



A Comparative Study of Total Quality Management (TQM) Implementation in Islamic Educational Institutions

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ABSTRACT

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This study aims to compare the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in Islamic educational institutions by examining similarities and differences in the aspects of planning, implementation, and evaluation of educational quality. The research employs a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation to capture both managerial practices and institutional values. The findings indicate that TQM is implemented through two distinct approaches: a systematic and modern model that emphasizes structured management and data-driven decision-making, and a traditional approach that prioritizes moral development and spiritual values. Despite these differences, both approaches share a common objective of improving educational quality based on Islamic principles. Furthermore, the study highlights that the integration of professional management practices with strong spiritual foundations creates a more comprehensive and sustainable quality management system. It implies that the success of TQM in Islamic education depends on balancing managerial effectiveness and spiritual commitment as a unified framework for continuous improvement.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a strategic instrument in shaping the civilization and future of a nation. The quality of education determines how effectively a country can respond to global challenges, including technological advancement, economic competition, and social transformation. In this context, improving educational quality becomes an urgent priority (Rahman, 2026; Shoha, 2026). However, in Indonesia, educational quality remains uneven and often fails to meet global standards. Several issues persist, such as the low quality of teachers, limited infrastructure, and inadequate literacy and numeracy skills among students at the secondary level. These challenges highlight the need for innovative and adaptive educational management systems capable of improving learning

outcomes. Evidence from the UNESCO (2024) Global Education Monitoring Report indicates that many developing countries, including Indonesia, still struggle to achieve equitable and high-quality education. Therefore, strengthening management approaches in education is essential to ensure that institutions can produce graduates who are competitive, competent, and socially responsible in a rapidly changing world.

Despite its strategic importance, the education sector in Indonesia continues to face systemic problems that hinder quality improvement. These problems are not only technical but also managerial in nature, including weak institutional governance, lack of continuous evaluation, and limited stakeholder involvement in decision-making processes. Educational institutions often rely on conventional management practices that are less responsive to contemporary demands (Holidi, 2025; Khofsah, 2025). As a result, many institutions struggle to maintain consistency in quality standards and fail to achieve sustainable improvement. In addition, the absence of integrated quality management systems contributes to inefficiency and fragmented development efforts. These conditions create a gap between expected educational outcomes and actual performance. Consequently, there is a growing need for a comprehensive management framework that can address these issues holistically. Total Quality Management (TQM) emerges as a relevant approach because it emphasizes continuous improvement, stakeholder participation, and data-driven decision-making, which are essential for addressing persistent challenges in the education sector.

In the context of Islamic education, particularly Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), the challenges of quality management are even more complex. *Pesantren* play a unique role as institutions that integrate religious education, character development, and social values within a residential system. Historically, *pesantren* have contributed significantly to the formation of morally grounded and socially responsible individuals. According to data from the Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia (2024), there are more than 39,000 *pesantren* with approximately 4.9 million students across Indonesia, highlighting their importance as a major pillar of Islamic education. However, the rapid development of globalization, technological change, and increasing public expectations for educational quality require *pesantren* to adapt. Many *pesantren* still rely heavily on traditional management systems, which may limit their ability to compete in providing high-quality educational services. This phenomenon reflects the urgent need for integrating modern management approaches while preserving Islamic values and traditions.

Previous studies have explored the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in educational institutions, particularly in formal schools and madrasahs. Research shows that TQM contributes significantly to improving educational quality through transformational leadership, teacher development,

and continuous evaluation mechanisms (Mufidah, 2025). In addition, TQM has been recognized as an effective strategy for enhancing institutional efficiency, strengthening participatory culture, and fostering innovation in teaching and learning processes (Rosidin, 2025). Studies also indicate that integrating TQM principles with Islamic values can create a balanced management system that aligns technical effectiveness with spiritual objectives. Furthermore, scholars such as W. Edwards Deming (1986) and Joseph M. Juran (1992) emphasize that quality improvement requires continuous commitment and involvement from all organizational members. These findings suggest that TQM has strong potential to be applied in various educational contexts, including Islamic institutions.

However, despite the growing body of research on TQM in education, most studies focus on formal educational settings such as schools and universities, while research on its implementation in *pesantren* remains limited (Robbin et al., 2025). This gap is significant because *pesantren* have distinct characteristics compared to formal institutions, including their integration of academic, religious, and social education within a boarding system. The complexity of *pesantren* management requires a contextualized approach to TQM that accommodates spiritual, moral, and communal dimensions (Rahman, 2026; Syafiih, 2025). Moreover, existing studies often emphasize technical aspects of quality management without fully exploring how Islamic values shape managerial practices. As a result, there is a lack of comprehensive understanding of how TQM can be effectively adapted in *pesantren* environments. Addressing this gap is crucial, as it can provide insights into developing a more holistic and context-sensitive quality management model that aligns with the unique identity of Islamic boarding schools.

This study offers a novel contribution by examining the implementation of TQM within Islamic boarding schools through a comparative perspective that integrates both modern and traditional approaches (Hefniy & Alwahedi, 2025; Manshur, 2026). Unlike previous research that focuses primarily on formal institutions, this study highlights how TQM principles are adapted within the unique cultural and spiritual context of *pesantren*. The novelty lies in its emphasis on the dual function of TQM as both a managerial tool and a value-based framework rooted in Islamic teachings. By exploring how professional management practices coexist with spiritual values such as *ihsan*, *amanah*, and *ukhuwah*, this study provides a deeper understanding of quality management in Islamic education. Furthermore, it contributes to the development of a hybrid model of TQM that balances technical efficiency with moral and spiritual dimensions. This approach is essential for ensuring that educational quality is not only measured by academic outcomes but also by character development and social responsibility.

Based on the issues and gaps identified, this study aims to analyze and compare the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in Islamic

boarding school educational institutions, focusing on planning, implementation, evaluation, and challenges. The main research problem is how TQM can be effectively adapted to different organizational cultures within Islamic education. This study argues that the success of TQM in *pesantren* depends on the integration of structured management systems and strong spiritual values. While modern approaches emphasize efficiency, accountability, and data-driven practices, traditional approaches prioritize moral guidance, leadership charisma, and community-based values. The combination of these elements is expected to create a more comprehensive and sustainable quality management system. Therefore, this study contributes both theoretically, by enriching the discourse on TQM in Islamic education, and practically, by providing strategic insights for improving educational quality in *pesantren* contexts.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with a comparative design to explore the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in Islamic educational institutions (Niam et al., 2024; Pregoner, 2024). This design is selected because it enables an in-depth understanding of social realities, managerial practices, and cultural values embedded within different institutional contexts. A qualitative approach is particularly appropriate for capturing complex interactions between management systems and spiritual values that cannot be measured quantitatively. Furthermore, the comparative model allows the researcher to identify similarities and differences in how TQM is interpreted and implemented across institutions with distinct orientations. In this study, TQM is not merely viewed as a technical management strategy, but also as a value-based paradigm that integrates organizational processes with Islamic spiritual principles such as *ihsan*, *amanah*, and *ukhuwah*, reflecting a holistic perspective of quality management in Islamic education.

The research was conducted in two Islamic boarding schools selected purposively based on their contrasting characteristics in terms of managerial orientation and educational approach. One institution represents a modern management model that integrates formal and non-formal education with structured systems, while the other reflects a traditional model emphasizing classical Islamic learning and spiritual development. The selection of these sites is based on their relevance to the research objective, as they represent two distinct approaches to quality management within Islamic education. This purposive sampling strategy aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how TQM principles are adapted within different cultural and organizational settings. By comparing these institutions, the study seeks to generate a contextualized analysis of TQM implementation that reflects both modern managerial practices and traditional Islamic values.

Data collection was conducted intensively over a four-month period using multiple techniques, including in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Interviews were carried out with key informants such as school leaders (kyai), teachers, administrative staff, and senior students who possess comprehensive knowledge of institutional management practices. The interviews were semi-structured and flexible, allowing participants to express their experiences and perspectives naturally. In addition, participant observation was conducted to capture daily activities, teaching and learning processes, leadership interactions, and institutional routines, enabling the researcher to understand the lived experiences within the educational environment. Document analysis was also employed to examine institutional records such as vision and mission statements, curricula, organizational structures, annual reports, and evaluation documents. These multiple data sources enhance the depth and credibility of the findings through triangulation.

Data analysis in this study follows the interactive model of Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman, which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Salmona & Kaczynski, 2024). Data condensation involves selecting, simplifying, and categorizing relevant information related to TQM implementation, while irrelevant data are excluded. The next stage, data display, presents the findings in a structured and comparative narrative form to highlight patterns, similarities, and differences between the two institutions. Finally, conclusion drawing and verification involve interpreting the data, identifying emerging themes, and linking the findings with existing TQM theories and Islamic educational principles. To ensure validity, the study applies source and method triangulation, as well as member checking to confirm the accuracy of interpretations. This systematic analytical process ensures that the findings are credible, reflective, and grounded in empirical evidence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Total Quality Management (TQM)

Total Quality Management (TQM) can be understood as a dynamic management system that involves all members of an organization in implementing quality control concepts and techniques to achieve both customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction. TQM represents an advanced form of quality assurance, positioning customers as the central focus of organizational processes. According to Makbuloh Deden, improving the quality of educational institutions can be achieved through the consistent application of integrated quality management, which emphasizes continuous quality assurance from the initial educational process to the final outcomes.

In the context of education, TQM is defined as a set of principles and methods that emphasize the continuous improvement of institutional capacity and competence to meet evolving needs. This approach includes several essential components: curriculum and administrative management, diagnostic processes, data-driven decision-making based on qualitative and quantitative evidence, continuous improvement, stakeholder involvement, and the ultimate goal of achieving satisfaction among students, parents, and the broader community (Fahrudin, 2023).

Historically, TQM emerged from industrial and business practices focused on productivity and quality improvement. Traditional management approaches emphasized planning, organizing, staffing, directing, and controlling. However, TQM introduced a new paradigm centered on customer satisfaction, innovation, and continuous quality enhancement. This paradigm shift was driven by increasing competition, customer dissatisfaction, budget constraints, and economic challenges. Although initially developed in the industrial sector, TQM has expanded into public and non-profit organizations, including education (Hakim, 2023).

TQM also emphasizes proactive problem-solving and continuous improvement rather than reactive responses. It requires active participation and creativity from all organizational members. Each working group functions as a monitoring mechanism that enables organizations to adapt to environmental changes and identify opportunities. Mujamil Qomar highlights that quality improvement management requires the integration of key elements such as customers, leadership, teams, processes, and organizational structure. In this perspective, customers are not only external recipients but also internal stakeholders involved in every stage of quality improvement.

Concept of Total Quality Management (TQM)

The concept of TQM is built upon several fundamental principles. First, it emphasizes a strong focus on both internal and external customers, who determine the quality standards of products and services. Second, it reflects an obsession with quality, requiring organizations to meet and exceed expectations through consistent performance. Third, TQM adopts a scientific approach in decision-making and problem-solving to ensure systematic and measurable outcomes.

Fourth, TQM requires long-term commitment, as it is not merely a management technique but a cultural transformation within the organization. Fifth, teamwork is essential, involving collaboration among employees, leaders,

and external stakeholders. Sixth, continuous improvement is a core principle, requiring organizations to constantly evaluate and refine their processes. Seventh, education and training play a crucial role in enhancing human resource capacity and professional skills.

Eighth, controlled empowerment encourages employee participation in decision-making, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility. Ninth, unity of purpose ensures that all organizational efforts are aligned toward shared goals. These principles collectively form a comprehensive framework for achieving sustainable quality improvement (Abidin, 2023).

Total Quality Management in Islamic Education

In the modern era, increasing competition across sectors, including education, requires institutions to provide high-quality services to meet stakeholder expectations. Educational quality plays a critical role in building trust and satisfaction among service users. Therefore, educational institutions must adopt effective management systems to ensure that their services align with stakeholder needs.

Islamic educational institutions, including *pesantren*, have significant potential to compete with other institutions by enhancing their quality through strategic management approaches such as TQM. In practice, TQM implementation in education is often reflected in the adoption of quality management systems such as ISO 9001:2008, which emphasize customer orientation. Edward Sallis explains that TQM encompasses key components, including systems and procedures, teamwork and empowerment, and self-assessment processes such as monitoring, evaluation, and identification of stakeholder needs. These components are designed to ensure that quality improvement is continuous and aligned with customer expectations.

In Islamic education, TQM has a dual function. It serves as a managerial strategy to improve academic quality, teacher performance, and institutional services, while also reinforcing Islamic values and spiritual development. This integration ensures that quality improvement is not limited to technical efficiency but also encompasses moral and spiritual dimensions.

Implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in Islamic Educational Institutions

The implementation of TQM in Islamic educational institutions involves a complex process that integrates managerial, social, and spiritual dimensions. In this context, quality management is not limited to administrative and technical

aspects but is deeply embedded in organizational culture and interpersonal relationships. Values such as sincerity (*ikhlas*), trustworthiness (*amanah*), consultation (*musyawarah*), and responsibility serve as the foundation for continuous improvement.

The findings reveal that both institutions share a common awareness of the importance of quality improvement in the modern era. However, they differ in their approaches. One institution adopts a modern and systematic approach, emphasizing structured management, clear organizational roles, data-based decision-making, and continuous evaluation (Mundiri, 2023; Purwanto & Wafa, 2023). This approach is reflected in regular meetings, internal quality assurance teams, and performance-based evaluation systems. As a result, teachers demonstrate higher professionalism, and the institution builds a culture of accountability and innovation.

In contrast, the other institution applies a more traditional approach, focusing on moral development, spiritual values, and leadership charisma. Quality improvement is achieved through character building, direct supervision, and reflective practices such as collective evaluation sessions (*muhasabah*). Although less formalized, this approach effectively fosters strong interpersonal relationships, discipline, and moral responsibility among students.

The comparative analysis indicates that both approaches align with the core principles of TQM, particularly total involvement, continuous improvement, and shared responsibility. However, the modern approach emphasizes efficiency and structure, while the traditional approach prioritizes spirituality and personal relationships (Adeoye et al., 2025; Kumala & Nadya, 2024).

In terms of leadership, the modern institution demonstrates transformational leadership that encourages innovation and collaboration, whereas the traditional institution relies on charismatic leadership that strengthens loyalty and moral discipline. Both models have distinct advantages and contribute to the effectiveness of quality management in their respective contexts.

The study also identifies common challenges, including limited human resources and infrastructure. However, each institution adopts different strategies to address these challenges. The modern institution focuses on training, external collaboration, and resource mobilization, while the traditional institution emphasizes communal values such as sincerity, cooperation, and collective responsibility.

The impact of TQM implementation is evident in both institutional outcomes and community perceptions. The modern approach enhances public trust and prepares students for academic and professional success, while the traditional approach strengthens moral character, independence, and religious commitment. These findings demonstrate that educational quality should not be measured solely by academic indicators but also by moral and spiritual outcomes.

From a value integration perspective, both institutions successfully adapt TQM principles within an Islamic framework. Continuous improvement is interpreted as *ihsan* (striving for excellence), teamwork as *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), and customer satisfaction as seeking divine approval and social benefit. This contextualization makes TQM more relevant and meaningful within Islamic educational settings (Najiah, 2025).

Ultimately, the findings confirm that TQM implementation in Islamic education is flexible and context-dependent. Each institution adapts TQM principles according to its values, culture, and resources. Therefore, TQM should be viewed not as a rigid model but as a dynamic approach that integrates managerial professionalism with spiritual values to achieve holistic educational quality.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reveal that the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in Islamic educational institutions is not uniform but highly contextual, depending on institutional characteristics, culture, and value systems. The most important insight gained is that effective quality management in Islamic education requires a balance between managerial professionalism and spiritual values. Institutions that adopt a modern and systematic approach tend to emphasize structured management, data-driven decision-making, and formal evaluation mechanisms, making them more adaptive to contemporary demands. In contrast, institutions with a traditional approach focus on moral development, spiritual guidance, and exemplary leadership, which strengthen collective responsibility and character formation. Despite these differences, both approaches share a common philosophical foundation rooted in Islamic values such as *ihsan*, *ukhuwah*, and *amanah*. This study contributes academically by offering a nuanced understanding of TQM as a flexible and integrative framework that bridges modern management principles with Islamic educational values.

However, this study has several limitations that should be considered. First, the research is limited to a qualitative comparative analysis of two

institutions, which may not fully represent the diversity of Islamic educational contexts. Second, the findings rely heavily on interpretative data, which may be influenced by researcher subjectivity despite efforts to ensure validity through triangulation. Therefore, future research is recommended to expand the scope by including more institutions, applying mixed-method approaches, and exploring quantitative measurements of TQM effectiveness. Further studies could also examine the long-term impact of TQM implementation on student outcomes, institutional sustainability, and community trust, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of quality management in Islamic education.

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