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ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

Change Management in Strengthening the Adaptability of Islamic Educational Institutions

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze and develop the performance-based competency of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at MI Mathlaul Anwar Srirahayu, Banyumas District, Pringsewu Regency. PAI teacher competency is a The increasingly dynamic educational environment requires Islamic educational institutions to develop strong and sustainable adaptive capacities. However, many institutions continue to face resistance to change, limited human resource competencies, weak change communication, and inadequate integration of innovation into organizational culture. This study aims to analyze change management in strengthening the adaptability of Islamic educational institutions and to identify the mechanisms through which organizational change develops into sustainable institutional capacity. The study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis and were analyzed thematically through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The findings identified four major dimensions: (1) building awareness and strategic direction for change; (2) strengthening human resource capacity and participation; (3) developing innovation and organizational learning; and (4) institutionalizing change as sustainable adaptive capacity. The findings demonstrate that the adaptability of Islamic educational institutions develops through three interconnected mechanisms: adaptation, internalization, and institutionalization. Adaptation enables institutions to recognize and respond to environmental changes; internalization facilitates the acceptance and transformation of organizational knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors; while institutionalization embeds successful changes into organizational systems, routines, and culture.

Keywords: change management; institutional adaptability; Islamic education; organizational learning; innovation.



ABSTRAK

Perubahan lingkungan pendidikan yang semakin dinamis menuntut lembaga pendidikan Islam memiliki kemampuan adaptasi yang kuat dan berkelanjutan. Namun, sebagian lembaga masih menghadapi resistensi terhadap perubahan, keterbatasan kompetensi sumber daya manusia, lemahnya komunikasi perubahan, serta belum optimalnya integrasi inovasi dengan budaya kelembagaan. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis manajemen perubahan dalam memperkuat adaptabilitas lembaga pendidikan Islam serta mengidentifikasi mekanisme yang memungkinkan perubahan menjadi kapasitas kelembagaan yang berkelanjutan. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur, observasi nonpartisipatif, dan analisis dokumen, kemudian dianalisis secara tematik melalui proses kondensasi data, penyajian data, serta penarikan dan verifikasi kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan empat temuan utama, yaitu: (1) pembangunan kesadaran dan arah strategis perubahan; (2) penguatan kapasitas sumber daya manusia dan partisipasi dalam perubahan; (3) pengembangan inovasi dan pembelajaran organisasi; dan (4) institusionalisasi perubahan sebagai kapasitas adaptif yang berkelanjutan. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa adaptabilitas lembaga pendidikan Islam berkembang melalui tiga mekanisme yang saling berkaitan, yaitu adaptasi, internalisasi, dan institusionalisasi. Adaptasi memungkinkan lembaga mengenali dan merespons perubahan lingkungan, internalisasi mendorong penerimaan dan perubahan pengetahuan serta perilaku warga lembaga, sedangkan institusionalisasi menjadikan praktik perubahan sebagai bagian dari sistem dan budaya organisasi. Nilai-nilai Islam seperti amanah, musyawarah, keadilan, tanggung jawab, dan integritas berperan sebagai landasan etis dalam mempertahankan identitas kelembagaan selama proses perubahan.

Kata kunci: Manajemen Perubahan; Adaptabilitas Kelembagaan; Pendidikan Islam; Pembelajaran Organisasi; Inovasi.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation, the advancement of artificial intelligence, changing student characteristics, increasing demands for twenty-first-century competencies, dynamic educational policies, and growing public expectations regarding educational quality have transformed the way Islamic educational institutions perform their academic, managerial, and institutional functions (Kholil Syamsul & Abd. Muis, 2026). Islamic educational institutions can no longer rely solely on maintaining established systems and practices; rather, they are required to recognize emerging changes, respond to them strategically, and integrate them into institutional governance. In this context, adaptability has become a critical organizational capacity that determines the sustainability, effectiveness, and competitiveness of Islamic educational institutions.

However, the capacity of Islamic educational institutions to respond to change has not yet developed optimally. Some institutions continue to face resistance to change, limited human resource competencies, predominantly administrative leadership patterns, weak communication of change, inadequate utilization of technology, and a lack of integration between innovation and organizational culture. Change is also frequently perceived as a temporary program or policy rather than as an institutional transformation process that requires systematic planning, communication,

Change management is important because institutional transformation does not occur automatically through the implementation of new policies, organizational restructuring, or technological adoption (Dumevi et al., 2026). Change requires a systematic managerial process through which organizational members understand the rationale for change, accept its direction, develop the capacity to implement it, and sustain new practices as part of institutional culture. Change management perspectives view organizational transformation as a process involving the identification of change needs, the development of awareness, vision formulation, communication, stakeholder engagement, capacity building, implementation, evaluation, and institutionalization. The change framework developed by John P. Kotter, for example, emphasizes creating a sense of urgency, building a guiding coalition, developing a vision, communicating the vision, empowering action, generating short-term wins, consolidating gains, and anchoring new approaches within organizational culture (Riyadi et al., 2024). Similarly, the organizational learning perspective emphasizes the ability of organizations to learn and adjust as an essential condition for organizational sustainability. Accordingly, change management should not be viewed merely as a response to external pressures but as a strategic mechanism for developing organizational adaptive capacity.

Previous studies have examined organizational change in educational settings from various perspectives, including change leadership, digital transformation, organizational innovation, policy implementation, teacher professional development, and organizational culture (Setyobudi & Hartono, 2025). These studies generally indicate that effective leadership, organizational communication, human resource competence, innovation culture, and technological support are important factors in successful organizational change. Research on adaptability in educational organizations has also expanded, but much of it tends to position adaptability as an outcome of leadership, digitalization, innovation, or environmental change. Studies that specifically explain how change management functions as a mechanism for developing the comprehensive adaptive capacity of Islamic educational institutions remain relatively limited. Furthermore, research on change management in Islamic education has often focused on specific areas, such as curriculum reform, learning transformation, or digitalization, rather than examining how institutional change can systematically contribute to the development of sustainable organizational adaptability.

This research gap is also evident in the limited number of studies integrating the structural and managerial dimensions of change with human resources, organizational culture, organizational learning, innovation, and Islamic values within a single analytical framework. Institutional adaptability cannot be established merely through the adoption of new policies or technologies; it develops through processes involving organizational actors, mindset transformation, competency development, communication, collective learning, innovation, and the internalization of new practices into institutional culture. Therefore, the central issue is not simply whether Islamic educational institutions are capable of adapting to change, but rather how change is managed so that it generates sustainable institutional adaptive capacity.

Based on this research gap, this study aims to analyze change management in strengthening the adaptability of Islamic educational institutions, particularly by examining the processes and strategies through which change is managed, the role of leadership and human resources, mechanisms of communication and stakeholder engagement, innovation development, and the

evaluation and institutionalization of change. The study seeks to understand how Islamic educational institutions develop the capacity to recognize environmental changes, respond to emerging demands, engage in organizational learning, and integrate new practices into institutional systems and culture. This perspective allows the study to examine not only the outcomes of organizational change but also the processes through which change is transformed into sustainable adaptive capacity.

The novelty of this study lies in positioning change management as a strategic mechanism for developing the adaptability of Islamic educational institutions rather than merely as an approach for implementing particular organizational changes. The study proposes that institutional adaptability is developed through an interconnected process consisting of change diagnosis, vision alignment, human resource capacity building, communication and engagement, innovation and organizational learning, and institutionalization of change. This framework suggests that change management strengthens adaptability through three interconnected processes: adaptation, internalization, and institutionalization. Adaptation refers to the institution's capacity to respond to environmental demands; internalization refers to the process through which organizational members accept, learn, and modify their behaviors in response to change; while institutionalization refers to the capacity to sustain change and embed new practices within organizational systems and culture.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design to explore how change management is implemented to strengthen the adaptability of Islamic educational institutions. A qualitative approach was selected because the study focused on understanding processes, experiences, strategies, interactions, and meanings constructed by institutional actors in responding to organizational change (Mantula et al., 2024). The case study design enabled the researchers to examine change management within its natural institutional context and to identify the mechanisms through which organizational change contributes to institutional adaptability (Supriatna, 2025). Particular attention was given to three interconnected processes: adaptation, internalization, and institutionalization.

The research was conducted in selected Islamic educational institutions that had experienced significant organizational changes, particularly in relation to digital transformation, curriculum development, human resource management, educational services, and institutional governance. The selection of research sites was based on several considerations: the institutions had implemented organizational changes, demonstrated efforts to respond to changes in the educational environment, and had institutional programs or practices aimed at improving organizational adaptability. These characteristics allowed the researchers to obtain rich information concerning the processes, challenges, and strategies involved in managing institutional change.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct involvement and knowledge of institutional change processes. The participants consisted of institutional leaders, such as principals or heads of Islamic educational institutions, vice principals or institutional

coordinators, teachers, administrative staff, and other personnel involved in organizational change initiatives. Participants were selected because they possessed relevant experiences regarding the planning, implementation, communication, evaluation, and institutionalization of change. The number of participants was determined based on data adequacy and saturation, whereby data collection was concluded when additional interviews no longer generated substantially new information relevant to the research questions.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis (Vera Nurfajriani et al., 2024). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with institutional leaders and organizational members to explore their perceptions and experiences concerning the need for change, change strategies, leadership practices, communication processes, employee involvement, competency development, innovation, organizational learning, and institutional responses to change. Open-ended questions allowed participants to provide detailed accounts while enabling the researchers to maintain focus on the research objectives. Non-participant observations were conducted to examine organizational practices and interactions related to change management (Panyasai & Ambele, 2025). The observations focused on leadership activities, communication among organizational members, implementation of new programs, use of technology, collaborative practices, and evidence of new practices becoming embedded within institutional routines. In addition, relevant institutional documents were analyzed, including strategic plans, institutional policies, work programs, meeting documents, training records, curriculum documents, digital transformation programs, and evaluation reports. The combination of interviews, observations, and documents enabled methodological triangulation and strengthened the credibility of the findings.

The data were analyzed thematically through an iterative process consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Initially, interview transcripts, observation notes, and institutional documents were organized and repeatedly reviewed to develop familiarity with the data (Azis et al., 2026). Relevant statements were then coded according to concepts associated with change management and institutional adaptability. The initial codes were subsequently compared, grouped, and developed into broader categories. The thematic analysis resulted in several interconnected dimensions of change management, including change diagnosis and awareness, strategic vision and leadership, communication and participation, human resource capacity building, innovation and organizational learning, and institutionalization of change. These dimensions were then interpreted in relation to the three central mechanisms proposed in this study: adaptation, internalization, and institutionalization. Adaptation represented the institution's ability to recognize and respond to environmental changes; internalization referred to the process through which organizational members accepted and incorporated new knowledge, values, and practices; while institutionalization represented the process through which changes became embedded in organizational systems, routines, and culture.

The trustworthiness of the findings was ensured through source triangulation, technique triangulation, member checking, and prolonged engagement. Source triangulation was achieved by comparing information obtained from institutional leaders, teachers, administrative personnel, and other relevant participants. Technique triangulation involved comparing interview findings with observations and institutional documents. Member checking was conducted by presenting

key interpretations or findings to selected participants to verify whether the researchers' interpretations accurately reflected their experiences. Prolonged engagement within the research setting also enabled the researchers to develop a deeper understanding of institutional practices and minimize interpretations based solely on isolated events.

The study followed relevant ethical principles in qualitative research. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw from the study. Informed consent was obtained before interviews and observations were conducted. Participant identities and sensitive institutional information were protected through anonymization. The data were used solely for research purposes, and the interpretation of findings was conducted transparently to minimize researcher bias and preserve the integrity of participants' perspectives.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that change management plays a strategic role in strengthening the adaptability of Islamic educational institutions. Based on interviews, observations, and document analysis, the process of institutional change was not found to be a linear administrative process but rather an interconnected process involving leadership, human resources, communication, innovation, organizational learning, and the internalization of institutional values. The analysis identified four major findings: (1) building awareness and strategic direction for change, (2) strengthening human resource capacity and participatory change, (3) developing innovation and organizational learning, and (4) institutionalizing change as sustainable adaptive capacity. These findings demonstrate that institutional adaptability develops through the interconnected mechanisms of adaptation, internalization, and institutionalization.

The first finding shows that institutional adaptability begins with the ability of leaders and organizational members to recognize changes in the external and internal educational environment. Institutional leaders did not view change merely as an external demand but as a necessity for maintaining institutional relevance and improving educational quality. Changes in educational policies, technological developments, student characteristics, and community expectations became important considerations in determining institutional priorities. The leaders played a significant role in translating external changes into an understandable institutional agenda. Rather than immediately implementing new programs, they first communicated the reasons for change and linked them to the institution's vision and educational objectives. This process helped organizational members understand why change was necessary and reduced uncertainty and resistance.

The findings also indicate that strategic direction was important in preventing change from becoming fragmented. Institutions developed priorities by identifying areas requiring adjustment, such as learning systems, teacher competencies, administrative services, technology utilization, and organizational governance. Consequently, change was gradually directed toward institutional priorities rather than implemented as isolated programs. This process represents the adaptation

mechanism, in which institutions identify environmental demands and translate them into strategic organizational responses.

The second finding demonstrates that human resources constitute a central component of successful institutional change. Changes in organizational systems and technology were not considered sufficient unless teachers, administrative staff, and other organizational members possessed the competencies required to implement them. Institutions therefore developed various forms of capacity building, including training, workshops, peer learning, mentoring, and collaborative problem-solving. The findings reveal that capacity building was increasingly connected to practical institutional needs. Teachers and staff were encouraged not only to acquire technical competencies but also to develop new approaches to teaching, administration, communication, and problem-solving. Leaders also created opportunities for organizational members to exchange experiences and provide feedback concerning the implementation of new practices.

Participation was another important characteristic of the change process. Organizational members were involved in discussions, program development, implementation, and evaluation. This participatory approach contributed to greater acceptance of change because employees perceived themselves as actors in the transformation rather than merely recipients of institutional decisions. Communication therefore functioned not only as a mechanism for disseminating policies but also as a mechanism for building trust and collective ownership. The process illustrates the internalization mechanism of change. New practices were gradually accepted when organizational members understood their purpose, received adequate support, participated in decision-making, and experienced the benefits of the changes in their daily work. Thus, adaptability was strengthened not simply through structural adjustment but through changes in organizational knowledge, attitudes, competencies, and behavior.

The third finding indicates that innovation and organizational learning became important mechanisms for strengthening institutional adaptability. Institutions responded to environmental changes by experimenting with new educational and managerial practices. These innovations included the utilization of digital technologies, modification of learning strategies, improvement of administrative services, development of collaborative programs, and adjustment of institutional work procedures. The implementation of innovation was generally accompanied by a process of experimentation and evaluation. Not every new practice was immediately considered successful. Leaders and organizational members reviewed implementation experiences, identified problems, and adjusted practices according to institutional needs. This process created an organizational learning cycle in which experience became a source of knowledge for subsequent improvement.

The findings further show that learning was not restricted to formal training activities. It also occurred through peer interaction, informal discussions, reflection on program implementation, collaborative problem-solving, and sharing of successful practices. Such learning processes enabled institutions to respond more flexibly to unexpected challenges. Instead of perceiving failure or implementation difficulties solely as obstacles, organizational members increasingly treated them as sources of learning and improvement.

The fourth finding demonstrates that the sustainability of change depends on the extent to which new practices become embedded in institutional systems, routines, and organizational culture. Institutions that successfully managed change did not stop after implementing new programs. Instead, successful practices were gradually incorporated into institutional policies, work procedures, evaluation mechanisms, professional development activities, and organizational routines. Institutional leaders played an important role in ensuring that new practices were consistently implemented and monitored. Evaluation was used not merely to assess program outcomes but also to identify whether new practices had become part of everyday institutional behavior. When a particular practice was considered effective, it was strengthened through formal policies, standard procedures, regular monitoring, and continuous professional development. Institutionalization therefore represents the final stage through which temporary changes are transformed into sustainable organizational capacity. When new knowledge, behaviors, systems, and values become embedded within institutional routines and culture, the institution becomes less dependent on individual initiatives and more capable of maintaining its adaptive capacity over time.

The four findings demonstrate an interconnected change-management process. Awareness and strategic direction enable adaptation; human resource development and participation facilitate internalization; innovation and organizational learning strengthen the capacity to respond to emerging challenges; while institutionalization transforms successful changes into sustainable organizational capacity. The relationship can therefore be conceptualized as: change awareness and strategic direction, human resource capacity and participation, innovation and organizational learning, institutionalization, sustainable institutional adaptability.

The findings further demonstrate that the three core mechanisms—adaptation, internalization, and institutionalization—are not separate stages operating independently. Instead, they form a continuous cycle. Institutions first adapt by recognizing and responding to environmental demands, internalize change through learning and participation, and institutionalize successful practices through organizational systems and culture. Institutionalized practices subsequently increase the institution's readiness to respond to new changes, creating a continuous cycle of organizational adaptation. Thus, the central finding of this study is that the adaptability of Islamic educational institutions is strengthened when change management moves beyond program implementation toward the development of organizational learning, human capacity, participatory culture, continuous innovation, and value-based institutionalization. This finding provides an empirical basis for understanding change management as a strategic mechanism for developing sustainable adaptive capacity in Islamic educational institutions.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that change management in Islamic educational institutions is not merely an administrative mechanism for implementing new programs but a strategic process for developing sustainable institutional adaptability. Four interconnected findings emerged from the study: building awareness and strategic direction, strengthening human resource capacity and participation, developing innovation and organizational learning, and institutionalizing change.

These findings can be interpreted through change management theory, organizational learning theory, adaptive organization perspectives, and Islamic educational management. More importantly, the findings extend previous research by showing that institutional adaptability is developed through a continuous process of adaptation, internalization, and institutionalization.

The first finding, concerning change awareness and strategic direction, confirms the central assumption of change management theory that organizational transformation must begin with an understanding of why change is necessary. In Kotter's change framework, creating a sense of urgency and developing a shared vision constitute important foundations for successful transformation. The present findings reinforce this perspective because institutional leaders first identified changes in educational policies, technology, student characteristics, and community expectations before translating them into institutional priorities. Change was therefore not treated as an isolated response to external pressure but as a strategic necessity for maintaining institutional relevance. This finding is consistent with the broader literature on educational organizations, which emphasizes that schools and educational institutions must continuously adjust their structures, processes, and practices in response to changing social and institutional environments (Thompson et al., n.d.).

However, the findings extend conventional change management theory in an important way. In Islamic educational institutions, the construction of urgency was not based exclusively on competitiveness, technological pressure, or organizational efficiency. It was also connected to the institution's educational mission and Islamic values. Change was considered legitimate when it contributed to educational improvement while remaining consistent with the institution's religious identity. This interpretation is supported by recent research on Islamic education, which found that change in Islamic educational settings can be strengthened when modernization is framed as renewal while maintaining religious values (Rivat et al., 2026). Thus, the present study suggests that strategic awareness in Islamic educational institutions is both managerial and value-based. This represents an important distinction from conventional organizational change models that tend to emphasize organizational performance without giving equal attention to religious identity.

The second finding concerns human resource capacity and participatory change. The study demonstrates that organizational change becomes more sustainable when teachers, administrative staff, and other organizational members are positioned as active participants rather than passive recipients of policy. Training, mentoring, collaborative learning, discussion, and feedback provided organizational members with the knowledge and confidence required to implement new practices. This finding is consistent with change management theory, which emphasizes the importance of empowering organizational members and removing barriers to action. It also corresponds with recent research on change management in Islamic educational institutions showing that resistance to change, inadequate human resources, weak communication, and insufficient involvement of organizational members are significant obstacles to successful transformation (S. et al., 2026).

The finding is also supported by recent empirical research applying change management to Islamic educational contexts. A qualitative study of digital transformation in an Islamic educational institution found that limited technological infrastructure, low digital literacy, and resistance to

change can constrain institutional transformation when systematic and collaborative change management is underdeveloped. In contrast, the present findings demonstrate that participation and capacity building can transform organizational members from potential sources of resistance into change agents. This is particularly important because adaptability is ultimately realized through individual and collective behavior (Riyadi et al., 2024). An institution may introduce a new policy or technology, but the change becomes meaningful only when organizational members understand it, accept it, develop the necessary competencies, and incorporate it into their daily practices.

The third finding, namely innovation and organizational learning, demonstrates that adaptability depends on the institution's ability to learn from experience and continuously adjust its practices. The institutions examined in this study did not simply adopt technological or managerial innovations; they experimented with new practices, evaluated their implementation, identified problems, and modified strategies. This process reflects the organizational learning perspective, in which organizations become adaptive by generating, sharing, interpreting, and applying knowledge. From this perspective, innovation is not an isolated product but part of an organizational learning cycle.

The finding is consistent with recent research on Islamic education management in the digital era, which reports a movement toward hybrid management systems that combine Islamic educational values with digital technologies, learning management systems, online administration, and data-informed decision-making. Similarly, research on digital transformation in Islamic educational institutions indicates that strategic adaptation is supported by visionary leadership, strengthening educators' digital literacy, and integrating information technology into institutional management (Holilah Holilah & Wafi Ali Hajjaj, 2024). The present study adds an important dimension to these findings by showing that technology adoption alone does not constitute organizational adaptability. Adaptability emerges from the institution's capacity to experiment, reflect, learn, and modify its practices continuously (Godoe & Johansen, 2012).

The fourth finding concerns institutionalization of change as sustainable adaptive capacity. The study shows that change becomes sustainable when new practices are incorporated into institutional policies, procedures, routines, evaluation mechanisms, professional development, and organizational culture. This finding strongly corresponds with the final stage of several change management models, particularly the idea that new approaches must become embedded within organizational culture. It also parallels Lewin's concept of *refreezing*, in which newly established behaviors and practices become stabilized within the organization. Recent research applying Lewin's model in Islamic educational settings similarly found that institutional policies, mentoring networks, and the incorporation of Qur'anic values into digital practices helped embed change after the implementation stage (Bahri et al., 2025).

Nevertheless, the present study offers a broader interpretation of institutionalization. Rather than viewing institutionalization as simply the stabilization of a new organizational practice, the findings indicate that institutionalization is the process through which adaptive capacity itself becomes part of organizational culture. This distinction is important. If an institution merely stabilizes one particular innovation, it may become rigid again when a new environmental

challenge emerges. Conversely, when the institution institutionalizes learning, reflection, participation, innovation, and continuous improvement, it becomes capable of adapting repeatedly to different forms of change. Therefore, institutionalization in this study should be understood not as the end of change but as the establishment of a permanent capacity for future change.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that change management plays a strategic role in strengthening the adaptability of Islamic educational institutions. Institutional adaptability is not formed merely through the implementation of new policies, technologies, or organizational programs, but through a systematic and continuous process involving strategic awareness, human resource development, participation, innovation, organizational learning, and institutionalization. The findings demonstrate that effective change begins with the ability of institutional leaders to recognize environmental changes and translate them into a clear strategic direction. This process is followed by strengthening human resource capacity and involving organizational members in decision-making and implementation, thereby increasing acceptance and ownership of change. Innovation and organizational learning then enable institutions to experiment, evaluate, learn from experience, and continuously adjust their practices.

The study further demonstrates that sustainable adaptability emerges when successful changes are institutionalized within organizational systems, routines, policies, and culture. These values provide an ethical foundation that allows institutions to respond to contemporary changes without losing their Islamic identity. Accordingly, the central contribution of this study is the conceptualization of institutional adaptability as a continuous process involving three interconnected mechanisms: adaptation, internalization, and institutionalization. Adaptation enables institutions to recognize and respond to environmental demands, internalization transforms organizational members' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors, while institutionalization embeds successful changes into organizational systems and culture. Therefore, an adaptive Islamic educational institution is not simply an institution that follows change, but one that is capable of anticipating change, learning from it, selectively responding to it, and transforming successful responses into sustainable organizational capacity.

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