

Analyzing the Implementation of Total Quality Management Principles in Character Education Programs at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah

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ABSTRACT. This study addresses the limited understanding of how Islamic schools strategically apply Total Quality Management (TQM) principles in character education programs. Specifically, this research investigates the implementation of five core TQM principles: involvement of people, customer focus, process approach, continuous improvement, and human resource management in managing flagship character development initiatives at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA. Employing a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with the principal and teachers, classroom observations, and document analyses of program implementation records. Findings indicate that Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA effectively integrates TQM principles through structured daily routines, strong collaboration between teachers and parents, systematic semester-based evaluations, and targeted professional development for educators. The structured implementation of these principles resulted in improved consistency in student character development activities and enhanced program sustainability. This study contributes to existing research by presenting a practical TQM-based model for systematically embedding character education into school culture, which is particularly valuable for Islamic educational institutions. The implementation of TQM principles strengthens the quality and consistency of character education in the madrasah, enhances stakeholder collaboration, and systematically promotes program sustainability. This model can be a reference for other Islamic educational institutions to integrate quality management into effective and sustainable student character development.

Keywords: *Character Education, Flagship Program, Madrasah, Quality Management, Total Quality Management*

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INTRODUCTION

Education today is no longer measured solely by academic ability but also by how effectively educational institutions shape students' character with integrity and resilience. Amid technological advancement and the rapid flow of information, students' character faces increasingly complex challenges (Chen et al., 2024; Sakti et al., 2024). Various articles have shown a decline in student discipline, responsibility, and morality, as reflected in behavior that does not embody noble values. Currently, the attitudes and behaviors of students in Indonesia are experiencing degradation (Aningsih et al., 2022; Basri et al., 2024; Fahdini et al., 2021; Istiyani et al., 2024; Pabbajah et al., 2020; Suarningsih et al., 2024). The condition of education in Indonesia still does not fully reflect

the goals of national education, as it has yet to produce individuals with strong character (Susilo et al., 2022). The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology recorded a 17% increase in bullying cases in schools in 2023, indicating a lack of empathy and respect among students (Achmad -, 2025; Arif et al., 2024; Bork-Hüffer et al., 2021; Pusvitasari & Zarkasyi, 2024). This emphasizes that character education must be an inseparable part of the entire educational process.

Character education plays a crucial role in shaping students' morality (Ardianto et al., 2023; Dewi et al., 2025; Fahdini et al., 2021; Stefani & Meylina, 2024). Character itself is defined as a system that includes perseverance, motivation, drive, and resilience, accompanied by internalized values such as virtue, ethics, and morality (Birhan et al., 2021; Dirsra et al., 2022; Prayitno et al., 2022). Education aims to develop good character, which is not innate but acquired through real-life experiences (Chotimah et al., 2021; Frick & Pazey, 2024; Ho et al., 2024). Character education needs to be instilled in every student as an integral part of the education process. Therefore, character education must be managed systematically through a structured quality management approach. This study aims to examine how the principles of Total Quality Management (TQM) are implemented in character development programs to enhance students' character quality in a sustainable manner.

This research was conducted using a qualitative method at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA. From pre-observation studies, it was found that Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA, established in 2021, is an educational institution that has flagship programs for student character development. Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA is committed to providing flagship programs that holistically develop students' character while maintaining educational quality. The school has designed four flagship programs: Ubudiyah, Bina Akhlak Siswa, I Can't Speak English, and Takallam Billughatil Arabiyah. Although newly established, this madrasah has shown rapid development. Its steadily increasing number of students from only 11 in its first year to 37 in the fourth year demonstrates the growing public trust in the quality of education it offers. One of the approaches adopted by Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA is Total Quality Management (TQM), which is expected to ensure optimal quality in all aspects of its flagship programs by involving all stakeholders teachers, students, parents, and foundation management while promoting continuous improvement.

This article aims to examine the implementation of five core principles of Total Quality Management (TQM), namely involvement of people, customer focus, continuous improvement, human resource management, and process approach in the management of character education programs in educational institutions. These principles are described by (Fandy & Diana, 2003; Jain & Nandwani, 2024; Parveen et al., 2024; Toke & Kalpande, 2020), including customer focus, quality obsession, scientific decision-making, long-term commitment, teamwork, education and training, and total employee involvement. Hensler and Brunell in (Nasution, 2001) emphasize the importance of customer satisfaction, respect for individuals, fact-based management, and continuous improvement. (Alwi & Mumtahana, 2023; Bazhenov et al., 2015; Margono, 1999) also highlights five key elements of TQM: customer focus, process improvement, long-term thinking, human resource development, and commitment to quality. These ideas are supported by prominent TQM theorists such as (Deming, 1986), who emphasizes continuous improvement and constancy of purpose; (Juran & Schilling, 1998), with their quality trilogy focusing on planning, control, and process improvement; (Crosby, 1979), who advocates "doing it right the first time" through training and error prevention; and (Ishikawa, 1985), who highlights the importance of total organizational involvement through systematic approaches and quality circles.

Previous studies have widely discussed the importance of character education in schools (Aningsih et al., 2022; Chotimah et al., 2021; Fahdini et al., 2021; Stefani & Meylina, 2024; Suarningsih et al., 2024). However, studies on how newly established educational institutions, especially Islamic-based schools, implement strategic management frameworks such as Total Quality Management (TQM) to systematically and sustainably build character education remain limited. Most research focuses more on pedagogical approaches and curriculum design, while managerial approaches to supporting character education are still underexplored. Therefore, this

study seeks to fill this gap by highlighting the synergy between TQM principles and character education in the context of a newly established madrasah.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in the flagship programs of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA. This approach was chosen as it enables the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of how TQM is applied in managing the school's flagship programs, as well as the challenges encountered in the process.

Primary data were collected using three techniques: interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with the principal and several teachers who are directly involved in the implementation of the flagship programs. These semi-structured interviews aimed to uncover their perceptions and experiences related to TQM implementation. Observations were carried out to directly examine the execution of the flagship programs, with the goal of understanding how TQM principles are applied in daily practice. The researcher participated in learning activities and program implementations to gain clearer insight into how these programs are operated.

Documentation, including work plans, policies, evaluation reports, and records related to TQM, was used to support and verify the data obtained from interviews and observations. All collected data were analyzed thematically, focusing on the application of TQM in the management of flagship programs and the challenges involved. Through this method, the study is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of how TQM is implemented at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA and its impact on educational quality and student character development.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA, established in 2021, is an educational institution striving to address these challenges. Despite its recent establishment, the madrasah has shown rapid development. Its growing student population from just 11 in its first year to 37 in its fourth demonstrates the public's increasing trust in the quality of education it offers. As a school that prioritizes character education, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA is committed to providing flagship programs that holistically develop students' character while maintaining educational quality. The school has designed four flagship programs: *Ubudiyah*, *Bina Akhlak Siswa*, *I Can't Speak English*, and *Takallam Billughatil Arabiyah*.

The *Ubudiyah* program aims to reinforce students' spiritual values by instilling strong religious principles. *Bina Akhlak Siswa* focuses on moral development honesty, responsibility, discipline, and empathy. The *I Can't Speak English* program addresses English language proficiency, a critical skill in today's global world. Meanwhile, *Takallam Billughatil Arabiyah* develops Arabic language skills, essential for Islamic learning and interpreting religious texts. Although each program has a different focus, they are integrated into a comprehensive system ensuring a balanced development between academic competence and moral-spiritual growth. These programs aim to shape not only intellectually capable students but also individuals with noble character, ready to face global challenges with strong values.

Implementation of Flagship Programs at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA

Based on the results of interviews and observations, several findings emerged regarding how Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA implements its flagship programs: *Ubudiyah*, *Bina Akhlak Siswa*, *I Can't Speak English*, and *Takallam Billughatil Arabiyah*.

Parental Involvement in Flagship Programs

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA demonstrates active efforts to involve parents in the implementation of its flagship programs. At the beginning of each semester, the school invites parents to attend a program orientation. At the start of each academic year, special interviews are conducted with parents to ensure their commitment to supporting character development programs at home.

In order to intensify parental engagement, the school utilizes class WhatsApp groups, through which homeroom teachers provide daily updates on student progress particularly related to character development. In addition, the school provides a special monitoring book for parents to record their child's character-building activities at home on a daily checklist basis.

Table 1. Type of Self-Development

Self-Development Program	Instilled Values	Strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ubudiyah / Daily Ma'tsurat Prayers • Student Character Development (Bina Akhlak Siswa) • I Can Speak (English Speaking Program) • Takallam Billughatil 'Arabiyah (Arabic Speaking Program) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honesty • Self-confidence • Social awareness • Communicativeness • Discipline • Noble character (Akhlaqul Karimah) • Simplicity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Character and personality formation • Providing motivation • Career counseling and guidance

Regular Implementation of Flagship Program Activities

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA has a specific policy to implement its flagship programs daily from 07:00 to 09:00 AM. These daily activities include:

- 1) Performing *Dhuha* prayer, *dzikir*, and collective supplication;
- 2) Daily instruction in English and Arabic;
- 3) Daily memorization of short Surahs from the Qur'an.

These activities are directly monitored by each student's homeroom teacher to ensure structured and intensive supervision of student development.

Consistent Character Education Practices

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA routinely enforces character-building practices within the school environment, such as encouraging students to greet and shake hands with teachers upon arrival and teaching proper etiquette in daily interactions. This is supported by a specific morning time allocation for character development activities, ensuring that students consistently practice these values in their daily lives.

Table 2. Unstructured Self-Development Program (adapted to madrasah activities)

Activity	Implementation
Routine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congregational Dhuha Prayer • Congregational Dhuhr Prayer • Congregational Asr Prayer
Spontaneous/Habit Formation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greeting with smile and handshake • Kissing teacher's hand • Throwing trash in the bin • Visiting sick friends or teachers

Evaluation and Monitoring of Flagship Programs

To measure the effectiveness of its flagship programs, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA conducts structured evaluations at the end of each semester in the form of a special examination focused on the flagship programs. The scores from these exams are absolute and tailored to the individual developmental progress of each student, allowing parents to tangibly observe their child's growth over the semester.

The school also uses a dedicated guidebook to monitor the implementation of the flagship programs each semester. This book is specifically designed for use by teachers and homeroom teachers to systematically document students' development every semester.

Recruitment and Development of Educators

To maintain the quality of its flagship programs, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA implements a specific recruitment policy that prioritizes candidates who are graduates of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). During the selection process, candidates must pass a special religious examination to ensure that their competencies align with the school's vision.

Furthermore, the school supports continuous professional development by organizing monthly religious study sessions (*kajian*) for educators. These sessions aim to enhance teachers' motivation and competence in carrying out character education tasks within the school environment.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA has implemented various principles of Total Quality Management (TQM) in a concrete manner in the management of its flagship programs. In this section, the previously presented empirical findings are examined in greater depth through a theoretical lens. Specifically, this discussion analyzes how the application of TQM principles such as Involvement of People, Customer Focus, Process Approach, Continuous Improvement, and Human Resource Management contributes to improving the quality of education and character development at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA. Furthermore, the field findings are compared with previous research to provide a clearer picture of the relevance of TQM practices in the educational context, particularly in efforts to enhance character-based education quality.

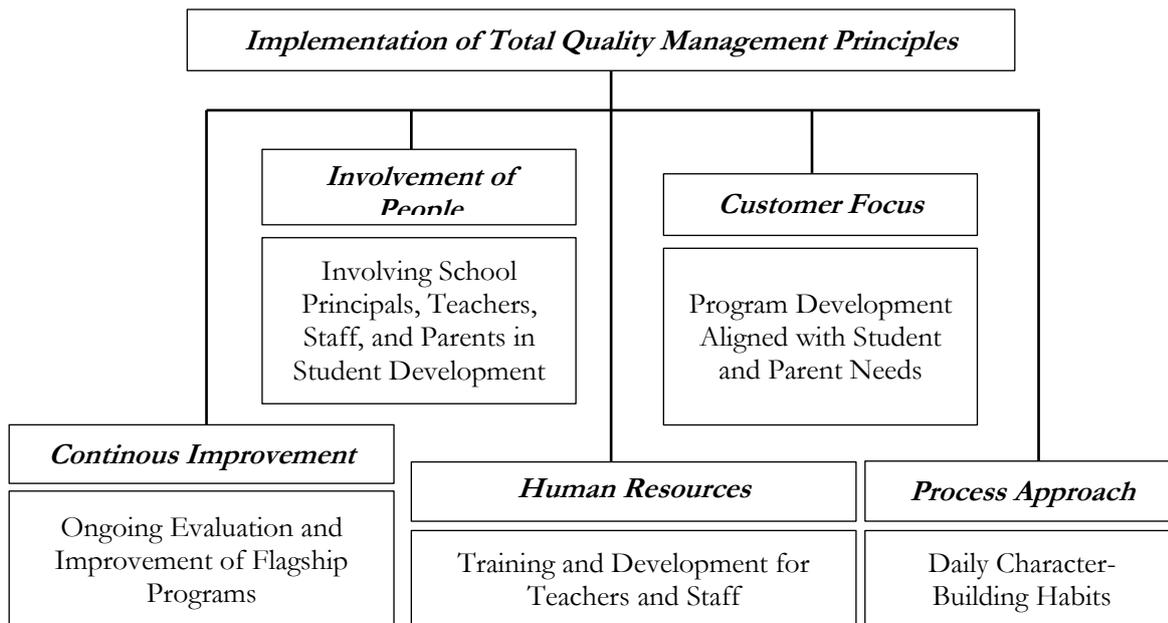


Figure 1. Implementation of Total Quality Management Principles.

Involvement of People

One of the fundamental principles in Total Quality Management (TQM) is the Involvement of People, which emphasizes the active participation of every individual within an organization to achieve quality objectives. According to ISO 9001:2015, this involvement includes participation, responsibility, and empowerment of all human resources in the process of continuous quality improvement. This principle underlines that the success of a quality system is highly dependent on the collective commitment, collaboration, and sense of ownership from all parties involved leaders, staff, and relevant external stakeholders. As (Deming, 1986) states, quality can only be achieved through the full involvement of all personnel in the organization, where each individual plays a vital role in continuously improving processes. In the educational context, (Sallis, 2002) affirms that the success of TQM implementation greatly depends on the participation and commitment of the entire school community from the principal and teachers to administrative staff and parents. This creates a collaborative climate in which everyone feels responsible for improving educational quality.

At Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA, the principle of Involvement of People is reflected in the strong commitment and active participation of all educational components, including the school principal, teachers, and parents. The school principal plays a central role as the driving force behind the implementation of the flagship programs. This commitment is realized through strategic policies, such as the designation of a special morning time slot (07:00–08:00 AM) dedicated to flagship program activities, particularly those focused on character development and competency building. This policy is not merely an administrative routine but a concrete form of quality-based leadership, which, according to Deming, is a key element in effectively engaging personnel.

Moreover, the principal not only formulates policies but also demonstrates active involvement in monitoring and quality control. According to (Deleryd & Fundin, 2025; Fundin et al., 2025), successful school leaders in implementing TQM are those who act as role models and integrate quality values into the school's daily operational policies. The principal regularly oversees the implementation of programs and provides direct guidance to teachers, ensuring that all activities are conducted consistently, systematically, and measurably. This aligns with the Management by Walking Around (MBWA) approach, which encourages leaders to be physically present on the ground as a form of tangible support and effective two-way communication. As described by (Serrat, 2017), MBWA is a leadership style that highlights the importance of direct presence in the workplace as a means of building rapport, enhancing engagement, and fostering open communication across all organizational levels.

This finding reinforces the critical role of school principals in fostering participatory spaces and building collective commitment. As emphasized by (Miovský et al., 2023; Waligo et al., 2014), the success of strategic programs is strongly influenced by leadership quality that can mobilize active involvement from both internal and external stakeholders. In the educational context, this approach allows principals to monitor learning processes directly, provide immediate feedback, and establish more personal connections with both teachers and students. Thus, MBWA not only strengthens tangible quality control but also increases trust and motivation within the school environment.

Commitment to quality is also evident in the role of teachers as primary implementers of the flagship programs. Teachers at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA do not merely follow technical instructions; they are actively involved in designing, guiding, and evaluating learning activities related to character and competency development. This level of involvement positions teachers as quality practitioners not merely administrative executors, but agents of quality transformation in education. As (Sallis, 2002) explains, teachers who are actively involved in quality management processes will develop a strong sense of ownership toward the program, thus being more motivated to enhance teaching quality. Further research by (El Kalai et al., 2022) affirms that teachers' professional and organizational commitment has a direct impact on students' academic engagement

and learning success. This commitment is strongly influenced by appropriate human resource management practices and healthy interpersonal relationships in the workplace. Loyalty to the profession and a sense of responsibility toward colleagues are key factors that motivate teachers to contribute maximally to the educational organization.

Thanks to the dedicated daily schedule, teachers are provided with flexible and focused time to conduct character-based activities such as leadership training, religious habit formation, and literacy development. Teachers also utilize this time to monitor student progress holistically not only in academic performance, but also in behavior, discipline, and social responsibility (Barnoto, 2020; Syukur et al., 2024). This serves as a concrete application of people-based quality improvement, where quality enhancement targets not just outcomes but also the personal growth and learning processes of students.

Finally, although not explicitly stated in the school's internal policy documents, parental involvement remains a vital part of student character education. Parents are engaged through routine communication with the school, participation in joint activities, and the provision of moral and spiritual support at home. This collaboration helps create continuity of values between the school and home environments, allowing character formation to occur more effectively. A study by (Sipahutar et al., 2024) indicates that parental involvement has a significant impact on the character development of elementary school students. Another study by (Paul et al., 2022) reveals that character education programs involving collaborative activities between students and parents at home are proven to effectively enhance students' character development. Moreover, this involvement also strengthens family relationships and encourages parental reflection on the values of character education. Positive parental engagement contributes to the reinforcement of character values, while inappropriate involvement may hinder optimal character growth in children.

The involvement of all parties aligns with the TQM principle that prioritizes stakeholder participation in achieving optimal quality of educational services. According to (Juran & Schilling, 1998), such involvement represents empowerment, where each individual is given the space to contribute to the process of continuous improvement. This finding is also in line with (Berhanu & Gobie, 2023), who emphasize that active stakeholder involvement in educational management can only be achieved if supported by credible leadership, sufficient organizational capacity, and open communication systems. In the context of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA, strategies such as engaging parents through monitoring books and involving teachers in daily programs serve as concrete efforts to overcome those very challenges.

Customer Focus

The principle of Customer Focus at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA is implemented by attentively addressing the needs and expectations of its primary customers students and parents. Total Quality Management (TQM) requires institutions to ensure that every strategic planning process places the perspective of learners at its center (Ibrahim & Rusdiana, 2021). (Juran, 1992) emphasizes that customer satisfaction is the main benchmark for the success of TQM. In an educational context, students and their parents are the core customers, and all educational processes must be directed toward consistently meeting their needs and expectations.

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA recognizes that parents have high expectations for their children's education, especially in the areas of character development, morality, and language proficiency. On the other hand, students as the primary recipients of education also have specific needs that must be fulfilled for optimal growth.

The school implements this principle from the very beginning of its flagship program planning process. When designing program guidelines, the madrasah aligns the content and methodology with student needs based on initial mapping. Every new student undergoes an evaluation process aimed at understanding their background in character, behavior, and competencies. The results of this evaluation become the foundation for designing relevant

programs that directly respond to students' developmental needs. In this way, the flagship programs are not generic but tailored to provide tangible benefits to each individual.

For parents, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA places special emphasis on open and transparent communication. From the enrollment stage, parents are given detailed information about the school's flagship programs. These programs are designed not only to fulfill academic goals but also to meet expectations for character development and language acquisition. Parents are invited to actively collaborate through various activities, such as semester-opening meetings and interviews, with the aim of aligning visions in supporting their children's education at home.

The school also strives to maintain parental satisfaction through various communication channels, most notably WhatsApp groups. These groups enable homeroom teachers to provide daily updates on students' progress, especially in relation to the implementation of flagship programs. Additionally, parents are provided with a monitoring book designed to track their children's activities at home. This book includes a checklist of character-building tasks to be completed by students, which are then confirmed by the parents daily. This approach ensures that character development at school aligns with activities at home, creating a positive synergy between school and family environments.

This finding is consistent with (Sipahutar et al., 2024), who stress that consistent and positive parental involvement is a crucial factor in supporting character development during elementary school years.

For students, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA demonstrates a focus on their needs by allocating a dedicated time slot from 07:00 to 08:00 AM daily for flagship program activities. During this time, students engage in activities designed to foster character development, language skills, and moral education. Each activity is supervised by a homeroom teacher to ensure that students receive sufficient attention and can follow the program effectively. Furthermore, the curriculum used in the flagship programs is designed with relevance and continuity in mind, ensuring long-term benefits for student growth.

Referring to (Juran, 1992), Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA centers its services around the needs and expectations of its main customers students and parents as part of its effort to generate added value through high-quality educational services. Through this integrated approach, the school effectively fulfills both student and parent expectations. These efforts not only increase parental trust in the school but also foster a learning environment that holistically supports student development.

The successful application of the Customer Focus principle is one of the key factors behind Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA's ability to maintain its quality and attract increasing student enrollment each year. This aligns with the findings of (Mukolo et al., 2024), who assert that customer-focused educational strategies enable institutions to design more relevant, personalized, and impactful service systems that enhance learning outcomes. This approach also resonates with the perspective of (Mittal & Jung, 2024), who state that customer-centered strategies in educational institutions can improve parental satisfaction, institutional loyalty, and student academic performance.

Process Approach

The Process Approach is one of the foundational principles in Total Quality Management (TQM), emphasizing the need to manage all organizational activities as an interconnected process system to achieve consistent and efficient results. This approach assumes that an organization's success depends not only on the achievement of end results but also on how processes are designed, implemented, monitored, and continually improved. According to ISO 9001:2015, systematically managed processes enable organizations to achieve desired outcomes more efficiently through integrated workflows. (Arcaro, 1995) also asserts that process improvement is a key element of quality-based schools, where the focus shifts from mere teaching to a structured and results-oriented learning process.

In the context of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA, this principle serves as the foundation for designing and implementing flagship programs in an organized, monitored, and sustainable manner to ensure optimal development of student character and competencies.

In applying the Process Approach, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA employs a structured and continuous method in implementing its flagship programs. Every day, the school conducts character development activities through various routine practices, such as the *duba* prayer, *dzikir*, collective supplication, and scheduled English and Arabic language development sessions. These activities are monitored by homeroom teachers to ensure that learning processes run smoothly and in accordance with established standards.

One of the main principles upheld by the school is that character development can only be successful if carried out continuously and as part of daily habits. For this reason, all flagship programs at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA are implemented daily as part of a habit-forming approach to instill character in students. This aligns with the findings of (Faiz et al., 2021), who state that character education must be conducted through habitual processes that are continuous and integrated. (Tsauri, 2015) adds that habit is one of the elements that can shape human character. (Gunawan, 2022) further explains that habit plays a significant role in shaping student character, as repeated actions become easier to perform. Furthermore, a system is needed to condition students to cultivate these habits so that good character can be firmly established.

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA also has a specialized curriculum for its flagship programs, focusing on character and language development, implemented in a structured manner from the beginning to the end of the semester. These programs are monitored using a *monitoring book* given to parents, designed to ensure that students' character and language skills develop in line with the set objectives. With this clear process approach, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA ensures that every element within the flagship programs is well-executed and produces optimal results.

According to (Sallis, 2002), the effectiveness of an educational institution is greatly determined by how efficiently its core activities are managed in a structured and systematic way. He states: "this is about the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization's core activities and the importance of developing a systematic approach to their management. The establishment of clear roles and responsibilities and identifying key activities are some of the issues that are important in a process approach." This quote reinforces that the successful implementation of the Process Approach in educational institutions depends on their ability to design clear workflows, define roles and responsibilities for every actor, and ensure that each process is managed with measurable quality goals.

In this regard, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA has fully integrated this principle by establishing daily routines, allocating roles among homeroom teachers and supporting educators, and utilizing evaluation tools such as the monitoring book to ensure that processes are carried out according to the set quality standards.

Continuous Improvement

The principle of Continuous Improvement is a key element in the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM). It emphasizes the importance of systematic, sustained, and comprehensive quality enhancement across all organizational aspects (Ma'arif et al., 2023). In the field of education, this principle implies that all processes teaching, management, and educational services must be continuously evaluated and refined to remain relevant and effective in meeting the needs of students and society.

(Deming, 1986), one of the main proponents of TQM, underscores that continuous improvement is an unending process that must become an integral part of organizational culture, not merely a one-off project. (Ishikawa, 1985) similarly argues that quality improvement is not solely the responsibility of leadership, but a cultural commitment that must be nurtured through collective participation and long-term engagement.

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA, as a quality-oriented educational institution, applies this principle through a variety of strategies designed to continuously evaluate and develop its flagship programs. Through routine evaluation, reflection on learning outcomes, and the active involvement of teachers and parents, the school endeavors to build a responsive system that consistently enhances students' character and competency development.

The implementation of Continuous Improvement at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA is realized through a series of ongoing efforts aimed at improving the quality of its flagship programs and delivering better educational outcomes. Routine evaluations are conducted every semester through specialized assessments designed to measure student development in various aspects of the flagship programs such as character, morality, and language skills. The results of these evaluations are absolute and tailored to the individual conditions and abilities of each student. This indicates that the school prioritizes individual progress, ensuring that every student receives the attention necessary for their development.

As part of the evaluation process, the school also utilizes a *monitoring book*, a tool designed to involve parents in their children's character education at home. The book includes a checklist of required student activities and daily progress tracking (Bazhenov et al., 2015; Malczyk & Lawson, 2017). Feedback from parents, recorded in this book, not only helps the school assess character development outside the classroom but also provides valuable data for evaluating the overall effectiveness of the flagship programs. If challenges or gaps are identified, the school can promptly design appropriate solutions to ensure the character-building process continues effectively.

In addition to student evaluation and parental involvement, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA also conducts internal evaluations through regular discussions between the principal and teachers. These discussions consider various sources of information, such as student assessment results, parental feedback, and direct classroom observations, to identify areas for improvement. For instance, if there is a gap between assessment outcomes and program goals, the school quickly adjusts its teaching methods or character development approaches.

As a form of commitment to continuous improvement, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA also organizes regular teacher training and religious study sessions. These efforts aim to enhance the competencies and motivation of educators, enabling them to implement the flagship programs more effectively. Moreover, teacher input serves as a key consideration in designing and refining program implementation strategies.

Through consistent evaluation, active parental involvement, and ongoing teacher development, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA demonstrates a strong commitment to the principle of Continuous Improvement. These efforts enable the school to consistently enhance the quality of its flagship programs, provide relevant education, and meet the expectations of both students and parents. This principle forms a vital foundation for the school in maintaining educational quality and addressing the ever-evolving challenges of the educational landscape.

The routine evaluation and reflective practice embedded in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA's flagship programs embody (Ishikawa, 1985) philosophy that continuous improvement should become an organizational culture involving all stakeholders. This approach also aligns with findings by (Suaeb, 2022), who suggests that continuous improvement in TQM can be holistically implemented through advancements across multiple institutional dimensions, including organizational management, learning processes, and resource development.

Human Resource Management

At Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA, the quality of teaching staff is one of the main pillars in ensuring the success of its flagship programs, particularly in student character development. (Jufri & Suprpto, 2014) emphasize that to recruit the best educators, educational institutions must conduct job analyses, one of which includes defining the minimum requirements for a position so that individuals can perform their assigned duties effectively. The recruitment process for teaching staff at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA is based on such analyses. The institution understands that to

achieve optimal educational outcomes, educators must possess not only strong academic competencies but also high moral and spiritual integrity. Therefore, the selection process is conducted with great care and consideration.

(Crosby, 1979) introduced the concept of “doing it right the first time” as a fundamental philosophy of quality management, highlighting that quality should not be checked and corrected at the end of a process, but should be built from the beginning through careful planning and precise execution. In the context of education, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA prioritizes recruiting teachers who are graduates of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), who are already accustomed to religious-based learning environments. This background significantly supports the implementation of character and morality-based flagship programs. The recruitment process also includes a special religious competency test to ensure that prospective educators have a strong understanding of Islamic values critical in shaping students’ character at the school.

By ensuring that each educator understands and can correctly perform their duties from the outset, the school aims to minimize errors in the teaching and character-building processes. This aligns with the perspective that teacher morality and professionalism are foundational to quality learning and key to improving educational standards (Muzakki, 2022). This approach echoes Crosby’s belief that investing in quality early yields long-term efficiency and strengthens the integrity of educational services provided to students and parents as the main customers.

However, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA does not rely solely on educational background and religious testing when selecting teaching staff. The school also provides continuous development programs to improve the quality of its educators. As stated by (Azizi et al., 2021; B et al., 2023; Danial et al., 2021; Wijaya et al., 2019), developing educators as a vital educational resource is a necessity to achieve desired goals. (Deng et al., 2023; Haidar et al., 2022; Rich et al., 2021) found that long-term training enhances teachers’ confidence in delivering new materials while helping them identify areas in their teaching competencies that require improvement. Even experienced educators must continuously update their knowledge, skills, and attitudes to improve their performance. Therefore, the school and its foundation must have well-planned strategies to enhance the professional capacity of educators, ensuring the consistent improvement of instructional quality.

Every month, educators are required to attend religious studies sessions organized by the school. These sessions aim to deepen their understanding of Islamic teachings and strengthen their motivation to teach. Beyond expanding religious knowledge, teachers are invited to reflect on their roles as role models for students and to discuss more effective methods of integrating character values into learning. These sessions also offer opportunities for educators to renew their understanding of contemporary methods in Islamic character education. (Crosby, 1979) asserts that quality does not emerge by chance, but is the result of systematic training and guidance. This assertion supports Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA’s policy of conducting regular religious enrichment and training for teachers as a means of maintaining instructional and character development quality.

In addition to religious development, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA provides technical and pedagogical training for its teaching staff. Educators are trained to understand and implement the school's flagship program-based curriculum, including effective strategies to integrate character education into daily instruction. Teachers are also trained to use the *monitoring book* system to track students’ character development in detail and ensure that desired values are internalized effectively. This training is conducted regularly and involves all educational staff from classroom teachers to dormitory supervisors to ensure consistent character education across all levels.

The school also encourages teachers to collaborate and share knowledge with their peers. Through discussion forums and routine meetings, educators can provide feedback on effective teaching strategies and work together to find solutions for challenges encountered in character development. This collaboration strengthens teacher engagement in achieving shared educational goals: forming students who are virtuous, competent, and prepared to face future challenges.

By ensuring teacher quality through rigorous recruitment, continuous development, and strong collaboration, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA has successfully created an educational environment that supports students in achieving their full potential. Teachers at the school are not merely transmitters of knowledge; they also serve as mentors and role models who instill the character values that students will carry throughout their lives. Through these efforts, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA affirms its commitment to providing high-quality education both academically and morally aimed at nurturing a generation that is not only intellectually capable but also ethically grounded.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) principles in managing flagship programs at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA. The findings demonstrate that TQM's five core principles have been applied concretely and systematically. First, the Involvement of People is reflected in the active participation of school leaders, teachers, and parents in student character development through a collaborative approach. Second, Customer Focus is realized by designing programs based on students' needs and parents' expectations, which are communicated through meetings and digital communication platforms. Third, the Process Approach is implemented through daily character-building routines such as congregational prayers, greetings, and structured Arabic and English language activities. Fourth, Continuous Improvement is ensured through semester-based evaluations of flagship programs, reflection on assessment results, and incorporation of parental feedback. Fifth, Human Resource Management is carried out by recruiting morally and religiously grounded teachers, supported by regular professional development programs.

These findings significantly contribute to addressing a gap in existing research, namely the lack of studies that connect strategic management frameworks such as TQM with systematic character education, especially in newly established Islamic schools. Unlike previous studies emphasizing pedagogical methods or curriculum content, this research highlights how quality-oriented managerial approaches can effectively support character education initiatives.

Nonetheless, this study has limitations, as it was conducted in only one institution, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah QITA. Therefore, future research should expand the scope to other schools and educational settings to generalize the findings more broadly. Additionally, schools may refer to the results of this study as a practical guideline for implementing character education programs based on Total Quality Management within their institutions.

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