



# The Implementation of Total Quality Management in Islamic Junior High Schools: Commitment, Continuous Improvement, and Performance Outcomes

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## ABSTRACT

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Total Quality Management, Islamic Education, Educational Quality Improvement

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This study aims to analyze the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in an Islamic boarding-based bilingual junior high school and to explore its implications for institutional performance and educational quality improvement. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed, with data collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis involving school leaders, teachers, educational staff, and students. The study examined six core dimensions of TQM implementation: leadership commitment, customer focus, total involvement, continuous improvement, data-driven decision making, and systematic management practices. The findings indicate that TQM principles have been substantially integrated into institutional management and academic processes, contributing positively to performance enhancement, learning quality improvement, and infrastructure development. However, challenges persist in maintaining implementation consistency, strengthening organizational structure, and enhancing staff understanding of comprehensive TQM concepts, particularly among personnel holding multiple roles. The study implies that sustained leadership commitment, capacity building, and structured quality management systems are essential to optimize TQM effectiveness in Islamic educational institutions.

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## INTRODUCTION

Education constitutes a fundamental pillar of national development because it shapes human capital, social cohesion, and moral integrity within society. The increasing complexity of global competition requires educational institutions not only to transmit knowledge but also to cultivate critical thinking, collaboration skills, and strong ethical values (Hefniy & Alwahedi, 2025; Holidi, 2025; Khofsah, 2025; Manshur, 2026). Scholars argue that quality education systems are central to sustainable national progress, as they produce competent

and character-driven citizens capable of responding to rapid technological and social change (Sallis, 2015). In the Indonesian context, educational reform continues to emphasize improved learning outcomes and institutional accountability. However, achieving these aspirations requires systematic management frameworks that ensure continuous quality enhancement rather than sporadic improvements. Without structured quality management, educational institutions risk stagnation and inefficiency (Hikmah & Mudarris, 2026; Kusumawati, 2025; Syafiih, 2025). Therefore, examining effective quality management models in schools is essential for broader societal advancement, as it contributes to the development of reliable educational systems that consistently deliver high-quality learning services and character formation.

Despite strong national commitments to educational reform, many schools continue to struggle with inconsistent quality standards, weak managerial systems, and limited integration between academic excellence and character education (Ataman & Safitri, 2024; Dewi et al., 2024; Hasanah et al., 2024; Purwanto & Wafa, 2023; Saharani & Diana, 2024). The demand for accountability and measurable performance has increased, yet institutional management practices often remain conventional and fragmented. In many cases, quality improvement initiatives are implemented only temporarily and lack sustainability due to insufficient leadership commitment and inadequate stakeholder involvement. Furthermore, schools frequently focus on administrative compliance rather than continuous improvement processes. Such conditions create gaps between policy expectations and actual performance outcomes. These challenges highlight the need for comprehensive management approaches capable of aligning vision, processes, and evaluation mechanisms. Total Quality Management (TQM), with its emphasis on customer satisfaction, continuous improvement, and systemic coordination (Deming, 1986; Crosby, 1996), offers a potential solution. However, its adaptation to diverse educational contexts requires careful examination to ensure contextual relevance and effectiveness.

In practice, certain educational institutions demonstrate notable achievements that suggest the presence of systematic quality management practices (Holid, 2025; Khoiroh et al., 2025; Musthofa & Yakin, 2024; Tohet, 2024; Veronika, 2024). Some Islamic boarding-based junior high schools with bilingual programs, for instance, have achieved high accreditation ratings within relatively short operational periods and have gained recognition for innovative curriculum implementation. These schools integrate religious education, national curricula, and foreign language instruction, creating a complex organizational environment requiring coordinated management strategies. Their rapid institutional development, improved infrastructure, and enhanced student performance indicate structured planning and sustained quality control mechanisms. However, behind these achievements, challenges such as workload

distribution, staff capacity limitations, and varying levels of understanding regarding comprehensive quality management remain evident (Ataman & Safitri, 2024; Dewi et al., 2024; Hasanah et al., 2024; Purwanto & Wafa, 2023; Saharani & Diana, 2024). This phenomenon presents a compelling case for deeper investigation, as it reflects both the potential and constraints of implementing TQM principles in pesantren-based educational systems that combine traditional and modern educational paradigms.

Previous research has extensively examined TQM in corporate and industrial sectors, emphasizing leadership commitment, continuous improvement (kaizen), teamwork, and customer orientation as key determinants of organizational success (Deming, 1986; Crosby, 1996). In educational contexts, Sallis (2015) argues that TQM fosters a quality culture that enhances institutional effectiveness and stakeholder satisfaction. Studies within Indonesian schools highlight the importance of principal leadership, participatory management, and performance evaluation systems in achieving educational excellence (Wahjosumidjo, 2002; Mulyasa, 2012). These findings demonstrate that TQM principles can be adapted to educational institutions to improve service quality and institutional accountability.

However, much of the existing literature tends to focus on general school settings or higher education institutions, often emphasizing isolated components of TQM rather than comprehensive implementation across multiple dimensions. Empirical studies specifically exploring TQM application in Islamic boarding schools that integrate bilingual education systems remain limited. Moreover, previous studies frequently overlook contextual challenges such as dual curriculum integration, religious-cultural dynamics, and organizational complexity unique to pesantren-based institutions. This gap underscores the need for holistic research examining how TQM dimensions operate collectively within such distinctive educational environments.

This study introduces a comprehensive analysis of TQM implementation within an Islamic boarding-based bilingual junior high school by examining six interconnected dimensions: leadership commitment, customer focus, total involvement, continuous improvement, data-driven decision making, and systematic management approaches. Unlike prior studies that focus on partial aspects of quality management, this research integrates structural, cultural, and operational perspectives to capture the complexity of institutional transformation. The state-of-the-art contribution lies in contextualizing TQM within pesantren-based educational systems that simultaneously uphold religious values, modern academic standards, and multilingual instruction. Addressing this issue is crucial because such institutions represent a growing educational model in Indonesia. Understanding how TQM can be effectively implemented in this context provides both theoretical enrichment and practical frameworks adaptable to similar institutions pursuing sustainable excellence.

Based on the identified gaps, this study addresses three primary research questions: (1) How is Total Quality Management implemented in an Islamic boarding-based bilingual junior high school? (2) What supporting and inhibiting factors influence its implementation? (3) What impacts does TQM implementation have on institutional performance and educational quality? This research argues that comprehensive and consistent application of TQM principles—supported by strong leadership commitment and stakeholder engagement—significantly contributes to performance enhancement, improved learning quality, and sustainable institutional development. By empirically examining these dimensions, the study offers theoretical insights into contextualized TQM adaptation and practical recommendations for educational leaders seeking to institutionalize quality culture within complex educational settings.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore comprehensively the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) within an Islamic boarding-based bilingual junior high school (Ahmad & Wilkins, 2025; Danford, 2023; Magnone & Yeziarski, 2024; Mulyana et al., 2024; Sari et al., 2023). A qualitative approach was selected because it enables in-depth understanding of complex organizational processes, leadership practices, and stakeholder experiences within their natural setting (Creswell, 2014). Since TQM implementation involves cultural transformation, leadership commitment, participatory management, and continuous improvement mechanisms, quantitative measurement alone would not sufficiently capture the contextual dynamics and meaning-making processes among institutional actors. The descriptive orientation allows the researcher to systematically portray real conditions related to planning, implementation, and evaluation of TQM practices without manipulating variables. This design aligns with the objective of examining managerial processes, supporting and inhibiting factors, and institutional impacts holistically. Therefore, a qualitative descriptive approach was considered most appropriate to generate rich, contextualized insights into quality management practices in Islamic educational institutions.

The research was conducted at an Islamic boarding-based bilingual junior high school that demonstrates rapid institutional development and notable academic achievements. The selection of this site was based on purposive considerations, particularly its successful attainment of high accreditation status within a relatively short period, recognition in national educational transformation programs, and implementation of innovative curricular initiatives. These characteristics indicate the presence of structured quality management practices worthy of scholarly investigation. Furthermore, the

institution integrates religious education, national curriculum standards, and bilingual instruction, creating a complex organizational structure that requires systematic coordination and continuous quality control. Such distinctive features make the school an appropriate and information-rich case for examining the comprehensive application of TQM principles in pesantren-based educational settings. The site was therefore chosen to provide contextual depth and empirical evidence regarding how TQM operates within a unique institutional environment.

Data were collected using multiple techniques to ensure depth and triangulation, including in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis (Creswell, 2014). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the principal, vice principals, teachers, administrative staff, and selected students to explore leadership commitment, stakeholder involvement, and perceptions of quality improvement practices. Observations were carried out to examine daily managerial routines, teaching–learning processes, coordination meetings, and quality assurance activities. Document analysis included reviewing institutional strategic plans, accreditation reports, performance evaluations, curriculum documents, and internal policy guidelines. The use of these complementary techniques enabled methodological triangulation, thereby enhancing credibility and trustworthiness of findings. Data collection was conducted systematically to capture both formal managerial structures and informal cultural practices influencing TQM implementation within the institution.

Data analysis followed an interactive model consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). In the data condensation stage, raw interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were organized, coded, and categorized according to key TQM dimensions such as leadership commitment, customer focus, total involvement, continuous improvement, data-based decision making, and systematic management approaches. The second stage, data display, involved organizing condensed data into matrices, thematic charts, and narrative descriptions to facilitate pattern recognition and relational analysis. Finally, conclusions were drawn and continuously verified through iterative comparison between data sources to ensure consistency and validity. Triangulation across interviews, observations, and documentation was conducted to strengthen analytical rigor. This systematic analytical process allowed the researcher to construct credible interpretations regarding TQM implementation and its institutional impacts.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings reveal that Total Quality Management (TQM) has been implemented substantially across six interconnected dimensions: leadership commitment, customer focus, stakeholder involvement, continuous improvement, data-based decision making, and systematic management approaches. Nevertheless, the degree of implementation maturity varies. While structural systems and quality-oriented practices are clearly visible, the institutionalization of a deeply embedded quality culture remains in transition. The following discussion integrates empirical evidence with established TQM theory and critically evaluates both strengths and developmental limitations.

### Principal Commitment and Leadership

Leadership commitment emerges as the primary catalyst of TQM implementation. The principal demonstrates visionary orientation, operational precision, and responsiveness to stakeholder needs. These characteristics align with Deming's (1986) principle that quality transformation begins with management responsibility and with Sallis's (2015) assertion that leadership is central to establishing a quality culture in educational institutions. The principal's attention to detail, proactive problem-solving, and support for teacher professional development indicate that quality is not treated as symbolic rhetoric but as operational practice.

However, critical analysis suggests that the sustainability of TQM may still depend heavily on individual leadership strength. Although collaborative mechanisms are present, strategic control and decision authority appear concentrated at the principal level. According to Mulyasa (2012), long-term educational reform requires distributed leadership and institutionalized systems rather than reliance on charismatic authority. Without deeper decentralization and leadership capacity building among middle managers and teachers, continuity of quality initiatives may face challenges in future transitions.

### Customer Focus: Students and Parents

Customer focus is operationalized through systematic learning-style mapping, English proficiency grouping, differentiated instruction, and structured satisfaction surveys involving students and parents. These practices reflect Sallis's (2015) emphasis on learner-centered quality management and correspond with differentiated instruction theory (Tomlinson, 2014). The translation of assessment data into practical instructional adjustments demonstrates meaningful alignment between quality management and

pedagogical innovation.

Nevertheless, the conceptualization of “customer” appears primarily limited to instructional and academic satisfaction. Broader dimensions such as long-term graduate outcomes, character internalization, and socio-emotional development are less systematically measured. Furthermore, while satisfaction surveys are conducted, documented evidence of structured feedback loops—where survey findings are formally analyzed, reported, and integrated into policy revision—remains limited. Within a mature TQM framework, customer feedback must function as a continuous improvement mechanism rather than a periodic evaluative exercise.

### **Comprehensive Stakeholder Involvement**

Stakeholder involvement is evident in collaborative curriculum planning, participatory meetings, student representation, and active parental engagement. These findings are consistent with Freeman’s (1984) stakeholder theory and participatory educational governance models (Komariah & Triatna, 2010). The school’s external collaborations with universities, government agencies, and community institutions further expand its institutional capacity and knowledge exchange.

Despite this positive engagement, participation largely operates within consultative parameters. While teachers and stakeholders are invited to contribute, final strategic authority remains centralized. In mature TQM environments, stakeholder involvement extends to shared accountability for performance outcomes and strategic indicators. Additionally, teacher-led innovation initiatives appear limited, suggesting that involvement is supportive but not yet fully transformative. Strengthening distributed ownership of quality goals would enhance institutional resilience and sustainability.

### **Continuous Improvement**

The institution demonstrates a clear orientation toward continuous improvement through progressive accreditation achievements, structured evaluation cycles, and systematic professional development programs. These practices align with Deming’s continuous improvement philosophy and Juran’s quality trilogy of planning, control, and improvement. The presence of short-, medium-, and long-term strategic planning indicates forward-looking management rather than reactive decision-making.

However, improvement efforts sometimes appear recognition-driven, oriented toward external accreditation and awards. While such achievements

reflect institutional progress, sustainable TQM requires documented root-cause analysis, preventive action mechanisms, and systematic PDCA (Plan–Do–Check–Act) cycles. Evidence suggests that improvement activities are practiced but not yet consistently formalized into comprehensive quality documentation systems. Embedding explicit improvement cycles would strengthen institutional learning capacity and reduce reliance on episodic corrective measures.

### **Data-Based Decision Making**

Data-based decision making constitutes one of the institution's emerging strengths. Entrance assessments, learning preference analyses, performance monitoring, and stakeholder surveys inform program adjustments and instructional strategies. This aligns with contemporary educational management frameworks emphasizing evidence-based governance (Habibah & Nasution, 2024). By grounding decisions in empirical data, the school enhances accountability and responsiveness.

Nonetheless, analytical depth varies among staff members. Some decisions continue to rely on experiential judgment rather than structured data interpretation. Advanced TQM maturity requires standardized performance dashboards, systematic reporting mechanisms, and enhanced data literacy across all organizational levels. While evidence-based practices are present, they reflect a developing analytical culture rather than fully institutionalized data governance.

### **Systematic Management Approaches**

The development of formal Management Guidelines (MPS) outlining job descriptions, coordination mechanisms, and operational standards demonstrates structural commitment to quality. This reflects Sallis's (2015) process-oriented quality management approach, where clearly defined systems reduce ambiguity and enhance consistency. The documentation of procedures supports efficiency and operational clarity.

However, formal systems alone do not guarantee consistent implementation. Supervision findings indicating occasional documentation gaps and variations in classroom practice suggest that behavioral internalization of quality standards remains uneven. Additionally, staffing limitations resulting in multiple-role assignments may dilute focus and reduce effectiveness. Balancing system standardization with organizational flexibility and resource realities remains a key developmental challenge.

## **Supporting and Inhibiting Factors**

Internal support factors include strong collective commitment, collaborative work culture, adaptive young human resources, and recognition mechanisms motivating performance. External support from foundations, government programs, and institutional partnerships further strengthens capacity. These factors correspond with TQM literature emphasizing organizational culture and stakeholder synergy as determinants of successful quality management (Sallis, 2015).

Conversely, inhibiting factors include limited explicit familiarity with comprehensive TQM frameworks, implementation inconsistency, and structural constraints related to staffing and workload distribution. Although quality principles guide daily practice, theoretical internalization of TQM concepts remains partial. As noted by Sallis (2015), sustainable TQM requires cultural transformation beyond procedural adherence. The institution therefore appears to be transitioning from operational quality compliance toward deeper philosophical quality integration.

## **Impacts of TQM Implementation**

TQM implementation has generated visible impacts in performance enhancement, instructional quality improvement, and infrastructure development. Managerial responsiveness to evaluation findings demonstrates organizational learning capacity. Instructional practices increasingly incorporate differentiation, interactive strategies, and structured supervision mechanisms aligned with contemporary pedagogical standards (Tomlinson, 2014). Infrastructure audits and facility improvements reflect holistic quality awareness extending beyond academic processes.

However, long-term outcome measurement remains limited. While process improvements are evident, systematic quantitative tracking of student achievement growth, graduate success trajectories, and longitudinal stakeholder satisfaction would strengthen evidence of TQM effectiveness. Future institutional development would benefit from integrating outcome-based performance metrics to complement qualitative process evaluation.

Overall, the findings indicate that TQM implementation is structurally substantial and culturally emerging. Leadership commitment, documented systems, and collaborative practices provide a strong foundation. Nevertheless, full institutional maturity requires deeper conceptual internalization, distributed leadership structures, strengthened data analytics, and consistent implementation across all organizational levels. The institution represents a

transitional model progressing from structured quality practices toward a fully embedded and sustainable quality culture within an Islamic educational context.

## CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the substantial implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) across six interrelated dimensions leadership commitment, customer focus, stakeholder involvement, continuous improvement, data-based decision making, and systematic management can significantly enhance institutional performance even within complex Islamic boarding school contexts. The most important lesson derived from this research is that leadership commitment acts as the catalytic force that translates quality principles into operational reality; however, sustainability depends on transforming leader-driven initiatives into institution-wide cultural practices. The findings demonstrate that TQM in educational settings is not merely a technical management tool but a cultural transformation process requiring consistency, shared ownership, and adaptive learning. The study's primary scholarly contribution lies in contextualizing TQM within an Islamic bilingual boarding school environment, illustrating how global quality management principles can be organically integrated with religious values and local institutional characteristics. By highlighting the dynamic interaction between structural systems and cultural adaptation, this research enriches the discourse on educational quality management in faith-based institutions and expands TQM literature beyond conventional secular or corporate settings.

Nevertheless, this study is limited by its single-case qualitative design, which constrains generalizability across diverse Islamic educational institutions. The reliance on qualitative data also limits the ability to measure long-term quantitative impacts on student achievement and institutional sustainability. Future research should adopt multi-site comparative designs, integrate mixed-method approaches combining qualitative depth with quantitative performance indicators, and examine longitudinal trajectories of TQM cultural internalization. Further investigation into leadership distribution models, data literacy development, and the conceptual refinement of culturally embedded "Islamic TQM" frameworks would strengthen theoretical advancement and practical applicability. Such studies would contribute to developing more comprehensive, evidence-based models of quality management tailored to diverse educational contexts.

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