Implementing Total Quality Management to Enhance Islamic Education Quality: A Case Study of Integrated Islamic Schools in Jambi, Indonesia

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Sections Info	ABSTRACT
Article history: Submitted: April 30, 2025 Final Revised: May 18, 2025 Accepted: June 28, 2025 Published: July 25, 2025 *Keywords:* Total quality management Quality of islamic education Integrated islamic school Educational management Islamic quality culture	*Objective:* *This study aims to evaluate the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in improving the quality of Islamic education at Integrated Islamic Schools (SIT) in Jambi Province. The background of this study rests on the need for integrated quality management in Islamic educational institutions, along with the increasing demands for the quality of professional and spiritual value-based educational services.* *Method:* *This research used a qualitative approach with a multicluster case study design on three SITs that were purposively selected. Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation, while data analysis was conducted interactively through data reduction, presentation, and verification.* *Results:* *The results show that the main principles of TQM, such as total involvement, continuous improvement, and customer satisfaction orientation have begun to be internalized in school management. School principals play a central role in promoting a culture of quality, although there are still challenges in quality documentation, understanding internal customers, and limited human resource development.* *Novelty:* *An important finding of this study is the integration of TQM principles with Islamic values contextually applied in SIT management culture. This study provides theoretical contributions in the development of a spiritual-based TQM framework, as well as practical recommendations to strengthen quality assurance systems in Islamic educational institutions.*

INTRODUCTION

Education is the main pillar in shaping the quality of human resources and realizing a civilized and equitable civilization. In the current global context, the quality of education is the main parameter of the success of educational institutions in responding to the challenges of the times. However, in reality, the world of education in Indonesia still faces various serious problems, ranging from the low relevance of the curriculum [1], the weak quality assurance system, to the gap between the competence of graduates and the needs of the labor market [2].

This condition is even more complex when examined from the perspective of Islamic education, where expectations for the formation of superior character and noble morals are often not directly proportional to the quality of the learning process and the results of graduates. Various national and regional evaluations show that the quality of Islamic education has not fully met the expectations of the community and stakeholders [3]. Islamic schools, including Integrated Islamic Schools (SIT), are faced with pressure to improve their competitiveness with general education institutions through the application of adaptive and measurable management principles.

One managerial approach that has proven effective in the industrial world and is starting to be adopted by the world of education is Total Quality Management (TQM).

This concept emphasizes the importance of continuous improvement, involvement of all elements of the organization, and orientation to customer satisfaction as the main focus of quality management [4], [5], [6]. In the context of educational institutions, internal customers include teachers and education personnel, while external customers include students, parents, and the wider community [2].

In Indonesia, the implementation of TQM in education has been encouraged by the Education Quality Assurance System (SPMP) policy as stipulated in Government Regulation No. 19 of 2005 article 91. However, most educational institutions, including integrated Islamic schools, have yet to implement TQM principles optimally and thoroughly. There is a gap between the idealism of the TQM concept and managerial practices in the field. On the other hand, integrated Islamic schools that are members of the JSIT network (Integrated Islamic School Network) have their own management standards that are ideally aligned with TQM principles, but have not been systemically and empirically evaluated for their effectiveness in improving the quality of Islamic education [7].

Within this framework, this research becomes important and urgent to do, especially considering the lack of empirical studies that specifically evaluate the implementation of TQM in Integrated Islamic Schools in Indonesia, especially in the Jambi region. This research not only answers the literature gap related to the effectiveness of TQM implementation in Islamic education, but also offers a strategic mapping of TQM implementation based on the peculiarities of an integrated Islamic education system. Thus, this research is expected to make a conceptual and practical contribution to the development of an Islamic education quality management model in the modern era.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research used a qualitative approach with the type of multicluster case study . This approach was chosen because it is suitable for exploring in depth the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in the context of education quality management in Integrated Islamic Schools (SIT) in Jambi Province. Case studies allow researchers to thoroughly understand the processes, strategies and dynamics of TQM implementation in a complex and contextualized Islamic education environment [8].

The research subjects consisted of three integrated Islamic schools: SDIT Nurul Ilmi Jambi City, SMPIT Al-Furqan Muaro Jambi Regency, and SMAIT Insan Cendekia Sungai Penuh City. The selection of locations was done purposively by considering the superior accreditation status and consistent implementation of quality-based management. The main informants included principals, vice principals, teachers, and administrative staff, while supporting informants were school committees and parents.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. Interviews were semi-structured to gather information on the implementation of TQM principles, such as involvement of all school components, continuous improvement, customer satisfaction orientation, and performance

measurement. Observations were made of managerial and learning activities, while documentation included SOPs, accreditation documents and school work plans.

The data analysis process refers to the interactive model of [9], which includes three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data validity was ensured through triangulation of techniques and sources, member checks, and peer discussions. The researcher also applied the principle of audit trail to maintain the transparency of the research process.

With this approach, the research seeks to fully reveal how TQM is implemented in the SIT environment, as well as the supporting and inhibiting factors that influence the successful implementation of the quality management system.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Results

This study found that the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in improving the quality of Islamic education in Integrated Islamic Schools (SIT) in Jambi Province has been implemented with a strategic approach, although it has not fully met all TQM principles comprehensively. The three educational units that became the research locus showed different quality management practices according to their respective institutional characteristics.

Management's Commitment to Quality

Principals of the three SITs showed a high commitment to implementing TQM principles, characterized by a quality policy outlined in the school's vision and mission, the formation of an internal quality control team, and the consistency of periodic HR training. For example, at SDIT Nurul Ilmi Jambi City, the principal established a quality policy in the form of a five-year medium-term school development plan focused on improving teacher competence, strengthening the culture of quality, and optimizing services based on student and parent satisfaction, Rifai.

At SMPIT Al-Furqan Muaro Jambi, the principal builds a collaborative organizational culture through regular coordination meetings and active involvement of all school elements, including teachers and TU staff, in strategic decision making. This is in line with TQM principles that emphasize total involvement in the quality improvement process [2], [4].

Customer Focus

All three schools place parental satisfaction as a key indicator of the success of educational services. External customer satisfaction is measured through annual surveys, suggestion boxes, and guardian forums. For example, at SMAIT Insan Cendekia Sungai Penuh, the school developed a digital application to receive and respond quickly to parents' feedback, which is then followed up in the form of service improvements.

However, an internal survey showed that not all teachers have a complete understanding of the concept of "internal customers", namely teachers and staff themselves. This indicates that customer orientation has not been fully internalized as an

organizational culture, and there is still a gap between the theoretical TQM concept and field practice, Rifai.

Performance Measurement and Continuous Improvement

The implementation of performance measurement in the three schools is done regularly through academic supervision, learning evaluation and assessment of work program achievements. Schools also routinely conduct internal quality audits based on indicators set out in planning documents. This reflects the application of the principle of continuous improvement (kaizen) which is at the core of TQM.

However, there are weaknesses in the consistency of documentation of monitoring and follow-up results. Some evaluation activities were incidental and not well documented, so the feedback loop process did not run optimally. This finding shows that the continuous improvement process has not been strongly standardized at all institutional levels [5].

Human Resource Development

The strategy of improving human resource competencies is the main focus in the implementation of TQM in the three schools. Training and workshops are conducted regularly, both through in-house training and external training in collaboration with higher education institutions or JSIT regions. At SMPIT Al-Furqan, for example, "Teachers as Quality Agents" training is held at the beginning of each school year as a form of internalizing quality values into teaching practices.

However, budget constraints are a major challenge in the sustainability of HR quality improvement programs, especially in schools that do not yet have financial independence. Therefore, HR development as the main pillar of education quality still requires continuous policy intervention [6].

Quality Culture and Transformational Leadership

Quality culture is a prominent element in field practice. The principal plays the role of a role model in building a positive, integrative and visionary work culture. The transformational leadership approach appears dominant, especially in terms of empowering teachers, providing work motivation, and forming internal quality teams [10], [11], [12], [13], [14].

For example, at SDIT Nurul Ilmi, the principal actively develops quality innovation programs such as "One Teacher One Innovation", where each teacher is required to develop at least one innovative learning tool every semester. This program has successfully increased teachers' active participation in classroom-based quality development.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in Integrated Islamic Schools (SIT) in Jambi Province has been carried out quite systematically, but still leaves a number of challenges in the comprehensive application of the basic principles of TQM. Conceptually, the results of this study support the thoughts of [4], [5], [6]who emphasized that the key to TQM

success lies in strong leadership, involvement of all elements of the organization, and continuous improvement.

Leadership as the Motor of TQM Implementation

Principal leadership plays a central role in determining the success of Total Quality Management (TQM) implementation in educational institutions, including in Integrated Islamic Schools (SIT). This research shows that the role of the principal as a transformational leader is not only administrative and structural, but also includes inspirational, motivational, and participatory functions. The principal becomes the key actor in directing the vision of quality, reviving the collective work culture, and ensuring that all elements of the school are actively involved in the process of improving the quality of education. This is in line with the transformational leadership theory proposed by [15], which emphasizes the importance of leaders in shaping the spirit of change, providing role models, and encouraging achievement beyond formal expectations through communicating a strong vision and empowering human resources.

In the context of Islamic schools, this role becomes even more strategic because the principal is not only expected to be an effective manager, but also a model figure who combines modern managerial values with Islamic leadership principles such as trustworthiness, fairness, and deliberation. As stated by the Head of SDIT Nurul Ilmi, "We do not only work for performance targets, but also carry the mandate of Islamic values in every quality process. Our teachers are not only educators, but part of the quality system itself" (Interview, January 10, 2024). This statement confirms that the success of TQM implementation is highly dependent on how principals internalize spiritual values into managerial strategies.

One of the concrete practices found in this study is the One Teacher One Innovation program at SDIT Nurul Ilmi, where each teacher is encouraged to produce one innovative product in learning each semester. This program not only encourages the improvement of teaching quality, but also builds teachers' sense of professional responsibility for the overall quality of learning. This is consistent with [5] view that quality improvement should be part of the work culture and not just the responsibility of the quality control unit.

This finding strengthens the argument that in the implementation of TQM, the quality of leadership is the main determinant. Without the support of leadership that is visionary, collaborative, and able to bridge between Islamic values and contemporary quality management practices, TQM will only be a formal slogan without transformational effects. As expressed by one of the teachers at SMAIT Insan Cendekia, "We feel motivated because the principal provides space to innovate, but still within the corridor of Islamic values" (Interview, January 17, 2024). Therefore, strengthening the leadership capacity of school principals is an important prerequisite in instilling a sustainable culture of quality in the Islamic education environment, as also confirmed by [2] that the role of leadership is a vital element in creating organizational commitment to quality.

Synergy between TQM Values and Islamic Teachings

One of the important and distinctive findings of this research is the strong synergy between the principles of Total Quality Management (TQM) and core values in Islamic teachings. The principle of continuous improvement, which in TQM is known as continuous improvement (kaizen), has a value equivalent in Islam, namely ishlah al-da'im, which means continuous improvement as a form of responsibility for trust, professionalism, and efforts to get closer to the perfection of charity (ihsan). This value is not only spiritual, but also operational, because it is the basis of work ethics and consistent self-development in Islamic educational institutions.

In the context of integrated Islamic schools, this synergy is reflected through regular training conducted by the principal for teachers and education personnel, not only to improve technical competence, but also to foster the spirit of ihsan at work. The head of SMPIT Al-Furqan, for example, explained, "We build a training system not only to improve teaching skills, but also to shape the character and work manners of teachers according to Islamic values" (Interview, January 12, 2024). The training program reflects an integral approach between spiritual values and quality management principles, where teachers are not only trained as professionals but also as moral role models in the school environment.

Furthermore, the principle of customer focus in TQM also does not contradict Islamic principles, but is strengthened by the concept of maslahah (benefit) and istihsan (selection of the best solution). In Islam, orientation to the best service to others is part of moral responsibility. Thus, the orientation towards customer satisfaction in education-both parents, students, and the community-can be framed as part of the mission of service (khidmah) in Islam. This means that the TQM principle is not something foreign to the values of Islamic education, but has a compatible and even inherent footing in the framework of Islamic epistemology.

Thus, the TQM approach in Islamic educational institutions cannot be seen as a mere adoption of the Western model, but instead can be creatively contextualized by integrating noble Islamic values. This synergy becomes an advantage as well as a novelty of this research - namely that strengthening quality in Islamic educational institutions will be much more effective if modern managerial principles such as TQM are combined with spiritual values that live in the daily lives of school residents. This integration emphasizes that the quality of Islamic education is not only measured by quantitative indicators such as test scores or accreditation, but also by moral exemplary, professionalism, and the blessing of the learning process.

Internal and External Customers: Understanding and Practice

One of the important findings in this study is the uneven understanding of the concept of "internal customers" in the Total Quality Management (TQM) framework among school members. The three schools that were the object of the study have shown seriousness in measuring the satisfaction of external customers, such as parents and the community, through survey instruments, student guardian forums, and written suggestion mechanisms. This shows an awareness of the importance of customer

satisfaction in maintaining the quality of education services. However, the concept of internal customers-that is, teachers, education personnel and administrative staff-has not been fully understood and practiced systemically by the entire school management. In fact, according to [2], the success of a quality system depends not only on the satisfaction of external customers, but also on the well-being, involvement and internal satisfaction of all actors in the educational organization.

This gap is evident in the difference between teachers' formal involvement in various quality programs and their psychological and emotional satisfaction with the working system. One teacher at SMAIT Insan Cendekia revealed, "Technically we are involved in the quality team, but sometimes our voices are not really heard, just to fulfill the formal structure" (Interview, January 17, 2024). This statement indicates that involvement does not automatically mean empowerment or satisfaction, and this can lead to a decline in commitment to quality in the long term. In TQM, this is referred to as pseudo-involvement, which is involvement that is not accompanied by functional and emotional value perceived by the individual [4], [5].

In the context of integrated Islamic education, this issue becomes more crucial because the institution is not only tasked with producing academically intelligent graduates, but also forming noble character and morals, both through teaching and exemplary. Thus, teachers as internal customers must be positioned proportionally as strategic partners, not just technical executors. Teachers' spiritual, emotional and social well-being needs to be part of the quality policy. Values such as ta'awun (mutual help), ikhlas (pure devotion), and ukhuwwah (brotherhood) should not only be rhetorical slogans, but become the spirit of the Islamic education management system.

Therefore, TQM-based work culture reform needs to be directed at creating a work environment that is communicative, supportive, and honors all parties in it. In the Islamic view, this is a form of ihsan fil 'amal - performing tasks with full responsibility, justice, and respect for the dignity of each individual. Efforts to build a comprehensive quality system cannot be separated from how the institution designs a spiritually and socially healthy work climate. Thus, quality improvement is not only about the system, but also about an inner healthy ecosystem.

Evaluation and Documentation System: Challenges in TQM Implementation

One of the most obvious challenges in the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in the three Integrated Islamic Schools (SITs) studied is the weak quality documentation system and the suboptimal feedback loop from the evaluation process. Although internal quality audits, classroom supervision, and program monitoring have been carried out regularly, the follow-up implementation is often not systematically recorded. The documentation formats used vary and do not all follow standardized quality standards. As a result, the continuous improvement process is often hampered by limited historical data, undocumented records of decisions, and lack of tracking of previous improvement recommendations. This condition is in line with [5] criticism, which states that a quality system without consistent documentation is only an

illusion of improvement, as there is no objective basis for measuring or controlling work processes.

This was confirmed by one principal who stated, "We often conduct evaluations, but the records are scattered, unstructured. So sometimes last year's findings are repeated because there is no clear written follow-up" (Interview, January 15, 2024). This statement illustrates how weak documentation can lead to rework and stagnation in quality system development. In the TQM framework, evaluation and documentation systems are not just administrative appendages, but the backbone of the continuous improvement process. Without accurate documentation, the organization's learning process is interrupted, and quality cannot be measurably improved.

In the context of Islamic education, documentation means more than just technical procedures. It is part of the institutional mandate in maintaining transparency, accountability and fairness in educational decision-making. In Islamic teachings, recording transactions, agreements and important events is part of sharia ethics, as emphasized in QS. Al-Baqarah verse 282 on the importance of recording transactions in writing (katib). Thus, strengthening the documentation system in education quality management not only fulfills managerial demands, but also spiritual and moral ones.

Therefore, strengthening technical capacity in quality documentation, training in data management, and developing standard formats and digitizing record-keeping systems need to be a priority agenda for Islamic schools. This will ensure that the evaluation cycle does not remain superficial but results in continuous, structured and professionally and religiously accountable improvements. A strong documentation system not only improves efficiency but also builds a reflective and progressive organizational culture.

TQM in the Context of Integrated Islamic Schools: Specifications and Adaptations

Integrated Islamic Schools (SIT) have managerial peculiarities that distinguish them from general education institutions. The management system in SIT is not only shaped by administrative and structural considerations, but is also strongly influenced by the ideological basis and Islamic values that are the foundation of education. In this context, every policy, program, and quality evaluation is not only considered in terms of technical efficiency or effectiveness, but also in accordance with the principles of tawhid, amanah, ihsan, and ukhuwah. These values become the institutional "spirit" that shapes the school's organizational culture.

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in SIT cannot be done in a copy-paste manner from industrial or general education models. Rather, TQM needs to be adapted contextually to be in line with the spirit of Islamic values that live in the daily lives of school members. One of the school principals stated, "We cannot apply quality management rigidly like in a company. Here, every policy must be in line with the values of tawhid and Islamic manners. Otherwise, there will be resistance from within" (Interview, January 13, 2024). This statement confirms that the success of TQM at SIT relies heavily on a transformative and spiritual approach in the process of changing the quality culture.

The combination of TQM principles such as continuous improvement, customer satisfaction, and total involvement with Islamic values such as amanah (divine responsibility), ukhuwwah (brotherhood-based collective work), and taqwa (moral awareness) has been shown to have a positive influence on the acceptance of the quality program by teachers, students, and parents. This is in line with the thoughts of [7] who emphasize the importance of resilience of the quality system in Islamic educational institutions through the synergy of spiritual values and modern management approaches. In practice, the principal becomes the main facilitator in bridging the technocratic approach of TQM with the religious values rooted in the school environment.

The main novelty of this research lies in the assertion that the successful implementation of TQM in the SIT environment is not sufficiently based only on quality structures and instruments, but requires a holistic approach that integrates technical, cultural, and spiritual aspects simultaneously. This approach expands the theoretical discourse on TQM by offering a local-religious perspective that is uniquely Indonesian, where quality management is positioned as part of devotion to God and service to the people. Thus, this article not only makes a practical contribution to SIT management, but also enriches the academic literature in the development of value-based quality management models in Islamic education.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding : The implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in improving the quality of Islamic education at Integrated Islamic Schools (SIT) in Jambi Province shows that the quality-based management approach can be applied adaptively in the context of Islamic education. The school principal as a transformational leader is proven to be the driving force of the quality culture through various initiatives that involve all school members actively and continuously. TQM principles such as continuous improvement, total involvement and customer focus, both internal and external, have gradually been integrated into school management. These findings underscore the importance of integrating modern management values and Islamic spiritual principles so that TQM does not merely become an administrative procedure but a visionary and meaningful collective work culture. **Implication :** Based on these findings, it is recommended that schools strengthen internal training on TQM principles and practices for teachers and education personnel, build a more organized quality documentation system, and maximize the role of the principal as a driver of an Islamic value-based quality culture. In addition, local governments and fostering institutions such as JSIT are expected to provide regulatory and technical support so that the implementation of TQM in SIT can run more effectively, sustainably, and standardized. **Limitation :** However, the implementation of TQM has not been fully optimized. Challenges such as low understanding of internal customers, weaknesses in the quality documentation system, and limited budgets for human resource development are obstacles that need to be seriously addressed. **Future Research :** This research also opens

opportunities for further studies that are more quantitative in measuring the impact of TQM implementation on concrete indicators such as student achievement, teacher job satisfaction, and accountability of Islamic education institutions in general.

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