Critique of Total Quality Management in Islamic Education: Proposing Prophetic Leadership as a Model for Quality Enhancement

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ABSTRACT

Total Quality Management (TQM) has been widely implemented in educational institutions to enhance quality through efficiency, productivity, and standardization. However, its application within Islamic education contexts presents epistemological and pedagogical tensions, particularly due to TQM's roots in industrial and materialistic rationality, which may not fully align with Islamic education's holistic and spiritual aims. This study critically examined these tensions and proposes prophetic leadership as a conceptual alternative. The research analyzed the conceptual underpinnings of TQM, Islamic education, and prophetic leadership using a literature review and a descriptive-critical approach. The findings suggested that TQM often overlooks the spiritual and moral dimensions of learning, tends to homogenize student development, and orients educational processes toward market-driven outcomes. In contrast, prophetic leadership—grounded in values such as *siddiq, amanah, tabligh,* and *fathanah*—offers a more integrative framework that embraces intellectual, emotional, and spiritual development. This model resonates more closely with the foundational goals of Islamic education by promoting balance between worldly and transcendental aims and responding to the challenges of postmodern society. This study recommends integrating prophetic leadership values into Islamic educational policy design and teacher training programs. It suggests future empirical research to test the applicability and impact of this model across various Islamic schooling contexts.

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INTRODUCTION

Total Quality Management (TQM) is a systematic, scientific, and statistical approach focused on enhancing quality through continuous improvement, customer satisfaction, and comprehensive process optimization to boost efficiency, effectiveness, and productivity (Boko, 2021). Historically, TQM was introduced in the 19th century, during the rapid development of industrial automation technology in the European and American Industrial Revolutions (Muiz et al., 2024). This evolution brought about the need for product quality assurance to meet customer satisfaction while minimizing production costs (Triyanto et al., 2024). TQM evolved significantly throughout the 20th century due to the contributions of management figures such as Frederick W. Taylor, Walter A. Shewhart, W. Edwards Deming, Joseph M. Juran, Kaoru Ishikawa, and Philip B. Crosby (Muiz et al., 2024). Taylor is known for scientific management, and Shewhart developed Statistical Quality Control (SQC) with the Control Chart and the PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycle (Rukiah, 2015). Deming refined these concepts through his 14 Principles and the Deming Cycle, while Juran introduced the Quality Trilogy: planning, control, and improvement (Wahyuni, 2023). Ishikawa emphasized Quality Circles and Fishbone Diagrams, and Crosby introduced the Zero Defects approach and framed quality as a cost-saving investment (Mahendrawan et al., 2019). The success of Japanese firms like Toyota and Sony in merging these ideas with Kaizen, Just-in-Time (JIT), and Total Productive Maintenance (TPM) led to the global dissemination of TQM. Since the 1990s, TQM has expanded beyond industry to healthcare, government, and education (Liker & Meier, 2006). With its industrial origins, TQM emphasizes product quality aligned with market satisfaction—thus revealing a materialistic orientation, focusing on tangible output.

As outlined, TQM has been adopted in various national education systems, including Indonesia's, for over a decade to improve educational quality (Rochaendi, 2020). However, this adoption raises critique, as TQM is fundamentally an industrial and material-oriented concept that emphasizes output in terms of products or goods (Darmawan et al., 2021). Its logic is rooted in industrial capitalism, prioritizing productivity, efficiency, and material effectiveness to maximize gains with minimal inputs (Ferian Hidayah, 2022). Humans, however, are complex, holistic beings with physical and spiritual dimensions—what modern science sometimes refers to as energy (Tafsir, 2014). Each human possesses unique traits and paths toward "maturity," a concept famously used by Ki Hajar Dewantara (Freire & Ramos, 2014). This physical, psychological, or spiritual diversity demonstrates that a singular, material-oriented educational approach is insufficient. From a postmodern perspective, humans are "the same yet different" (Jaeger & Highet, 1945). The complexity of human nature resists reduction into a capitalist-industrial education logic. The author refers to this phenomenon in Indonesia's education system under the TQM model (Hartmann & Kelly, 2014).

TQM has empirically improved educational performance in Indonesia (Aziz, 2019; Chintya, 2016). Many institutions have implemented it, even integrating TQM principles into school accreditation systems (H. Firmansyah et al., 2021). Compared to the past, educational achievements have risen considerably due to TQM (Afkar et al., 2023). Yet, globally, Indonesia's education remains low-ranked (*Average IQ by Country (2024 Update) - International IQ Test*, 2024). Educational institutions now compete in branding and stakeholder satisfaction, aligning with global market demands (Marx et al., 2002). While graduates are accepted into top companies and universities, the focus remains on material outcomes—reflecting TQM's industrial logic and capitalist foundation (Dewey, 2004).

Despite such achievements, moral, ethical, and character decline accompany this educational success (Arendt & Canovan, 2013). Education quality may improve materially, yet spiritual and ethical standards deteriorate (Adler & Group, 1984). This condition raises critical questions: why does enhanced material achievement correspond with a moral decline? While enhancing productivity and efficiency, the TQM-based system neglects core human values (Dewi & Meutia, 2022). The Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) recorded 64,000 educational achievements via the Talent Management Information System (SIMT) as of February 6, 2024. These include accomplishments in science, arts, sports, and innovation. Yet, simultaneously, media and public discourse consistently highlight the moral degradation among students: abuse, alcohol consumption, cohabitation, and disrespectful behavior. These issues, widely documented across media platforms, signal a crisis in ethical and character education (Karmila et al., 2020).

Despite abundant material achievements, this moral decline challenges the core responsibility of education in nurturing holistic human beings, or *insan kamil* (Russell, 2002). While improving institutional performance metrics, TQM aims to address spiritual and ethical education (Besterfield et al., 2012). Thus, the focus on TQM in Indonesia's educational system demonstrates a bias toward material metrics while neglecting the moral-spiritual dimension. From this lens, TQM appears incompatible with Islamic education. Islam emphasizes balance—between material and spiritual, intellect and soul, physical and metaphysical dimensions (Tafsir, 2014). The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "The best thing is the middle ground" (HR. Ahmad, No. 6768; Al-Baihaqi in Sunan Al-Kubra). Similarly, Surah al-Baqarah verse 143 states: "And thus We have made you (the Muslim community) a just and chosen community..." These verses underscore the value of balance—wasathiyah—in Islam (Basuki et al., 2023. According to Ramayulis, Islamic education must embody this equilibrium across eight aspects, from the physical-spiritual to social and moral balance (Ramayulis, 2002). Consequently, TQM's materialistic approach contradicts the holistic principles of Islamic education.

To bridge this gap, the author proposes the Prophetic Leadership approach (Mansyur, 2014). Prophetic leadership, modeled on the Prophet Muhammad's values—*fathonah*

(intelligence), *tabligh* (communication), *amanah* (trustworthiness), and *siddiq* (honesty)—offers a path to integrate intellectual, spiritual, and ethical education (Mar'ah & Ningsih, 2021). This model enables Islamic education to form complete individuals or *insan kamil* (Luluk Maktumah & Minhaji, 2020). This study addresses a gap in the literature; few studies critically analyze the incompatibility between TQM and Islamic education. Most literature assumes TQM as a universal solution (Dewi & Meutia, 2022). It creates a paradox: Islamic institutions implementing TQM risk losing their spiritual and moral core (Ramayulis, 2002; Tafsir, 2014).

While many studies have examined TQM in Islamic educational institutions, most focus on managerial effectiveness and output-based indicators, without engaging in a critical philosophical or epistemological appraisal of its compatibility with Islamic educational values. Few have addressed the deeper implications of TQM's industrial logic on the moral-spiritual mission of Islamic education. Moreover, although the Prophetic Leadership model is widely acknowledged in leadership literature, few studies have systematically explored or applied it as an alternative conceptual framework to analyze or address the shortcomings of TQM in this context. It constitutes a critical research gap which this study aims to address by offering Prophetic Leadership not only as a normative critique but also as a practical and value-integrative alternative aligned with the holistic vision of Islamic education.

Therefore, this research seeks to offer a more contextually appropriate model—prophetic leadership—as a transformative solution. It addresses managerial concerns and embeds morality, spirituality, and ethics into education. This model comprehensively integrates academic, moral, and spiritual excellence in a postmodern world increasingly driven by materialism and secularism. This study aims to theoretically and practically enrich Islamic education discourse by critiquing TQM and advocating for prophetic leadership. This research analyzes the incompatibility between TQM and Islamic education and proposes prophetic leadership as a holistic alternative for quality improvement. The theoretical foundation draws on Islamic educational philosophy, humanism, existentialism, and ethical theory (both normative and teleological).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a library research approach (George, 2008), which focuses on collecting, analyzing, and synthesizing data from relevant literature and written sources (Samsu, 2017). This approach was chosen because the research is conceptual, aiming to analyze the inconsistencies in Total Quality Management (TQM) in Islamic education and to build an argument supporting prophetic leadership as a model for improving the quality of Islamic education. Research data were obtained from primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include books, scientific journals, articles, and documents that directly discuss the concepts of TQM, Islamic education, and prophetic leadership. Meanwhile,

secondary sources include supporting writings such as opinion articles, previous research reports, and additional relevant literature. Data collection techniques were carried out through searching, reviewing, and analyzing documents related to the research topic. This study used content analysis techniques to examine the content of various collected literature (Sugiyono, 2013, 2021). This technique was used to identify themes, patterns, and relevant relationships between the concepts of TQM, Islamic education, and prophetic leadership.

After that, the analysis process was carried out descriptively and critically, namely by systematically describing existing concepts, evaluating the incompatibility of TQM concepts in the context of Islamic education, and constructing arguments that integrate prophetic values (Yusanto, 2020). Additionally, this study also utilizes the falsification approach introduced by Karl Popper. Falsification tests the theoretical claims made in analyzing TQM and the study of prophetic leadership. Through falsification, the author seeks data supporting the incompatibility of TQM in Islamic education and attempts to identify potential weaknesses in the argument (Popper, 2011). The research conclusions are not merely unquestionable assumptions but have undergone critical testing that strengthens the argument's robustness. Similarly, arguments regarding the superiority of prophetic leadership are tested through the possibility of limitations or weaknesses in its application. Furthermore, this research also adheres to Francis Bacon's scientific work ethic, particularly the concept of the four idols of thought (idola mentis), to avoid bias and enhance objectivity. The four idols are: the Idol of the Tribe (idola tribus), the Idol of the Cave (idola specus), the Idol of the Marketplace (idola fori), and the Idol of the Theater (idola theatri) (Popper, 2011).

By integrating content analysis techniques, Karl Popper's falsification, and Francis Bacon's four idols of the mind, this study strives to maintain objectivity in the data collection and analysis. This approach provides a solid foundation for the study to produce logical arguments based on critical and in-depth analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of TQM Non-conformity in Islamic Education

Findings revealed that Total Quality Management (TQM) fundamentally diverges from the core principles of Islamic education. This misalignment follows a hierarchical pattern: the deeper TQM is integrated, the more spiritual and moral values are sidelined. Intensified implementation reinforces materialistic and capitalist values, eroding the spiritual-emotional focus central to Islamic pedagogy.

At the initial stage—industrial logic—institutions begin to adopt frameworks driven by efficiency and measurable outputs, gradually weakening their Islamic philosophical, teleological, and axiological foundations. The second stage is marked by heightened capitalist influence, prioritizing competition and quantifiable performance at the expense of students' moral-spiritual growth. The third stage—branding competition—recasts educational success in

consumerist terms, with schools prioritizing image over substance. Finally, the standardization stage defines quality by material benchmarks, ignoring core Islamic values like ethics, character, and faith. This trajectory risks reducing Islamic education to a system optimized for market outputs, not the formation of *insan kamil*—holistically developed human beings.
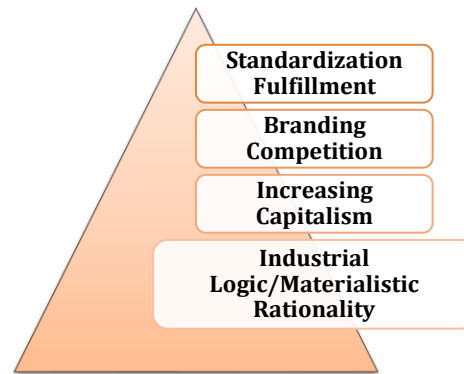

Figure 1. Hierarchy of TQM Incompatibility in Islamic Education

a. Industrial Logic or Materialistic Rationality

Total Quality Management (TQM) was initially developed to enhance productivity in the industrial sector, grounded in the pursuit of maximum profit and minimal cost (Deming, 2000). This framework—industrial logic or materialistic rationality—emphasizes tangible outcomes and operational efficiency (Defeo & Juran, 2010), making it effective and appropriate within corporate settings where outputs are inherently material.

In industry, it is standard to view employees as instruments of production and goods as the ultimate goal (Ishikawa & Lu, 1985). Thus, a materialistic approach is suitable and necessary in achieving organizational missions (Sallis, 2014). However, this logic becomes problematic when applied to educational institutions, particularly those rooted in Islamic values. Unlike factories, schools engage with human beings who possess intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions (al-Imam al-Ghazali, 2018). TQM's emphasis on efficiency and measurable output leads to a philosophical dissonance with education's humanistic and transcendental goals (Goetsch & Davis, 2015). Postmodern thought asserts that each system is grounded in a unique philosophical framework; transplanting one system wholesale into another with fundamentally different aims is methodologically flawed (Defeo & Juran, 2010). Islamic education, based on the principle of tauhid (oneness of God), aims to nurture faithful, ethical, and spiritually conscious individuals. Consequently, applying a model focused solely on productivity contradicts the objective of forming *insan kamil*—holistically developed human beings (Habermas & Burger, 1991).

Empirical evidence showed that while TQM may enhance academic performance, it often coincides with a decline in moral character (Wahyu, 2022). TQM fails to account for

inner development, reducing education to mechanistic procedures that ignore sincerity, devotion, and ethical cultivation—core values in Islamic pedagogy (Lestari, 2011; Tafsir, 2014). Viewing students and educators as mere resources diminishes their intrinsic worth and distorts education into a market-driven endeavor (F. Firmansyah, 2019).
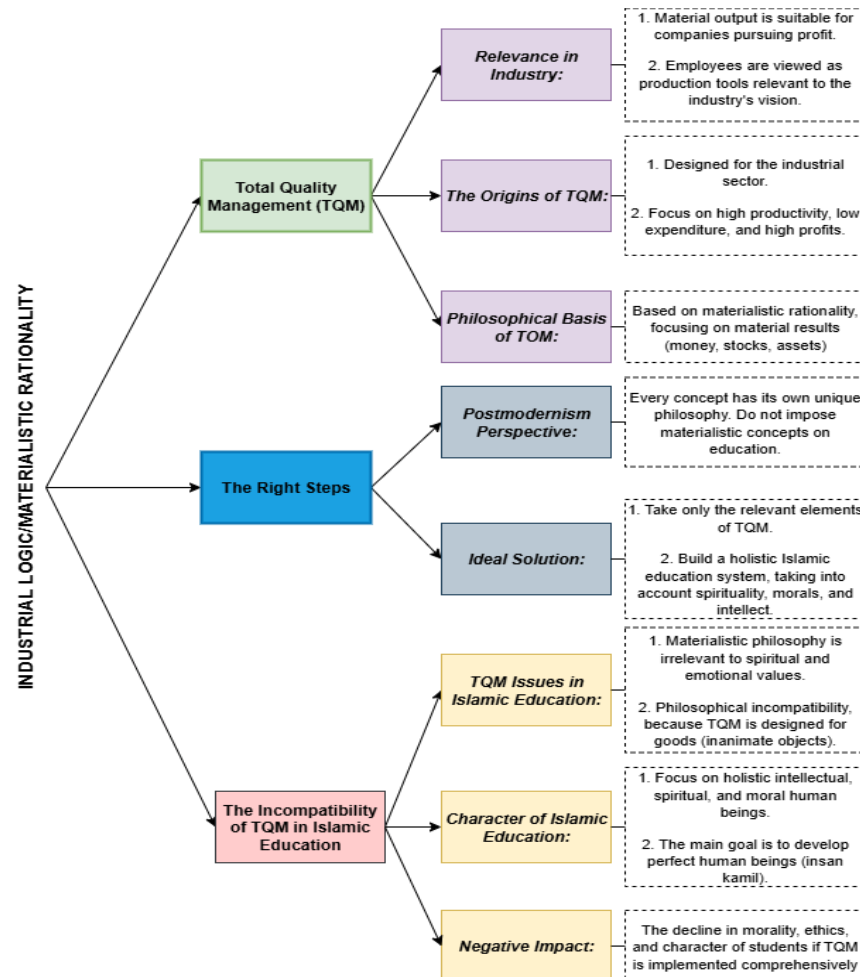

Figure 2. Diagram of the Relationship of Industrial Logic/Materialistic Rationality

To address this, Islamic education must shift from industrial to prophetic logic, emphasizing honesty, wisdom, trust, and compassion (Nabi, 2008). Prophetic Leadership offers a more coherent alternative, recasting educational leaders as ethical exemplars and holistic mentors (al-Attas, 1999). This model aligns with Islamic education's foundational purpose—integrating intellectual, moral, and spiritual growth. Unlike TQM, it provides a comprehensive framework that cultivates academic excellence and personal integrity (Nizar, 2002).

b.   Enhancing Capitalism

Total Quality Management (TQM), originally developed for industrial purposes, is deeply rooted in capitalist principles, given that industry actors are primarily capitalists (Defeo

& Juran, 2010; Deming, 2000; Ishikawa & Lu, 1985). Central to TQM are the ideals of customer satisfaction and productivity maximization. The "customer satisfaction" notion obligates producers to align products precisely with consumer preferences. At the same time, "high productivity" demands clear, large-scale, and quality output norms intrinsic to producing tangible goods (Defeo & Juran, 2010). TQM's focus on standardization further affirms its compatibility with manufacturing, where quality is quantifiable and materials are uniform (Deming, 2000). However, education operates on fundamentally different premises. It involves the formation of human character, values, and holistic potential. TQM in education imposes materialist standards on a spiritual and ethical development domain creating a philosophical mismatch (Feng & Bodde, 1983). TQM requires quantifiable metrics—often the number of students entering prestigious universities or companies—to determine institutional quality (Bradley, 1994; Sallis, 2014). Similarly, success is measured by accumulating student accolades, particularly at the national and international levels (Anderson & Hayes, 2023; Brue, 2002).
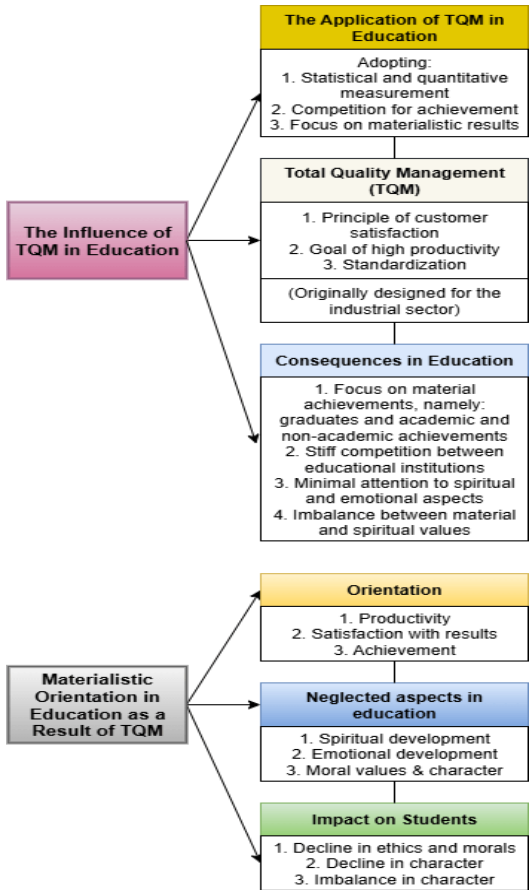

Figure 3. Diagram of the Relationship Effect of TQM in Education and Orientation, Consequences

From the perspective of normative ethics, this commodification of education raises moral concerns. First, redefining students and society as "customers" contradicts educational ethics, prioritizing character, not consumption (Rachels & Rachels, 2012). Second, the emphasis on material success diminishes education's intrinsic moral purpose, reducing it to a vehicle for socioeconomic advancement rather than human development (Mill & Crisp, 1998). Third, the neglect of qualitative growth—such as emotional and moral maturity—violates core educational values, undermining the ethical integrity of the institution (Korsgaard et al., 2012). A teleological ethical critique further underscores this conflict. While TQM pursues efficiency and output, the telos of education—especially in Islamic pedagogy—is the cultivation of *insan kamil*, the complete human being, grounded in tawhid, akhlak, and the integration of spiritual and intellectual excellence (Rawls, 2009). TQM's utilitarian logic fails to encompass these aims, often resulting in long-term consequences such as moral degradation, spiritual emptiness, and identity loss among learners. In sum, the capitalist logic. Embedded within TQM undermines the foundational goals of education by prioritizing performance over purpose. Its emphasis on materialism clashes with the ethical, spiritual, and humanistic missions at the heart of Islamic education.

c.   **Branding Competition**

Total Quality Management (TQM) in educational institutions has intensified branding competition, particularly when schools and universities become preoccupied with academic rankings and graduate outcomes. This trend compels institutions to prioritize public image to attract students and earn recognition from parents and the broader community (Rahmah Rahmah et al., 2024). As a result, capitalist logic increasingly dominates the educational landscape, with branding and customer satisfaction becoming central concerns—core characteristics of market-driven education (Mir'atussolihah et al., 2023).

In such an environment, schools begin to perceive parents and society as "customers," redefining educational success regarding consumer satisfaction (Shafrianto, 2023). This orientation deviates from the philosophical foundation of education, particularly in Islam, which emphasizes the formation of *insan kamil*—a whole person whose development is balanced across material, emotional, and spiritual dimensions (Darani, 2021). Education, therefore, becomes reactive to market preferences, evolving into a commercial enterprise embedded in global capitalist systems. This shift undermines learners' moral and spiritual development (Tu & Wei-Ming, 1985). TQM reinforces this condition by promoting productivity and customer satisfaction as performance metrics (Zarkasyi, 2013). To remain competitive, institutions highlight modern facilities, institutional branding, and promises of economic rewards—such as elite university admissions or lucrative careers. This model disproportionately caters to the upper-middle class while marginalizing underprivileged communities (Marx et al., 2002).

This evolution raises serious concerns from an ethical standpoint, especially within normative ethics. Normative ethics asserts that education must uphold moral values, including justice and equity. Branding competition limits access to quality education based on socio-

economic statusndermines these moral imperatives (Bertens, 2007). Institutions that prioritize elite markets and exclude lower-income groups violate the ethical foundation of Islamic education, which promotes inclusivity and social justice. Teleological ethics, or consequentialist theory, further critiques this model by focusing on educational ends. When educational success is defined solely by economic outcomes—high salaries, prestigious roles, or elite credentials—Islamic education's moral and spiritual objectives are sidelined (Aristotle, 1865). Thus, when applied uncritically, a TQM-driven model prioritizes quantifiable performance over character formation, rendering it ethically flawed from a teleological perspective.
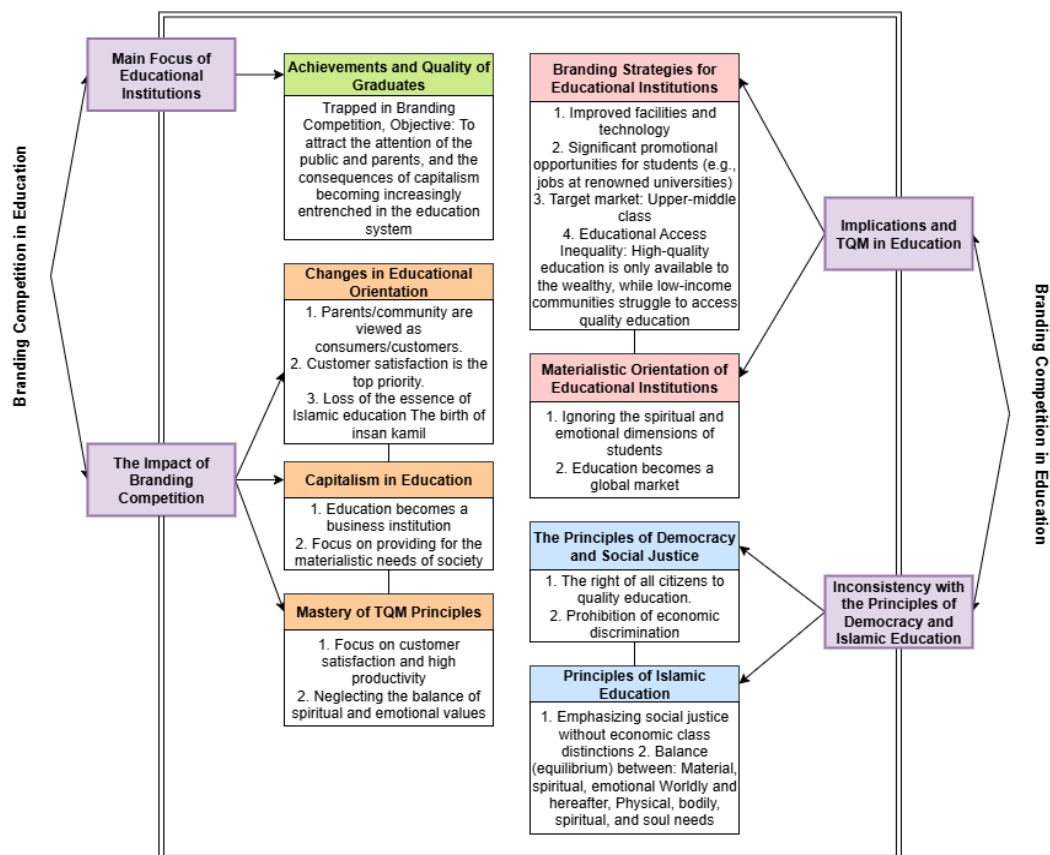

Figure 4. TQM Relationship Diagram, Branding Competition in Islamic Education

Moreover, the commodification of education through branding exacerbates social inequality. Students from low-income families are increasingly marginalized, violating both constitutional rights and Islamic principles of justice. As a democratic state, Indonesia upholds education as a universal right, regardless of socio-economic background (Dewey, 2004). It aligns with Islamic teachings that emphasize tawazun (balance) and justice in all spheres of life (Allen, 2017). Islamic education mandates a framework integrating material and immaterial dimensions—spiritual, moral, emotional, and intellectual. While effective in improving

efficiency, TQM often disregards these essential non-material elements, resulting in a philosophical and ethical misalignment. Consequently, education risks becoming a transactional service rather than a transformative process of human development.

In conclusion, both normative and teleological ethics reveal the incompatibility between TQM-induced branding competition and the foundational objectives of Islamic education. Education aims not merely to satisfy market demands or produce measurable success, but to nurture moral integrity, spiritual awareness, and strong character. When Islamic institutions adopt TQM uncritically, they compromise their foundational mission. A paradigm rooted in prophetic values—emphasizing ethical leadership, compassion, and holistic development—offers a more coherent and philosophically consistent alternative (Moore, 2019).

d. Compliance with Standards

In Total Quality Management (TQM), quality measurement is conducted precisely and accurately using statistical and quantitative approaches. Within industrial contexts, this is suitable because products or goods—being concrete and uniform—can be evaluated against international benchmarks such as ISO 9000 (Deming, 2000; Oakland, 2014). This standardization ensures consumers receive reliable, high-quality products. However, when TQM is applied in educational settings, particularly Islamic institutions, complications arise due to the complexity and uniqueness of human beings as the central subjects of education (Durkheim & Halls, 1997; Marcuse, 1991).

In the industrial sector, standardization is necessary to meet material output goals. Accordingly, TQM encourages educational institutions to pursue excellence as measured by quantifiable indicators: the number of students admitted to top universities, those who win competitions, or those securing prestigious jobs (Mir'atussolihah et al., 2023). These outcomes are supported by other standardized components, such as facilities, administration, and curriculum, all aimed at achieving material goals (Budianto, 2018; Rukiah, 2015; Shafrianto, 2023). Technically, educational institutions that apply TQM can be deemed successful by these standards. However, Islamic educational philosophy views this framework as insufficient and incompatible. Islamic education emphasizes holistic human development: nurturing intellectual, moral, spiritual, emotional, and social dimensions. A system that prioritizes material indicators cannot fully accommodate this goal. As TQM continues to be implemented in education, it risks eroding the spiritual and emotional aspects crucial to shaping the ideal human being, the *insan kamil* (Tafsir, 2014; Triyanto et al., 2024). Standardization disregards the uniqueness of each learner by imposing uniformity. Students who do not conform to these rigid benchmarks are often perceived as lacking value or potential (Arendt, 1973; Mannheim, 1991).

From the perspective of Islamic educational philosophy, such a system undermines the core purpose of education. Every student is believed to have inherent and diverse potentials that must be nurtured according to their fitrah, or divine nature. Imam al-Ghazali, for instance, emphasizes that education guides individuals toward spiritual perfection—not just material success (Barizi et al., 2024; Junaedi, 2017). Moreover, the Qur'an affirms that humans

are created with varying capabilities (Q.S. Al-Isra: 70), thus requiring a flexible and personalized educational approach (Mill & Crisp, 1998). Islamic education strives to create a balance between worldly success and spiritual maturity. The ultimate aim is to produce graduates with impressive resumes and to form individuals of noble character, deep faith, and intellectual vigor. TQM, emphasizing efficiency and productivity, fails to acknowledge non-material indicators such as sincerity, faith, ethics, and spiritual development— elements that are immeasurable but central to Islamic pedagogy (Nata, 2005).
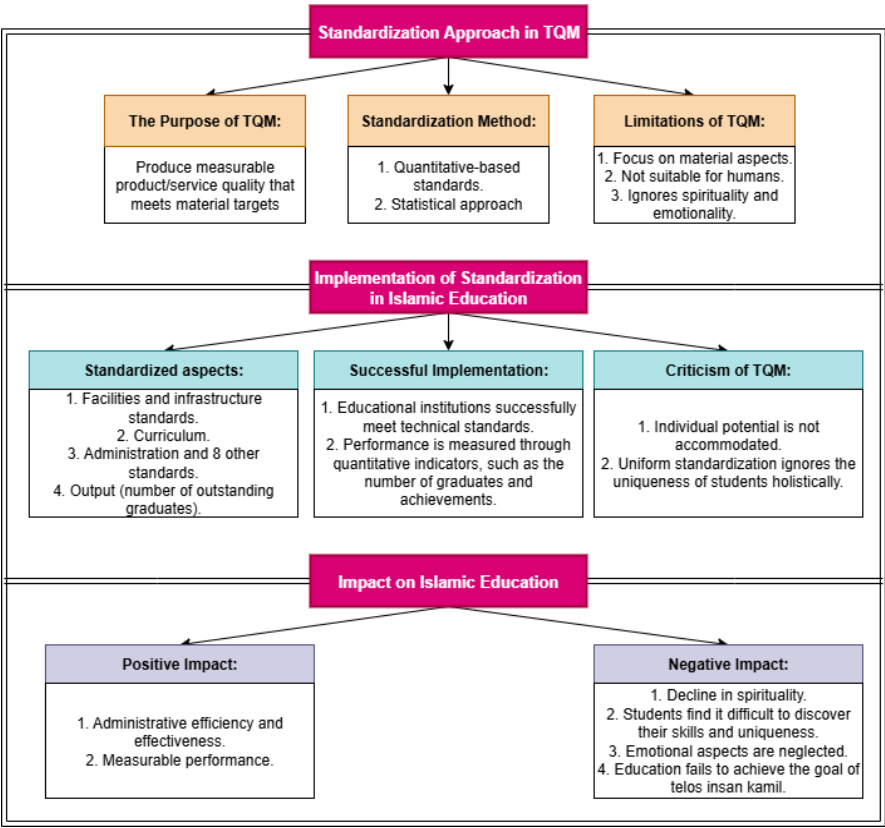

Figure 5. Diagram of the Relationship between TQM-Standardization in Islamic Education

Consequently, reliance on materialistic standards can obscure non-quantifiable qualities like noble character and spiritual depth. These values are critical in Islamic education but are often neglected under TQM's rigid framework. Prophetic leadership emerges as an alternative that better aligns with Islamic values. It emphasizes spiritual integrity, wisdom, and compassion—qualities that shape holistic educators and learners (Nabi, 2008). Prophetic leaders serve not just as administrators, but as moral role models and mentors who guide students toward worldly and spiritual success. Thus, the standardization paradigm of TQM, with its focus on material and quantitative metrics, directly opposes the aims of Islamic education. While TQM may bring short-term efficiency, it is unsuitable for long-term

educational goals that require nurturing faith, morality, and individuality. Islamic education necessitates a more holistic, individualized model—such as prophetic leadership—that places spiritual and ethical values at the core of its mission (al-Attas, 1999; Nizar, 2002).

Prophetic Leadership as a Holistic Model for Quality Improvement

One of the main reasons the author recommends prophetic leadership as a holistic model for improving educational quality is that this approach is based on prophetic values, particularly in Islamic education that emulates the Prophet Muhammad (Mansyur, 2014). Emulating the Prophet Muhammad's approach to education is not merely a matter of faith, but also a historically validated strategy. Numerous studies demonstrate the Prophet's effectiveness in shaping individuals into morally and intellectually complete human beings (Mar'ah & Ningsih, 2021).

Unlike managerial models such as Total Quality Management (TQM), which emphasize material performance and standardization, prophetic leadership integrates spiritual, moral, and ethical dimensions into educational practice (Luluk Maktumah & Minhaji, 2020). It is rooted in the core values exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad—*siddiq* (truthfulness), *amanah* (trust), *tabligh* (effective communication), and *fathonah* (wisdom)—which reflect a balanced development of intellectual, emotional, and spiritual faculties (Ghazali, 2023). In Islamic educational philosophy, derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah, the primary objective is to develop *insan kamil*: intellectually competent, morally upright, and spiritually conscious individuals. Education is not merely the transmission of knowledge, but a transformative process cultivating integrity, responsibility, wisdom, and empathy (al-Attas, 1999). Prophetic leadership transcends bureaucratic administration in this framework by positioning educational leaders as ethical role models and spiritual mentors. Conversely, TQM promotes a mechanistic view of education, emphasizing efficiency, productivity, and quantifiable outcomes. While this model may enhance academic metrics, it often neglects the internal, non-material aspects of education—character formation, moral sensitivity, and spiritual growth—which are central to Islamic pedagogy. Prophetic leadership offers a corrective by affirming the unique potential of each learner and aligning educational goals with the holistic development of the individual (Langgulung, 1987).

Prophetic leadership presents a transformative model grounded in timeless Islamic values in an era of globalization and postmodern fragmentation, where moral and ethical erosion is widespread. It meets local educational demands and addresses global ethical concerns by promoting justice, compassion, and integrity (Barizi et al., 2024; Junaedi, 2017). Thus, Educational leaders function as agents of change, fostering environments where academic excellence and spiritual maturity are cultivated. Ultimately, prophetic leadership provides a coherent and values-based alternative to materialistic frameworks such as TQM. It prioritizes the integration of intellectual, emotional, and spiritual dimensions, nurturing a generation that is academically capable, morally strong, and spiritually grounded (Barizi et al., 2024; Daulay, 2014). Therefore, in the context of Islamic education, prophetic leadership is

not only more suitable but also more transformative, offering an authentic path toward comprehensive quality improvement.

CONCLUSION

The findings indicated that Total Quality Management (TQM), which originates from industrial logic, faces fundamental limitations when implemented in Islamic education. TQM's focus on efficiency, productivity, and standardization overlooks the spiritual and moral dimensions central to Islamic education's mission. This approach also risks diminishing individual uniqueness through uniform standards while fostering institutional tendencies toward capitalist and branding orientations. As an alternative, prophetic leadership offers a framework more aligned with the values and objectives of Islamic education. Grounded in the four core traits of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)—*siddiq* (truthfulness), *amanah* (trustworthiness), *tabligh* (effective communication), and *fathonah* (wisdom)—this model emphasizes the integration of intellectual, emotional, and spiritual development, promoting balance between worldly achievement and moral-spiritual growth. These findings contribute to the discourse by highlighting the relevance of value-based quality enhancement over industrial-oriented TQM in Islamic education.

Practically, prophetic leadership requires leadership development programs that instill prophetic values, supported by curriculum reforms that integrate intellectual, ethical, and spiritual domains in balanced proportion. Raising public awareness about the true purpose of Islamic education is also essential to ensure the success of this approach. Future research is encouraged to explore the empirical application of prophetic leadership in diverse Islamic educational settings and to conduct comparative studies with institutions that adopt TQM strategies, assessing their respective impacts on student development, institutional culture, and long-term educational outcomes.

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