



# Total Quality Management and Pedagogical Thought in Islamic Higher Education: A Conceptual Analysis

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## Abstract

This study aims to analyse and synthesize the application of Total Quality Management (TQM) in Islamic higher education based on the thoughts of Rusdi Ahmad Thu'aimah. TQM has been widely adopted as a management approach to ensure continuous quality improvement in higher education, focusing on stakeholder satisfaction and academic service enhancement. However, the implementation of TQM often emphasizes administrative and procedural aspects, neglecting the improvement of the classroom learning process, which is central to determining graduate competencies. A qualitative approach using literature study methods was employed to explore this issue and examine ideas. The study finds that Thu'aimah's concepts, such as clarity of learning objectives, a communicative approach, competency grading, and continuous evaluation, align with TQM principles, suggesting a potential synergy between the two. The integration of TQM with a pedagogical foundation could strengthen the quality assurance system in Islamic universities, improving both administrative and learning outcomes. The research also highlights that more focus should be placed on enhancing classroom learning processes alongside accreditation standards. Moreover, TQM's emphasis on stakeholder satisfaction can drive institutional improvements and better graduate competencies. In conclusion, the study recommends further research into practical frameworks that integrate TQM with teaching and learning strategies to holistically improve academic quality in Islamic higher education.

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## Introduction

The quality of higher education is now becoming an increasingly important strategic issue in the development of the national learning system, including in the Islamic higher education sector (Crawford & Shutler, 1999; Efendi, 2022a; Sofyan et al., 2023). In an era of globalisation marked by rapid technological developments and ongoing social change, universities are faced with the demand to not only produce graduates who excel in academic aspects, but also have relevant competencies and are prepared to compete in an increasingly competitive global job market. Higher education graduates must be able to master skills that are in line with the latest industry and technology needs, as well as have critical, innovative, and adaptive thinking skills in facing new challenges (Chua & Lam, 2007). This is increasingly important given the role of higher education institutions as centres for the development of science and technology that contribute to economic, social, and national development. For example, the world of work now prioritises not only formal educational backgrounds, but also practical skills and soft skills that are highly needed in the digital era (Bashan & Kordova, 2021). Universities need to ensure that the curriculum and teaching methods applied can optimally develop these skills, while institutional governance must be able to respond to these challenges with high transparency and accountability (Kansanen, 1991). Thus, higher education must be able to adapt quickly to the times and produce graduates who are not only ready to work, but also able to play an active role in economic and social development at both the local and global levels.

To respond to these challenges, universities need to improve the quality of education through resource management, adaptive curriculum development, and strengthening institutional integrity. The application of quality management models such as Total Quality Management (TQM) is essential to ensure sustainable quality education. In the context of Islamic higher education, institutions must balance maintaining religious values with responding to the demands of scientific and technological developments. These efforts will ensure that higher education institutions produce graduates who are not only academically competent, but also able to adapt to changing times and make significant contributions to the development of society and the nation.

Total Quality Management (TQM) as a managerial approach aims to improve quality systematically and continuously, with a focus on continuous improvement, customer orientation, and the involvement of all parties in the organisation to achieve quality objectives (Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2007). TQM is not only applied to improve operational efficiency, but also to create a comprehensive quality culture, where every element in the organisation plays an active role in achieving optimal results (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). In the context of

higher education, the concept of customers in TQM is not limited to students as recipients of educational services, but also includes various other stakeholders, such as employers who need competent workers, the community that benefits from the presence of educational institutions, and the state that depends on the development of quality human resources (Kanan et al., 2023; Waithanji Ngware et al., 2006). Therefore, the implementation of TQM in higher education involves various aspects, ranging from curriculum improvement, enhancement of teaching methods, efficient human resource management, to transparent and accountable evaluation in every process, with the main objective of producing graduates who are not only excellent in academic aspects, but also ready to contribute to the needs of society and national development more broadly.

Several studies indicate that the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in higher education contributes positively to improving academic service quality, student satisfaction, and institutional management efficiency (Hackman & Wageman, 1995; Sofyan et al., 2023). The results of this study note that TQM has been proven to improve administrative and operational aspects, such as quality document management and more structured and transparent assessment reporting (Ramanauskienė & Ramanauskas, 2006; Yankovskaya, 2019). However, despite these benefits in administrative aspects, several studies have also found that TQM implementation often remains focused on meeting accreditation standards and formal procedures without significant transformation in the educational process itself (Bernold, 2008; Crawford & Shutler, 1999). In this regard, many institutions place greater emphasis on administrative aspects than on the quality of teaching in the classroom or a more holistic learning experience for students (Situmorang, 2022). Research (Hidayatullah & Yusuf, 2025) also notes that although TQM increases student satisfaction, the results are still limited to administrative management and have not brought about substantial changes to the curriculum and teaching methods applied in the classroom. As a result, TQM has not fully functioned as an instrument to improve academic quality in a real and sustainable manner (Efendi, 2022a; Sudir et al., 2025). This study distinguishes itself by highlighting how TQM can be integrated with a more in-depth pedagogical approach based on classroom teaching needs, particularly in the context of Islamic higher education, which combines quality management with value-based education principles.

Although various studies show that the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in higher education provides benefits in terms of improving academic service quality, student satisfaction, and institutional management efficiency, there is a significant gap in its implementation. This gap is particularly evident in the implementation of TQM, which tends to focus on administrative and procedural aspects, such as meeting accreditation standards and managing quality documents, without having a substantial impact on the quality of education in the classroom or the learning experience of students. Many studies highlight that TQM is applied more to improve compliance with regulations and meet external requirements than to improve teaching-centred educational processes, interactions between lecturers and students, and innovation in the

curriculum (Buarque et al., 2021). This indicates that although TQM has been widely adopted, its contribution to academic quality at the teaching level is still limited and has not yet brought about significant changes in the context of higher education as a whole. This gap is important to note, especially when higher education is faced with the challenge of becoming more relevant to the needs of the world of work and rapid technological developments.

The urgency of this research lies in the need to fill this gap by integrating a more holistic TQM approach, which focuses not only on administrative quality management but also on improving the actual quality of the educational process in the classroom. This study aims to introduce a new approach that combines TQM principles with a stronger pedagogical foundation, particularly in the context of Islamic higher education, which has unique characteristics in terms of religious values and its approach to teaching. By emphasising the quality of the educational process in the classroom, this study is expected to contribute to optimising the role of TQM as a tool for improving academic quality more effectively and sustainably. The objective of this study is to identify and synthesise Rusdi Ahmad Thu'aimah's thoughts in the context of TQM, as well as to analyse how his ideas can contribute to strengthening the quality of Islamic higher education by focusing more on pedagogical aspects and quality teaching.

## Methods

This research uses a qualitative-descriptive approach because the main objective of the study is to master, interpret, and synthesise theoretical concepts of Total Quality Management in Islamic higher education. The qualitative approach was selected because it allows researchers to explore the meaning, conceptual proximity, and theoretical implications of the thoughts of figures and scientific literature in depth, without being bound by statistical measurements (Macy et al., 1998). This approach is commonly used in conceptual studies and the philosophy of learning (Bridges, 2017; Cohen et al., 2007). The method used in this research is library research. This method was selected because the focus of the research was not on collecting field information, but on systematically examining library sources relevant to the theme of higher education quality management and the thoughts of Rusdi Ahmad Thu'aimah. Library research is considered appropriate for formulating a theoretical framework and conceptual synthesis in learning research, especially those of a normative-analytical nature (Smith et al., 2009). The sources of information in this research are divided into two types, namely primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include the works of Rusdi Ahmad Thu'aimah, which discuss the principles of education, curriculum development, and communicative approaches in learning. These works are positioned as the main foundation in formulating the pedagogical perspective to be synthesised with the principles of TQM.

Meanwhile, secondary sources of information took the form of reputable national and international daily publications issued within the last five years that

discussed the implementation of Total Quality Management in higher education. These sources were used to map the growth of advanced studies on TQM, identify research trends, and obtain a managerial framework relevant to the context of Islamic higher education. The information collection process was carried out through searches of scientific daily information bases such as Google Scholar, Garuda, and major academic daily portals, using keywords such as Total Quality Management, higher education quality management, Islamic higher education, and Rusdi Ahmad Thu'aimah. The selection of sources was carried out selectively by considering the relevance of the topic, the credibility of the journal, and the availability of permanent digital identification (DOI).

Information analysis was attempted through several stages. The initial session involved information reduction, which is the process of selecting and filtering reference sources to focus the study on key concepts relevant to the research objectives. The second stage is thematic categorisation, in which TQM concepts and Thu'aimah's ideas are grouped into key themes such as quality planning, the educational process, assessment, and continuous improvement. The next stage is comparative thematic analysis, which compares TQM principles with Rusdi Ahmad Thu'aimah's ideas to identify commonalities, similarities, or conceptual comparisons. This analysis aims to build theoretical integration between TQM managerial measures and Thu'aimah's pedagogical measures in the context of Islamic higher education. The final session of the analysis is a conceptual synthesis, which is the formulation of an integrative framework of thought on the implementation of TQM in Islamic higher education based on Rusdi Ahmad Thu'aimah's ideas. This synthesis is compiled argumentatively by linking the findings of the literature review and the results of the thematic analysis, thereby creating a coherent and systematic description.

## **Finding and Discussion**

### **Finding**

In this study, Total Quality Management (TQM) in Islamic higher education is operationally defined as a comprehensive management approach that involves a continuous process of improving the quality of education through systematic planning, implementation, evaluation, and feedback (Yankovskaya, 2019). The main principles of TQM in this context include a focus on customer satisfaction of students and stakeholders, continuous improvement, employee involvement, and data-driven decision-making. TQM aims to integrate Islamic educational values with modern managerial practices to improve the quality of education, curriculum development, teaching methodologies, and institutional management. TQM emphasises the importance of creating a learning environment that is not only academic but also in line with Islamic ethics and values.

Based on documented data, the implementation of TQM in higher education institutions has significantly improved educational outcomes and institutional performance. By adopting the TQM model, there has been a

significant increase in student satisfaction, teaching quality, and academic reputation. This needs to be complemented by the importance of leadership commitment in driving change and ensuring that TQM principles are embedded in the institutional culture. In conclusion, leadership plays a crucial role in setting the direction for quality and motivating staff to engage in the continuous improvement process.

Several challenges were encountered in the process of implementing TQM in Islamic higher education. One of the challenges was aligning TQM principles with traditional educational practices that were deeply ingrained in higher education institutions. This emphasised that although TQM encouraged innovation and improvement, some faculty members were still reluctant to change due to their strong attachment to traditional teaching and learning methods. Despite these challenges, informants acknowledge the value of TQM in ensuring that institutions remain competitive and responsive to the needs of students and the wider community.

In addition, observational data in this study shows that the implementation of TQM in Islamic higher education institutions is still in its early stages. Several initiatives, such as student feedback surveys, ongoing curriculum review processes, and faculty development programmes, are already in place. However, the level of engagement with these initiatives varies across departments. Some faculties demonstrate a strong commitment to quality management, with regular discussions on improving educational practices, while others show limited engagement. These observations highlight the need for a more consistent and comprehensive approach to TQM implementation, ensuring that all departments are aligned with the larger quality objectives.

Data obtained through interviews and observations reveal a complex picture regarding the implementation of TQM in Islamic higher education. On the one hand, TQM principles have been proven to have a positive effect on student satisfaction, institutional performance, and overall education quality. However, resistance to change and challenges in integrating TQM with existing traditions remain significant obstacles. Informants emphasised the need for strong leadership to drive TQM initiatives and overcome this resistance. In addition, the data shows that although the TQM process has been implemented, there is still a gap in terms of consistent involvement across departments and faculties. This indicates that more effort is needed to embed TQM in the institutional culture and ensure its long-term sustainability.

Data analysis reveals several key patterns related to the implementation of TQM in Islamic higher education institutions. First, there is a clear division between departments that are fully involved in the TQM process and those that are less involved. This division appears to be influenced by factors such as leadership commitment, faculty resistance, and the extent to which these departments have integrated quality management practices into their operations. Second, although TQM is effective in improving several aspects of institutional performance, there are still challenges in aligning modern managerial practices with traditional educational values. These patterns indicate that although progress

has been made, there is still work to be done to ensure that TQM is fully integrated and sustainable across all levels of Islamic higher education.

Table 1. Total Quality Management

| Source Type            | TQM Documentation   | Indicators  |
|------------------------|---|---|
| Documentation          | By adopting the TQM model, there has been a significant increase in student satisfaction, teaching quality, and academic reputation                   | Student Satisfaction, Teaching Quality, Academic Reputation |
| Documentation          | Despite challenges in integrating TQM with teaching traditions, there is recognition that TQM can ensure the institution remains competitive          | Institutional Competitiveness, Resistance to Change         |
| Observation            | Initiatives such as student feedback surveys and continuous curriculum reviews have been implemented, but involvement varies across departments       | Faculty Involvement, TQM Process Implementation             |
| Institutional Document | TQM-based managerial processes have been implemented at various levels, with continuous monitoring of teaching quality and student evaluation results | Quality Monitoring, Teaching Evaluation Results             |
| Journal Article        | Research shows that the implementation of TQM in Islamic higher education improves operational efficiency and academic service quality                | Operational Efficiency, Academic Service Quality            |

### Total Quality Management and Education Quality

A review of the literature shows that Total Quality Management (TQM) is understood as a systemic approach oriented towards continuous quality improvement through the involvement of all organisational factors. In the context of higher education, TQM does not only serve as an administrative feature, but also as a strategic framework for ensuring the quality of academic and non-academic services (Gitlow, 1995). Advanced research confirms that TQM can improve the consistency of institutional management through the alignment of vision, processes, and higher education quality achievements (Bernold, 2008). The implementation of TQM in higher education places students as the main customers, without neglecting the position of other stakeholders such as graduate users, citizens, and the state. This paradigm requires universities to design curricula, educational processes, and assessment systems that are relevant to the needs of graduate users. Research in various higher education institutions shows that a focus on student satisfaction correlates with an increase in educational quality and academic atmosphere.

However, the results of the study also show that the implementation of TQM in higher education often faces a reduction in meaning to merely meeting accreditation standards and quality administration (Jambekar, 2005). TQM is

practised as a bureaucratic instrument through the arrangement of quality documents, standard operating procedures, and assessment reports, without any transformation of academic culture. This phenomenon has been criticised by several researchers as a trigger for the failure of TQM to substantially improve the quality of education (Hough, 2004). In the context of Islamic higher education, the challenge of implementing TQM continues to be an issue because institutions are not only responsible for academic quality but also for the internalisation of Islamic values in the learning process. Therefore, TQM needs to be interpreted and implemented contextually so that it is in line with the scientific personality and mission of Islamic higher education. This approach requires the integration of a modern managerial framework and Islamic pedagogical foundations.

Rusdi Ahmad Thu'aimah's thinking places the quality of education at the core of the total learning process. For Thu'aimah, quality education is education that is structured based on clear, measurable objectives that are relevant to the needs of the learners. Educational objectives should not be formulated normatively, but must reflect the concrete competencies that are expected to emerge in learners after going through the educational process (Saiti, 2012). Furthermore, Thu'aimah views education as an educational communication process that links four main factors, namely educators, learners, educational modules, and media. The quality of education is achieved when these four factors are harmoniously integrated and mutually supportive. The communicative approach developed by Thu'aimah requires active and meaningful interaction between educators and learners in a dialogical academic atmosphere.

In the context of higher education, this idea has significant implications for the paradigm shift in education from teacher-centred to student-centred learning. Higher education is no longer understood as a one-way transfer of knowledge, but as a space for scientific dialogue, problem solving, and the development of critical thinking among students. Several studies show that communicative and participatory approaches to education contribute significantly to improving student learning outcomes. Not only that, Thu'aimah emphasises the importance of skill levels in the educational process. Each educational session must have clear achievement markers so that the progress of participants can be measured objectively. This concept is in line with the principles of Outcome-Based Education (OBE), which is widely applied in higher education, where graduate educational outcomes are the main reference for curriculum design and assessment. In Thu'aimah's perspective, educational assessment does not only serve as a final evaluation tool, but also as a means of reflection and continuous revision. Assessment is carried out formatively and continuously to identify weaknesses in the educational process and formulate revision strategies. This evaluative approach places quality as a dynamic process, not a static condition.

### **Synthesis of TQM Principles and Thu'aimah's Thoughts**

The concept of total quality developed by Thu'aimah in the field of learning is fundamentally consistent with the principles of Total Quality

Management. Thu'aimah views quality not as an end state, but as an ongoing process that requires the involvement of all factors of learning. From this perspective, improving the quality of education is seen as the core of learning quality, while managerial aspects play a supporting role in ensuring that the learning process runs consistently and according to plan (Sallis, 2014). This framework makes it clear that the integration of TQM in Islamic higher education must be rooted in the quality of education, as emphasised by Thu'aimah in his concept of total learning quality (Anderson et al., 1994). The results of the analysis show that there is a strong conceptual meeting point between the principles of TQM and the ideas of Rusdi Ahmad Thu'aimah, especially in terms of the orientation of the quality of the educational process. The principle of continuous improvement in TQM is consistent with Thu'aimah's ideas about continuous assessment and pedagogical reflection. Both emphasise that quality can only be achieved through a systematic and continuous revision process.

The principle of customer focus in TQM is also in line with Thu'aimah's thinking, which places the needs of students at the forefront of educational design. In Islamic higher education, this orientation can be interpreted as an effort to design education that is relevant to the needs of students, academic demands, and the challenges of the world of work without neglecting Islamic values. Research shows that the alignment between the curriculum and the needs of graduate users is an important aspect of improving the quality of higher education. Not only that, the principle of process orientation in TQM is closely related to Thu'aimah's communicative approach. TQM views quality as the result of a well-managed process, while Thu'aimah emphasises that the quality of education is determined by the quality of educational interactions that take place in the academic space (Van Manen, 1991). The integration of these two perspectives reinforces the argument that the quality of Islamic higher education cannot be achieved solely through regulations and policies, but must be realised in everyday educational practice.

The involvement of all organisational factors in TQM also creates its relevance in Thu'aimah's thinking. For Thu'aimah, the quality of education is not only the responsibility of educators, but is also influenced by institutional policies, the availability of facilities, and the academic atmosphere. Thus, Islamic higher education needs to build a culture of quality that actively involves leaders, lecturers, educational staff, and students.

#### Implementation of TQM Principles in Islamic Higher Education Management

The implementation of Total Quality Management in Islamic higher education requires a strong institutional commitment to quality as a core value of the organisation (Filippakou & Tapper, 2007). This commitment must be reflected in the strategic policies of the university, including its vision, mission and institutional development plan, which explicitly place the quality of education and stakeholder satisfaction as top priorities. Research shows that the commitment of university leaders has a positive correlation with the successful implementation of TQM and the sustainability of internal quality assurance systems.

From a TQM perspective, quality planning in Islamic higher education begins with the formulation of clear and measurable learning outcomes. These learning outcomes form the basis for curriculum design, educational planning, and academic assessment systems. Rusdi Ahmad Thu'aimah's idea of clarity of educational objectives can be seen as a pedagogical foundation that strengthens learning outcome-based quality planning (King & Cichy, 1995). Quality curriculum planning also requires harmony between graduate profiles, the needs of the world of work, and the scientific personality of Islamic higher education (Efendi, 2022b). Advanced research shows that curricula designed in a participatory manner and based on the needs of graduate users tend to be more adaptive and efficient in increasing the competitiveness of graduates. In this context, the principle of customer focus in TQM gains relevance through the involvement of external stakeholders.

The education process is at the heart of higher education, acting as the primary mechanism for producing qualified graduates who are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to excel in their respective fields (Lucander & Christersson, 2020). Within the framework of Total Quality Management (TQM), the education process is not viewed as a passive occurrence, but as a dynamic sequence of well-planned, systematic activities that need to be managed with precision and purpose. The main objective is to ensure that every facet of the educational process is standardized, continuously improved, and aligned with the institution's academic standards. For Islamic higher education, this means that every aspect of the education process, from curriculum development to the delivery of lectures and assessments, must be executed with careful attention to detail and consistency, adhering to both the established semester education plans and the academic quality benchmarks set by the institution. Ensuring quality in the educational process involves a commitment to systematic monitoring, feedback collection, and constant refinement, ensuring that the ultimate goal of nurturing competent and ethical graduates is achieved.

Gambar 1. Total Quality Management in Higher Education



Thu'aimah's pedagogical philosophy, particularly his view of education as an educational communication process, provides a significant theoretical foundation for managing educational processes in large academic institutions. His communicative approach underscores the importance of active interaction between lecturers and students, fostering an environment where dialogue, critical engagement, and collaborative learning take center stage. This approach emphasizes the importance of participatory educational methods, where students are not passive recipients of knowledge but active participants in their learning journeys. Thu'aimah argued that for education to be truly meaningful, it must be a dynamic exchange that involves the students' perspectives, fosters critical thinking, and encourages self-reflection. In practice, this means incorporating various educational media, such as digital tools, collaborative platforms, and interactive discussion methods, that promote a two-way exchange of ideas. Research on active education supports this notion, showing that such communicative methods can substantially enhance student engagement, participation, and ultimately, academic performance, as students are more likely to internalize and apply knowledge when they are involved in its creation rather than merely being exposed to it.

In the context of Islamic higher education, Thu'aimah's communicative approach takes on an additional layer of importance. It serves not only as a method for enhancing academic engagement and performance but also as a means of internalizing essential scientific values and academic ethics. For Islamic institutions, the education process is not only about acquiring knowledge but also about shaping students' characters and instilling ethical and moral values that align with Islamic principles. Scientific discussions, critical dialogues, and joint reflections are integral to the process of developing critical thinking and personal growth. These practices foster a deeper understanding of both the academic content and its ethical implications in the real world. By integrating Thu'aimah's communicative approach into the TQM framework, Islamic higher education institutions can create a learning environment where quality education is not just about meeting academic standards but also about cultivating well-rounded individuals who can think critically, act ethically, and contribute positively to society. This synthesis strengthens the notion that the quality of education in Islamic higher education must be realized in the everyday pedagogical applications, where both the intellectual and moral development of students is continuously nurtured.

### **Academic Assessment and Continuous Revision**

Assessment plays a pivotal role in the successful implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) within Islamic higher education (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). Traditionally, assessment is seen primarily as a tool for measuring student learning outcomes; however, in the context of TQM, its role extends far beyond mere evaluation. Assessment is a crucial instrument for controlling and improving the overall quality of education. By integrating assessment within the plan-do-check-act (PDCA) cycle, which is fundamental to TQM, assessment is positioned

as an ongoing, iterative process. This means that assessment is not a one-time activity but an essential mechanism for continuous improvement. Through regular and structured assessment, institutions can monitor the effectiveness of their educational practices, identify areas for enhancement, and make informed decisions to refine teaching strategies, curricular content, and overall pedagogical approaches. In this way, assessment contributes to the creation of a quality-driven culture that prioritizes ongoing progress and responsiveness to the evolving needs of students and the academic environment.

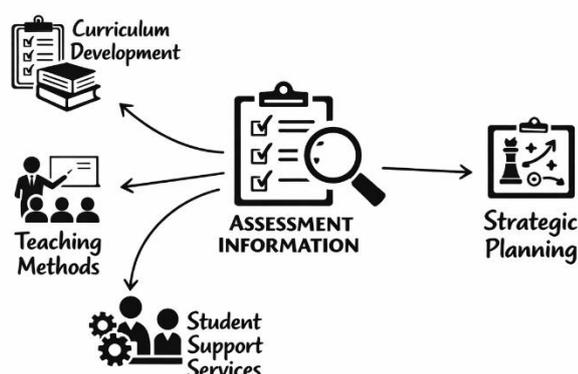
Thu'aimah's educational philosophy aligns seamlessly with the principles of TQM, particularly in his emphasis on formative and continuous assessment. According to Thu'aimah, assessment should be integrated as a dynamic and continuous element of the educational process, ensuring that feedback is consistently provided to both students and lecturers. This feedback loop is critical for identifying areas of weakness in the educational process and for enabling rapid intervention and correction. Formative assessments, which are conducted throughout the learning process, are particularly vital as they allow educators to gauge student understanding on an ongoing basis and adjust their teaching methods accordingly. Moreover, this approach fosters an environment of mutual improvement—students can refine their understanding of the material, while lecturers can enhance their pedagogical approaches. Thu'aimah's view emphasizes that quality in education is not a fixed destination but a dynamic, evolving process, which is continuously influenced by timely feedback and proactive adjustments.

In the practical application of Islamic higher education, assessment tools can be operationalized through a variety of instruments designed to provide actionable insights into both the academic progress of students and the effectiveness of educational delivery. One such instrument is student evaluations of lectures, which offer valuable feedback on teaching methods, content delivery, and the learning environment. These evaluations allow students to express their perceptions of the quality of their education, which, when analysed, can uncover important insights into areas needing attention. Additionally, regular monitoring of educational implementation ensures that curricula and teaching practices align with institutional goals and academic standards. This monitoring could include observing classroom interactions, reviewing lesson plans, and assessing the effectiveness of instructional materials. Furthermore, internal academic quality audits are essential for maintaining the standards of teaching and learning across departments. These audits involve thorough assessments of educational processes and outcomes, which are compared against established benchmarks to ensure that the institution's academic offerings meet the required quality criteria.

Research has shown that higher education institutions that effectively use assessment data for decision-making tend to have more efficient and adaptive quality systems. When assessment results are consistently collected, analysed, and used to inform decisions, institutions are better equipped to adapt to changing educational needs, technological advancements, and shifts in student demographics. The feedback provided by assessments allows for targeted

improvements in areas such as curriculum development, teaching methods, and student support services. By using assessment information as a basis for strategic planning, institutions can proactively address potential challenges and make adjustments before issues become critical. Additionally, when assessment is embedded within a culture of continuous improvement, faculty and staff are more likely to embrace change and contribute to the institution's quality enhancement efforts. Ultimately, the effective use of assessment data aligns with the principles of TQM, creating a learning environment where quality is not only maintained but is continually refined to meet the highest standards.

Gambar 2. Assesment Information



### Development of Human Resources and Academic Quality Culture

The successful implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) within Islamic higher education is fundamentally linked to the quality of human resources, particularly the lecturers (Tee Ng, 2008). In the TQM framework, lecturers are not just facilitators of knowledge, but central figures who directly influence the educational process. Their competencies, teaching methods, and ability to engage with students play a pivotal role in determining the overall quality of education delivered. As the most critical actors in the teaching and learning process, lecturers bear the responsibility of ensuring that educational objectives are met, and students are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills (Lovegreen, 2020). Consequently, enhancing the competencies of lecturers becomes a strategic focus in academic quality management, with a significant emphasis on both their subject matter expertise and their ability to teach effectively. This comprehensive approach to lecturer development is essential to ensuring that the principles of TQM are properly implemented and sustained.

Thu'aimah's pedagogical thinking aligns closely with the broader goals of TQM, particularly in regard to the competencies that educators should possess. According to Thu'aimah, a perfect educator is not just one who understands the scientific modules they teach, but one who also possesses strong pedagogical skills and effective communication abilities. Pedagogical competency involves understanding how to design and deliver lessons that facilitate student engagement, critical thinking, and deep learning. Furthermore, communication

skills are integral to effective teaching, as they allow lecturers to connect with students, clarify complex concepts, and provide constructive feedback. In the context of Islamic higher education, where the integration of faith and knowledge is essential, these qualities become even more important. Lecturers must be able to teach in a way that aligns with Islamic values while also using innovative and interactive methods that cater to diverse learning needs. Therefore, facilitating professional development programs that focus on pedagogical skills and communication techniques is crucial for ensuring that lecturers meet the high standards set by TQM.

In addition to individual lecturer development, TQM also calls for the establishment of a culture of academic quality at the institutional level. The creation of a quality-driven culture within an institution is essential for sustaining the goals of TQM over the long term (Fort, 1995). This culture is built on shared commitments to upholding academic standards, openness to continuous assessment and feedback, and a willingness to make ongoing improvements. In an Islamic higher education institution, fostering a quality culture goes beyond academic performance; it encompasses values such as accountability, integrity, and the pursuit of excellence in both teaching and administration. This cultural shift requires active engagement from all stakeholders—lecturers, students, administrators, and even policymakers. By embedding these values into the institutional framework, higher education institutions can create an environment where continuous improvement is not just a theoretical goal, but a practical, everyday reality.

Research has shown that an organizational culture that actively supports quality significantly influences the sustainability and effectiveness of TQM implementation in higher education institutions (Ronchetto & Buckles, 1994). When a culture of quality is established, it creates a shared responsibility for maintaining high academic standards across the entire institution. This cultural foundation encourages lecturers and staff to consistently assess their performance, reflect on their practices, and seek opportunities for improvement. Moreover, it ensures that quality is not seen as an isolated objective, but as a collective responsibility that is woven into the fabric of the institution's mission and vision. Institutions with a strong quality culture are more likely to adapt successfully to challenges, innovate in teaching methods, and implement reforms that lead to continuous improvement in education. This is especially important in Islamic higher education, where the integration of Islamic principles with academic standards requires constant attention and adaptation. By nurturing a quality-driven culture, Islamic higher education institutions can ensure that their TQM practices are sustainable and impactful, driving academic excellence in line with their core values.

## **The Relevance of TQM Integration and Thu'aimah's Thoughts in the Digital Age**

The rapid evolution of digital technology and artificial intelligence (AI) is revolutionizing many sectors, and education is no exception (Kansanen, 1991). Particularly within Islamic higher education, the integration of Total Quality Management (TQM) principles and advanced technologies is both an exciting opportunity and a challenge (Cheong Cheng & Ming Tam, 1997). On one hand, technology enables a more effective and data-driven approach to education, assessment, and quality management. On the other hand, it raises the concern of maintaining the core pedagogical values that are central to Islamic educational institutions. Without a solid foundation in pedagogy, there is the risk that technology may undermine the very quality it aims to improve.

In this context, the ideas of Thu'aimah, an influential figure in Islamic pedagogy, remain crucial. Thu'aimah's pedagogical thinking emphasizes the importance of interactive and communicative teaching strategies (Hough, 2004). His approach highlights the value of dialogue and feedback in the learning process, which can be easily adapted into the digital age. For example, learning management systems (LMS) and digital assessment tools can be used to facilitate continuous interaction between students and educators. However, the success of these digital platforms hinges on the pedagogical principles Thu'aimah championed, which stress the need for engagement, reflective thinking, and meaningful dialogue between learners and teachers.

One of the central tenets of Thu'aimah's thinking is the importance of a holistic approach to education that not only transmits knowledge but also nurtures character, critical thinking, and personal development. In Islamic higher education, this approach becomes even more critical as the goal is to produce not just knowledgeable individuals, but also ethical and responsible members of society. This can be achieved by integrating TQM with Thu'aimah's pedagogical principles, ensuring that technology serves as a tool for enhancing the quality of education rather than merely automating processes (Hough, 2004). By focusing on meaningful feedback, collaborative learning, and continuous self-improvement, institutions can ensure that the integration of technology does not come at the expense of their educational goals.

TQM, in this context, is more than just a set of quality control measures. It is a philosophy that fosters a culture of continuous improvement and innovation, which is essential in an era marked by rapid technological advancements. When combined with a pedagogically sound framework, TQM can ensure that digital technologies enhance the quality of teaching and learning rather than replacing or diminishing it. By embedding continuous assessment, feedback mechanisms, and data-driven decision-making into educational practices, Islamic higher education institutions can create a dynamic learning environment that adapts to the evolving needs of students while maintaining the integrity of Islamic educational values.

Advanced studies on the integration of TQM and technology in higher education have shown that institutions that successfully blend these elements are more resilient to the challenges posed by changes in the learning environment (Lucander & Christersson, 2020). With the advent of online

education, hybrid learning models, and AI-driven assessment tools, the need for strategic innovation in teaching methods and quality management becomes even more pressing. By combining the flexible and adaptable nature of TQM with the pedagogical principles laid out by Thu'aimah, Islamic higher education institutions can not only maintain but enhance the quality of education in this rapidly changing landscape.

Furthermore, the successful integration of technology and TQM into Islamic higher education presents opportunities for better accessibility and inclusivity. For instance, digital platforms enable institutions to reach a broader audience, including those from remote areas or underprivileged backgrounds who might not otherwise have access to high-quality education (Hidayatullah & Yusuf, 2025). This democratization of knowledge aligns with the values of equity and justice found in Islamic teachings. By leveraging digital tools, Islamic higher education can foster a more inclusive environment where all students have the opportunity to engage with and benefit from the best available resources, regardless of their geographical location or socio-economic background.

In conclusion, the synthesis of TQM and Thu'aimah's pedagogical thinking offers a strategic and relevant framework for the future of Islamic higher education. It provides a blueprint for institutions to effectively integrate digital technologies while preserving and enhancing the quality of education. The combination of a robust pedagogical foundation, a commitment to continuous improvement through TQM, and the innovative use of digital tools can help Islamic higher education institutions navigate the challenges of the 21st century. By doing so, they can ensure that they not only keep pace with technological advancements but also uphold the values of excellence, justice, and inclusivity that are at the heart of Islamic education.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the conceptual study that has been conducted, Total Quality Management (TQM) can be considered a highly relevant and strategic managerial approach to overcoming quality challenges in Islamic higher education. TQM not only functions as an administrative tool to meet accreditation requirements, but also as a systemic framework capable of integrating various aspects of planning, implementation, assessment, and continuous revision of education quality. This finding is in line with various studies that emphasise that the success of higher education is largely determined by the consistent application of integrated quality management across all institutional aspects. Furthermore, Rusdi Ahmad Thu'aimah's ideas regarding clarity of educational objectives, communicative approaches, competency levels, and continuous assessment provide a solid pedagogical basis for enriching the implementation of TQM in Islamic higher education. The integration of the TQM managerial framework with Thu'aimah's pedagogical thinking produces a more holistic conceptual model, in which the educational process is placed at the core of academic services and quality assurance as a cycle involving all stakeholders. These findings emphasise that the quality of Islamic higher education cannot be achieved partially, but must be built

through harmony between institutional policies and sustainable pedagogical applications.

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