Toward Quality of Education: Reviewing the Challenges of Quality Management in Primary School Contexts in Developing Countries

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Abstract. This community service project aims to empower teachers in Semarang City to improve their skills in academic writing and publication through a community-based mentorship program. The project addresses critical challenges faced by teachers, including limited time for research, lack of experience in scientific publication, and funding constraints. Using the participatory Community Appraisal (PCA) method, the program was designed to actively involve teachers in planning, executing, and evaluating. The community of teachers, particularly those involved in the PKY (Pengembangan Konten Youtube) Teacher Community, received intensive training and guidance in scientific writing, article submission, and the duplication processes. The project result include a significant improvement in a teacher's academic writing abilities, with several article prepared for submission to national journals. The collaborative approach fostered a sense of ownership among participants, making the outcome more sustainable. This initiative highlights the importance of providing structured mentorship to improve teacher professional development and their contributions to academic knowledge.

Keywords: scientific teacher publications, community-based mentoring, participatory community appraisal, professional development.

INTRODUCTION

Ensuring quality in primary education remains a global priority, particularly in the context of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which emphasizes inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all. Educational quality management, however, is a complex and evolving process that extends beyond academic outcomes. It involves system-wide efforts to improve governance, leadership, teacher professionalism, infrastructure, and accountability. In many developing countries, including Indonesia, the challenge is not the absence of policies, but the gap between well-formulated standards and their practical implementation at the school level.

Several studies have explored the application of international frameworks, such as Total Quality Management (TQM), ISO 21001, and the EFQM Excellence Model, in educational settings (Sallis, 2002; Zhang et al., 2000; EFQM, 2020). In the Indonesian context, national instruments like the National Education Standards (Standar Nasional Pendidikan-SNP), Minimum Service Standards

(Standar Pelayanan Minimal-SPM), and the newly revised 2024 Primary School Accreditation Framework have been established to regulate and monitor educational quality. However, research continues to show fragmented policy implementation, inadequate school leadership, and limited use of monitoring data (Mulyasa, 2022; BSKAP, 2022). What is often missing in the literature is a comprehensive synthesis that integrates global quality models with the unique regulatory, structural, and socio-cultural contexts of primary schools in Indonesia.

This study offers a strategic literature review to identify key implementation challenges and propose context-responsive solutions. By analyzing the convergence and divergence between global models and national standards, the research aims to inform more integrated, practical, and sustainable quality management approaches. The findings are expected to contribute not only to educational policy and school governance, but also to the broader goal of building resilient and equitable education systems. The study's results may benefit educators, policymakers, school

supervisors, and development agencies seeking to enhance school quality in developing country contexts.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative integrative literature review method to examine the implementation challenges and strategic responses in managing educational quality in Indonesian primary schools. The research was conducted systematically through the following steps:

Defining the Research Scope

The review focused on literature related to educational quality management at the primary school level, particularly in relation to Indonesian policy instruments such as the Standar Nasional Pendidikan (SNP), Standar Pelayanan Minimal (SPM), and the 2024 accreditation framework. Global quality management models including TQM, ISO 21001, EFQM, and SBM were also included to provide a comparative foundation.

Data Source Selection

Relevant documents were collected from peer-reviewed journal articles, official policy reports, institutional publications, and international frameworks published between 2015 and 2024. Primary databases included ERIC, Scopus, SpringerLink, Google Scholar, as well as national sources such as Garuda and SINTA.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The literature was selected based on relevance to the research objectives, publication credibility, and context applicability. Studies were excluded if they focused solely on secondary or higher education, lacked empirical basis, or were not directly related to quality management systems.

Data Extraction and Organization

Selected documents were coded and categorized into thematic clusters: policy and governance, leadership and human resources, teacher capacity, infrastructure and learning environment, and quality monitoring systems.

Analysis and Synthesis

The collected data were synthesized through thematic analysis, comparing the findings from international models and national policies. Patterns of challenges and solutions were identified and analyzed to develop strategic insights aligned with the study objectives.

The findings from this review serve as the basis for the subsequent discussion on implementation barriers and proposed directions for improving quality management practices in Indonesian primary education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study identified and analyzed five major categories of challenges in implementing educational quality management in Indonesian primary schools: (1) fragmented policy and governance, (2) limited leadership and managerial capacity, (3) unequal teacher quality and professionalism, (4) infrastructure and resource gaps, and (5) weak monitoring, evaluation, and data utilization. These findings align with the research objective to evaluate systemic implementation barriers and formulate strategic responses.

Key Challenges and Thematic Findings

The review revealed that although Indonesia has adopted a comprehensive set of national standards—SNP, SPM, and the 2024 risk-based accreditation model—the implementation at the school level remains inconsistent. Leadership capacity is often limited to administrative functions, teachers lack targeted professional development aligned with national indicators, and many schools struggle to meet basic infrastructure requirements, particularly in rural areas. Furthermore, data generated from evaluations are frequently underutilized for instructional improvement, indicating a disconnect between monitoring systems and school-based decision-making.

Comparative Analysis of Framework Alignment

To deepen the discussion, the table below presents a comparative synthesis of how key challenges align with both national and international frameworks showed in Table 1.

The Comparative Analysis of Framework Alignment highlights how key implementationchallenges in Indonesian primary education are reflected across national and international quality frameworks. While national standards like SNP, SPM, and Accreditation 2024 focus on formal benchmarks and service minimums, they often lack depth in areas such as instructional leadership and data-driven improvement. In contrast, international models— TQM, ISO 21001, EFQM, and SBM—emphasize

Table 1. Challenges National & International Frameworks

Challenge Area	SNP / SPM / Accreditation 2024	TQM / ISO 21001 / EFQM / SBM
Policy fragmentation	Misalignment among national policies	Disrupts continuous improvement and process standardization
Weak leadership capacity	Limited emphasis on instructional leadership	Undermines leadership-driven quality cycles
Teacher quality gaps	Certification ≠ pedagogical competence	Affects people development and learner outcomes
Infrastructure disparity	SPM targets not equitably achieved	Weakens enablers and resource-access equity
Data and monitoring gaps	Digital tools underutilized	Reduces feedback loops for strategic planning

continuous improvement, stakeholder engagement, and organizational learning. This comparison reveals gaps in policy integration and practice alignment, suggesting that Indonesian frameworks could benefit from adopting more adaptive, evidence-based, and participatory approaches found in global models showed in Figure 1.

The chart illustrates the degree to which key implementation challenges in educational quality management are addressed or reflected in both national and international frameworks. The five challenge areas—policy fragmentation, leadership capacity, teacher quality, infrastructure disparity, and data utilization—are assessed on a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 indicates a high degree of alignment or severity of the issue within the respective framework.

The international frameworks (TQM, ISO 21001, EFQM, SBM) consistently show higher alignment across all challenge areas, particularly in policy integration, leadership development, and data utilization, with scores of 4 or 5. This indicates that international models emphasize systemic coherence, stakeholder-driven improvement, and evidence-based planning more explicitly.

In contrast, the national frameworks (SNP, SPM, and the 2024 Accreditation System) show variable alignment. For instance, they address infrastructure disparity most strongly (score: 5) due to the Minimum Service Standards (SPM), but show lower alignment in areas like leadership capacity (score: 3) and data utilization (score: 3), suggesting that these areas are underdeveloped in current policy implementation.

This visual comparison highlights a critical insight: while national frameworks provide foundational standards, they lag in operationalizing continuous improvement mechanisms emphasized in global models. This underscores the need for policy integration and
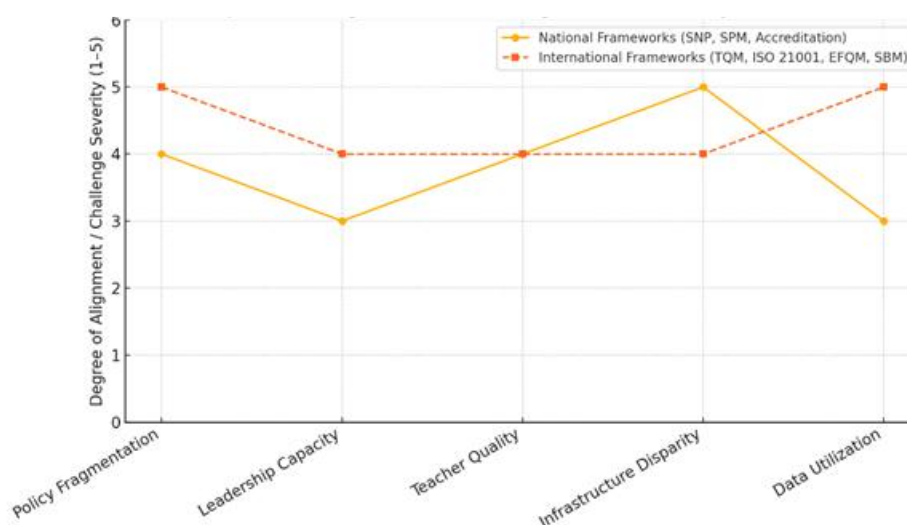
Figure 1. Comparative Alignment of Challenges Across Quality Frameworks

capacity-building strategies to bridge these gaps.

Discussion and Synthesis

These results echo findings from recent literature (Mulyasa, 2022; BSKAP, 2022; UNESCO, 2016), emphasizing that implementation failures are not caused solely by weak policy design, but rather by the lack of integration, capacity, and contextual adaptability. While frameworks like ISO 21001 stress stakeholder needs and evidence-based practices, in practice, Indonesian schools often operate under compliance-based cultures that hinder innovation.

The novelty of this study lies in its comparative synthesis that integrates both international standards and national regulatory instruments. Unlike previous studies that examine these frameworks in isolation, this review maps their points of convergence and divergence, offering a holistic framework for understanding implementation gaps and strategies.

Contribution to Science and Society

This research contributes to the scientific discourse by bridging theoretical frameworks with practical realities in school governance and policy implementation. It also offers actionable insights for policymakers, school supervisors, and education development actors. For society, improving primary education quality contributes to more equitable learning opportunities, better human development outcomes, and alignment with SDG 4 targets.

CONCLUSION

This study finds that the implementation of educational quality management in Indonesian primary schools is hindered by five key systemic issues: fragmented governance, weak leadership, uneven teacher competence, inadequate infrastructure, and poor use of data. Although national frameworks such as SNP, SPM, and the 2024 Accreditation are in place, their application remains inconsistent at the school level. A comparison with international models, TQM, ISO 21001, EFQM, and SBM, reveals misalignments, especially in continuous improvement, stakeholder involvement, and data-driven decision-making. To overcome these gaps, quality management must shift from compliance-based approaches to integrated, adaptive strategies that prioritize coherence, capacity building, and equity.

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