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Synergy of The Boarding Program and The Cambridge Partnership in Educational Management Strategy: Building Excellence and Public Interest

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Abstract:

Intensifying competition among educational institutions requires madrasah not only to manage resources administratively, but also to formulate and implement management strategies capable of producing a competitive advantage that is difficult for other institutions to replicate. This study aims to analyze the educational strategic management of MAN 4 Jakarta, focusing on the synergy between its boarding program and its Cambridge International curriculum partnership as strategic resources that build both institutional excellence and the school's favored status in the eyes of the public. The study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, questionnaires, observation, and documentation study involving the principal, vice principal, teachers, and education staff, and were analyzed through an interactive model of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification, supported by source and method triangulation to ensure data trustworthiness. The analytical framework combines a functional-area strategy-implementation model marketing, finance/accounting, research and development (R&D), and management information systems with the Resource-Based View (RBV), which evaluates resources against four criteria: valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable. The findings show that resource management at MAN 4 Jakarta is carried out in an integrated manner across functional areas, and that the boarding program combined with the Cambridge partnership forms a resource bundle that is relatively difficult for other madrasah to imitate, since it unites intensive religious formation, around-the-clock learning conditioning, and internationally recognized curriculum credentials within a single educational service package. This synergy is reflected in the strengthening of the school's image and market positioning, as well as in the admission outcomes of boarding-program students to domestic public universities, which have consistently exceeded those of the overall student ody and widened from roughly 6 percentage points in 2024 to roughly 18 percentage points in 2026. This pattern is further corroborated by the school's new-student admission (PPDB) documentation, which shows that total applicants to the boarding program and the Cambridge partnership more than tripled over two academic years (from 1,207 applicants in 2023/2024 to 4,358 applicants in 2025/2026), with the applicant-to-seat ratio also widening sharply for both programs. Nevertheless, this study did not collect data on applicants' motivations or the relative contribution of other factors beyond the boarding–Cambridge synergy, so the link between this synergy and the school's favored public status should still be read as a strong indication rather than a fully causal conclusion.

Keywords: *Educational strategic management; Resource-Based View; boarding program; international partnership; school excellence*

Introduction

Increasingly open competition among educational institutions requires madrasah to formulate strategy, rather than merely carry out routine administrative functions. The excellence of an educational institution does not, in essence, arise by chance; it is the outcome of a strategic management process that encompasses formulating a vision, setting policy direction, allocating resources, and conducting continuous evaluation. Research on strategic planning in schools shows that the quality of planning practice—encompassing analysis, strategic choice, and implementation—contributes to improved institutional performance (Ibrahim, Kyando, & Kiwonde, 2023). This finding confirms that a madrasah's long-term success is determined less by the sheer scale of the resources it possesses than by the appropriateness of the strategy it pursues.

Within the framework of strategic management, David (2011) emphasizes that the strategy process consists of three interrelated stages—strategy formulation, strategy implementation, and strategy evaluation—with implementation as the action stage that demands the involvement of every functional area of the organization: marketing, finance/accounting, research and development, production/operations, and management information systems. For a madrasah, this framework means that the strategies for managing human resources, financing, programs, and information cannot be viewed in isolation, but rather as a single, unified implementation directed toward the same institutional goal. Research on school financial management, for example, shows that the administrative effectiveness of a school principal is strongly influenced by how the budget is planned, recorded, and evaluated (Olaifa, Ajala, Olaifa, Medupin, & Adeoye, 2024), illustrating that every functional area carries its own strategic role in supporting the institution's overall excellence.

Not every resource an institution possesses, however, produces sustained excellence. The Resource-Based View (RBV) perspective developed by Barney (1991) explains that sustained competitive advantage can only be built from resources that simultaneously satisfy four criteria: valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable, and non-substitutable. A resource that other institutions can easily obtain or imitate, however useful, will not become a source of long-term advantage. Research on competition and competitive advantage in higher education confirms the relevance of this perspective to the education sector, showing that educational institutions able to manage a distinctive combination of resources—rather than generic, easily copied resources—are better able to sustain their competitive position (Hart & Rodgers, 2024). This framework is relevant for reading MAN 4 Jakarta, a state madrasah that possesses a combination of resources not commonly found at formal educational institutions of secondary-school level.

MAN 4 Jakarta's profile reflects a global orientation grounded in Islamic values, supported by school partnerships with Kunori Gakuen (Japan), Al-Azhar, and Cambridge. The madrasah operates a boarding program as part of its educational services, alongside regular learning facilities such as classrooms, laboratories, a mosque, and an arts room. The madrasah's 2026 profile data record 1,216 students, 98 teachers, and 53 education staff, with achievements spread across research, science,

sports, the arts, robotics, and religious studies. This combination of resources—a boarding program fused with intensive religious formation, on one hand, and the Cambridge international curriculum partnership, on the other—forms the point of departure for this study, since the two resources rarely occur together at a single state madrasah, and may reasonably be presumed to form a combination that distinctively sets MAN 4 Jakarta apart from similar educational institutions.

From the standpoint of education marketing, the presence of distinctive resources of this kind has consequences for how the public perceives and chooses educational institutions. A systematic review of marketing and school choice shows that the intensity of school marketing activity tends to rise alongside the level of inter-institutional competition, but promotion alone has little effect unless it is backed by service attributes that genuinely distinguish the institution from its competitors (Greaves, Wilson, & Nairn, 2023). In other words, a madrasah's image and positioning in the public eye are determined more by the substance of the services it offers than by promotional activity itself. On the other hand, research on international school partnerships shows that involvement in cross-country networks broadens students' perspectives and gives educational institutions access to a wider range of experience, standards, and recognition (Edge & Khamsi, 2012). Taken together, these two bodies of research suggest that the combination of the boarding program and the Cambridge partnership at MAN 4 Jakarta has the potential to function as a distinguishing service substance that naturally supports the madrasah's image and public interest—something that warrants further examination through empirical data.

An important precedent comes from research on the business strategy of pesantren-based educational institutions, which found that the business excellence of boarding-based Islamic education arises from the integrated management of human resources, marketing, production/service, and finance, with the pesantren's residential and religious character functioning as a distinguishing element that strengthens, rather than hinders, institutional competitiveness (Harjawati, Sumiati, Aisjah, & Ratnawati, 2026). This finding is relevant to MAN 4 Jakarta, as it confirms that the boarding character of an Islamic educational institution can—and should—be read as a strategic resource, not merely as a supporting facility, when it is deliberately managed as part of the institutional strategy.

Research on strategic management in education has been conducted extensively, including on aspects of strategic planning, education marketing, and school financial management. However, research that specifically examines how the combination of two particular resources—a boarding program and an international curriculum partnership—functions as a source of competitive advantage through Resource-Based View criteria, while also contributing to public preference for a state madrasah, remains limited. This study is directed at filling that gap by analyzing the implementation of educational management strategy at MAN 4 Jakarta across the functional areas of marketing, human resources, finance/accounting, program development (R&D), and information systems, and by specifically examining the synergy between the boarding program and the Cambridge partnership as a strategic resource that builds both excellence and this madrasah's favored status in the public eye.

Theoretical Review: Strategic Management and The Management of Educational Resources

The Concept and Process of Strategic Management

Strategic management is defined by David (2011) as the art and science of formulating, implementing, and evaluating cross-functional decisions that enable an organization to achieve its objectives. This process consists of three main stages. Strategy formulation encompasses developing a vision and mission, identifying external opportunities and threats, assessing internal strengths and weaknesses, setting long-term objectives, and selecting among alternative strategies. Strategy implementation is referred to as the action stage because it requires the organization to set annual objectives, devise policies, motivate organizational members, and allocate resources so that the formulated strategy is genuinely carried out across every functional area—marketing, finance/accounting, research and development, production/operations, and management information systems. Strategy evaluation closes this process through the measurement and assessment of performance to ensure the strategy remains relevant to the organization's circumstances. For an educational institution such as a madrasah, this framework confirms that excellence does not arise solely from a well-formulated vision, but from the consistency of its implementation across every functional area in a coordinated manner.

Resource-Based View (RBV) and Competitive Advantage

The Resource-Based View developed by Barney (1991) views a firm or organization as a bundle of resources and capabilities, encompassing all the assets, capabilities, organizational processes, organizational attributes, information, and knowledge controlled by the organization that enable it to formulate and implement strategies that improve efficiency and effectiveness. Barney asserts that sustained competitive advantage can only be obtained from resources that simultaneously satisfy four attributes: valuable, in the sense of enabling the organization to exploit opportunities or neutralize threats; rare among both actual and potential competitors; imperfectly imitable, whether because of unique historical conditions, causal ambiguity, or social complexity; and non-substitutable by functionally equivalent alternative resources. Applied to the education context, this framework encourages a more specific kind of analysis: rather than concluding that an institution is "excellent" simply because it possesses many resources, RBV guides researchers to identify the particular resource or combination of resources that specifically satisfies all four criteria, and which therefore merits being regarded as the genuine basis of competitive advantage.

Strategy Implementation in Functional Areas: Marketing, Finance/Accounting, R&D, and Information Systems

In the marketing area, strategy implementation according to David (2011) centers on market segmentation and product positioning—that is, how an organization distinguishes itself from competitors through service attributes communicated to a particular target segment. In the finance/accounting area, strategy implementation relates to financing and budgeting decisions that support the execution of strategy,

including an assessment of a program's feasibility and sustainability from a financing standpoint. In the research and development (R&D) area, strategy implementation concerns how an organization develops new products, services, or programs that are responsive to the chosen strategy. In the management information system (MIS) area, strategy implementation concerns how an organization collects, manages, and presents information as a basis for decision-making; research on the role of MIS in educational institutions confirms that an integrated information system supports administrative efficiency, transparency, and the quality of managerial decision-making (Shah, 2014). Applied to a madrasah, these four areas—marketing, finance/accounting, R&D/program development, and information systems—provide a framework for mapping how resource-management strategy is genuinely implemented, rather than merely recorded in vision and mission documents.

Value Chain Analysis in the Education Context

Value chain analysis views an organization as a sequence of activities that create value, divided into primary activities and support activities that jointly form the organization's margin, or added value (David, 2011). Adapted to the education context, a madrasah's primary activities can be understood as the processes of learning, religious formation, and the development of students' potential that students and parents directly experience as the educational "product." Support activities include human resource management (recruitment and professional development of teachers and staff), finance/accounting (financing and budgeting), facilities and infrastructure (physical facilities, including boarding houses), and management information systems. The value the public perceives in a madrasah is ultimately the outcome of how these primary and support activities reinforce one another; a good learning program, for instance, will not be optimal without the support of competent teaching staff, adequate financing, and appropriate facilities. This framework serves as a reminder that a madrasah's excellence needs to be read as the outcome of interlinkage among activities, rather than as the contribution of a single, standalone activity.

Service Differentiation and International Partnership as Sources of Excellence

In the marketing of educational services, service differentiation becomes an important strategy for an educational institution to distinguish itself from competitors and establish a clear positioning in the public eye. A systematic review by Greaves, Wilson, and Nairn (2023) found that schools tend to intensify marketing activity when facing higher competition, but the effectiveness of that marketing depends heavily on whether the institution genuinely possesses differentiated service attributes, rather than merely communicating them persuasively. On the other hand, Edge and Khamsi's (2012) research on international school partnerships found that students' involvement in cross-country networks and partnerships broadens their global outlook and provides an educational experience that is qualitatively different from that of schools without such partnerships—a form of added value that, when linked to the RBV framework, is relatively difficult for institutions lacking access to similar networks to replicate. The boarding program, for its part, has been shown capable of being positioned as a strategic resource at residential-based Islamic educational

institutions, where the integrated management of human resources, marketing, service, and finance within a boarding environment produces a distinctive educational business advantage that is difficult for non-residential institutions to imitate (Harjawati et al., 2026). Together, these three bodies of research form the conceptual basis for this study's central argument: that the combination of the boarding program—with its intensive residential and religious character—and the Cambridge international curriculum partnership—with its cross-country recognition and standards—has the potential to form a single resource package that is simultaneously valuable, rare, difficult to imitate, and not easily substituted, and therefore merits empirical testing as a basis for competitive advantage and public preference toward MAN 4 Jakarta.

Research Conceptual Framework

Based on the discussion above, this study constructs a conceptual framework that views educational management strategy at MAN 4 Jakarta as a process encompassing: (1) strategy formulation, as embodied in the madrasah's vision and mission; (2) strategy implementation across five functional areas—marketing, human resources, finance/accounting, program development (R&D), and management information systems, including the management of facilities and infrastructure; (3) strategy evaluation through student outcomes and stakeholder perceptions; and (4) resource assessment through Resource-Based View criteria to identify which of the madrasah's resources genuinely function as a basis for sustained competitive advantage. This conceptual framework is specifically directed at testing the synergy between the boarding program and the Cambridge partnership as a combination of resources presumed to satisfy the valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable criteria, and which therefore explains both the excellence and the favored status of MAN 4 Jakarta in the public eye. This framework is used as the analytical lens in the Results and Discussion section.

Research Method

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design, as developed by Creswell (2013), chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of the implementation of educational management strategy at a single institution within its real-life context, namely MAN 4 Jakarta. Research data were obtained through in-depth interviews, questionnaires, observation, and documentation study. Interviews were conducted with the principal, vice principal, teachers, education staff, and program managers directly involved in resource management, including the managers of the boarding program and the international partnership. Informants were selected through purposive sampling based on their involvement in formulating and carrying out the madrasah's resource-management strategy. A questionnaire using a 1–5 Likert scale was used as a supporting instrument to obtain a picture of respondents' perceptions of strategy implementation in the areas of marketing, finance, program development, information systems, and the use of facilities and infrastructure, including perceptions of the role of the boarding program and the Cambridge partnership in shaping the madrasah's image. Documentation study was

used to complement the data on the madrasah's profile, programs, student outcomes, and external partnerships.

Data were analyzed descriptively and qualitatively, drawing on the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (1994), which comprises the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data from interviews, questionnaires, observation, and documentation were grouped into themes following the functional areas of strategic management—marketing, human resources, finance/accounting, program development (R&D), information systems, and facilities and infrastructure—and specifically traced to identify resources that potentially satisfy Resource-Based View criteria. Questionnaire data were processed descriptively through the calculation of scores and response tendencies, while interview, observation, and documentation data were analyzed through thematic reduction and display. The results of each technique were then compared through source triangulation and method triangulation to maintain data trustworthiness, before being used to describe the implementation of educational management strategy and the contribution of the boarding program–Cambridge partnership synergy to excellence and public preference toward MAN 4 Jakarta. This study then supplemented the qualitative data with the madrasah's new-student admission (PPDB) documentation data on the number of applicants and the applicant-to-seat ratio for the boarding program and the Cambridge partnership over the past three academic years (2023/2024–2025/2026), so that claims regarding the madrasah's favored public status rest not only on informant and respondent perceptions, but also directly on the madrasah's admission-data trends. This study remains aware of its limitation in that the PPDB data are not accompanied by information on applicants' motivations or the relative contribution of other factors beyond the boarding–Cambridge synergy.

Results and Discussion

Results

The findings show that educational management strategy at MAN 4 Jakarta is implemented across functional areas, with the boarding program and the Cambridge partnership emerging as the two resources informants consistently cited as this madrasah's primary distinguishing feature from other institutions at the same level. The madrasah's profile confirms a global orientation grounded in Islamic values, supported by partnerships with Kunori Gakuen (Japan), Al-Azhar, and Cambridge, together with a mission that emphasizes innovative education, the professionalism of teaching and education staff, the development of facilities and infrastructure, and transparent and accountable governance. Strategy implementation in each functional area is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Implementation of Educational Management Strategy at MAN 4 Jakarta by Functional Area

No.	Functional Area	Form of Implementation	Research Finding
1	Human Resources	Management and development of teaching and education staff	98 teachers and 53 education staff with diverse educational backgrounds and employment status

No.	Functional Area	Form of Implementation	Research Finding
2	Marketing	Service differentiation and positioning through the boarding program and international partnerships	The synergy of the boarding program and the Cambridge curriculum partnership, supported by cooperation with Kunori Gakuen and Al-Azhar, shapes a global madrasah image grounded in Islamic values that informants consistently cited as the primary distinguishing feature, reinforced by PPDB data showing that the number of applicants to both programs rose more than threefold within two academic years
3	Finance/Accounting	Management of financing for boarding services and supporting programs	Financing is directed at sustaining boarding services and development programs, but is not yet supported by detailed budget data
4	R&D/Program Development	Development of learning, research, achievement, and boarding programs	Innovative learning programs and boarding mentoring run alongside academic, non-academic, and religious programs
5	Facilities and Infrastructure	Provision and optimization of educational facilities, including the boarding house	Facilities include classrooms, laboratories, a mosque, sports facilities, a library, and the student boarding house as a core facility of service differentiation
6	Information System	Provision of public information media	MAN 4 Jakarta has an official madrasah website; evidence of an integrated internal management information system has not yet been documented in detail

Table 1 shows that the six functional areas are interrelated, with the marketing aspect explicitly highlighting the synergy between the boarding program and the Cambridge partnership as the form of service differentiation most frequently cited by informants. Meanwhile, the finance/accounting and information system aspects show relatively more limited implementation compared with the marketing, human resources, and program development areas—a pattern that will be discussed further in the Discussion section.

In terms of human resources and students, MAN 4 Jakarta has a fairly large student body in the current academic year, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Human Resources and Students of MAN 4 Jakarta

Component	Category	Number
Students	Grade X	382
	Grade XI	423
	Grade XII	411

Component	Category	Number
Total Students		**1,216**
Teachers	Bachelor's Degree	64
	Master's Degree	30
	Doctoral Degree	4
Total Teachers		**98**
Education Staff	33 Men / 20 Women	**53**

Based on Table 2, MAN 4 Jakarta has 1,216 students distributed across Grade X (382), Grade XI (423), and Grade XII (411). The madrasah is supported by 98 teachers—comprising 64 bachelor's degree holders, 30 master's degree holders, and 4 doctoral degree holders—and 53 education staff, comprising 33 men and 20 women. This fairly large population of students and teaching staff forms a human resource base that needs to be strategically directed, including to support the management of the boarding program and the international partnership that are the focus of this study.

In addition, MAN 4 Jakarta also recorded a range of student achievements in 2025 in the fields of science, research, debate, languages, sports, the arts, robotics, and religious studies, as summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Student Achievements as an Indicator of Madrasah Excellence

Achievement Category	Level	Number of Awards
Research Competitions	International	296
Indonesian Madrasah Olympiad – Research	International	6
National Research Competition	National	39
Other National Science Olympiads	National	1,103
Sports	National	32
Arts	National	68
Robotics	International/National	28
Qur'an Memorization (3–30 Juz)	National	78

Table 3 shows that MAN 4 Jakarta students' achievements span the academic, research, sports, arts, robotics, and religious domains, with significant achievements in international research competitions (296 medals) and other national science olympiads (1,103 medals). This diversity of achievement shows that program development at the madrasah is not confined to a single field; however, this study cannot ascertain the proportion of achievements specifically produced by boarding-program students, because the available data have not been disaggregated by boarding-program participation status.

Besides these achievements, the number of MAN 4 Jakarta students admitted to overseas universities in 2024–2026 also shows an upward trend, as displayed in Figure 1.

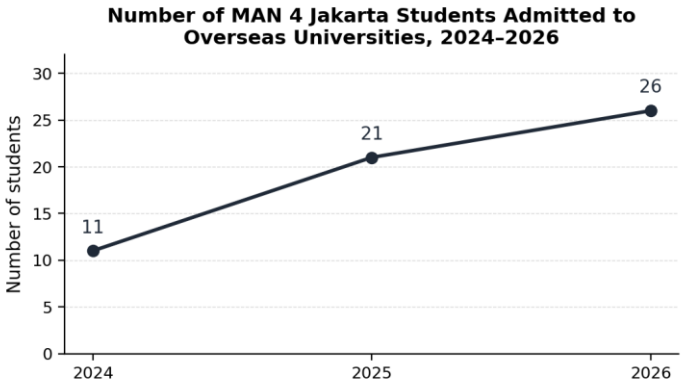


Figure 1. Number of MAN 4 Jakarta Students Admitted to Overseas Universities, 2024–2026

Figure 1 shows an increase in the number of MAN 4 Jakarta students admitted to overseas universities, from 11 students in 2024 to 21 students in 2025 and 26 students in 2026. In 2026, 8 of these students also received the Garuda Scholarship for undergraduate study abroad.

Beyond achievements at the international level, the madrasah's documentation also records domestic public university (PTN) admission outcomes throughout 2024–2026, including a comparison between boarding-program students and the overall student body, as presented in Table 4 and Figure 2.

Table 4. Public University (PTN) Admission Outcomes: Overall Students vs. Boarding-Program Students, 2024–2026

Year	Total Students	Admitted to PTN	% Overall	Boarding Students	Admitted to PTN (Boarding)	% Boarding
2024	329	278	84.5%	21	19	90.5%
2025	367	288	78.5%	102	92	90.2%
2026	408	329	80.6%	72	71	98.6%

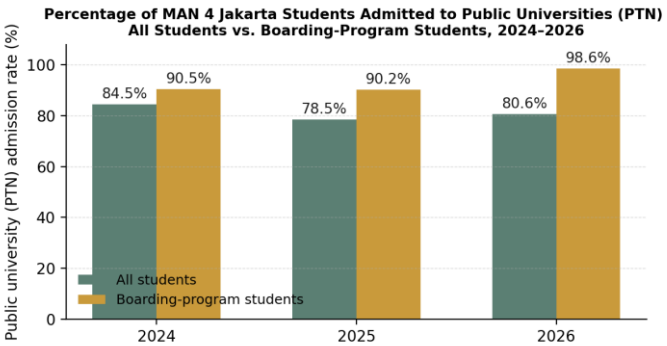


Figure 2. Percentage of PTN Admission: Overall Students vs. Boarding-Program Students, 2024–2026

Table 4 and Figure 2 provide the quantitative evidence most relevant to this study's central argument. The PTN admission percentage of boarding-program students was consistently higher than that of the overall student body throughout 2024–2026, with the gap widening from around 6 percentage points in 2024 (90.5% versus 84.5%) to around 18 points in 2026 (98.6% versus 80.6%), when 71 of 72 boarding students were admitted to PTN. This widening pattern will be examined further in the Discussion section as empirical evidence of how the synergy between the boarding program and the Cambridge partnership functions as the madrasah's distinguishing strategic resource.

Beyond the outcome data, the interview and questionnaire results show that informants and respondents consistently linked the boarding program and the Cambridge partnership to their reasons for regarding MAN 4 Jakarta as a madrasah favored by the public. Several informants stated that the combination of intensive religious formation in the boarding house and the international curriculum recognition from Cambridge gives parents a sense of security while also promising graduates ready to compete globally without abandoning their religious education. This qualitative perception can be compared with the madrasah's new-student admission (PPDB) documentation data on the number of applicants to both programs over the past three academic years, as presented in Table 5 and Figure 3.

Table 5. Number of Applicants and Students Admitted to the Flagship Boarding Program and the Cambridge Partnership through MAN 4 Jakarta's PPDB, Academic Years 2023/2024–2025/2026

Academic Year	Boarding Applicants	Boarding Admitted (Students)	Applicant-to-Seat Ratio (Boarding)	Cambridge Applicants	Cambridge Admitted (Students)	Applicant-to-Seat Ratio (Cambridge)
2023/2024	900	72	12.5 : 1	307	72	4.3 : 1
2024/2025	1,382	72	19.2 : 1	753	72	10.5 : 1
2025/2026	3,030*	90	33.7 : 1	1,328	72	18.4 : 1

*The 2025/2026 boarding applicants comprise 1,422 applicants through the SNMB track and 1,608 applicants through the PMBM track. Source: MAN 4 Jakarta PPDB documentation data.

Table 5 shows that the number of applicants to both programs rose sharply over the past three academic years. Boarding-program applicants rose from 900 in 2023/2024 to 1,382 in 2024/2025, then surged to 3,030 in 2025/2026, after the madrasah opened the SNMB track in addition to the pre-existing PMBM track. Applicants to the Cambridge partnership also rose consistently, from 307 (2023/2024) to 753 (2024/2025) and 1,328 (2025/2026). Combined, total applicants to both programs rose from 1,207 in 2023/2024 to 2,135 in 2024/2025 and 4,358 in 2025/2026—growth of more than 3.6-fold (261%) within just two academic years.

This rise in applicant numbers occurred even though admission capacity remained relatively constant: the number of class sections (rombel) in both programs

stayed at 3 classes throughout the three academic years, and the number of students admitted to the Cambridge partnership remained 72 per year, while boarding capacity was only expanded to 90 students in 2025/2026. As a result, the applicant-to-seat ratio widened sharply in both programs: for the boarding program, this ratio rose from about 12.5 applicants per seat (2023/2024) to about 19.2 (2024/2025) and 33.7 (2025/2026); for the Cambridge partnership, the ratio rose even more sharply, from about 4.3 applicants per seat (2023/2024) to 10.5 (2024/2025) and 18.4 (2025/2026). Figure 3 displays the trend in the number of applicants to both programs over this period.

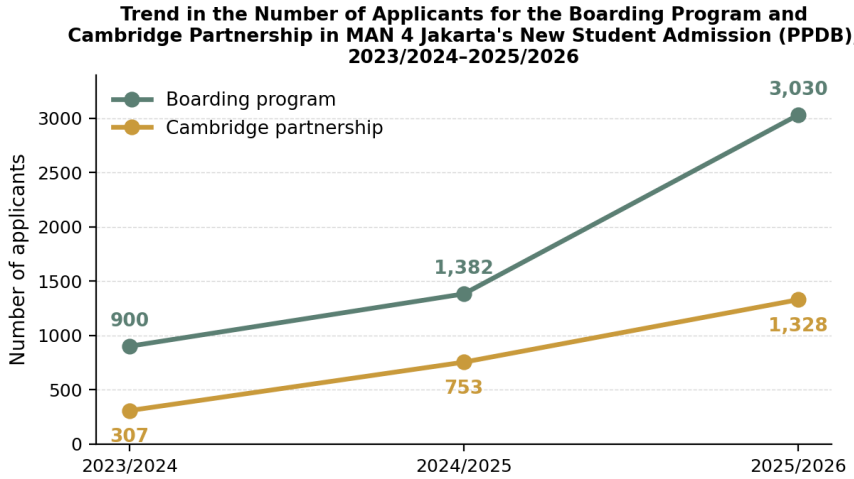


Figure 3. Trend in the Number of Applicants for the Boarding Program and Cambridge Partnership in MAN 4 Jakarta's PPDB, 2023/2024–2025/2026

The trend in Figure 3 provides quantitative evidence that directly supports informants' perception of MAN 4 Jakarta's status as a madrasah increasingly favored by the public: the rising applicant-to-seat ratio in both programs indicates growing public demand, year after year, for the combination of boarding-based religious formation and the Cambridge international curriculum. Nevertheless, these PPDB data are not yet accompanied by information on applicants' motivations or the relative contribution of other factors, such as the madrasah's general academic reputation and word-of-mouth promotion, so the rise in applicant numbers cannot be exclusively attributed to the boarding–Cambridge synergy alone. These data nonetheless provide a quantitative foundation far stronger than informant perception alone for supporting the argument regarding this madrasah's favored status in the public eye, as will be discussed further in the Discussion section.

Discussion

Implementation of Resource-Management Strategy within an Integrated Strategic Management Framework

The findings show that resource-management strategy at MAN 4 Jakarta is carried out multidimensionally and across functional areas, consistent with David's (2011) view that strategy implementation demands the simultaneous involvement of every functional area of the organization. Human resources, educational programs, facilities (including the boarding house), external cooperation, and information systems are not managed as standalone elements, but are directed toward the same

institutional goal: strengthening service quality and the madrasah's competitive advantage. This pattern shows that resource management at MAN 4 Jakarta has moved from an administrative approach toward a strategic approach that consciously links every functional area to the institutional goal.

This integration carries important significance because, as research on school strategic planning confirms, it is the quality of strategy implementation—not merely the quality of its formulation—that determines a strategy's contribution to institutional performance (Ibrahim, Kyando, & Kiwonde, 2023). In the context of MAN 4 Jakarta, the madrasah's vision and mission, which emphasize innovation, professionalism, the development of facilities and infrastructure, and transparent governance, provide direction for allocating resources across the six functional areas set out in Table 1. The findings also show, however, that the level of implementation maturity is not uniform across these functional areas: the marketing aspect—particularly through the boarding–Cambridge synergy—and human resources appear the most mature, while the finance/accounting and management information system aspects still require strengthening, as will be discussed in the following subsections.

Marketing Strategy through Service Differentiation and Positioning

On the marketing front, MAN 4 Jakarta does not rely solely on direct promotional activity, but builds its appeal through the madrasah's identity, service quality, and network of cooperation—a pattern consistent with Greaves, Wilson, and Nairn's (2023) finding that the effectiveness of school marketing depends heavily on the presence of service attributes that genuinely distinguish an institution from its competitors. An identity as a globally oriented madrasah that remains grounded in Islamic values forms part of the positioning that distinguishes MAN 4 Jakarta from other educational institutions, and that positioning is specifically reinforced by the boarding program and the Cambridge partnership, which most other state madrasah do not possess.

From the perspective of market segmentation and product positioning (David, 2011), the combination of the boarding program and the Cambridge partnership enables MAN 4 Jakarta to reach a segment of parents who want both intensive religious formation and international curriculum recognition for their children simultaneously—a segment that is difficult for madrasah offering only one of these two attributes, or for international schools that do not offer boarding-based religious formation, to adequately serve. This kind of positioning explains why the study's informants consistently linked both resources to the madrasah's image as an institution that is both excellent and favored by the public, as already noted in the Results section.

The Boarding Program–Cambridge Partnership Synergy as a Distinguishing Strategic Resource

Tested against Resource-Based View criteria (Barney, 1991), the boarding program–Cambridge partnership synergy at MAN 4 Jakarta shows indications of satisfying all four strategic-resource criteria. First, in terms of value, this combination enables the madrasah to exploit an educational market opportunity for parents who

want both religious formation and international recognition at once—a need reflected in informants' perceptions of why they regard MAN 4 Jakarta as a promising choice. This value is also evident in measurable learning outcomes: data in Table 4 and Figure 2 show that boarding-program students consistently recorded a higher PTN admission percentage than the overall student body, with the gap widening from around 6 percentage points in 2024 to around 18 points in 2026.

Second, in terms of rarity, the combination of a boarding program with intensive religious formation and a Cambridge international curriculum partnership occurring together at a single state madrasah is not commonly found. Other madrasah generally possess only one of these two attributes—either a boarding program without an international partnership, or an international curriculum partnership without a boarding character steeped in religious formation—so that the combination of both attributes is relatively rare among similar educational institutions, particularly at the state madrasah level of MAN 4 Jakarta.

Third, in terms of imperfect imitability, this synergy was formed through a distinctive historical path—the combination of MAN 4 Jakarta's status as a leading state madrasah with the process of building the Cambridge partnership and developing the boarding program gradually over time—as well as social complexity in the form of institutional culture, alumni networks, and public trust built up over time, which cannot be instantly copied by other institutions, even if those institutions attempt to build similar programs. Fourth, in terms of non-substitutability, this synergy is difficult to replace with a functionally equivalent alternative resource: supplementary tutoring programs or academic cooperation with national universities, for instance, can strengthen students' academic readiness, but cannot replace the experience of intensive religious formation and international curriculum recognition offered simultaneously through the boarding–Cambridge synergy.

Taken together, these four RBV criteria show that the boarding program–Cambridge partnership synergy merits being regarded as a distinguishing strategic resource that explains both the competitive advantage and the favored public status of MAN 4 Jakarta, consistent with findings at other boarding-based Islamic educational institutions that a residential character can become a source of distinctive educational business advantage when managed in an integrated manner with marketing, human resource, and financial strategy (Harjawati et al., 2026). These four criteria are further reinforced by the PPDB documentation data in Table 5 and Figure 3, which show that the applicant-to-seat ratio for the boarding program and the Cambridge partnership widened sharply throughout 2023/2024–2025/2026—a pattern consistent with resource status that is valuable and rare within the RBV framework. Nevertheless, this study needs to emphasize an important limitation: the applicant data are not yet accompanied by a survey of applicants' motivations or an analysis that separates the contribution of the boarding–Cambridge synergy from other factors, such as the madrasah's general academic reputation or word-of-mouth promotion, so conclusions regarding this synergy's contribution to the madrasah's favored status should still be read as a strong indication, not as final causal evidence, and call for further research that directly traces applicants' motivations.

Human Resource Management as the Basis of Excellence

Human resources are an important component in the implementation of educational management strategy at MAN 4 Jakarta. The madrasah has 98 teachers and 53 education staff with diverse educational backgrounds and employment status. A teacher composition of 64 bachelor's degree holders, 30 master's degree holders, and 4 doctoral degree holders reflects an academic capital that supports the delivery of learning as well as the development of madrasah programs, including the mentoring of the boarding program and the facilitation of the Cambridge partnership curriculum.

However, consistent with the RBV perspective, numbers and educational qualifications alone do not make human resources a basis for competitive advantage, since academic qualifications can be relatively easily imitated by other institutions through similar recruitment. The strategic value of human resources at MAN 4 Jakarta is better seen in the madrasah's ability to place teachers and boarding mentors according to the distinctive needs of its programs—including religious mentors for the boarding house and facilitators for the international curriculum—and to direct their performance toward an integrated institutional goal. This kind of specialized competence, built up through years of experience mentoring both the boarding program and the international partnership, is relatively more difficult to imitate than mere formal academic qualifications.

Program Development and R&D as a Driver of Excellence

Program development at MAN 4 Jakarta shows a broad orientation, encompassing research, science, academic, non-academic, and religious domains, as reflected in student achievements in Table 3. From the R&D perspective as intended by David (2011), this program diversity reflects the madrasah's capacity to develop programs responsive to students' needs and the demands of the educational environment, not confined to a single pathway of academic development alone.

The success of program development is also evident in the rising admission of students to overseas universities (Figure 1) and in the PTN admission outcomes already described in Table 4. Nevertheless, as emphasized in the Results section, individual student achievements cannot be attributed solely to any single program, since they are also influenced by individual ability, family support, and other factors beyond the madrasah's programs. These achievements are therefore better understood as an indicator that program development at MAN 4 Jakarta, including the boarding–Cambridge synergy, has produced an environment that supports the emergence of various forms of student achievement.

Finance/Accounting and the Efficiency of Service Management

Finance/accounting management in this study is chiefly evident in how financing resources support the provision and sustainability of boarding services and the Cambridge partnership. Financial management forms an inseparable part of the service quality students receive, because both the boarding program and the international curriculum partnership require sustained financing support if they are to continue functioning as the madrasah's distinguishing strategic resource.

Research on school financial management confirms that the administrative effectiveness of a school principal is strongly influenced by how the budget is planned,

recorded, and evaluated (Olaifa et al., 2024), a principle relevant to the sustainability of the boarding–Cambridge synergy at MAN 4 Jakarta. However, this study did not use detailed financial data, so the effectiveness and financial efficiency of managing these two strategic resources cannot yet be measured quantitatively. To obtain a more in-depth picture of this synergy's financial sustainability, data on budget planning, allocation, realization, and evaluation of fund use specifically for the boarding program and the international partnership would be required.

Information System and Identified Implementation Limitations

On the information system front, the findings show that MAN 4 Jakarta already has a public information medium through the madrasah's official website, which serves to introduce its profile and programs—including the boarding program and the Cambridge partnership—to the public (Shah, 2014). Nevertheless, this study did not find sufficient documentation regarding the detailed implementation of an internal management information system, including the integration of data on boarding-program students' achievements disaggregated from the overall student body.

This limitation remains relevant to some of this study's findings: although the PPDB documentation data in Table 5 show that the madrasah's applicant numbers can be traced by academic year, this study did not find documentation of a real-time integrated management information system, nor student-achievement data (Table 3) disaggregated between boarding and non-boarding students. Without such an information system, the madrasah will find it more difficult to evaluate, in a measurable and sustained manner, the contribution of the boarding–Cambridge synergy to excellence and public preference from year to year. Strengthening the management information system therefore remains one of the areas for future development of educational management strategy at MAN 4 Jakarta, particularly to support data-based evaluation of the strategic resources identified in this study.

Conclusion

This study shows that educational management strategy at MAN 4 Jakarta is implemented in an integrated manner across the functional areas of marketing, human resources, finance/accounting, program development, and information systems, with differing levels of maturity across each area. Viewed through the Resource-Based View framework, the synergy between the boarding program and the Cambridge international curriculum partnership shows indications of satisfying all four strategic-resource criteria—valuable, rare, difficult to imitate, and non-substitutable—and therefore merits being regarded as this madrasah's primary basis of competitive advantage, as well as a factor contributing to public preference toward it.

The strongest empirical evidence of this synergy's contribution is found in domestic public university admission data, where the gap in admission percentages between boarding-program students and the overall student body widened consistently from around 6 percentage points in 2024 to around 18 points in 2026. This evidence is further reinforced by the new-student admission (PPDB) data, which show that total applicants to the boarding program and the Cambridge partnership

increased more than threefold within the past two academic years—from 1,207 applicants in 2023/2024 to 4,358 applicants in 2025/2026—with the applicant-to-seat ratio also widening sharply over the same period. This pattern, supported by informants' perceptions that consistently linked the boarding program and the Cambridge partnership to the madrasah's image as excellent and favored by the public, shows that the combination of these two resources is not merely a supporting facility, but a deliberate and increasingly institutionalized strategic intervention.

Nevertheless, this study has an important limitation in that it has not yet collected data on applicants' motivations, a random survey of public preference, or detailed program financial data, so conclusions regarding the contribution of the boarding–Cambridge synergy to the madrasah's favored public status should be read as a strong indication rather than final causal evidence. Further research is recommended to collect data on applicants' motivations, a random survey of public preference, and specific program financial data, in order to more measurably test the contribution of the boarding program–international partnership synergy to excellence and public preference at other boarding-based Islamic educational institutions. In practical terms, these findings suggest that MAN 4 Jakarta's management should strengthen the management information system for admissions and disaggregated student outcomes, as well as the specific financial record-keeping of the boarding program and the Cambridge partnership, so that both resources' strategic contributions can be evaluated more objectively and sustainably going forward.

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