
From affiliation to standardization: Bridging policy and practice through mentoring in an affiliated madrasahNur Mutima^{1*}¹ Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Pasuruan, Pasuruan, Indonesia*Corresponding Author: nurmutima@gmail.com

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Abstract

Learning standardization in *madrasahs* continues to face challenges because academic standards are often implemented without sustained mentoring, while studies examining mentoring as an integrative mechanism for learning standardization in affiliated *madrasahs* remain limited. This study aims to analyze the mentoring process implemented by Pondok Pesantren Sidogiri in establishing learning standardization at Madrasah Nurul Huda following its affiliation with MMU A-84. A qualitative case study design was employed using semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, document analysis, and thematic analysis involving five purposively selected participants. The findings reveal that mentoring serves as the central mechanism integrating *curriculum alignment*, *teaching practices*, and *academic supervision*, resulting in more consistent learning standardization while simultaneously supporting student character development. This study contributes conceptually by proposing a mentoring model as an integrative mechanism for establishing learning standardization and offers practical implications for improving educational quality in Islamic educational institutions.

Keywords: Mentoring; Learning standardization; *Madrasah*; Pondok Pesantren Sidogiri; Character development.

Abstrak

Standardisasi pembelajaran di madrasah masih menghadapi berbagai tantangan karena implementasi standar akademik sering kali belum didukung oleh mekanisme mentoring yang berkelanjutan. Sementara itu, kajian mengenai peran mentoring sebagai mekanisme integratif dalam mewujudkan standardisasi pembelajaran pada madrasah afiliasi masih relatif terbatas. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis proses mentoring yang diterapkan Pondok Pesantren Sidogiri dalam membangun standardisasi pembelajaran di Madrasah Nurul Huda setelah berafiliasi dengan MMU A-84. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur, observasi nonpartisipan, dokumentasi, dan analisis tematik terhadap lima informan yang dipilih secara purposive. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mentoring berperan sebagai mekanisme utama yang mengintegrasikan penyesuaian kurikulum, praktik pembelajaran, dan supervisi akademik sehingga menghasilkan standardisasi pembelajaran yang lebih konsisten sekaligus mendukung pengembangan karakter santri. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi konseptual dengan menawarkan model mentoring sebagai mekanisme integratif dalam membangun standardisasi pembelajaran serta memberikan implikasi praktis bagi pengembangan mutu pendidikan di lembaga pendidikan Islam.

Kata Kunci: Mentoring; Standardisasi pembelajaran; Madrasah; Pondok Pesantren Sidogiri; Pengembangan karakter.

Introduction

Learning standardization remains a persistent challenge for many *madrasahs*, particularly when teachers independently develop instructional materials, teaching methods, and assessment systems based on their individual experiences (Haddade et al., 2024; Nasution et al., 2026; Redocto & Sumayo, 2024). As a result, the quality of learning is difficult to maintain because no effective mechanism exists to ensure the consistent implementation of academic standards across classrooms. A similar situation was experienced by Madrasah Nurul Huda before its affiliation with Madrasah Miftahul Ulum (MMU) A-84 of Pondok Pesantren Sidogiri. Variations in lesson planning, teaching practices, and the absence of systematic academic supervision indicated that institutional standards alone were insufficient to ensure consistent learning quality (Caena & Redecker, 2019; Ferri et al., 2020). These conditions suggest that the primary challenge lies not in the availability of standards, but in the existence of a mechanism capable of ensuring their sustained implementation.

Various educational institutions have introduced teacher development programs to address these challenges; however, their outcomes have not always produced sustainable improvements. Many initiatives remain centered on short-term training activities, limiting their impact to the enhancement of teachers' knowledge without leading to consistent changes in classroom practices (Ehri & Flugman, 2018; Hathcock et al., 2020). In contrast, Pondok Pesantren Sidogiri has established a mentoring system through the MMU affiliation scheme, positioning mentoring as a continuous professional development process (Bashith et al., 2025; Johar et al., 2025). Through this mechanism, teachers receive not only curriculum guidance but also continuous support in lesson planning, classroom instruction, and periodic academic supervision. This approach is particularly noteworthy because it demonstrates that learning standardization is achieved through sustained mentoring rather than through the implementation of institutional regulations alone.

The affiliation of Madrasah Nurul Huda with MMU A-84 provides a relevant context for understanding how mentoring contributes to learning standardization. Following the affiliation process, significant changes occurred in curriculum alignment, instructional administration, classroom implementation, and academic supervision, all of which had previously been implemented inconsistently. These changes indicate that mentoring functions not only as a means of transferring institutional policies from the parent institution to its affiliated *madrasahs*, but also as a professional development mechanism that bridges institutional standards and everyday teaching practices (Ekawati et al., 2022; Syah & Mudarris, 2025). Therefore, affiliation should not be viewed merely as an administrative relationship between institutions; rather, it

represents a structured mentoring system that enables learning standardization to be implemented more systematically and sustainably.

Studies on mentoring, academic supervision, and learning standardization have been widely conducted across various educational contexts. Research by Nolan and Molla (2018) demonstrated that mentoring enhances teachers' professional competence and improves learning quality through continuous professional support, although its primary emphasis has been on strengthening individual teacher capacity. Research by Mekarsari et al. (2025) found that academic supervision contributes to improving learning quality, yet it is still predominantly viewed as an evaluative mechanism rather than a collaborative professional development process. Similarly, research by Verger et al. (2019) highlighted the importance of curriculum alignment and instructional administration in learning standardization but did not explain how these components could be integrated through a systematic mentoring mechanism. Consequently, the relationship between mentoring, learning standardization, and student character development within the context of affiliated *madrasahs* remains insufficiently explored.

Against this background, this study aims to examine the mentoring process implemented by Pondok Pesantren Sidogiri in establishing learning standardization at Madrasah Nurul Huda following its affiliation with MMU A-84. The study not only investigates the changes that occurred before and after affiliation but also explains how mentoring integrates curriculum alignment, teaching practices, and academic supervision into a structured model of learning standardization. This research is significant because it provides a more comprehensive understanding of mentoring as a strategic mechanism for improving the quality of Islamic education. Beyond extending the literature on teacher professional development, it also proposes a conceptual model that may serve as a reference for other *madrasahs* seeking to develop sustainable learning standardization through continuous mentoring.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of the mentoring process implemented by Pondok Pesantren Sidogiri in establishing learning standardization at Madrasah Nurul Huda following its affiliation with MMU A-84 (Hamel et al., 1993). A qualitative case study was considered appropriate because it enabled the exploration of the dynamics of mentoring implementation, changes in teaching practices, and interactions among key actors that could not be adequately captured through quantitative approaches. The study focused on the processes, experiences, and meanings that emerged throughout the mentoring activities, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms underlying learning standardization. The research was conducted at Madrasah Nurul Huda, Pasuruan, East Java, which was purposively selected because

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it is one of the *madrasahs* that has implemented an academic mentoring system through its affiliation with MMU A-84 of Pondok Pesantren Sidogiri.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in the mentoring process and the implementation of learning standardization (Creswell, 2014). The study involved five participants consisting of the head of the *madrasah*, the mentoring coordinator, two teachers, and one student. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, and document analysis, including lesson planning documents, academic supervision records, and institutional policies related to the MMU A-84 affiliation. These three data collection techniques were employed to obtain complementary evidence, enabling the mentoring process to be examined from multiple perspectives. Data collection was conducted iteratively as new information emerged in the field and continued until the findings demonstrated sufficient consistency.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the procedures proposed by Miles et al. (2019), which include data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Interview transcripts were first transcribed and systematically coded to identify the major themes related to mentoring, curriculum alignment, teaching practices, academic supervision, and learning standardization. Observation and documentary evidence were subsequently used to triangulate the findings and enhance their credibility. The trustworthiness of the study was strengthened through source triangulation and methodological triangulation by comparing information obtained from all participants with supporting institutional documents. Finally, the analytical findings were synthesized into a conceptual model illustrating the interrelationships among the core dimensions of mentoring in establishing learning standardization at Madrasah Nurul Huda following its affiliation with MMU A-84.

Results and Discussion

Learning standardization before and after affiliation with MMU A-84

Learning standardization at Madrasah Nurul Huda underwent significant transformation following its affiliation with Madrasah Miftahul Ulum (MMU) A-84 of Pondok Pesantren Sidogiri. The findings indicate that these changes extended beyond administrative improvements to establish a more structured learning system through the implementation of standardized academic practices. Based on observations and document analysis, the standardization process encompassed lesson planning, curriculum alignment, strengthened academic supervision, and the implementation of more systematic assessment mechanisms. The Head of the *Madrasah* emphasized that "*Affiliation with MMU A-84 has become a strategic step toward improving learning quality by ensuring that our madrasah meets the same standards as the affiliated madrasahs under Pondok Pesantren Sidogiri, including administrative management, teaching and learning*

processes, and learning assessment" (KM). These findings suggest that affiliation served as the primary foundation for establishing a more integrated learning system oriented toward educational quality.

Table 1. Comparison of learning standardization before and after affiliation with MMU A-84

Aspect	Before Affiliation	After Affiliation
Curriculum	Independently prepared by teachers	Aligned with the MMU A-84 curriculum standards
Lesson Planning	Different formats among teachers	Standardized lesson planning format
Teaching Methods	Based on individual teaching preferences	Guided by mentoring and institutional standards
Learning Evaluation	Varied assessment methods	Standardized assessment procedures
Academic Supervision	Conducted occasionally	Scheduled and periodic supervision
Teacher Development	Individual initiative	Continuous mentoring and professional development
Learning Administration	Non-uniform documentation	Standardized administrative documentation

Source: Observation, interviews, and institutional documents compiled by the researcher (2026).

Before affiliating with MMU A-84, learning implementation at Madrasah Nurul Huda lacked standardized operational procedures. Observational findings revealed that each teacher adopted different administrative formats, instructional strategies, and assessment techniques based on individual experience. Consequently, learning quality varied across classrooms, making comprehensive monitoring difficult to implement. As one teacher explained, *"Before receiving mentoring from MMU A-84, every teacher had their own way of preparing instructional materials and assessing students, so there was no consistency in how learning was implemented"* (G1). This condition demonstrates that the absence of standardized procedures constituted a major obstacle to maintaining consistent learning quality.

The affiliation process began with a series of orientation sessions, training programs, and mentoring activities conducted by the MMU A-84 team for all teaching staff. Based on interview and documentary evidence, the mentoring process focused on developing a shared understanding of the curriculum, standardizing instructional administration, improving teaching practices, and implementing assessment procedures in accordance with established institutional standards. In addition to providing technical guidance, the mentoring team conducted classroom supervision and periodic evaluations of instructional implementation. The mentoring coordinator explained that *"The mentoring process was implemented gradually to ensure that all teachers fully understood the MMU A-84 learning standards. We not only provided guidance but also conducted regular supervision and evaluation of their implementation in the classroom"* (KP).

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These findings indicate that mentoring served as the principal mechanism for transforming instructional practices into a more standardized learning system.

The continuous implementation of mentoring resulted in substantial improvements in learning management. Teachers began adopting standardized administrative formats, designing learning objectives based on common guidelines, and conducting assessments using standardized procedures. Furthermore, regular academic supervision provided constructive feedback that enabled teachers to continuously improve their instructional practices. One teacher noted, "*Mentoring has made it much easier for us to understand the learning standards. Our administrative work has become more organized, our teaching has become more structured, and learning assessment now follows the same guidelines*" (G2). These findings indicate that learning standardization not only improved administrative consistency but also enhanced the effectiveness of classroom instruction.

The impact of standardized learning was experienced not only by teachers but also by students as the primary beneficiaries of educational services. Interview findings revealed that students perceived learning as becoming more systematic, with clearer learning objectives and greater consistency in instructional delivery across teachers. This consistency enabled students to follow classroom activities more effectively while gaining a clearer understanding of the learning outcomes expected in each subject. One student stated, "*Learning is much more organized now. We know the learning targets we are expected to achieve, and each teacher follows almost the same instructional approach, making the lessons easier to understand*" (S1). This experience demonstrates that learning standardization also enhanced the quality of students' learning experiences from the learners' perspective.

Overall, the findings reveal a clear transition from an individualized learning system to a more structured and standardized one following affiliation with MMU A-84. These changes were reflected in curriculum alignment, standardized learning administration, systematic academic supervision, continuous teacher professional development, and more structured learning experiences for students. Collectively, these empirical findings indicate that mentoring functioned not merely as a professional development activity but also as an institutional mechanism for maintaining the consistency of learning quality. Building on these findings, the following section discusses how mentoring operates as the central strategy for achieving learning standardization while simultaneously fostering student character development.

Mentoring as a strategic mechanism for learning standardization and student character development

Although educational standardization is commonly associated with curriculum development, institutional regulations, and assessment systems, these elements alone

do not necessarily lead to meaningful improvements in classroom practice (Pak et al., 2020). Many educational institutions have formally adopted administrative standards, yet learning quality continues to vary because teachers often lack sustained professional support in implementing those standards. This condition raises an important question as to whether learning standardization can be achieved solely through institutional policies or whether it requires a mentoring process capable of bridging policy and classroom practice. Based on the findings of this study, mentoring proved to be more than a professional support activity; it functioned as the primary mechanism that enabled learning standardization to be implemented consistently following Madrasah Nurul Huda's affiliation with MMU A-84.

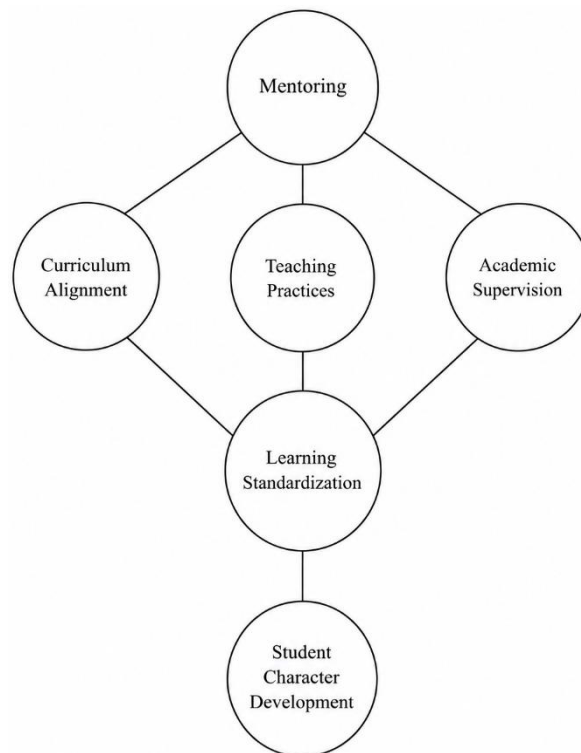


Figure 1. Core dimensions of mentoring in learning standardization

Source: Developed by the authors based on research findings (2026).

Figure 1 presents a conceptual synthesis developed from the empirical findings of this study rather than an adaptation of an existing theoretical framework. The model illustrates the interrelationships among the three core dimensions identified during the analysis—*curriculum alignment*, *teaching practices*, and *academic supervision*—which are integrated through mentoring as the central mechanism for establishing *learning standardization* and ultimately promoting *student character development*. Therefore, Figure 1 serves to simplify the empirical findings into a conceptual model that facilitates a more systematic understanding of the relationships among the identified dimensions. Beyond clarifying the conceptual structure of the findings, the model also demonstrates that learning standardization emerges through the interaction of

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multiple complementary dimensions rather than through the operation of a single component in isolation.

The first dimension underpinning the conceptual model is *curriculum alignment*. The findings indicate that the mentoring process promoted the alignment of learning objectives, instructional materials, and teaching resources across teachers, thereby creating greater consistency in classroom instruction without limiting teachers' flexibility in delivering learning materials. This curriculum alignment constituted the initial foundation upon which learning standardization could be systematically established, as it ensured that all teachers shared a common pedagogical direction. Research by Kilpatrick and Fraser (2019) similarly argued that professional mentoring contributes to curriculum coherence through collaborative instructional planning. Likewise, research by Cilliers et al. (2020) emphasized that curriculum consistency is difficult to achieve when teachers work independently without sustained professional support. Accordingly, the findings of the present study reinforce the argument that *curriculum alignment* is a fundamental prerequisite for effective learning standardization.

The second dimension, *teaching practices*, demonstrates that mentoring extends beyond the preparation of instructional documents to influence how teachers conduct classroom instruction. The findings reveal that teachers adopted more systematic approaches to content delivery, implemented relatively consistent instructional strategies, and managed classrooms more effectively after participating in continuous mentoring activities. In contrast to the perspective advanced by Li (2018), which primarily viewed mentoring as a means of enhancing individual pedagogical competence, the present study found that mentoring also functions as an institutional mechanism for maintaining the consistency of instructional quality. Nevertheless, research by Hauge and Wan (2019) acknowledged that sustained professional interaction contributes significantly to improving teachers' instructional practices. Therefore, this study extends previous understanding by demonstrating that *teaching practices* are directed not only toward improving teachers' individual competencies but also toward ensuring the consistent implementation of learning across the *madrasah*.

The final dimension is *academic supervision*, which in this study is conceptualized as a collaborative professional development process rather than merely an evaluative mechanism. Supervision was implemented through professional discussions, constructive feedback, shared reflection, and continuous assistance in addressing instructional challenges, enabling teachers to refine their teaching practices over time. These findings suggest that the effectiveness of academic supervision depends less on the frequency of evaluation than on the continuity of the mentoring relationship between mentors and teachers. Consistent with the findings of Sugiar et al. (2025), academic supervision plays a crucial role in maintaining educational quality.

However, this study offers a different perspective by demonstrating that the effectiveness of supervision is influenced more by a sustained mentoring approach than by periodic monitoring alone. In this context, *academic supervision* evolves into a form of professional learning that continuously supports the process of learning standardization.

Overall, Figure 1 demonstrates that mentoring serves as the central mechanism integrating *curriculum alignment*, *teaching practices*, and *academic supervision* in establishing learning standardization. These findings indicate that learning standardization should not be understood merely as compliance with administrative procedures or institutional regulations, but rather as a process of pedagogical transformation achieved through systematic and continuous mentoring. Consequently, the conceptual model proposed in this study not only synthesizes the empirical findings but also provides an analytical framework that may guide other Islamic educational institutions in developing more standardized learning systems while simultaneously fostering student character development.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the mentoring process implemented by Pondok Pesantren Sidogiri through the MMU A-84 affiliation serves as a strategic mechanism for establishing learning standardization at Madrasah Nurul Huda. Learning standardization was reflected not only in the alignment of the curriculum, instructional documents, and assessment systems, but also in the transformation of teaching practices and the implementation of more structured academic supervision. These findings indicate that successful learning standardization depends not merely on the existence of institutional regulations or instructional guidelines, but on a continuous mentoring process that ensures their effective implementation. Through mentoring, institutional policies are translated into consistent pedagogical practices, creating greater coherence in the learning process while simultaneously supporting student character development. Accordingly, this study confirms that mentoring functions as a bridge between institutional policy and effective classroom practice.

This study makes a conceptual contribution by proposing a mentoring model as an integrative mechanism that connects *curriculum alignment*, *teaching practices*, and *academic supervision* in establishing learning standardization. It also offers practical implications for Islamic educational institutions seeking to develop sustainable teacher professional development systems. Nevertheless, this study is limited by its focus on a single *madrasah* affiliated with MMU A-84, meaning that the findings are closely shaped by the institutional context under investigation. Furthermore, the study did not quantitatively examine the long-term effects of mentoring on students' academic achievement or character development. Future research is therefore encouraged to involve a broader range of educational institutions with diverse characteristics, adopt

comparative or mixed-methods approaches, and investigate the effectiveness of mentoring across multiple indicators of educational quality in order to further validate and refine the conceptual model proposed in this study.

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