

STRATEGY FOR SANTRI POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH INTEREST AND TALENT PROGRAM AT KYAI SYARIFUDDIN BOARDING SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

The development of students' abilities is an inseparable element of the educational system in Islamic boarding schools, aimed at creating students skilled in both spiritual knowledge and practical skills. This study aims to describe and analyze the methods for developing students' potential through the Interest and Talent Development Program (PMB) at Pesantren Kyai Syarifuddin in Lumajang. Using a qualitative approach through a case study, data was collected via in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. Data validity was evaluated through triangulation of sources, methods, and time, while the analysis used the interactive model by Miles and Huberman. The research findings reveal that PMB implements four main approaches: (1) an identification approach involving collaboration with room leaders and direct observation; (2) a structured design and implementation approach with regular training, mentoring, and ongoing evaluation through the Star Festival; (3) an adaptive approach to overcome challenges with schedule adjustments, rotation in facility use, and individual motivation; and (4) a collaborative approach involving multiple parties to create synergy between caregivers, PMB coordinators, admins, room leaders, and students. This study emphasizes that a systematic, flexible, and collaborative development approach can optimize students' potential even with limited resources.

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) are the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia and have historically contributed to building the morality, spirituality, and social responsibility of the younger generation (Latifah et al., 2025). In the context of competency challenges in the 21st century, pesantren are not only expected to maintain the intellectual heritage of Islam but also to hone students' skills in communication, leadership, creativity, and social adaptability (Muhaimin, 2020). Therefore, improving the abilities of students is crucial to achieving the goals of pesantren education, which focuses on developing qualified individuals (Setiawan, MF, Asrori, MD, Ainurrofiq, MR, & Febriansyah, 2024).

From an Islamic educational perspective, developing human potential is an essential part of the learning process. Allah says in the Qur'an (Az-Zumar 39:9)

قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْمَلُونَ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

"Say, are those who have knowledge equal to those who do not know? Indeed, only those who are given understanding will pay attention." This verse emphasizes that Islamic education does not only revolve around mastery of knowledge, but also on the development of human potential as a whole (Hidayat & Rahman, 2022). Therefore, developing students' interests and talents is an important aspect in the implementation of Islamic education which aims to optimize the abilities of each individual as a whole (Thoriq Aziz & Muharom, 2025).

International research also shows that extracurricular education can function as a developmental environment rather than merely an extension of formal instruction (Eccles et al., 2003) found that structured activities were associated with educational outcomes, identity formation, peer-group membership, and attachment to non-familial adults, while Fredricks and (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006) reported concurrent and longitudinal associations between extracurricular participation and academic, psychological, behavioral, and civic outcomes. However, these studies also indicate that outcomes depend on the type, intensity, and social context of participation. In talent-development research, (Subotnik et al., 2011) conceptualize talent as a developmental and domain-specific process in which potential must be deliberately cultivated through educational, psychosocial, and practice opportunities. This perspective is important for pesantren research because students' abilities cannot be inferred from a single formal assessment; they need to be observed, nurtured, and evaluated through sustained participation. The PMB program provides a distinctive context for examining this process because religious, linguistic, artistic, and public-speaking activities are organized within a residential educational ecosystem.

However, students' potential does not develop automatically without a planned coaching strategy. Previous studies have examined pesantren educational transformation, extracurricular activities, and the relationship between extracurricular participation and students' social-emotional development (Subotnik et al., 2011). For example, research on extracurricular arts and sports reports positive associations with adolescents' social and emotional skills, although the effects vary by activity type and context (Wang et al., 2024). Studies on pesantren have likewise highlighted the importance of program management and extracurricular provision, but have generally discussed these elements separately rather than tracing how potential is identified, coached, adapted to constraints, and coordinated across stakeholders. Consequently, less is known about the day-to-day mechanisms through which a pesantren converts informal observations of students into sustained coaching and evaluation. (santika, eka, 2024). This study addresses that gap by examining the complete implementation process of the PMB program from identification and student choice, through routine mentoring and adaptive problem-solving, to collaborative evaluation in a resource-constrained pesantren context. Its conceptual contribution is an integrated four approach model consisting of identification, structured design and implementation, adaptive management, and collaboration. Practically, the model offers a low-cost procedure that other pesantren can adapt: using room leaders as early observers, providing regular practice and feedback, adjusting schedules and shared facilities, and distributing responsibility among caregivers, coordinators, administrators, room leaders, and students. Because organizational culture and available resources differ across pesantren, the model is proposed as a context-sensitive framework rather than a universal prescription.

The Kyai Syarifuddin Islamic Boarding School in Lumajang is one of the institutions that consistently implements the Interest and Talent Development Program (PMB) through various activities such as khitobah (public speaking), tahfidz (Quran memorization), qira'ah (Quran recitation), calligraphy, al-banjari (Islamic music), and the annual Star Festival as a medium for evaluating student skills. Despite limited resources, this boarding school maintains the continuity of the program and achieves various student achievements. This situation shows

an interesting training practice and deserves further research, especially regarding how the PMB strategy is applied in developing the potential of students. Based on the explanation above, the research problem is outlined as follows: How does the Interest and Talent Development Program implement training methods to optimize the potential of students at the Kyai Syarifuddin Islamic Boarding School, Lumajang? The purpose of this study is to describe and analyze the implementation of training methods through PMB at the aforementioned boarding school. The results of this study are expected to provide a model that can be practically applied to other boarding schools, especially those with limited resources, in developing a planned and collaborative strategy for training the potential of students.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative method with a case study design. The case study was chosen because it focused on a detailed explanation of the implementation of training strategies at the Kyai Syarifuddin Islamic Boarding School in Lumajang (Creswell, 2015).

Participants and sampling. This study involved eight informants selected through purposive sampling. The informants consisted of one pesantren caretaker, five PMB management members, and two students. The pesantren caretaker was Nyai Hj. Qurroti A'yun. The PMB management members consisted of Nilna Hulwatun Nafi'ah as the PMB coordinator, Sevia Nur Hidayatullah as the head of the academic division, and three PMB administrators, namely Nabila Najma Zahiroh, Qurratul Aini, and Nafis Zahrotun. The two student informants were Kamila and Hifawatul Bilqis. They were selected because of their direct involvement and experience in the planning, implementation, supervision, and participation in the Interest and Talent Development Program (PMB). Purposive sampling was used to select informants who could provide relevant information regarding the identification of students' potential, training implementation, obstacles, mentoring, and collaboration within the PMB program.

Data collection instruments. Data were collected using three instruments: (1) a semi-structured interview guide containing open-ended questions about the implementation of PMB, participant roles, obstacles, and collaboration; (2) an observation sheet to record training activities, mentoring patterns, student involvement, and the use of facilities; and (3) a document analysis form to review PMB schedules, activity reports, achievement records, and Star Festival documentation. These instruments were designed based on the research questions and qualitative research procedures (Arikunto, 2022).

Trustworthiness and data analysis. Trustworthiness was strengthened through triangulation of sources, methods, and time. In addition, member checking was conducted by confirming interview summaries with relevant informants, while an audit trail was maintained through interview notes, observation notes, coding decisions, document lists, and refinements of analytical categories. Peer discussions were also conducted to discuss emerging interpretations among research team members before the final themes were determined. These procedures were intended to strengthen the credibility, consistency, and confirmability of the findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles (Miles et al., 2014) consisting of data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

Table 1. Approaches to Student Interest and Talent Development

Approach	Core mechanism	Expected function
1. Identification	Room-leader recommendations, direct observation, student choice, and motivation	Align potential with interest and establish an initial coaching pathway
2. Structured design and implementation	Program planning, routine practice, mentoring, and Star Festival evaluation	Convert identified potential into progressively demonstrated competence

3. Adaptive management	Schedule adjustment, rotating facility use, and individualized encouragement	Maintain continuity despite time, facility, and confidence constraints
4. Collaboration	Caregiver legitimacy, coordinator management, administrator mentoring, room-leader observation, and student agency	Integrate resources and accountability across the pesantren ecosystem

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Developing Interests and Talents Strategy in Identifying Potential Students

The implementation of student potential development at the Kyai Syarifuddin Islamic Boarding School begins with a planned identification approach. The Student Orientation (PMB) does not wait for students to discover their potential independently but instead implements an early detection method through two main channels: recommendations from room leaders and direct observation by PMB officers. Room leaders are chosen as partners in the identification process because they have the most intense interaction with students in the daily life of the boarding school. This strong bond allows class leaders to identify students' natural talents that may not be apparent in formal activities.

A Student Admissions officers stated that dormitory leaders are the ones who know each student's strengths best due to their close experience of dormitory life. They recommend talented students; for example, if a student is proficient in Arabic, the dormitory leader will ask for their permission to join relevant training classes (interview with Ustadzah Nafis Zahrotun, May 23, 2025). Observations indicate that dormitory leaders play a crucial role in identifying potential by observing students during daily dormitory activities, including storytelling, singing, or discussions, which can provide early clues to specific talents.

After receiving recommendations, the PMB team proceeds with direct observation and personal interaction with students to ensure that the proposed training area aligns with their abilities and interests. However, this approach faces challenges when students demonstrate talent but lack interest. In such situations, PMB employs motivational techniques. As explained by another officer, sometimes students have the ability but lack interest, so they need to be motivated before being invited to participate in training that aligns with their talents. After the training, they typically participate in the Star Festival, which serves as a source of motivation to perform optimally (interview with Ustadzah Qurratul Aini, May 23, 2025).

Furthermore, the guardian's policy provides opportunities for students through socialization in the field of training. According to the PMB coordinator, in accordance with the guardian's policy, every Thursday evening, formal religious study activities are replaced with interest and talent training. Each student is given a choice of: Indonesian, English, Arabic, Qur'anic verses, qira'ah (recitation of the Qur'an), or a Qur'anic quiz. Each class is guided by a staff member who accompanies the student (interview with Ustadzah Nilna Hulwatun Nafi'ah, May 23, 2025).

These findings suggest that regularity plays an important role not just because of repeating activities, but also because these repetitions are integrated into a clear pathway from preparation to performing in front of an audience and receiving feedback. That's why the Star Festival serves as a genuine evaluation platform: it showcases students' progress, provides evidence for mentors for further guidance, and creates social incentives that encourage students to keep striving. This interpretation supports the belief that talent develops through continuous participation and focused practice while also broadening our understanding by showing that in the context of Islamic boarding schools, evaluation events also shape motivation and responsibility collectively. These findings align with evidence that extracurricular activities can support students' social and emotional skills, but they add an explanation of the process on how guidance, mentors, and performance opportunities are interconnected in the context of boarding religious education (Wang et al., 2024). This interpretation is also in line with the meta-analysis by Macnamara (Macnamara et al., 2014), which indicates that deliberate practice plays a role

in performance but does not explain performance itself. In this context, practice becomes meaningful when combined with guidance, student motivation, opportunities to demonstrate abilities, and feedback. Therefore, PMB does not see talent as a fixed trait or practice as the only adequate way; it combines structured practice with psychosocial support and social recognition.

Developing Interests and Talents Strategy in Designing and Implementing Coaching

Once potential is identified, PMB implements a planned, intensive training approach in three stages: planning, routine training implementation, and evaluation. This strategy is designed to ensure that the training program is not random but systematic and sustainable. During the planning stage, administrators develop programs based on identified needs and potential. The PMB coordinator explained that boarding school-based educational institutions conduct various activities to hone students' interests and talents, including routine activities such as sermons, speaking training, Quranic recitation, qira'ah (recitation), calligraphy, memorization (tahfidz), and the annual Star Festival (interview with Ustadzah Nilna Hulwatun Nafi'ah, June 5, 2025). This planning process involves collaboration between administrators, caregivers, and teaching staff in determining the types of activities, scheduling, and assigning roles.

On The implementation phase is conducted through regular training sessions led by PMB coordinators who act as mentors. Each training session is managed by a single coordinator to ensure personalized and continuous support. The coordinators explained that they select appropriate competitions for the students, create schedules, and assign responsibilities. They also accompany students during training sessions, providing encouragement and guiding them toward greater confidence. When challenges arise, such as a lack of equipment or a lack of motivation, they seek solutions. In this way, the coordinators serve as a liaison between teachers and students and as a companion throughout the session (interview with Ustadzah Nilna Hulwatun Nafi'ah, June 7, 2025).

Another manager emphasized that the implementation was carried out in stages: the first was to introduce the upcoming activities; second, students chose their areas of interest, followed by practice sessions with the management assistant; and finally, after thorough preparation, students were given the opportunity to perform, either in sermons, internal competitions such as the Star Festival, or external events (interview with Ustadzah Nabila Najma Zahiroh, June 7, 2025).

The observations indicate that the administrators are actively involved in every stage of the activity. Throughout the activity, the administrators play a role in technical aspects, from preparing equipment and organizing schedules to maintaining student discipline. During practice sessions, several administrators accompany students, providing basic instructions and motivating them to build confidence. One student confirmed this process, stating that they are initially informed about upcoming competitions or activities, then practice in their respective areas. After the event, there is usually an assessment or feedback from teachers and administrators to improve their skills (interview with Hifawatul Bilqis, June 7, 2025).

The evaluation phase is realized through the annual Star Festival. The academic chair stated that the Star Festival is held to celebrate and develop students' interests and talents. This event was initiated because the end-of-year competition previously held by the foundation had been discontinued. Therefore, the caretaker, Nyai Hj. Qurroti A'yun, established a policy to ensure that students' creativity, talents, and interests continued to be expressed through a competition called the "Star Festival" specifically for the Dalem Utara—Dalem Timur dormitories (interview with Ustadzah Sevia Nur Hidayatullah, June 5, 2025).

The findings indicate that the three-stage strategy of planning, implementation, and evaluation forms a continuous coaching process. Planning determines the direction of training based on students' identified potential, while regular implementation provides opportunities for

students to develop their abilities through focused practice and mentoring. The Star Festival then functions as an evaluation space where students can demonstrate their abilities and receive feedback. This pattern is consistent with the coaching concept, which emphasizes the integration of planning, implementation, and evaluation as an inseparable process (Yuliana, 2021). Regular and focused practice is also important because talent requires continuous training to develop into achievement (Winkel, 2012), while regular mentoring can support students' skill development and self-confidence (Suryabrata, 2019). Evaluation through competition provides students with opportunities to demonstrate their abilities and receive feedback that encourages further improvement.

Adaptive Strategies of Talent Development Managers in Overcoming Training Obstacles

Implementing the training strategy faced various operational challenges. The PMB focused not only on identifying issues but also implemented a flexible approach to address obstacles without interrupting the training session. Some of the key challenges identified included busy student schedules, limited trainers, and low self-confidence among some participants.

An administrator explained that several obstacles frequently arise: students have very busy schedules, which makes it difficult to balance formal education, talent training, and religious activities. Furthermore, the overall number of coaches limits effectiveness, as each coach must handle many students. Facilities are sometimes inadequate, such as limited practice space or incomplete musical instruments. Furthermore, some students feel shy or lack confidence when performing, requiring additional encouragement from administrators and peers (interview with Ustadzah Qurratul Aini, June 10, 2025). A student also confirmed these challenges, stating that busy schedules, limited facilities that require rotations or waiting for practice opportunities, and occasional shyness or lack of confidence when performing are problems they face (interview with Hifawatul Bilqis, June 10, 2025).

To address these challenges, the PMB has implemented three flexible approaches. First, time adjustments are made to avoid conflicts with mandatory student activities. The coordinator emphasized that issues such as busy schedules and limited facilities can be addressed by scheduling practice times so that students can participate without conflicting with other activities (interview with Ustadzah Nilna Hulwatun Nafi'ah, June 10, 2025). Second, the implementation of rotating facility use is used to accommodate limited resources. The coordinator added that they utilize available space and equipment by rotating so that all students have the opportunity to practice (interview with Ustadzah Nilna Hulwatun Nafi'ah, June 10, 2025). Third, extra motivation is provided to students who feel low on confidence. Another administrator explained that for students who are still feeling uncertain and lacking in confidence, they usually start with small talk to encourage them to be more confident (interview with Ustadzah Nabila Najma Zahiroh, June 10, 2025).

Observation this adaptive strategy demonstrated that it effectively maintained program continuity. Administrators actively assisted students who showed signs of hesitation, provided support, and created a positive practice environment. Peer support was also evident as students encouraged each other before their performances.

Theoretically, PMB's response to obstacles aligns with (Djamarah, 2020) view, which states that learning success is strongly influenced by internal factors (students' psychological state) and external factors (environment and facilities). This view is reinforced by (Slameto, 2010), who stated that learning outcomes are determined by internal and external factors that need to be managed synergistically. PMB does not view obstacles as the final limit of the process, but rather as elements that need to be managed through innovation. Time adjustments reflect time management, rotating use of facilities reflects resource management, and extra motivation reflects psychological support. According to (Uno, 2021), motivation is the main

factor that maintains student engagement in structured activities. These three strategies demonstrate that the implementation of coaching methods is not rigid but adaptable to changing conditions in the field (Faladhin et al., 2024).

Collaborative Strategy of The Talent Development Committee in Guiding Students

The implementation of training plans cannot be carried out without cross-stakeholder cooperation. PMB creates a collaborative approach involving caregivers, PMB coordinators, administrators, room leaders, and students as part of an integrated system. Each individual has an important, complementary role (Zakiyah, 2023)

The guardian acts as a decision-maker and source of legitimacy for the program. The policy of replacing formal religious instruction on Thursday nights with training on interests and talents is an example of a structural intervention that provides opportunities and time for students to develop. The academic head stated that the interest and talent development program is a guardian policy aimed at providing space for students to explore their potential (interview with Ustadzah Sevia Nur Hidayatullah, June 15, 2025).

The PMB Coordinator acts as a liaison between the caretaker's policies and field practices. As coordinator, Ustadzah Nilna Hulwatun Nafi'ah develops operational plans, assigns tasks to administrators, and coordinates potential identification with room leaders. She also directly addresses challenges in the field, demonstrating that the coordinator possesses not only managerial duties but also problem-solving abilities.

The PMB administrators serve to implement technical procedures and act as mentors who accompany students during their internships. One administrator emphasized that room leaders understand each student's strengths due to their close relationships, which is why they recommend talented students (interview with Ustadzah Nafis Zahrotun, June 15, 2025). Another administrator added that they also invite room leaders to collaborate in selecting dorm members (interview with Ustadzah Qurratul Aini, June 15, 2025).

Classroom leaders serve a unique role as early observers due to their emotional closeness and intense daily interactions with students. The information provided by class leaders is a crucial factor for PMB in determining the appropriate type of training based on each student's individual characteristics.

Students act as active individuals, with their willingness to practice being key to the program's success. One student explained that support from peers and teachers, available facilities such as a practice room and al-banjari instruments, dedicated practice time, and the students' own enthusiasm all contributed to their interest and the development of their talents (interview with Kamila, June 10, 2025).

Observations show that collaboration between caregivers, coordinators, administrators, room leaders, and students has established a comprehensive training mechanism, from identifying potential and implementing coaching to evaluating progress. This collaborative structure demonstrates that interest and talent development are not the sole responsibility of one party, but rather the result of a multi-faceted collaboration.

This collaborative strategy is effective because it connects four functions that are distributed among different actors: permission and scheduling by the caregivers, operational management by the PMB coordinator, daily observation and mentoring by administrators and room leaders, and active participation by students. Through this structure, information from daily observations can be transferred into program decisions, while feedback from training activities can be communicated to those responsible for supporting students. The collaborative structure also helps address limited resources by enabling the sharing of expertise, time, facilities, and motivation among the actors involved. These findings are consistent with the view that effective stakeholder collaboration requires clear roles and connected communication (Vlcek & Somerton, 2024). However, this study shows a distinctive pattern in which collaboration occurs within the internal ecosystem of a pesantren, with room leaders

functioning as early observers and students participating as active partners rather than merely as recipients of the program.

In this Islamic boarding school, collaboration creates an internal environment like a dormitory, where the room leaders act as talent scouts, while the students take on the role of active partners, not just recipients (Vlcek & Somerton, 2024). The significance of this study is to illustrate how collaboration can serve as a means for talent development, not merely as a general managerial principle. The research findings also add to the literature on extracurricular activities by showing that the learning environment goes beyond these activities: it also involves adults and peers who recognize the students, organize practice sessions, and maintain their motivation. This is especially crucial in boarding schools, where daily interactions generate more ongoing opportunities for analysis and guidance compared to short-term extracurricular programs that typically exist.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Interest and Talent Development Program (PMB) at Kyai Syarifuddin Islamic Boarding School implements four interrelated approaches to developing students' potential. First, the identification approach combines recommendations from dormitory leaders, direct observation, student choice, and motivation. Second, the structured design and implementation approach connects program planning, routine practice, mentoring, and evaluation through the Star Festival. Third, adaptive management maintains program continuity through schedule adjustments, facility rotation, and individualized encouragement. Fourth, the collaborative approach integrates the complementary roles of caregivers, PMB coordinators, administrators, dormitory leaders, and students.

Theoretically, this study contributes an integrated framework for understanding talent development in pesantren by connecting identification, structured coaching, adaptive management, and stakeholder collaboration within a residential educational environment. Practically, the findings indicate that pesantren with limited resources can develop students' potential by utilizing existing human resources, organizing regular practice, adjusting schedules, and distributing responsibilities among relevant stakeholders. This finding also confirms that talent development in pesantren is not solely dependent on facilities, but can be strengthened through systematic management and collaboration among members of the pesantren community.

This study has limitations. First, it was conducted at a single pesantren, meaning that the findings reflect the organizational and cultural characteristics of Kyai Syarifuddin Islamic Boarding School and cannot be directly generalized to all pesantren. Second, the study focuses on the implementation of the PMB program and does not quantitatively measure changes in students' talent development or achievement. Future research could examine similar programs across several pesantren to compare different organizational contexts and could investigate students' developmental outcomes over a longer period.

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