encouraged to become 'ambassadors of moderation' within the community. Many of them become religious teachers, preachers, and social activists. According to data provided by alumni management, they are regularly involved in advanced training and alumni communication forums to stay connected to the Islamic boarding school's values. The presence of these alumni helps strengthen the broader moderation network at the local and regional levels (Interview with Islamic boarding school leaders, 2025)."

Next interview about Community Service Program Improvement:

Final-year students at both Islamic boarding schools are required to participate in community service (PPM) for at least one month in the assisted villages. During this activity, they deliver sermons, teach the Quran, and engage in cultural dialogue with the local, multicultural community. According to the boarding school administrators, this activity is crucial for developing the students' social awareness and training them to interact empathetically with a diverse society (Interview with the Boarding School Leader, 2025).

Next interview on Strategic Responses to the Challenge of Radicalism:

Overall, the Islamic boarding schools' response to the issue of radicalism is not reactive, but rather progressive and planned. The kiai and boarding school leaders recognize that radicalism does not only come from outside but can also grow latently in the digital spaces accessed by students. Therefore, the approach used includes curriculum improvement, teacher development, and simultaneous digital and ideological literacy. Both boarding schools have also established strategic partnerships with government agencies and Islamic higher education institutions to ensure their programs have academic legitimacy and sufficient regulatory power. In fact, on several occasions, both boarding schools have become references for other boarding schools in the Jambi region in developing moderation-based curricula (Interview with Boarding School Leaders 2025).

Based on field observations and in-depth interviews with administrators, teachers, and students at Permata Nusantara Madani Islamic Boarding School and Syekh Daud al-Masrur Islamic Boarding School, it was discovered that both institutions have developed a series of managerial strategies in curriculum development to counter radicalism. This research found that the pesantren's response to the issue of radicalism is not merely reactive, but rather an integral part of their educational vision, which aims to produce a generation of students who are moderate, patriotic, and socially sensitive.

One of the main steps taken is the integration of national values into religious education. Interviews with Islamic boarding school administrators revealed that this integration is reflected in the curriculum, which explicitly links religious teachings to the values of Pancasila, interfaith tolerance, and love for the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI). Teachers at both Islamic boarding schools teach interpretation and hadith using a contextual approach, prioritizing understanding Islamic teachings within the framework of the diversity of Indonesian society.

Furthermore, open dialogue spaces are provided both in the classroom and in regularly held student discussion forums. Observations show that in these forums, students engage in critical discussions on socio-religious issues, including extremism and intolerance. This creates an open-minded climate that protects students from narrow-minded tendencies toward religious texts.

Another effort observed was the implementation of extracurricular activities such as youth training, student organizations, community service, and public communication training. These activities not only foster a sense of social responsibility among students but also train them to become agents of moderation in their surrounding communities. In interviews, administrators emphasized that these programs are designed to strengthen the values of empathy, solidarity, and diversity.

Both Islamic boarding schools also demonstrated a commitment to improving the capacity of their teachers. Documentation and interviews revealed that several teachers participated in national training and workshops focused on strengthening teaching methods for religious moderation and counter-radicalism. Furthermore, the modules and textbooks used have been adapted to reflect the principles of Islam, which is a blessing for all the worlds. The curricula they designed are not only based on the yellow books and classical traditions of Islamic boarding schools, but also incorporate contemporary issues relevant to national life.

Islamic boarding schools also collaborate with external institutions such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs, civil society organizations, and universities. This collaboration takes the form of joint seminars, training for moderate Islamic boarding school cadres, and anti-radicalism outreach activities involving the surrounding community. Field observations indicate that these activities are well-received by the local community, strengthening the pesantren's position as a center for moral and social development.

The strength of the alumni network is also leveraged to expand the influence of Islamic boarding schools in spreading the message of peaceful and tolerant Islam. Alumni spread across various regions serve as extensions of the Islamic boarding schools in fostering their respective communities. Interviews with several alumni revealed that the values of moderation they learned during their time at the boarding school continue to guide their social and religious activities after graduation.

However, this study also identified significant challenges. For example, there remains a gap in understanding among Islamic boarding school students (*santri*) regarding the meaning of moderation and the threat of radicalism. This has prompted Islamic boarding schools to continuously refine teaching methods and learning evaluations. Furthermore, budgetary constraints also hinder the expansion of character-building and national literacy programs.

In general, the results of this study confirm that curriculum development in Islamic boarding schools, if managed with a planned and contextual approach, can be a strategic instrument in countering radicalism. Permata Nusantara Madani Islamic Boarding School and Syekh Daud al-Masrur Islamic Boarding School are concrete examples of how traditional Islamic educational institutions can play an active role as agents of social change through a moderate, participatory managerial approach based on the noble values of Islam and nationalism.

In The implementation of both Islamic boarding schools also demonstrates a seriousness in improving management. Management has many functions. The most commonly studied management functions include planning, organizing, staffing, directing, and controlling. These five management functions were proposed by management experts Knoontz and O'Donnell and have been widely accepted, but they are certainly not the only ones. (Hamim et al., 2022; John W. Cresswell, 2008; Shapin, 2020; Vesper & Gartner, 1997) . (Rachmawati et al., 2021) put forward the management functions as shown in the image below:

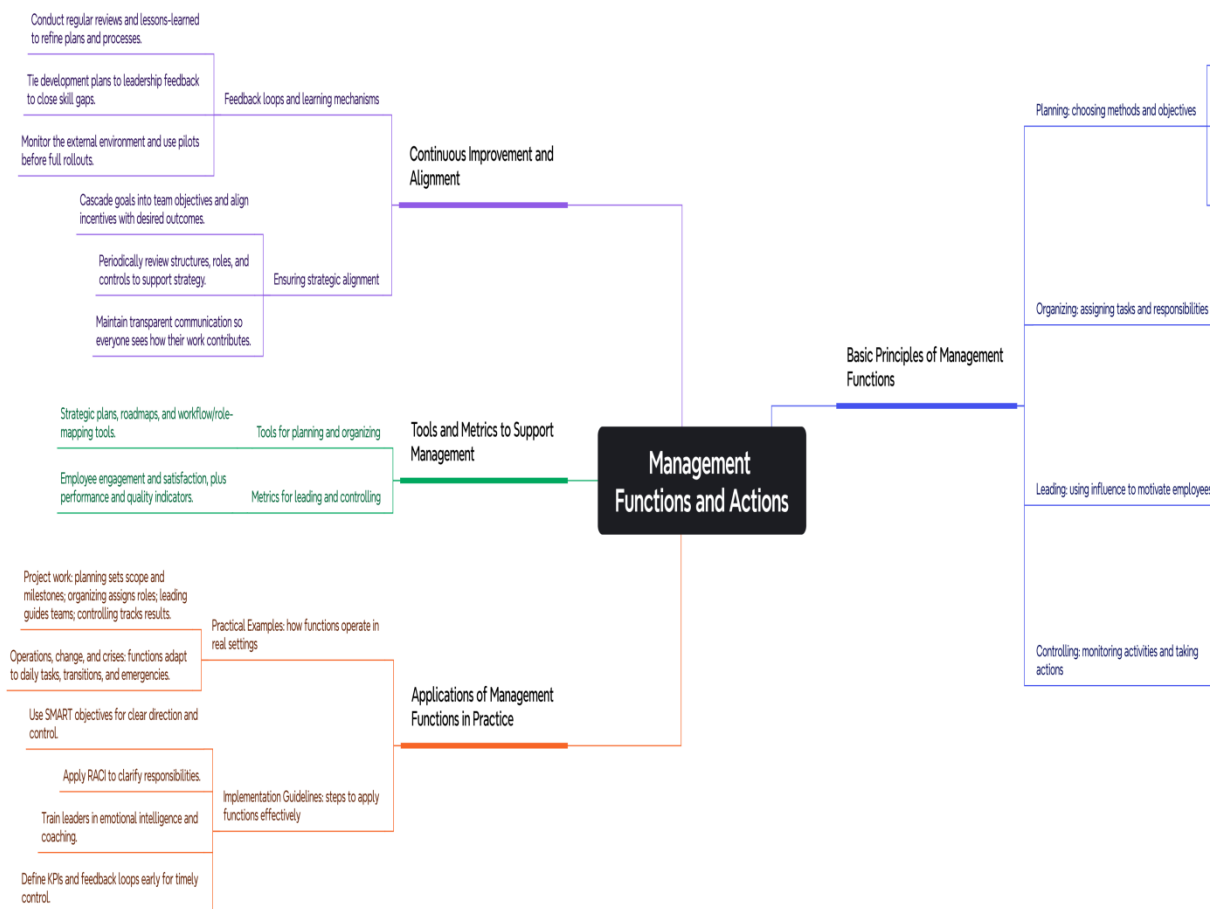


Figure 2. Management Functions.

CONCLUSION

The discourse on radicalism in the context of Islamic education requires a thorough and proportionate understanding, particularly given the widespread negative generalizations about traditional Islamic educational institutions such as Islamic boarding schools (pesantren). Radicalism, as understood in academic studies and national security policy, is an ideology or movement that demands extreme social, political, and even ideological change, often accompanied by justification for the use of violence. This phenomenon contradicts the fundamental values of Islamic boarding school education, which are rooted in the principles of moderation (wasathiyah), respect for differences (tasamuh), and loyalty to the nation and state (hubbul wathan). Islamic Boarding School Efforts and Responses to Counter Radicalism: Islamic boarding schools undertake various strategic efforts to counter radicalism, including strengthening character-based curricula, fostering moral and spiritual development of students, and collaborating with various parties to broaden their horizons and introduce moderate Islamic concepts. At the Permata Nusantara Madani Islamic Boarding School, for example, students are encouraged to actively participate in community social activities, such as community service and public religious studies, which instill a spirit of togetherness and tolerance. Meanwhile, the Syekh Daud al-Masrur Islamic Boarding School has developed a student leadership development program through intra-boarding school organizational activities and entrepreneurship training. Islamic boarding schools' responses

to the issue of radicalism are also demonstrated through openness to educational innovation and the development of learning methods that are adaptive to changing times

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