



Implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in Enhancing School Competitiveness in the Era of Disruption

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in improving school competitiveness in the disruption era. The research employed a qualitative approach through literature review and case studies in educational institutions. Data were collected through observations, in-depth interviews with school stakeholders, and documentation related to quality management policies. Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The findings revealed that effective TQM implementation is supported by five main dimensions: adaptive transformational leadership, customer satisfaction orientation, continuous data-based improvement, full involvement of human resources, and the utilization of information technology in quality management. Schools that consistently implemented TQM demonstrated improvements in accreditation, student achievement, institutional reputation, and public trust. The study concludes that the integration of TQM and technological innovation contributes to adaptive, effective, and sustainable school management in responding to the challenges of the disruption era.

Keywords: Disruption Era, Educational Quality Management, Total Quality Management, Transformational Leadership, School Competitiveness.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis implementasi Manajemen Mutu Terpadu (Total Quality Management/TQM) dalam meningkatkan daya saing sekolah pada era disrupsi. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif melalui studi pustaka dan studi kasus pada lembaga pendidikan. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara mendalam dengan pemangku kepentingan sekolah, dan dokumentasi terkait kebijakan mutu. Analisis data dilakukan melalui reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa implementasi TQM yang efektif didukung oleh lima dimensi utama, yaitu kepemimpinan transformasional yang adaptif, fokus pada kepuasan pelanggan, perbaikan berkelanjutan berbasis data, keterlibatan seluruh sumber daya manusia, dan pemanfaatan teknologi informasi dalam manajemen mutu. Sekolah yang menerapkan TQM secara konsisten menunjukkan peningkatan pada akreditasi, prestasi siswa, reputasi lembaga, dan kepercayaan masyarakat. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa integrasi TQM dan inovasi teknologi mampu menciptakan pengelolaan sekolah yang adaptif, efektif, dan berkelanjutan dalam menghadapi tantangan era disrupsi.

Kata Kunci: Daya Saing Sekolah, Era Disrupsi, Manajemen Mutu Pendidikan, Kepemimpinan Transformasional, Total Quality Management.

Introduction

National education is currently situated in the midst of a global vortex of change known as the era of disruption. This phenomenon is characterized by rapid fundamental shifts resulting from technological innovation and digitalization, which have displaced the old order toward a more dynamic and unpredictable system. In this context, educational institutions are required not only to survive but also to demonstrate their existence through competitive advantage. Schools that fail to adapt to these changes will lose their relevance and the trust of the community as users of educational services (Haz, Adriani, 2025).

The primary challenge faced by schools in the era of disruption is the rising standard of stakeholder expectations regarding graduate quality. Society now looks beyond academic achievement, focusing also on graduates' readiness in digital literacy and adaptive character. Therefore, school management must transform from traditional management patterns toward modern management systems that are measurable and quality-oriented (Aulia & Sohiron, 2026). One management concept considered highly relevant to addressing these challenges is Total Quality Management (TQM).

Total Quality Management is a management philosophy that places quality as the primary focus across all organizational lines by involving the active participation of all its members (Syafitri, 2023). Through TQM, a school is viewed as a system that must provide maximum satisfaction to its customers, including internal customers (teachers and staff) and external customers (students, parents, and the community). The implementation of TQM emphasizes continuous improvement, which is crucial in the era of disruption where changes occur constantly, demanding rapid and accurate responses.

Previous studies indicate that schools consistently applying TQM principles tend to possess higher competitiveness compared to conventionally managed schools. School competitiveness is reflected in the ability to offer unique value-added features, operational efficiency, and sustained customer satisfaction (Hasibuan, 2024). However, implementing TQM in the era of disruption carries its own complexities, considering that technological barriers and resistance to change often become obstacles in the field.

The world of education is currently facing a massive wave of change triggered by the Industrial Revolution 4.0 and the transition toward Society 5.0. This "disruption era" has created a paradigm shift where conventional educational models are deemed no longer adequate to meet the needs of a fast-paced, data-driven age. Disruption is not merely a change in technology, but a shift in lifestyle, learning methods, and labor market expectations for graduate quality (Kasali, 2018). In this highly competitive environment, schools are required to possess high resilience and competitiveness to avoid being overtaken by the currents of change (Waskita, 2024).

School competitiveness in the modern era is no longer measured solely by the grandeur of physical facilities, but through the effectiveness of governance and the quality of services provided to customers. However, many educational institutions remain trapped in rigid bureaucracies and reactive management. According to Siregar (2024), the primary weakness in educational management often lies in low commitment to quality and a lack of innovation in the learning process. Without a systematic management system, schools will struggle to maintain community loyalty, especially with the emergence of various digital-based non-formal educational alternatives that offer higher flexibility.

To overcome these issues, Total Quality Management (TQM) emerges as a holistic and strategic management paradigm. TQM is not just a quality control tool, but an organizational culture oriented toward continuous improvement involving all school components, from the principal to the support staff (Hariyati, Ismawati, Fitriyani, Solowayi, 2026). Implementing TQM in the era of disruption demands an integration between traditional quality management systems and the utilization of information technology. This is vital because operational efficiency in this era depends heavily on the speed and accuracy of data processing for decision-making (Hidayat & Machali, 2020).

Leadership aspects also serve as a primary key to the successful implementation of TQM. In the era of disruption, the school principal must act as a managerial leader capable of driving a quality vision amidst uncertainty. Transformational leadership is required to minimize resistance from human resources who may feel uncomfortable with digital-based workflow changes (Bush, 2019). Furthermore, the primary pillar of TQM, which is customer-focused, must be sharpened by actively listening to the "voice of the customer" (students and parents) through various modern communication channels.

Beyond human resource improvement, school competitiveness is also heavily influenced by the school's ability to achieve cost efficiency without sacrificing quality. TQM teaches that high quality will actually lower costs in the long run through the elimination of waste and work errors (Muslihatuzzahro, 2023). With effective and efficient processes, schools can allocate their resources toward curriculum innovations that are more relevant to industrial needs in the disruption era, such as strengthening soft skills, creativity, and technological literacy.

Although the concept of TQM has been widely discussed, its implementation in educational institutions amidst massive digital disruption pressures still requires further exploration. There is often a gap between quality policies on paper and practice in the field. Therefore, this study aims to investigate more deeply the adaptive and accelerative TQM implementation strategies. It is hoped that the results of this study can provide a roadmap for educational managers to enhance institutional competitiveness through the reinforcement of a resilient quality culture for the future.

Method

This research employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical method to examine the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in improving school competitiveness during the disruption era. A qualitative approach was selected because it allows a comprehensive understanding of quality management practices within the natural context of the school environment. The study focused on how TQM principles were adapted to address rapid educational changes and technological developments. Research subjects were determined through purposive sampling, involving informants considered to possess authoritative knowledge regarding school management and quality assurance practices. The participants included the school principal, vice-principal of curriculum, quality assurance coordinator, administrative staff, and teacher representatives. The research design used a descriptive case study approach that concentrated on a school implementing quality management systems relevant to institutional competitiveness. Primary data were obtained through direct interaction with informants, while secondary data were collected from school archives, annual reports, and institutional documents supporting the research findings. The researcher acted as the key instrument to capture the complexity of managerial activities and quality culture within the educational institution.

Data collection was conducted using observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation techniques to obtain detailed and reliable information regarding TQM implementation. Observations focused on quality coordination meetings, technology-based administrative services, and disciplinary culture within the school environment. Semi-structured interviews provided flexibility for informants to explain issues related to customer focus, continuous improvement, and total involvement as central pillars of TQM. Documentation analysis included Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), Medium-Term Work Plans (RKJM), student achievement reports, and parental satisfaction data as indicators of school competitiveness. Data credibility was strengthened through source triangulation, technical triangulation, and member checking to ensure consistency and validity of findings. Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman interactive model, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Relevant information from interviews and field notes was categorized into major themes such as digital leadership, quality culture, and curriculum adaptation. Final conclusions were continuously verified with field data until the findings reached consistency and accurately represented the implementation of TQM in enhancing school competitiveness.

Findings and Discussion

1. Transformational Leadership as a Driver of Quality Culture

Transformational leadership became the main foundation of Total Quality Management (TQM) implementation in schools facing the challenges of the disruption era. School principals demonstrated an important role in directing institutional change through adaptive and visionary leadership practices. Leadership was not limited to administrative management but focused on building a strong quality culture within the school environment. Principals communicated institutional goals clearly to teachers, staff, and other educational stakeholders. Effective communication encouraged all school members to understand the importance of continuous quality improvement. Leadership orientation toward innovation strengthened the institution's ability to respond to rapid educational changes. Strategic leadership practices created a more organized and competitive educational environment. School competitiveness increased when leadership focused consistently on quality development and institutional transformation (Fatimah & Idaroh, 2024).

School principals acted as agents of change capable of influencing organizational behavior positively. Leadership practices encouraged teachers and staff to adapt to technological and educational developments. Digital transformation within schools required leaders who were able to guide institutional adaptation effectively. Principals motivated educational personnel to improve work performance and professional competence continuously. Supportive leadership created confidence among teachers in implementing technology-based learning systems. Organizational changes became easier to implement when school leaders provided clear direction and constructive support. Leadership influence also strengthened collaboration between academic and administrative staff. Institutional progress depended significantly on the leader's ability to manage change strategically (Choirunisa & lae, 2025).

The implementation of transformational leadership encouraged teachers to leave conventional working patterns and adopt innovative approaches. Teachers became more willing to integrate digital technology into classroom learning activities and administrative processes. Professional development programs organized by school leaders improved teachers' readiness to face educational transformation. Innovation in

teaching methods increased learning effectiveness and student participation in classroom activities. Technology adoption also improved communication and coordination within the school environment. Educational quality developed more effectively when teachers received institutional support for innovation. The willingness to adapt became an important characteristic of schools implementing TQM successfully. Transformational leadership therefore played a significant role in creating a dynamic educational culture (Shoimah, Holimah, Julia, 2025).

Leadership in the disruption era required strong orientation toward learning and innovation. Educational institutions needed leaders capable of understanding technological developments and their impact on learning systems. Innovation-based leadership encouraged schools to become more responsive to academic and social changes. School principals focused on improving educational services through strategic planning and institutional evaluation. Learning-oriented leadership also strengthened the school's ability to maintain educational quality consistently. Academic programs became more relevant when institutional leaders supported curriculum adaptation and instructional innovation. The quality culture developed more effectively in schools with leaders committed to continuous improvement. Educational competitiveness increased when leadership emphasized innovation and academic excellence.

Strategic decision-making became an essential aspect of transformational leadership in TQM implementation. School leaders consistently involved teachers and staff in institutional decision-making processes. Participatory leadership strengthened organizational trust and improved cooperation among school members. Teachers felt more valued when their opinions and ideas were considered in policy development. Collaborative decision-making also improved the effectiveness of institutional programs and educational strategies. Organizational commitment became stronger when school members shared responsibility for achieving quality objectives. Participatory management created a positive working environment that supported institutional development. School quality improvement therefore depended on effective collaboration between leaders and educational personnel (Rambe, Pratiwi, Daulay, 2025).

Fact-based decision-making became increasingly important in the disruption era due to rapid educational and technological changes. School leaders relied on data and institutional evaluation results to determine educational policies and improvement strategies. Data-driven management strengthened the accuracy and effectiveness of school decision-making processes. Institutional evaluation provided information regarding student achievement, teacher performance, and educational service quality. Leaders used this information to identify institutional strengths and areas requiring improvement. Quick and accurate responses to educational challenges became important indicators of school competitiveness. Strategic decisions based on reliable data improved institutional adaptability and organizational performance. Schools with effective data management demonstrated stronger competitiveness in the educational sector (Suryadi, 2023).

Organizational trust emerged as a critical element in successful transformational leadership. School leaders developed trust by maintaining transparency, consistency, and accountability in institutional management. Teachers and staff demonstrated higher commitment when they trusted the leadership and institutional vision. Trust also strengthened communication and collaboration among school members. Educational personnel became more motivated to contribute to institutional improvement and service quality enhancement. Positive organizational relationships created a supportive academic and professional environment. Institutional stability became stronger when

leaders maintained constructive interactions with teachers, students, and administrative staff. Trust-based leadership therefore contributed significantly to sustainable educational quality development (Naufal & Muhith, 2026).

The implementation of transformational leadership strengthened the overall quality culture within the school environment. Leadership practices focused on innovation, participation, and continuous improvement supported effective TQM implementation. Educational institutions became more adaptive to technological changes and competitive educational demands. Teachers and staff demonstrated stronger professional commitment when institutional leadership provided clear direction and support. School competitiveness improved through effective management, collaborative culture, and strategic innovation. Leadership orientation toward quality development also enhanced institutional reputation and public trust. Sustainable educational improvement required leadership capable of integrating organizational goals with modern educational challenges. Transformational leadership therefore became a key factor in strengthening educational quality and institutional competitiveness in the disruption era.

2. Focus on Customer Satisfaction in the Digital Era

Customer satisfaction became a central principle in the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) within educational institutions during the digital era. Schools recognized students and parents as the primary customers who determine institutional credibility and competitiveness. Educational services were designed to meet academic expectations, communication needs, and technological demands from stakeholders. Schools that focused on customer satisfaction demonstrated stronger commitment to improving service quality continuously. Institutional policies prioritized responsiveness, accessibility, and effectiveness in delivering educational services. Digital transformation increased public expectations regarding the quality and speed of school services. Educational institutions therefore needed to provide learning experiences that were adaptive, efficient, and student centered. Customer-oriented management strengthened the competitiveness of schools in a rapidly changing educational environment.

Student satisfaction became an important indicator of educational quality in the disruption era. Schools implemented learning systems that supported students' academic development and digital literacy skills. Technology-based learning platforms improved access to educational materials and classroom communication. Interactive learning methods increased student engagement and participation during academic activities. Educational institutions also provided academic guidance and counseling services to support students' personal and academic development. Flexible learning systems allowed students to adapt more effectively to digital learning environments. Student-centered educational practices contributed significantly to improving learning outcomes and institutional reputation. Educational quality increased when schools consistently prioritized student needs and learning experiences.

Parent satisfaction also played a major role in strengthening school competitiveness. Parents expected transparent communication, academic accountability, and responsive educational services from schools. Educational institutions utilized digital communication platforms to improve interaction between schools and families. Online information systems enabled parents to monitor student performance and school activities more efficiently. Transparent communication strengthened parents' trust in institutional management and educational quality. Schools that maintained positive relationships with parents demonstrated stronger public image and community support. Parent involvement in educational programs also contributed to student discipline and

academic achievement. Customer satisfaction therefore extended beyond students to include family engagement in the educational process (Suryadi, 2023).

Digital technology significantly transformed the way schools provided educational services to stakeholders. Educational institutions adopted information technology to improve administrative efficiency and learning effectiveness. Online registration systems, digital attendance records, and electronic academic reports simplified school management processes. Technology integration reduced communication barriers between schools, students, and parents. Digital services increased institutional responsiveness to stakeholder needs and educational challenges. Schools capable of utilizing technology effectively demonstrated greater adaptability in the disruption era. Educational quality management became more efficient using digital information systems and online communication platforms. Technology-based services therefore became an important factor in achieving customer satisfaction (Shoimah, Hotimah, Julia, 2025).

Service quality in education depended heavily on the institution's ability to respond quickly and accurately to stakeholder needs. Schools implementing TQM focused on continuous improvement in academic and administrative services. Feedback from students and parents became an important source of information for institutional evaluation and development. Educational institutions regularly assessed stakeholder satisfaction to identify weaknesses in service delivery. Evaluation results were used to improve communication systems, teaching quality, and administrative performance. Continuous service improvement strengthened institutional credibility and public confidence. Schools with strong service orientation demonstrated higher competitiveness and stronger community support. Customer satisfaction therefore became closely connected to institutional sustainability and educational excellence.

The digital era increased competition among educational institutions in providing quality services. Schools were required to demonstrate innovation, professionalism, and adaptability in managing educational programs. Institutions that failed to meet stakeholder expectations faced declining public trust and reduced competitiveness. Customer-oriented schools developed strategic programs designed to improve educational quality and institutional reputation. Digital communication and marketing also influenced public perception of school performance and credibility. Educational institutions increasingly relied on technology to maintain positive relationships with stakeholders. Competitive advantage emerged from the institution's ability to provide effective and responsive educational services. Customer satisfaction therefore became an essential component of school competitiveness in modern education (Choirunisa, Lae, 2025).

School management practices focused on customer satisfaction encouraged the development of a positive institutional culture. Teachers and administrative staff became more aware of their responsibility in delivering high-quality educational services. Professional attitudes and effective communication improved relationships between educational personnel and stakeholders. Institutional commitment to service quality strengthened teamwork and organizational accountability. Educational personnel demonstrated higher motivation when schools emphasized stakeholder appreciation and positive work culture. A supportive institutional environment contributed to better academic performance and organizational effectiveness. Service-oriented management also encouraged innovation in teaching and administrative practices. Educational quality improved significantly when all school members shared responsibility for stakeholder satisfaction.

The implementation of customer-focused management strengthened the sustainability of educational institutions in the disruption era. Schools that consistently prioritized stakeholder needs demonstrated stronger adaptability to technological and social changes. Educational quality improvement became more systematic through continuous evaluation and service innovation. Student achievement, parent trust, and institutional reputation improved when schools maintained strong commitment to customer satisfaction. Digital transformation created opportunities for schools to develop more efficient and accessible educational services. Educational institutions capable of balancing technological innovation with stakeholder needs achieved stronger competitiveness in the educational sector. Sustainable quality management required continuous collaboration between school leaders, teachers, students, and parents. Customer satisfaction therefore became a strategic foundation for institutional success and long-term educational development (Siregar, 2024).

Conclusion

The implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in the disruption era demonstrates that school competitiveness is strongly influenced by adaptive leadership, customer-oriented management, continuous quality improvement, and effective utilization of digital technology. Transformational leadership strengthens institutional innovation and encourages the development of a sustainable quality culture within schools. Customer satisfaction involving students and parents becomes an essential indicator of educational service quality and institutional credibility. Technology integration improves learning effectiveness, administrative efficiency, and communication between schools and stakeholders. Continuous evaluation and data-based decision-making also support institutional adaptability in responding to educational changes and challenges. Collaboration among school leaders, teachers, staff, students, and parents contributes significantly to achieving quality educational outcomes. Schools that consistently implement TQM principles show stronger competitiveness, improved public trust, and better academic performance. Effective quality management therefore becomes a strategic foundation for sustaining educational excellence in the digital and disruption era.

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