



## Optimizing Learning Quality: A Total Quality Management Approach in Islamic Secondary Schools

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### ABSTRACT

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This study aims to examine the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in improving the quality of learning in an Islamic junior secondary school. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed, with data collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. The participants included the principal, teachers, and administrative staff. The findings indicate that TQM implementation established a systematic framework for learning quality improvement through participatory planning, continuous supervision, regular evaluation, and consistent follow up actions. The active involvement of teachers in planning, monitoring, and professional development contributed to enhanced teaching competencies and more effective learning processes. In addition, the successful implementation of TQM was supported by a strong organizational culture characterized by religious values, collaborative decision making, and a commitment to continuous improvement embedded in academic and character building programs. These findings imply that TQM provides an effective management framework for fostering sustainable improvements in learning quality by strengthening institutional commitment, teacher professionalism, and a culture of continuous quality enhancement in Islamic educational institutions.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, education stands as one of the most decisive factors in improving the quality of human resources, and its importance extends beyond the walls of any single institution to society as a whole (Rodliyah et al., 2024). This significance arises because contemporary educational institutions are required to produce graduates who excel not only academically but also possess strong character, practical skills, and a high level of competitiveness in an increasingly interconnected world (Pendidikan et al., 2023; Ridho et al., 2026). The management of educational personnel serves as a solution for providing

qualified and responsible teaching staff in accordance with school needs, since competent educators have a direct impact on the overall quality of education (Arifianto et al., 2025). This shows that teacher quality functions as a fundamental determinant of educational outcomes at every level. It can therefore be concluded that improving the quality of education, particularly through effective management of educational personnel, is an urgent necessity that societies cannot afford to overlook (Tantowi et al., 2025; Zien et al., 2024).

Despite the widely acknowledged importance of education, many societies, including Indonesia, continue to face persistent problems in ensuring that educational institutions consistently deliver high quality teaching and learning. One of the most pressing of these problems lies in the uneven quality and management of teaching personnel, which directly affects the extent to which schools can meet the demands of a rapidly changing, globalized environment (Amaly et al., 2023; Rokhimawan et al., 2025). The absence of proper personnel management often results in the provision of educators who are neither adequately qualified nor sufficiently accountable to the needs of the institutions they serve (Mahmud & Malik, 2024). When teacher management is weak, the consequences ripple outward to affect curriculum implementation, student achievement, and ultimately public trust in the education system (Darwanto et al., 2024; Siswadi et al., 2025). This general problem underscores the broader societal concern that without deliberate, systematic efforts to manage educational quality particularly through sound governance of teaching staff schools will struggle to produce graduates capable of meeting the intellectual and moral demands of contemporary society.

This general problem is clearly reflected in the specific context of MTs Lubbul Labib Maron Probolinggo, an Islamic educational institution entrusted with the strategic task of shaping a generation that is not only intellectually capable but also grounded in strong religious values (Parveen et al., 2024). In practice, however, the school continues to encounter various obstacles related to the quality of learning, including insufficiently optimal planning, implementation, and evaluation of instructional activities. Such weaknesses in the planning implementation evaluation cycle tend to have a direct negative impact on student learning outcomes, which remain below the level expected by the institution and the surrounding community (Zohriah et al., 2025). Preliminary observations further indicate that although the madrasah has initiated various improvement efforts, these efforts have not yet been carried out in a fully integrated or sustained manner. This field phenomenon illustrates that the gap between the ideal expectations of quality education and the everyday realities faced by the school is a concrete manifestation of the broader problem described above (Oyeniran et al., 2024).

One approach that has been widely discussed in the literature as a means of addressing quality related problems in education is Total Quality Management (TQM), a management concept that emphasizes continuous quality improvement through the involvement of every component of an organization (Jusup et al., 2024). Within the educational context, TQM can be applied to enhance the quality of learning through careful planning, effective implementation, and ongoing, sustainable evaluation (Hadi & Kesuma, 2025). Previous studies applying this concept in schools have generally shown that TQM provides a useful framework for aligning institutional processes with quality objectives, since it treats quality improvement not as a one time project but as an integrated, cyclical process involving leaders, teachers, and staff alike. This body of literature positions TQM as a relevant and theoretically grounded lens through which the problems of planning, implementation, and evaluation identified in the field such as those occurring at MTs Lubbul Labib Maron Probolinggo can be systematically examined and addressed, rather than treated as isolated technical shortcomings (Mustaghfiroh et al., 2025).

Complementing this management oriented literature, studies on educational leadership highlight that the success of any quality improvement initiative, including TQM, is strongly determined by the quality of leadership within the institution. The leadership of the madrasah principal significantly influences the implementation of education and teaching, particularly through the coaching and development of teachers, which in turn affects the improvement of learning quality (Mu'alimin et al., 2026). While these prior studies on personnel management, TQM principles, and principal leadership each offer valuable insight, they largely address these dimensions separately rather than as an interconnected system. Few studies have specifically examined how TQM principles are actually enacted, in an integrated way, within the daily planning, teaching, and evaluation practices of a religious based madrasah led by a particular principal. This research gap is important to address because without an integrated understanding of how leadership and TQM jointly shape learning quality in such institutions, improvement efforts risk remaining fragmented and difficult to sustain.

Building on the gap identified above, this study offers a distinct contribution by examining the implementation of Total Quality Management as an integrated, continuous cycle of planning, implementation, and evaluation within the specific setting of an Islamic junior secondary school (madrasah tsanawiyah). Rather than treating quality management, principal leadership, and instructional practice as separate variables, this research approaches them as interrelated elements of a single quality improvement system that operates within a religiously grounded educational culture. This focus is particularly

important because madrasahs such as MTs Lubbul Labib Maron Probolinggo are expected to uphold both academic standards and religious values simultaneously, a dual demand that has rarely been examined through the lens of TQM in existing research. Addressing this issue is essential, since a clearer understanding of how TQM functions in practice within such institutions can provide a replicable model for other madrasahs facing similar challenges in balancing academic quality with their distinctive religious mission.

Based on the issues, phenomena, and gaps outlined above, this study is directed at answering the central question of how Total Quality Management is implemented to improve the quality of learning at MTs Lubbul Labib Maron Probolinggo, encompassing the stages of planning, implementation, and evaluation as well as the role of principal leadership within that process. It is argued that the quality of learning at this madrasah can be significantly improved when TQM principles are applied consistently and coherently across all stages of the learning cycle, supported by committed and capable leadership from the madrasah principal. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by offering an integrated, context specific account of TQM implementation in a religious based educational setting, thereby providing both theoretical insight for future research and practical guidance for madrasah leaders seeking to design more effective, sustainable strategies for enhancing the quality of teaching and learning within their institutions.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type, chosen because it enables the researcher to systematically depict and interpret a phenomenon as it actually occurs in the field, without manipulating variables or testing hypotheses, thereby allowing for a rich, in-depth (Hall & Liebenberg, 2024), and contextual understanding of how the phenomenon unfolds in its natural setting. This descriptive qualitative design is considered appropriate for the present study because the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in improving learning quality is a process that develops gradually through the everyday practices, interactions, and decisions of school actors, and can therefore be more accurately captured through detailed, narrative description than through numerical measurement (Reeves et al., 2023). The research was conducted at MTs Lubbul Labib Maron Probolinggo, an institution selected on the basis of preliminary observations indicating that the madrasah has already carried out various planning, evaluation, and follow-up activities reflecting the principles of TQM, yet these efforts have not been systematically described or documented in prior research, making the site both relevant and

appropriate for an in-depth descriptive study. The research subjects consist of the madrasah principal, teachers, and administrative staff who are directly involved in the management of the learning process (Reeves et al., 2023).

Data were collected through three complementary techniques: interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted to obtain first-hand information from informants regarding the planning, implementation, and evaluation of learning quality, allowing the researcher to explore their perspectives and experiences in depth. Observation was carried out to directly examine the learning process and the various activities associated with the implementation of TQM within the madrasah, thereby enabling the researcher to verify and contextualize information gathered through interviews. Documentation was used to complement these data through the collection of madrasah records such as lesson plans, teaching materials, and archives of school activities, providing additional evidence to support and cross-check the findings obtained through interviews and observation (Villamin et al., 2025). The combined use of these three techniques was intended to ensure that the data gathered were sufficiently comprehensive, mutually reinforcing, and representative of the actual conditions in the field, in line with the descriptive nature of this study, which relies on rich, triangulated data to produce an accurate and detailed account of the phenomenon under investigation.

Data analysis in this study followed the interactive model of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Reeves et al., 2023). Data condensation involved selecting, simplifying, and focusing the raw data obtained from interviews, observation, and documentation so that only information relevant to the research questions was retained for further analysis. Data display was then carried out by organizing the condensed data into narrative descriptions, enabling patterns related to the planning, implementation, and evaluation of TQM to be more easily understood and interpreted—an approach that aligns closely with the descriptive character of this study, which seeks to present findings in a clear, accessible narrative form. Conclusion drawing and verification were subsequently performed by examining the displayed data in relation to the research focus, cross-checking findings across the three data sources, and revising interpretations as necessary until stable, well-supported conclusions were reached. Throughout this process, the researcher functioned as the primary instrument, being directly and continuously involved in the data-collection activities at MTs Lubbul Labib Maron Probolinggo, in order to obtain data that were sufficiently in-depth and accurately reflected actual field conditions, so that the findings could offer an objective description of the planning, evaluation, and follow-up processes involved in implementing TQM to improve learning quality at the madrasah.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

MTs Lubbul Labib is a private Islamic educational institution located on Jalan KH. Ach. Qusyairi, Kedungsari Village, Maron Subdistrict, Probolinggo Regency. The madrasah was established in 2002 with the aim of providing both general and religious education services to the surrounding community. Since its founding, MTs Lubbul Labib has continuously strived to improve the quality of education through the development of the learning process, the enhancement of teacher competence, and the provision of facilities and infrastructure that support teaching and learning activities. Over the course of its history, the madrasah has been led successively by the late KH. Wasil Ma'sum (2002–2015), the late Abdul Hamid, S.Pd. (2015–2019), M. Basyir Nawawi, M.Pd. (2019–2024), and is currently led by Rahmatul Aziz Al Mursyidin, M.Pd. These successive changes in leadership reflect a continuity in institutional management as well as an ongoing effort to improve the quality of education provided by the madrasah.

Based on the researcher's observations, learning activities at MTs Lubbul Labib take place in a regular and orderly manner, supported by the active involvement of the madrasah principal, teachers, and educational staff. The madrasah also carries out various learning programs and supporting activities aimed at improving educational quality, while coordination between the principal and teachers is continuously maintained to support the achievement of established learning objectives. Based on this profile and institutional condition, MTs Lubbul Labib demonstrates a clear commitment to improving the quality of education through a range of programs and activities that support the learning process. This quality improvement effort is consistent with the principles of Total Quality Management (TQM), which emphasize continuous improvement across all aspects of education. It is on this basis that the researcher conducted the present study, in order to examine how TQM is implemented to improve learning quality at MTs Lubbul Labib Maron Probolinggo.

Based on the results of interviews, observation, and documentation conducted at MTs Lubbul Labib Maron Probolinggo, several key findings emerged. The planning of learning quality is carried out through coordination meetings involving the madrasah principal, the vice principal for curriculum affairs, and all teachers, aimed at developing the learning program, academic targets, and the madrasah's flagship programs. The evaluation of learning quality is conducted through classroom supervision, review of teachers' administrative documents, routine evaluation meetings, and assessment of student learning outcomes. Follow up actions based on these evaluation results are then carried out through mentoring, training, discussions, and routine coordination intended to enhance teacher competence and improve the overall quality of learning.

The observation results indicate that learning activities proceed in accordance with the programs that have been planned. Teachers carry out instruction based on the lesson plans and teaching materials they have prepared, while the madrasah principal periodically monitors both the learning process and teachers' administrative work. In addition, the madrasah's various flagship programs are implemented according to their established schedules. These conditions reflect the madrasah's ongoing effort to maintain learning quality through the consistent application of planning and continuous evaluation.

The documentation results further show that MTs Lubbul Labib possesses a range of supporting documents for the learning process, including the madrasah's work program, academic calendar, class schedules, teachers' lesson plans and teaching materials, supervision instruments, student learning outcome reports, and program evaluation documents. These documents are well organized and are used as guidelines in the implementation, evaluation, and improvement of learning programs. The existence of such documentation indicates that efforts to improve learning quality at the madrasah have been carried out systematically and are well recorded, in line with the principles of Total Quality Management (TQM).

Overall, these findings indicate that the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in improving learning quality at MTs Lubbul Labib is carried out through ongoing planning, evaluation, and follow up activities. All of these activities are substantiated by the observation and documentation findings, which demonstrate the madrasah's clear commitment to maintaining and continuously improving the quality of learning.

## **Discussion**

The finding that quality of learning planning at MTs Lubbul Labib is carried out through coordination meetings involving the madrasah principal, the curriculum vice principal, and all teachers is largely consistent with the literature stating that planning constitutes the foundational step in the implementation of Total Quality Management, since sound planning underlies the effective and efficient execution of every subsequent educational program (Ktebi, 2024). What extends this literature, however, is that planning at MTs Lubbul Labib is not driven solely by managerial mechanisms but is deeply embedded within the madrasah's religious culture, evident in programs such as Al Miftah Lil 'Ulum, Arabic language habituation, religious activities, and the practice of musyawarah (deliberative consultation) among the principal and teachers. This finding suggests that while general TQM literature tends to frame planning as a technical managerial process, in a faith based institution such as MTs Lubbul Labib, planning is simultaneously a technical and a cultural religious act, in which

consensus building and shared religious values function as informal yet powerful mechanisms for securing teacher commitment to the plans that are formulated (Hasbi et al., 2025; Syamsy et al., 2023).

With respect to evaluation, the finding that quality control at MTs Lubbul Labib is carried out through classroom supervision, review of teachers' administrative documents, routine evaluation meetings, and assessment of student learning outcomes closely aligns with the view that evaluation constitutes an essential component of the quality control process within TQM (Mahmood et al., 2024). As the madrasah principal explained, evaluation activities include classroom supervision, checking of teaching administration, regular evaluation meetings, and assessment of student learning outcomes, and this description is corroborated by the observation and documentation data collected in the field. Beyond what is typically emphasized in the general TQM literature, however, evaluation at MTs Lubbul Labib also extends to non academic dimensions such as student discipline and religious literacy, particularly the ability to read classical Islamic texts (kitab). This broader scope indicates that evaluation in an Islamic educational setting is not confined to academic achievement alone but is integrated with character and religious formation, reflecting a more holistic conception of "quality" than is commonly articulated in mainstream, secular TQM frameworks.

The follow up activities identified in this study, namely coaching, training, discussion, and routine coordination aimed at improving teacher competence and instructional quality, are consistent with the principle of continuous improvement that lies at the heart of Total Quality Management, in which follow up represents the concrete manifestation of an institution's commitment to ongoing, incremental improvement (Zakaria et al., 2025). The observation and documentation findings including training reports, evaluation meeting minutes, and teacher development programs demonstrate that these follow up measures are not merely formal obligations but are actively implemented in response to problems identified during the evaluation stage. What distinguishes this case from more generic accounts of continuous improvement in the literature is the way in which follow up at MTs Lubbul Labib is carried out through a consultative and relational process rather than a purely top down managerial directive, reflecting the same culture of musyawarah that underlies the planning stage and thereby reinforcing coherence across the entire planning evaluation follow up cycle.

Theoretically, these findings reinforce the established understanding that TQM functions effectively as an integrated, cyclical process linking planning, evaluation, and follow up, while also extending this theory by demonstrating that in religious based educational institutions, the success of this cycle is

substantially mediated by institutional culture rather than by managerial structures alone. Whereas much of the existing TQM literature treats organizational culture as a background condition, this study indicates that culture expressed through musyawarah, religious habituation, and collective values can function as an active mechanism that sustains participation, commitment, and continuity across all three stages of the quality cycle. This has an important theoretical implication for the study of educational quality management: models of TQM developed primarily within secular or corporate contexts may require contextual adaptation when applied to faith based institutions, since religious and cultural values in such settings do not merely coexist with managerial processes but actively shape how those processes are enacted and sustained over time.

Practically, these findings offer several implications for madrasah leaders and other stakeholders in Islamic education. First, they suggest that quality improvement planning is more likely to be effectively implemented, and more readily accepted by teachers, when it is conducted participatively and reinforced by shared institutional values rather than imposed solely through formal directives. Second, the results highlight the importance of maintaining systematic evaluation instruments and documentation such as supervision instruments, evaluation reports, and learning outcome records not only to ensure accountability but also to provide a reliable evidentiary basis for follow up decisions. Third, the findings underscore the value of embedding follow up activities, such as coaching and training, within existing cultural practices like musyawarah, so that improvement efforts are experienced by teachers as collaborative rather than punitive. These practical insights can serve as a reference for other madrasahs seeking to design quality management strategies that are both managerially sound and culturally congruent with their institutional identity.

In terms of novelty, this study contributes a context specific account of how Total Quality Management operates not merely as an abstract managerial framework but as a lived, culturally embedded practice within an Islamic junior secondary school, an angle that remains relatively underexplored in existing TQM literature, which tends to focus either on general educational institutions or on isolated dimensions such as leadership or teacher management in separation from religious institutional culture. By showing how planning, evaluation, and follow up at MTs Lubbul Labib are consistently reinforced by religious values and consultative culture, this study offers an integrated model of TQM implementation that bridges managerial theory and the lived realities of faith based education. Accordingly, the contribution of this research lies not only in confirming the applicability of TQM principles within a madrasah setting, but

also in providing empirical evidence and a conceptual basis for future studies and practitioners seeking to design quality improvement strategies that are sensitive to the religious and cultural character of Islamic educational institutions.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the interviews, observations, and documentation conducted in this study, the most important lesson to be drawn is that the successful implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in improving learning quality at MTs Lubbul Labib does not rest on managerial procedures alone—systematic planning, evaluation, and follow up but is fundamentally sustained by the institution's religious culture, its practice of collective deliberation (*musyawarah*), and its consistent commitment to continuous improvement, as reflected in programs such as *Al Miftah Lil 'Ulum*, Arabic language habituation, and routine religious and academic coaching activities; this demonstrates that in faith based educational institutions, quality management is most effective when managerial processes and institutional values operate as a single, mutually reinforcing system rather than as separate domains. Academically, this study contributes to the body of knowledge on educational quality management by offering a context specific illustration of how TQM principles are enacted within an Islamic junior secondary school, thereby enriching existing TQM theory largely developed within secular or corporate settings with empirical insight into how religious and cultural values can function as active drivers, rather than mere background conditions, of quality improvement. Nevertheless, this study is limited by its single case, single institution design and its reliance on qualitative data drawn from a relatively small number of informants at one point in time, which restricts the generalizability of its findings to other madrasahs or educational contexts; future research is therefore encouraged to employ comparative case studies across multiple madrasahs, incorporate quantitative or mixed methods approaches to measure the long term impact of TQM implementation on learning outcomes, and further examine the specific mechanisms through which religious culture mediates the success of quality management practices in Islamic educational institutions.

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