



HERMENEUTICS AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR MANAGEMENT SCIENCE: AN INTERPRETIVE PERSPECTIVE IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

The development of management science requires a perspective that goes beyond effectiveness, efficiency, and measurement to address meaning, context, experience, and values in organizational life. This article examines the significance of hermeneutical philosophy for the development of management science, particularly Islamic Education Management, drawing on the perspectives of Dilthey, Ricoeur, Abou El-Fadl, and Shahrur. The study employs a qualitative approach using library research and a conceptual design. Data were analyzed descriptively and analytically through concept identification, comparison of theoretical perspectives, contextualization, and conceptual synthesis. The findings indicate that hermeneutics can serve as a complementary perspective that broadens management understanding by incorporating context, text, action, experience, and values. Its integration with the Planning, Organizing, Actuating, and Controlling (POAC) functions provides a more contextual, reflective, human-centered, and value-oriented approach to management. The study further develops a conceptual framework linking context, text or action, interpretation, and managerial decision-making as a basis for strengthening governance in Islamic educational institutions.

Keywords: hermeneutical philosophy; management science; Islamic Education Management; interpretation; POAC; Islamic educational governance.

INTRODUCTION

The development of hermeneutical philosophy reflects an important shift from the interpretation of religious texts toward a broader approach to understanding human beings, action, language, and social reality. Hermeneutics is concerned not only with how a text is read, but also with how meaning is understood through the relationship among text, author, reader, historical context, and human experience. Within the tradition of philosophical hermeneutics, Wilhelm Dilthey positioned *verstehen*, or understanding, as a defining feature of the human sciences, while Paul Ricoeur developed hermeneutics through the relationship among text, action, symbol, and interpretation (Palmer, 2005; Ricoeur, 1991). This perspective is relevant to management science because organizations constitute a space of human interaction saturated with language, symbols, norms, experience, and processes of meaning-making.

Modern management science has developed through substantial contributions from rational, empirical, and positivistic approaches. Performance measurement, efficiency, productivity, and organizational control are important instruments for ensuring the achievement of institutional goals. Organizations, however, do not operate solely through formal structures and performance indicators. Managerial decisions are also shaped by perception, organizational culture, power relations, values, identity, and the ways organizational members interpret messages and policies. Research on

organizational interpretation shows that culture, symbols, and sense-making practices form an essential part of organizational studies (Jeffcutt, 1994). An interpretive approach can therefore enrich aspects of organizational life that are not always adequately captured through numerical indicators.

This issue becomes even more significant in the management of Islamic educational institutions. Pesantren (Islamic boarding schools), madrasah, and other Islamic educational institutions perform not only administrative and academic functions, but also sustain tradition, religious authority, exemplary conduct, moral values, and distinctive social relations. Management practice in these institutions unfolds at the intersection of modern professional demands and Islamic values. Consequently, the effectiveness of institutional management cannot be understood solely through quantitative achievement, but must also be understood through the meaning that leaders, educators, education personnel, students, and stakeholders attach to organizational policy.

Digital transformation further extends this complexity. The digitalization of administration and communication offers opportunities to improve efficiency, transparency, and accountability, yet at the same time it can raise issues related to authority, organizational culture, digital literacy, data security, and changing patterns of interaction. Recent studies show that technology-based governance in Islamic education requires transparency, participation, digital leadership, stakeholder engagement, and data-driven decision-making (Hilman & Samad, 2025; Baqir et al., 2026). Digital transformation should likewise not be understood merely as technology adoption, but as organizational change that must remain aligned with institutional identity and values (Riyanto, 2026).

Within contemporary Islamic thought, hermeneutics has developed as an effort to read texts and authority in a more contextual manner. Khaled Abou El-Fadl (2001) draws attention to the problem of authoritarianism in interpretation and to the importance of morality, justice, and interpretive responsibility. Through his theory of limits, Muhammad Shahrur opens space for reading religious texts by taking into account normative boundaries and contextual change (Shahrin, 2018; Witro, 2021). These perspectives can serve as conceptual inspiration for Islamic Education Management, particularly when institutions need to translate normative values into organizational policies that remain relevant to changing times without losing their underlying principles.

A number of recent studies show that the management of Islamic educational institutions requires an integrative governance model. The digitalization of administration relates to efficiency and accountability, while digital governance demands transparency, participation, and information-based decision-making (Ulfiyah et al., 2022; Hilman & Samad, 2025). Other research indicates that the transformation of Islamic education management needs to integrate leadership, technology, quality assurance, curriculum, and Islamic character in a unified manner (Baqir et al., 2026). At the same time, value-rooted digital leadership can help institutions manage change more adaptively (Riyanto, 2026). These findings demonstrate that the dimensions of meaning, values, leadership, and culture cannot be separated from the problem of Islamic education management.

Building on this background, this article seeks to strengthen the discourse on the relationship between hermeneutical philosophy and management science without positioning hermeneutics as a substitute for empirical approaches. The article focuses on how the perspectives of Dilthey and Ricoeur, enriched by the thought of Abou El-Fadl and Shahrur, can be used to read the phenomena of Islamic Education Management in a more contextual way. Its conceptual novelty lies in connecting hermeneutics as a method of understanding with management functions, organizational communication, organizational behavior, and the spiritual and ethical needs of Islamic educational

institutions. The article is thus expected to contribute to the development of a management science that is not only instrumentally effective, but also reflective toward human beings, context, and values.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a library research design and a conceptual approach. The primary data sources consist of books and scholarly articles addressing philosophical hermeneutics, philosophy of science, management, organizational behavior, and Islamic Education Management. The literature reviewed includes the thought of Wilhelm Dilthey, Paul Ricoeur, Khaled Abou El-Fadl, and Muhammad Shahrur, together with recent studies on governance and digital transformation in Islamic educational institutions. The analysis was conducted descriptively and analytically to identify concepts, compare ideas, and construct relationships among concepts.

The analytical stages comprise: (1) identifying the core concepts of hermeneutics and management science; (2) examining the relationship among understanding, interpretation, text, action, and organization; (3) contextualizing these concepts within Islamic educational institutions; and (4) conceptually synthesizing the opportunities for applying hermeneutics to communication, management functions, organizational behavior, and digital governance. Because this study is library-based, the article does not claim the empirical effectiveness of the proposed model in the field. The term “urgency” is used here to denote the relevance and the potential methodological contribution of hermeneutics to enriching the perspective of management science.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The conceptual review shows that hermeneutics has strong relevance for broadening the perspective of Islamic Education Management (IEM), particularly in understanding the relationship among organizational action, institutional context, language, experience, and values. Hermeneutics is not positioned as a substitute for conventional management approaches, but as an interpretive perspective that complements the processes of planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling. This finding draws on Dilthey’s notion of *verstehen*, Ricoeur’s development of the hermeneutics of action and text, and attention to questions of authority and interpretive responsibility in Islamic thought (Palmer, 2005; Ricoeur, 1991; Abou El Fadl, 2001).

Overall, the synthesis yields four main findings. First, hermeneutics broadens the object of management studies beyond mere variables and indicators to encompass action, experience, text, symbols, and context. Second, hermeneutics can be used complementarily with positivistic approaches, particularly when research seeks not only to determine the degree of relationship or influence, but also to understand the underlying meaning and context. Third, interpretive principles can be recontextualized within the functions of Planning, Organizing, Actuating, and Controlling (POAC), making the practice of Islamic education management more sensitive to values, culture, and stakeholder experience. Fourth, this synthesis produces a conceptual model linking context, text/action, interpretation, and managerial decision-making as a contextual decision-making pathway.

1. Hermeneutics as an Interpretive Perspective in Islamic Education Management

At the epistemological level, the findings indicate that an organization cannot be adequately understood merely as a technical system operating according to formal procedures. Policy, leadership communication, leadership practice, and the responses of organizational members carry meaning that is shaped by experience and context. Dilthey’s perspective provides the foundation that human experience needs to be understood through *verstehen*, while Ricoeur extends the scope of

interpretation by treating human action as something that can be read as a text. Within the context of Islamic educational organizations, written policies, vision and mission statements, leadership directives, deliberative forums (*musyawarah*), and institutional practices can be positioned as objects of interpretation (Palmer, 2005; Ricoeur, 1991).

These findings show that the management process possesses an interpretive dimension that is often not captured by quantitative indicators. For instance, employees' compliance with a policy does not always signify equivalent acceptance of the meaning underlying that policy. Similarly, loyalty, exemplary conduct, trustworthiness (*amanah*), and commitment may carry different meanings in Islamic educational organizations compared with business organizations. Social context, culture, and institutional values are therefore essential to explaining organizational behavior (Jeffcutt, 1994; Palmer, 2005).

2. Recontextualizing Hermeneutics within the POAC Functions

The synthesis indicates that hermeneutics can be integrated into the four management functions, namely *Planning*, *Organizing*, *Actuating*, and *Controlling* (POAC). This integration does not alter the basic structure of POAC, but broadens the way each function is understood so that it becomes more contextual, reflective, and value-based.

Table 1. Synthesis Matrix of Hermeneutics and Islamic Education Management Functions

Management Function	Conventional Focus	Hermeneutic Lens	Islamic Values/Context	Managerial Implication
Planning	Targets, programs, indicators	Interpreting needs, experience, and context	Maqasid (higher objectives), trustworthiness (<i>amanah</i>), public benefit (<i>maslahah</i>)	Plans that are more contextual and responsive
Organizing	Division of tasks and structure	Reading relationships, roles, language, and organizational culture	Deliberation (<i>musyawarah</i>), justice, responsibility	A more collaborative and legitimate structure
Actuating	Motivation and implementation	Understanding the meaning of leadership and members' responses	Exemplary conduct (<i>uswah</i>), fraternity (<i>ukhuwah</i>), trustworthiness (<i>amanah</i>)	Leadership that is more communicative and humanistic
Controlling	Evaluation and correction	Interpreting the meaning of results, deviations, and responses	Self-vigilance (<i>muraqabah</i>), accountability, justice	Control that is not only numerical but also reflective

Source: Researchers' synthesis based on studies of hermeneutics and Islamic Education Management

Table 1 shows that applying hermeneutics is not intended to replace well-established management functions. At the *planning* stage, planning still requires targets and indicators, but the process of setting them needs to take into account stakeholders' needs and experiences. At the *organizing* stage, organizational structure is viewed not merely as a division of labor, but also as a space in which relationships, communication, and culture are formed. *Actuating*, in turn, situates leadership in the context of exemplary conduct and interpersonal relationships, whereas *controlling* does not stop at checking indicator achievement but also traces the reasons and context behind emerging deviations. This approach is consistent with the interpretive view that organizations need to be understood through the meaning and context of their actors' actions (Jeffcutt, 1994; Ricoeur, 1991).

3. The Position of Hermeneutics in Relation to the Positivistic Approach

The findings show that hermeneutics and positivism have different epistemological orientations, yet they are not mutually exclusive. The positivistic approach excels at measuring variables, testing relationships among constructs, and generating empirical estimates. Hermeneutics, by contrast, creates space for understanding the experience, action, language, text, and context underlying a phenomenon (Jeffcutt, 1994; Palmer, 2005).

Table 2. Comparison of the Positivistic and Hermeneutic Approaches

Aspect	Positivistic	Hermeneutic	Relevance for IEM
Object	Variables and indicators	Action, text, experience, meaning	Combining measurement with contextual understanding
Purpose	Explaining relationships/effects	Understanding and interpreting	Reading outcomes together with the reasons behind them
Data	Standardized numbers and measures	Narratives, documents, interactions, context	Enriching quantitative data with interpretive data
Researcher's role	Maintaining measurement objectivity	Reflective toward the context of interpretation	Promoting research reflexivity
Output	Generalization/estimation	Contextual understanding	Management recommendations that better fit the context

Source: Researchers' synthesis based on studies of management epistemology and hermeneutics

The findings presented in Table 2 show that the choice of approach should be guided by the research question. If a study aims to test the influence of leadership on performance, a quantitative approach remains relevant. However, if the research question is directed toward understanding how actors make sense of leadership, compliance, policy change, or exemplary conduct, an interpretive approach is more appropriate. The two approaches can also be combined through mixed methods when a research question requires both measurable evidence and contextual understanding. This complementary position is consistent with developments in organizational studies that regard interpretation as an essential element in achieving a fuller understanding of organizational phenomena (Jeffcutt, 1994).

Discussion

1. Hermeneutics as an Expansion of the Epistemology of Islamic Education Management

The findings show that hermeneutics can make an epistemological contribution to Islamic Education Management by broadening the way organizations are understood, moving from an approach dominated by measurement toward one that also takes meaning into account. An educational organization is not merely a formal structure carrying out administrative functions; it is also a social space in which individuals interpret policy, build relationships, make sense of leadership, and shape institutional experience. This understanding is consistent with the interpretive perspective in organizational studies, which positions the organization as an arena for the production and negotiation of meaning (Jeffcutt, 1994).

Dilthey's notion of *verstehen* provides the epistemological foundation that human experience needs to be understood through a process of meaning-making rather than through causal explanation alone. In the context of IEM, this approach is relevant because phenomena such as loyalty, compliance, commitment, exemplary conduct, and trustworthiness do not always carry uniform meanings. Such meanings are shaped by experience, culture, social relations, and institutional history. Palmer (2005) positions hermeneutics as a theory of interpretation that enables human experience and expression to be understood through the relationship between the part and the whole of its context.

Ricoeur's view reinforces this position by extending hermeneutics from the interpretation of texts to the interpretation of action. Human action is regarded not merely as observable behavior, but as action bearing meaning and social consequence (Ricoeur, 1991). Within Islamic educational organizations, leadership decisions, policy communication, leadership practice, and members' responses can be treated as an "organizational text" that needs to be understood within its context. This perspective provides a foundation for developing IEM research that asks not only how effective a policy is, but also how that policy is understood and given meaning by organizational actors.

The contribution of hermeneutics thus lies in broadening managerial ways of thinking. Quantitative data remain important for measuring performance and the relationships among constructs, but such data can gain interpretive depth when read together with organizational experience, narrative, and context. This position reinforces the view that the interpretive approach is not merely a methodological alternative, but also offers a different way of understanding organizational reality (Jeffcutt, 1994).

2. Hermeneutics, Authority, and Values in Islamic Education Management

The interpretive dimension of Islamic education management carries ethical consequences, because the process of interpretation is always bound up with authority, the position of the interpreter, and the parties affected by a decision. In this context, Abou El Fadl's (2001) thinking on authority and authoritarian tendencies is relevant. Authority should not be allowed to harden into a singular claim that forecloses dialogue, but must instead be accompanied by moral responsibility, justice, and careful consideration of the consequences of a decision.

This perspective is important for Islamic educational institutions because leadership is fundamentally concerned with more than formal authority alone. Leadership also involves the capacity to build legitimacy, understand the experience of members, and take into account the interests of those affected. When policies are implemented without regard for the experiential horizon of those who carry them out, a gap may arise between the intent of a policy and the meaning attributed to it. Hermeneutics offers a way of reading that gap reflectively.

Within contemporary Islamic thought, Muhammad Shahrur's theory of limits likewise opens space for interpretation within certain normative boundaries. Witro (2021) explains that Shahrur's theory of limitation represents one effort at renewal in understanding contemporary Islamic law. Although this theory has limitations when positioned as a sole method, the idea of interpretive boundaries remains relevant as a framework for balancing the need for adaptation with the persistence of normative principles.

In relation to IEM, this balance can be realized through decision-making processes that remain open to context while continuing to be oriented toward trustworthiness (*amanah*), justice, public benefit (*kemaslahatan*), deliberation (*musyawarah*), and responsibility. Hermeneutics, therefore, is not directed toward value relativism, but toward a more contextual understanding of how these values are applied within institutional reality.

3. Recontextualizing POAC and Strengthening Islamic Education Governance

The findings on integrating hermeneutics with POAC show that a philosophical perspective can be translated into operational management functions. This integration does not create new management functions, but instead lends interpretive depth to functions already familiar in management practice. This matters because the development of IEM requires a framework capable of bridging theory, values, and institutional practice.

In the *planning* function, for example, planning cannot be directed solely toward setting targets; it needs to begin with an understanding of stakeholders' needs and experiences. In the *organizing*

function, the division of tasks needs to be read alongside social relations, organizational culture, and communication patterns. In the *actuating* function, successful implementation is determined not only by instructions but also by exemplary conduct and leaders' ability to build shared understanding. *Controlling*, meanwhile, can be understood as an evaluative process that not only identifies deviations but also interprets their causes and context (Palmer, 2005; Ricoeur, 1991).

This approach reinforces the idea that Islamic education governance needs to integrate managerial effectiveness with the dimension of values. In the context of technology-based Islamic education, Hilman and Samad (2025) demonstrate the importance of transparency, participation, digital leadership, stakeholder engagement, and data-driven decision-making. These findings can be extended through a hermeneutic perspective by asking how data, digital policy, and systemic change are given meaning by the actors involved.

Digital transformation, therefore, cannot be adequately understood simply as the digitalization of administration. Technological change can also alter the ways institutions communicate, make decisions, store information, and build relationships with stakeholders. The literature on the transformation of Islamic education management likewise points to the need for integrative governance linking technology, leadership, human capacity, accountability, and institutional values (Baqir et al., 2026). The hermeneutic perspective complements this framework by positioning the process of meaning-making as part of what makes transformation successful.

Consequently, the adoption of technology needs to be assessed not only in terms of usage levels or system efficiency, but also in terms of user acceptance, changing communication patterns, actors' experience, and alignment with the institution's mission. At this point, hermeneutics functions as a reflective lens that helps leaders understand whether an innovation is genuinely embraced as meaningful change or merely perceived as an administrative requirement.

4. Hermeneutics as a Complementary Approach to Positivism

The findings do not suggest a need to replace the positivistic approach with hermeneutics. Rather, the two perspectives serve distinct epistemological functions. The positivistic approach is strong in measurement, testing relationships, and empirical estimation, while hermeneutics provides depth in understanding experience, context, and the process of meaning-making (Jeffcutt, 1994; Palmer, 2005).

This complementary position is important for the development of IEM research. Quantitative data can be used to identify general patterns, while qualitative data can be used to explain the meaning and experience underlying those patterns. For example, if quantitative research finds a low level of satisfaction with a particular policy, a hermeneutic approach can be used to understand employees' experience, how the policy was communicated, and the organizational context that shaped that response.

Within Ricoeur's (1991) framework, organizational action can be read as action possessing meaning and consequence. Measurement results, therefore, need not be treated as the endpoint of analysis. They can instead serve as an entry point for understanding the social and interpretive processes that produce a given organizational condition. This approach opens opportunities for the use of mixed methods when a research question requires the integration of measurable evidence with contextual understanding.

Hermeneutics can thus enrich management research without negating the quantitative approach. Indeed, this complementary relationship allows IEM research to move from questions of "how much" toward deeper questions of "how" and "why" a phenomenon takes shape. This is consistent with the

complex character of organizational studies, in which institutional reality cannot always be reduced to linear relationships among constructs (Jeffcutt, 1994).

5. Spiritualization as a Synthesis of Science, Meaning, and Values

The synthesis shows that spiritualization, as used in this article, is best understood as an effort to bring the dimensions of value and meaning into the management process, rather than as a replacement of management science with normative doctrine. This framework brings together management instruments oriented toward effectiveness and efficiency, hermeneutic interpretation oriented toward context and meaning, and Islamic values oriented toward trustworthiness, justice, public benefit, and responsibility.

This synthesis shows that the management of Islamic educational institutions requires a balance between managerial rationality and value orientation. Effectiveness and efficiency remain organizational needs, but both must be situated within the horizon of educational purpose and public benefit. At the same time, Islamic values cannot simply be stated normatively; they need to be translated into the practice of planning, organizing, leadership, evaluation, and decision-making.

Abou El Fadl's (2001) thinking on interpretive responsibility provides the grounding that the application of values should not give rise to authoritarianism. Values, rather, need to serve as a basis for strengthening responsibility, justice, and consideration for affected parties. In this sense, spiritualization can be understood as an integrative process that positions values as an ethical orientation for management practice without eliminating organizational rationality.

This framework further reinforces the position of hermeneutics as a bridge between the philosophy of science and the practice of Islamic Education Management. Hermeneutics provides a reflective apparatus for understanding meaning, while management provides the operational apparatus for translating that understanding into programs and decisions. Islamic values, in turn, provide orientation regarding the direction and ethical boundaries of such decisions. These three elements form a mutually complementary relationship rather than a substitutive one.

6. A Conceptual Model of Hermeneutics for Islamic Education Governance

The resulting four stage model, comprising context, text and action, interpretation, and decision, provides a framework for connecting processes of meaning making with managerial action. The model is based on the premise that organizational decisions do not arise in isolation. Rather, they are shaped by the institution's history, organizational culture, structure, patterns of communication, and underlying values. Within this framework, organizational meaning is constructed from contextual conditions, interpreted through relevant texts and actions, and subsequently translated into managerial decisions.

The context stage functions to situate an issue within the institutional conditions that shape its emergence and development. The text and action stage identifies the documents, communications, behaviors, and organizational practices that constitute the objects of interpretation. The interpretation stage examines how organizational actors understand and attribute meaning to the phenomenon under consideration. The decision stage then translates the resulting interpretation into managerial action while taking institutional values, organizational objectives, and contextual considerations into account.

The model highlights a dynamic relationship between understanding and action. Managerial decisions are not merely determined by the availability of information, but are also influenced by how information is understood, interpreted, and related to the institutional context. Ricoeur (1991) provides an important theoretical foundation for this relationship through his discussion of the

connections among text, action, and interpretation. Palmer (2005) further emphasizes the significance of context in the process of hermeneutic understanding. Taken together, these perspectives provide a conceptual basis for examining how meaning is constructed before it is translated into organizational action.

In practical terms, the model can be applied by leaders of pesantren, madrasah, Islamic schools, and other Islamic educational institutions when addressing policy issues, organizational change, communication challenges, or digital transformation. Before making a decision, leaders can examine the institutional context, identify relevant texts and organizational actions, explore the experiences and perspectives of the actors involved, and formulate decisions based on the resulting interpretation and institutional values. This process positions managerial decision making as an interpretive activity rather than merely an administrative response to available information.

The model also provides a basis for subsequent empirical research in Islamic Education Management. Each stage can be examined through document analysis, interviews, observation, narrative analysis, or integration with quantitative evidence. The framework therefore extends hermeneutics beyond philosophical discussion by providing an analytical perspective for investigating how meaning, experience, organizational values, and institutional context influence governance practices in Islamic education.

Overall, the synthesis indicates that hermeneutics does not seek to replace established management theories within Islamic Education Management. Instead, it offers an interpretive perspective that deepens understanding of how managerial processes unfold. By connecting context, text, action, experience, interpretation, and institutional values with organizational decision making, the framework provides a conceptual basis for understanding governance in Islamic educational institutions. In the context of contemporary Islamic education, this perspective may help institutions preserve their value orientation while responding to technological developments, organizational change, and evolving demands of educational governance (Hilman & Samad, 2025; Baqir et al., 2026).

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that hermeneutical philosophy holds urgency for the development of management science because it broadens the understanding of organizations by attending to meaning, context, experience, action, and values. In Islamic Education Management, hermeneutics is not positioned as a substitute for conventional management approaches, but as a complementary perspective that can deepen the functions of *Planning*, *Organizing*, *Actuating*, and *Controlling* so that they become more contextual, reflective, humanistic, and aligned with institutional values. The synthesis also shows that the management process can be understood through the interrelationship among context, text or action, interpretation, and managerial decision-making, so that decision-making rests not only on indicators and procedures but also considers stakeholders' experience and the values underlying organizational life. Based on these findings, Islamic educational institutions are advised to develop management practices that combine managerial rationality with dialogue, reflection, contextual understanding, and value orientation, particularly in facing organizational change and digital transformation. For future researchers, the hermeneutic framework developed in this study can be further developed through empirical research in pesantren, madrasah, Islamic schools, and other Islamic educational institutions using interviews, observation, document analysis, narrative analysis, or mixed-methods approaches. Academically, this

study implies that the integration of hermeneutics, management functions, and Islamic values can become one direction for the development of Islamic Education Management as a discipline — one that is oriented not only toward effectiveness and efficiency, but also toward meaning-making, responsibility, public benefit, and institutional sustainability.

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