



# Total Quality Management in Education: A Strategic Approach for Continuous Improvement and Success

**Eylem MENTEŞOĞULLARI**

Cyprus Health and Social Sciences University

[eylemmentesoglari@gmail.com](mailto:eylemmentesoglari@gmail.com). ORCID: 0000-0001-7342-4806

## **Abstract**

This article highlights the importance of quality management in the education sector and discusses the necessity of a strategic approach to achieve continuous improvement and success.

He states that the education sector operates in a complex and rapidly changing environment today. For this reason, institutions need to adopt a quality-oriented approach in order to maintain their competitive advantage and to offer the best education to their students. At this point, the concept of Total Quality Management (TQM) comes into play.

This research highlights the importance of a strategic approach to how TQM can be applied in education. TQM is a management philosophy that encourages the participation of the entire organization and continuous improvement. The article focuses on leadership, customer orientation, continuous improvement, participation and collaboration, data and information management, which are the five basic principles of TQM.

The article also presents strategic steps on how TQM can be applied in educational institutions. These include determining the corporate vision, measuring student satisfaction, analyzing and

improving processes, ensuring employee participation, and establishing data and information management processes.

In conclusion, the article emphasizes the importance of Total Quality Management in education and reveals the necessity of a strategic approach for continuous improvement and success. Educational institutions should adopt the principles of TQM, create a quality-oriented culture and focus on constantly improving themselves. In this way, it will be possible for students to achieve success by offering the best education.

**Keywords:** Total quality management( TQM), strategic approach, education sector

### **Eğitimde Toplam Kalite Yönetimi: Sürekli İyileştirme Ve Başarı İçin Stratejik Bir Yaklaşım**

#### **Özet**

Bu makale, eğitim sektöründe kalite yönetiminin önemini vurgulayarak sürekli iyileştirme ve başarı elde etmek için stratejik bir yaklaşımın gerekliliğini ele almaktadır.

Eğitim sektörünün günümüzde karmaşık ve hızla değişen bir ortamda faaliyet gösterdiğini belirtmektedir. Bu nedenle, kurumların rekabet avantajını sürdürebilmek ve öğrencilerine en iyi eğitimi sunabilmek için kalite odaklı bir yaklaşım benimsemeleri gerekmektedir. Bu noktada, Toplam Kalite Yönetimi (TKY) kavramı devreye girmektedir.

Bu araştırma, TKY'nin eğitimde nasıl uygulanabileceği konusunda stratejik bir yaklaşımın önemini vurgulamaktadır. TKY, tüm kurumun katılımını ve sürekli iyileştirmeyi teşvik eden bir yönetim felsefesidir. Makalede, TKY'nin beş temel ilkesi olan liderlik, müşteri odaklılık, sürekli iyileştirme, katılım ve işbirliği, veri ve bilgi yönetimi üzerinde durulmaktadır.

Makale ayrıca TKY'nin eğitim kurumlarında nasıl uygulanabileceğine dair stratejik adımlar sunmaktadır. Bunlar arasında kurumsal vizyonun belirlenmesi, öğrenci memnuniyetinin ölçülmesi, süreçlerin analiz edilmesi ve iyileştirilmesi, çalışanların katılımının sağlanması, veri ve bilgi yönetimi süreçlerinin kurulması gibi adımlar yer almaktadır.

Sonuç olarak, makale eğitimde Toplam Kalite Yönetimi'nin önemini vurgulayarak sürekli iyileştirme ve başarı için stratejik bir yaklaşımın gerekliliğini ortaya koymaktadır. Eğitim kurumları, TKY prensiplerini benimseyerek kalite odaklı bir kültür oluşturmalı ve sürekli olarak

kendilerini geliştirmeye odaklanmalıdır. Bu sayede öğrencilere en iyi eğitimi sunarak başarı elde etmeleri mümkün olacaktır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Toplam kalite yönetimi (TKY), stratejik yaklaşım, eğitim sektörü

## **Introduction**

Total quality management is an approach that focuses on processes, in which management decisions are based on sound information and data analysis by increasing the qualifications of all employees. This approach considers the material and moral resources of the organization in its entirety.

Total quality management is an approach that focuses on the processes of an organization and aims to increase the qualifications of all employees. This approach adopts a structure in which management decisions are based on information and data analysis in a healthy way and that deals with all material and moral resources of the organization in a whole (Ersen, 1997).

Quality in the education sector is one of the most important factors in achieving success. Educational institutions need effective management in order to maximize student success, duration of education and sustainable success. The concept of total quality management offers a strategic approach to raise quality standards in education and to ensure continuous structuring.

Total Quality Management in Education is an approach that includes many different components and includes the entire education system. This management approach offers a student-centered perspective based on continuous tables. Educational institutions can adopt Total Quality Management principles to achieve quality, from curriculum design to teaching methods, from student assessment process to teacher training.

This article will focus on the importance of Total Quality Management in education and how to apply it. First, why educational institutions have quality management principles and the benefits from these measures will be discussed. Then, the main components of Total Quality Management and how they can be integrated into the training process will be explained.

In the continuation of the article, how Total Quality Management will maintain its continuity in education and how it will increase student success will be examined.

As a result, Total Quality Management in education is a strategic approach that helps educational institutions to raise quality standards, increase student success and provide a continuous perspective. This article will be a valuable resource for education professionals and decision makers and will increase awareness of quality management in education.

### **Total Quality Management (TQM) Approach**

Education is a fundamental element for the development and progress of societies. A quality education system ensures sustainable success by revealing the potential of individuals and society. Therefore, the continuous improvement of educational institutions and the management of quality are of great importance.

Total Quality Management (TQM) is a management approach that covers all processes of an organization and aims to keep quality at the highest level. TQM includes not only product or service quality, but also employee engagement, continuous improvement and customer satisfaction. In the field of education, the implementation of TQM has been an effective strategy to increase the success of students and educational institutions.

In order to achieve quality in an institution, it is necessary for all employees to care about quality. It should be known by everyone that quality is the basis of achieving success. Quality should not be based on controlling the product after its manufacture. Finding or investigating deficiencies in a product later is not organizationally important. The important thing is to avoid mistakes while producing something. Therefore, a team spirit should be created in the organization. All members, individually and together, should contribute to the formation of this common culture. Organizations that adopt Total Quality Management should consider four principles: (Kaufman & Zahn, 1993).

1. The attention of the organization should be directed by focusing on the wishes and expectations of the individuals.
2. Top managers must be models in all operations in order to deliver quality products.

3. The employees of the organization should have the necessary training, development and innovation opportunities in order to provide the best service.
4. Systematic innovation processes should be implemented for everyone for continuous development and progress.
5. A people-oriented management approach should be adopted.

Educational institutions, like other organizations, have to produce. However, due to the nature of the education process, it may not always be possible to reveal the productivity elements as clearly as in the organizations that produce goods. Quality in education is a situation that emerges as a result of the interaction of many different variables, and no quality element can be handled alone.

It is possible to evaluate quality in education both as quality in design and quality in the process (Aykın, 2001). Quality in design refers to the elements required for a quality product. Quality and these elements are a whole. Quality in design is about output (for example, an academic program that meets students' needs) and process (for example, curriculum, equipment, planning, and other factors).

Quality in output refers to the successful achievement of desired results. For example, all pharmacy graduates must pass the exam for a business license. Quality in the process, on the other hand, is to ensure that the steps in all functions of the organization work effectively and in accordance with the desired goals with the contribution of each of them to the organization (Chaffee; Lawrance, 1992).

In educational organizations, more emphasis has generally been placed on output quality (outcome assessment) and design quality (curriculum design). Not much attention has been paid to process quality. Focusing on output quality can have a negative impact on skipping many processes and building quality, and it is not always sufficient. Controlling the quality of the product or service at the last stage is an old and costly management approach. It can often result in faulty or incomplete production. The only way to improve a product or service is to make it superior.

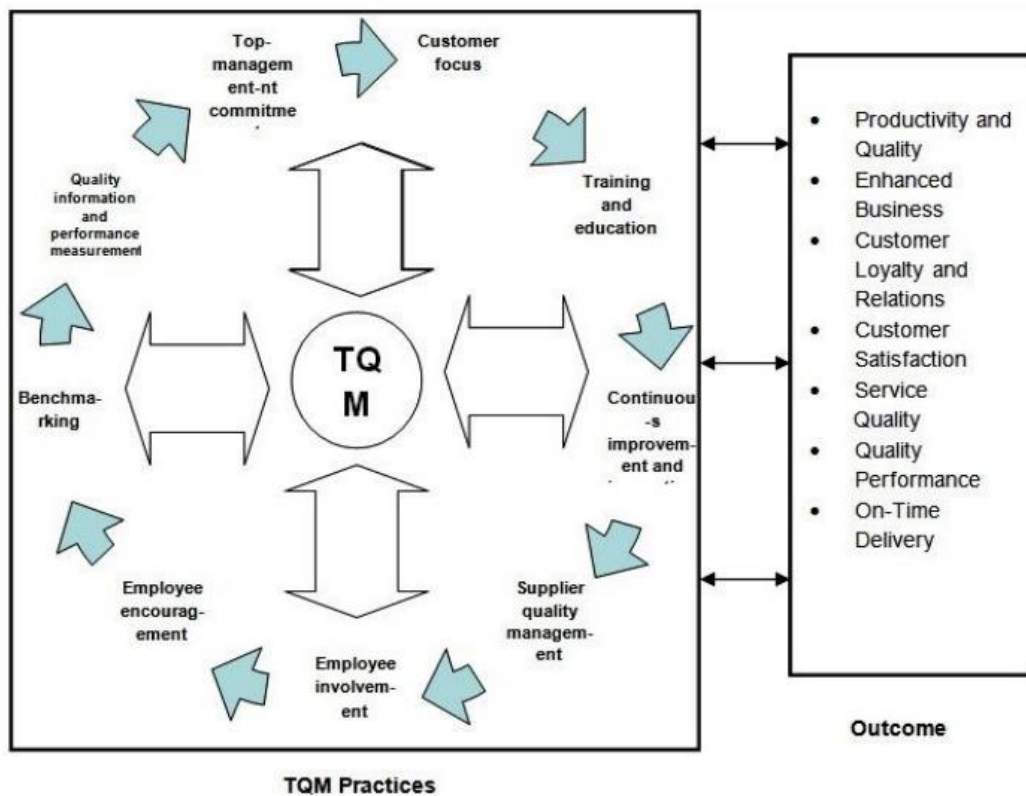
On the other hand, if the process is properly designed and executed, the result is quality. Inputs are extremely important for quality in education. Inputs are important indicators, but they do not provide or measure quality. The design, processes, and outputs define appropriate inputs.

Inappropriate or insufficient inputs can constrain systems, while appropriate inputs maximize systems.

In summary, it is important to pay attention to output quality, design quality and process quality to ensure quality in education. Focusing solely on output quality may be insufficient and it is important to design and implement the process correctly. In addition, the determination of appropriate inputs is important in terms of quality (Şimşek, 2001).

Quality is the combination of various processes in an organization from a development perspective. Knowing the purpose of existence of a process is the first step in developing it. Unfortunately, in many organizations the purpose of the process is forgotten and the process is left on its own. However, all processes exist to meet the needs of service providers. An organization must determine the purpose of each process, whom it serves, and the wants and needs of customers (Chaffee; Lawrence, “ERIC Digest”, 1992).

As seen in Figure 1, total quality has many components.



*Figure 1 : : Components of TQM (Talib and Rahman, 2010a)*

## **Basic Principles of TQM in Education**

The basic principles of TQM in education can be listed as follows:

**a) Leadership and Management Commitment:** Successful implementation of TQM in educational institutions requires the leadership and commitment of senior management. Leaders must demonstrate their commitment to quality and promote TQM principles at all levels of the organization.

**b) Student Orientation:** TQM emphasizes the understanding of students' needs and their active participation in the educational process. Educational institutions should continuously evaluate student feedback and direct their improvement activities accordingly in order to increase student satisfaction.

**c) Continuous Improvement:** Continuous improvement, which is a fundamental element of TQM, requires educational institutions to analyze business processes, identify problems and find more effective solutions. Based on the principle of the quality cycle (Plan, Do, Check, Learn), educational institutions should constantly seek and implement improvement opportunities (Saraç, 2000).

**d) Staff Participation and Training:** Staff participation and training are important for the successful implementation of TQM. Personnel should be actively involved in the training processes, receive training for quality objectives and continuously improve their knowledge and skills.

## **Benefits of TQM in Education**

The adoption and implementation of TQM by educational institutions provides various benefits. Some of these are those:

**a) High Student Satisfaction:** TQM focuses on increasing student satisfaction. Educational institutions benefit from feedback to better understand the needs and expectations of students and improve the education process accordingly. As a result, student satisfaction and engagement increases.

**b) Increasing Achievement:** With the implementation of TQM, educational institutions develop more effective strategies to increase student achievement. Improvement activities increase students' learning outcomes and performance (Hergüner, 1999).

**c) Effective Resource Utilization:** TQM ensures effective use of resources through analysis and improvement of business processes. Educational institutions increase efficiency and prevent waste of resources, so they can direct more resources towards education quality.

**d) Institutional Image and Competitive Advantage:** Educational institutions that adopt TQM adopt a quality-oriented approach and create a higher corporate image. Institutions that offer quality education become the choice of students and parents and gain competitive advantage (Erdoğan, 1999).

Total Quality Management in Education is a strategic approach for continuous improvement and success. Educational institutions acting in line with the principles of TQM increase student satisfaction, increase success, use resources effectively and gain competitive advantage. The implementation of TQM in education enables to take important steps to create a quality education system and contributes to the sustainable development of societies.

### **Implementation of Total Quality Management in Educational Organizations**

Total Quality Management (TQM) is a philosophy that is expressed as a change in the understanding of management and when it is implemented in educational organizations, it will be more successful in achieving the goals. TQM, which was started by the Japanese and spread to the world, enabled the increase of productivity by ensuring the realization of the goals of the organizations. TQM, which emerged as a result of these searches, is a system development process. In this process, problems are solved and even a simple problem is solved at once, and results are obtained for taking measures to prevent the repetition of the same problem (Kavrakoğlu, 1996, p. 18).

"Total Quality Management (TQM) is one that communicates and interacts with the environment, follows the needs of the environment, balances the factors affecting the school, is open to change,



harmonizes between teachers, students and staff, establishes good relations, is democratic, tolerant, understanding and uses the resources at hand. The application of TQM to education will only be possible if the school administrator adopts this concept.

A.W. Austin (1980, p. 1-4) explains that in order to determine the quality in education, the following two criteria must be determined first:

1. "What is meant by quality?" Every education board and level should reach a consensus on this issue. At this stage, all of the school's activities, resources, etc. It must be taken into attention.
2. "How to improve the quality of education?" For this, a strategic plan should be prepared with the participation of the employees in the institution and work should be started to realize the determined qualifications.

For this reason, the clarification of quality indicators and features in educational organizations will facilitate the transition to total quality practices.

With the changing world conditions, new perspectives on education should be developed. The education system should be restructured and schools should be transformed into a structure where innovative practices are included, change is encouraged, teachers have innovative approaches and school members adapt to change. However, the authoritarian structure should be abandoned and approaches that will bring efficiency to the system should be adopted." (Şimşek, 2001)

First of all, you need to determine the quality policy and objectives of the educational organization. The quality policy should express the organization's commitment to quality and its commitment to quality. Goals should be measurable and realistic. The educational organization should understand its customers (students, parents, employers, etc.) and work to meet their expectations. It is important to evaluate customer feedback and identify areas of improvement (www.meb.gov.tr , 2023)

.The processes in the educational organization need to be defined and documented. These processes should include the planning, delivery, evaluation and continuous improvement of educational services. Performance measurement should be made for quality management. The achievement of the determined targets and the efficiency of the processes should be monitored with measurable indicators. Data such as student success rates, teacher performance evaluations,

and feedback can be used. It is important that employees participate and actively contribute to the processes. The educational organization should offer training and development opportunities to its employees, increase their motivation and encourage teamwork. Total quality management aims at continuous improvement. Therefore, it is important to carry out improvement activities within the organization. It is necessary to analyze processes and performance, identify problems and adopt solution-oriented approaches. The educational organization should establish good relations with its suppliers and provide materials and services that comply with quality standards. Monitoring and evaluation of supplier performance should continue as a continuous process. The educational organization can obtain a quality certificate or participate in accreditation processes in accordance with national or international standards. This means externally auditing and recognizing the organization's quality management practices.

These steps provide a basic framework to support total quality management practices in educational organizations. In the implementation process, the special needs and conditions of the organization should be taken into account and the principle of continuous improvement should be given importance.

Quality improvement is an approach that requires continuous improvement of all activities in the educational process. Internal quality improvement is aimed at making business processes more efficient and streamlined. The aim in this process is to reduce costs in the long term, together with the prevention of problems and errors. External quality improvement, on the other hand, aims to increase external customer satisfaction. In order to achieve this goal, innovations should be reflected in the curriculum quickly and new learning methods should be applied. Thus, the quality of the students being educated and the quality of the educational products increase (Yıldız and Ardıç, 1999, p. 77).

Deming's important principles of quality can be applied in schools as well. These principles are:

- 1. Democratic atmosphere:** Creating a democratic atmosphere in the school, encouraging student participation and valuing the views of stakeholders.
- 2. Supportive leadership:** School administrators adopt a supportive leadership approach and motivate employees.

**3. Teamwork:** Encouraging cooperation and teamwork among teachers, staff and other stakeholders.

**4. Unity of purpose:** Creating a common vision for the school's goals and focusing on these goals.

**5. Regular analysis of student performance and success:** Students' performance and success should be regularly monitored, evaluation results should be analyzed, and improvement measures should be taken when necessary.

**6. Continuous improvement:** Creating a culture of continuous improvement at school, reviewing processes and implementing innovative solutions.

**7. Determining the customers of the school:** The customers of the school should be determined as parents, business world and other stakeholders of the society as well as students, and their expectations should be taken into account (Schmokers, 1993, p. 388).

These principles form the basis of quality improvement processes in schools and can be applied to increase school success.

### **Differences Between Classical Management Approach and Total Quality Approach in Education**

The Total Quality approach has put an end to the traditional management's approach that sees people as a machine and has created a system where employees can use their creativity, solve problems and participate in decisions (Yenersoy, 1997, p. 16).

Classical management approach and total quality management (TQM) represent two different approaches in education. Here are some differences of these two approaches:

#### **1. Focus:**

- ***Classical management approach:*** Classical management approach is generally based on a hierarchical structure in businesses and the focus is efficiency and profitability. This approach emphasizes teacher management and control, while placing less emphasis on the processes of measuring and evaluating student achievement.

- **Total Quality Management:** Total quality management aims at continuous improvement. The focus is on student success and satisfaction. TQM encourages student feedback, collaboration between teachers and continuous improvement to improve the quality of educational processes.

## **2. Teacher-Student Relationship:**

- **Classical management approach:** In the classical management approach, the teacher assumes an authoritarian role and gives instructions to the students. Students passively receive information and may be less involved in the classroom.

- **Total Quality Management:** In the TQM approach, the teacher-student relationship is more interactive and collaborative. Teachers encourage students to participate in the learning process by providing support and evaluating their ideas. Students actively participate in learning and develop skills in asking questions, critical thinking and problem solving.

## **3. Evaluation and Feedback:**

- **Classical management approach:** In the classical management approach, student success is usually measured by exams and grades. Students are usually given one-way feedback and are expected to correct their mistakes.

- **Total Quality Management:** TQM places more emphasis on student evaluation and feedback processes. Various assessment tools are used to support students' development, and students are given constructive feedback on a regular basis. In this way, students are encouraged to develop their strengths and correct their weaknesses.

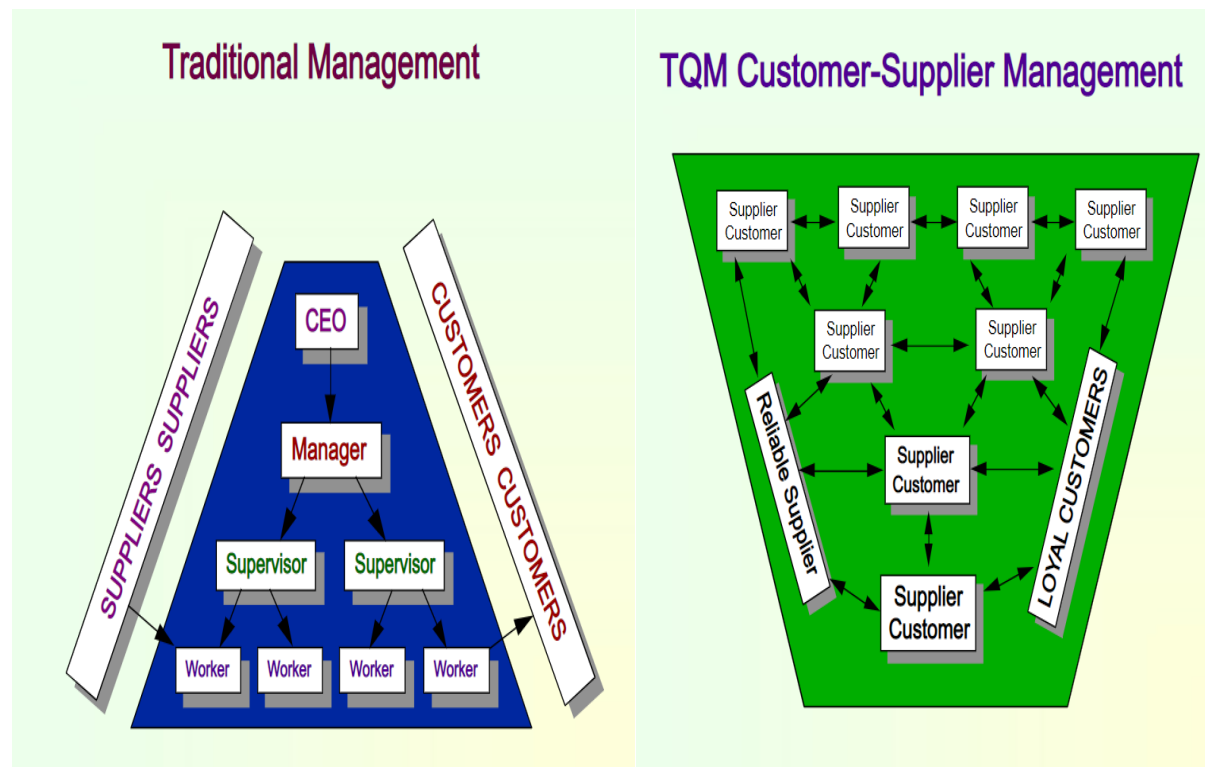
## **4. Continuous Improvement:**

- **Classical management approach:** Classical management approach generally does not address change in a compelling way. Decisions in businesses are usually made by senior managers, and changes can happen slowly.

- **Total Quality Management:** TQM emphasizes continuous improvement. Teachers and administrators constantly review educational processes, consider student feedback and make

changes to improve practices. In this way, training processes and results become more effective over time.

Besides these differences, both approaches have different advantages and can be adapted by educational institutions to specific situations. The important thing is to provide a quality education by focusing on the needs of the students. As seen in Figure 2, it differs from the classical understanding of total quality



**Figure 2:** Differences between Classical Management Concept and Total Quality Management

## Conclusion

As a result, total quality management in education should be considered as a strategic approach for continuous improvement and success. In this article, we touched on the key points regarding the application of total quality management in the education sector.

Total quality management aims at continuous improvement in learning and teaching processes. Educational institutions should adopt the principles of total quality management in order to increase student satisfaction, improve the quality of education and gain competitive advantage.

Taking a strategic approach helps educational institutions set their goals and effectively implement planning and management processes to achieve these goals. The compatibility of quality management processes with strategic goals ensures the success of educational institutions.

In our article, we focused on leadership, employee engagement, process management, data analysis and continuous improvement, which are the key elements for total quality management. The implementation of these elements in educational institutions helps to raise quality standards and increase student success.

Total quality management in education ensures that educational institutions aim at continuous improvement and adapt to change. Continuous review of teaching methods and curricula is important to meeting student needs and expectations.

As a result, total quality management in education is an important approach for educational institutions to achieve sustainable success. It provides a strategic framework for continuous improvement, student success and improving the quality of education. Adopting total quality management by educational institutions enables them to gain competitive advantage and provides students with a better educational experience.

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