

Sustainable Strategic Management: Quality Design Based on Continuous Improvement

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ABSTRACT

In today's dynamic global competition, organizations are required not only to focus on short-term profits but also on long-term sustainability. This study aims to examine the integration between sustainable strategic management and quality design driven by continuous improvement. The research method used is a conceptual literature study combined with a field study at MA Islamiyah Syafiiyah, using a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze how organizations can design their planning and budgeting in a participatory and accountable way to improve and refine deficiencies according to needs, not wants, along with providing eco-friendly services and processes that are operationally efficient. The study's results show that implementing quality design based on continuous improvement acts as a catalyst in bridging the organization's strategic goals with operational practices. sustainable daily activities. The never-ending improvement process ensures that quality standards adapt to changes in environmental regulations and market expectations. In conclusion, the synergy between sustainable strategic management and quality design based on continuous improvement creates a strong competitive advantage, minimizes waste, and increases long-term value for stakeholders.

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INTRODUCTION

In today's era of globalization and cyberspace, this has implications for market dynamics, and educational institutions are faced with increasingly complex challenges. Future predictions and

changes in this landscape are no longer driven only by intense competition and technological speed, but also by stakeholder demands regarding sustainability. (Kunc, 2024) MA Islamiyah is now expected not just to pursue short-term profitability, but also to be able to maintain environmental preservation and long-term social welfare. In this context, sustainable strategic management becomes a must. This approach integrates environmental and social goals into the core strategy of MA Islamiyah Syafiiyah to create lasting superior value.

Institutions under the guidance of Islamic boarding schools, like MA Islamiyah Syafiiyah, are not only faced with religious pressures as an innovation, but also with the challenge of predicting future needs by always adapting to various possibilities. That's why the organization's strategic vision needs to be designed in such a way that goals can be achieved to the fullest. Providing high-quality and inclusive education requires sustainable strategic management. In this context, strategic management serves as a guiding tool so that educational institutions can respond to external dynamics, strengthen cross-sector collaboration, and ensure that the institution's development process remains aligned with environmental sustainability, financial stability, and social justice. (Fred R. David dan Forest R. David, 2017)

However, integrating the concept of sustainability into an organization's strategic vision often runs into hurdles at the operational execution level. Many organizations get stuck with green commitments on paper without clear implementation in processes or service delivery. To bridge this gap, a strong operational tool is needed, which is quality design. Quality design focuses on designing programs and processes from the start with careful attention to resource efficiency, waste reduction, and meeting customer expectations precisely. Strategic management in the context of education serves as a guiding tool so that institutions can respond to external dynamics and strengthen cross-sector collaboration. (Duçi, 2021)

Future-oriented quality design ensures that sustainability standards are embedded as a key characteristic of an organization's output. That said, quality design cannot be static. Stricter environmental regulations, fluctuations in raw material availability, and dynamic consumer expectations require quality design to keep adapting. Therefore, implementing quality design must be supported by the pillar of continuous improvement. The development process of contemporary institutions must remain aligned with commitments to environmental preservation, financial stability, and social justice. (Putra, 2023)

Through a never-ending cycle of evaluation and innovation, like the Kaizen philosophy or the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle, organizations can continuously identify inefficiencies, minimize their carbon footprint, and constantly improve their quality standards and operational processes. Although previous literature has extensively discussed strategic management, quality design, and continuous improvement separately, there is still limited research that explicitly integrates these three elements into a single, cohesive operational model to support long-term sustainability. Most industries still view quality improvement and sustainability as two poles that compromise each other (trade-off). Therefore, this study aims to analyze and formulate how the synergy between sustainable strategic management and continuous improvement-based quality design can be applied to create strong competitive advantages. Through this study, it is hoped that a conceptual framework can be found that proves that commitment to environmental sustainability and operational efficiency can actually go hand in hand to enhance organizational value in the future.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to examine sustainable strategic management in developing a quality design based on continuous improvement at MA Islamiyah Syafiiyah. The qualitative approach was selected because the study sought to explore in depth how strategic management processes, quality development practices, and continuous improvement mechanisms are constructed and implemented within the institutional context. The case study design enabled the researchers to investigate the phenomenon holistically by considering the

interaction between leadership, organizational culture, human resources, quality assurance practices, and institutional strategic policies.

Research Setting and Participants

The research was conducted at MA Islamiyah Syafiiyah, which was purposively selected as the research setting because of its efforts to develop institutional quality through systematic and sustainable improvement. Research participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their involvement in strategic planning, quality management, and educational implementation. The participants included the madrasah principal, vice principals, teachers, administrative staff, members of the quality assurance team, and other relevant stakeholders. Their involvement provided diverse perspectives on strategic decision-making, quality implementation, evaluation, and continuous improvement.

Data Collection

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore participants' understanding and experiences regarding strategic management, quality planning, quality assurance, evaluation mechanisms, and continuous improvement practices. Observations focused on organizational practices, leadership processes, teaching and learning activities, quality assurance activities, and institutional routines that reflected continuous improvement. Documentary data included strategic plans, quality standards, evaluation reports, institutional policies, meeting records, curriculum documents, and other relevant administrative documents. Data collection was conducted iteratively to enable the researchers to compare information obtained from different sources.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. First, interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were condensed through coding and categorization according to the research focus. Second, the data were displayed thematically to identify patterns related to strategic planning, quality design, implementation, evaluation, and continuous improvement. Third, conclusions were developed and continuously verified by comparing emerging findings across participants and data sources. The analysis specifically examined the continuous improvement cycle, including the processes of planning, implementation, evaluation, reflection, and corrective action. This analytical process was used to identify how continuous improvement was embedded into the madrasah's strategic management rather than treated merely as an occasional quality-control activity.

Data Validity

The credibility of the findings was ensured through source and technique triangulation. Source triangulation involved comparing information obtained from principals, teachers, administrative personnel, quality assurance teams, and relevant stakeholders. Technique triangulation was conducted by comparing interview findings with observations and institutional documents. Member checking was also used by discussing preliminary interpretations with selected participants to ensure that the findings accurately represented the institutional practices under investigation. An audit trail was maintained throughout the research process to strengthen the transparency and dependability of the analytical process.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Conceptualization of Sustainable Strategic Management

Today's education world is in the middle of rapid changes, from technological disruption and shifting student expectations to global uncertainty. (Sedovs & Volkova, 2024) In this situation, educational institutions, whether schools, madrasahs, or universities, can no longer be managed conventionally or just go with the flow. Sustainable strategic management is an evolution of traditional strategic management by incorporating long-term sustainability, resource efficiency, and adaptability to environmental changes. A comprehensive approach is needed, namely Sustainable Strategic

Management, to ensure that institutions not only survive but also continue to grow and make a long-term impact. Strategic management is the art and science of formulating, implementing, and evaluating cross-functional decisions that enable an organization to achieve its goals. (Fred R. David dan Forest R. David, 2017) The success of implementing sustainable strategic management in educational institutions largely depends on the consistency of the cycle, from planning, executing innovation-based programs, to comprehensive evaluation and control. This ensures that the institution not only survives operationally, but can also achieve accountable long-term growth and global competitiveness. Strategic management involves the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of cross-functional decisions that enable the organization to reach its goals. (David, 2020)

The Urgency of Strategic Management in the Era of Disruption

Sustainable strategic management is the art and science of formulating, implementing, and evaluating cross-functional decisions that allow an organization to achieve its goals while keeping future aspects in mind, whether in terms of quality, the environment, or finances. Long-Term Focus: Shifting the focus from just chasing annual targets or short-term student enrollment toward a long-term, quality-oriented vision. Environmental Adaptation: Keeping up with global trend changes, like integrating artificial intelligence (AI) in learning, regulatory shifts, and the ever-changing needs of the workforce. Resource Efficiency: Making sure resources (financial, human, and infrastructure) are used in an optimal and responsible way. (Sinnaiah, Adam, & Mahadi, 2023)

Main Pillars of Implementation in Educational Institutions

For strategic management to run sustainably, education institution leaders need to build three main pillars: Comprehensive Environmental Analysis (SWOT/PESTEL): Regularly evaluate strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and external threats, including socio-economic trends and government policies. Visionary and Collaborative Leadership: Strategic changes are impossible without the active involvement of all stakeholders, from the foundation, school principals/rectors, educators, educational staff, to parents and alumni. Culture of Continuous Improvement: Implement regular quality evaluation cycles (like PPEPP: Planning, Implementation, Evaluation, Control, and Improvement) to ensure that educational services are always relevant. (Sulich & Soloduch-Pelc, 2024)

Aligning Academic Quality and Ecological Sustainability

The concept of 'sustainable' in modern management also includes environmental and social dimensions. Educational institutions have a moral responsibility to set an example (like a Green School or Green Campus): Integrate sustainability and climate change issues into cross-subject curricula. Build eco-friendly physical facilities (energy-efficient, good waste management, and green open spaces). Strengthen the institution's social responsibility through community service programs that have a real impact. (Brundin, Liu, & Cyron, 2022)

The Role of Quality Design in Strategic Planning

In the context of education, Quality Design is a strategic approach to designing the entire learning ecosystem, from curriculum, facilities, human resources, to management systems, so that it can consistently produce graduates who are competent and meet quality standards. Unlike the manufacturing industry, which measures quality in physical products, Quality Design in educational institutions focuses on designing the learning experiences and processes. Quality is designed from the start (by design), not just evaluated at the end of the semester through exams or accreditation. Quality must be designed from the start (quality by design) through identifying customer needs and developing products or services that respond to those needs appropriately. (Juran, 2018)

MA Islamiyah Syafi'iyah Paiton is a high school-level educational institution based on a pesantren (Islamic boarding school) with unique characteristics. As an institution that combines the national curriculum with salafi/pesantren values, MA Islamiyah Syafi'iyah faces a double challenge: maintaining moral-religious distinction while also competing in meeting modern academic quality

standards. Therefore, the integration of Strategic Management, Quality Design, and Continuous Improvement in this institution becomes a very relevant study.

Implementation of Strategic Management at MA Islamiyah Syafi'iyah Paiton

Strategic management at this institution acts as a broad umbrella that sets the direction of the institution in the long term. Environmental Analysis (SWOT): The discussion in this study highlights how the school maps internal strengths (such as strong pesantren support and loyal human resources) as well as weaknesses (for example, limited advanced digital facilities). On the other hand, the school captures external opportunities in the form of high public trust in religion-based education to counter the negative effects of globalization. In conducting this analysis, the institution uses primary and secondary data as the basis of analysis. Primary data is obtained by reviewing performance evidence in the form of documents and performance, while secondary data is taken from education report cards and the results of the school's self-evaluation.

Vision-Mission Formulation and Execution: The strategy applied focuses on the integration of science and religion (Integration Strategic management at MA Islamiyah Syafi'iyah Paiton is not just focused on cognitive achievements, but also on producing graduates who are knowledgeable in religion (tafaqquh fid din) and ready to face the challenges of the times. At MA Islamiyah Syafi'iyah, the vision and mission are reviewed every year together with the school development team to formulate the school's vision and mission, which include character and competencies.

Implementation of Character-Based Quality Design

As a follow-up to strategic management, Quality Design at MA Islamiyah Syafi'iyah Paiton is instilled right from the planning phase of the madrasa ecosystem. Integrative Curriculum Design: Quality is planned through a curriculum that synergizes Ministry of Religious Affairs/MoE subjects with pesantren-based curriculum (like studying classical Islamic texts and habituating noble character). Here, quality is defined as a balance between intellectual and spiritual intelligence. At MA Islamiyah Syafi'iyah, the integrated curriculum consists of the Ministry curriculum, diniyah madrasa, and pesantren programs. Human Resource (HR) Design: The teacher recruitment and placement system at MA Islamiyah Syafi'iyah Paiton is designed by considering two main competencies: professional academic expertise and readiness to be a role model (uswah hasanah) for students. Regarding human resources at MA Islamiyah Syafi'iyah, there is development A continuous self-assessment is carried out every semester.

Continuous Improvement Culture

To ensure that the quality already designed doesn't stall, MA Islamiyah Syafi'iyah Paiton applies the principle of continuous improvement through consistent evaluation. Regular Evaluation Cycles: The madrasah uses monthly coordination meetings and end-of-semester evaluations to tackle learning challenges. Improvements aren't left until the five-year accreditation; instead, they are made through small steps (like training elder teachers to use digital media or optimizing students' evening study hours). The madrasah's self-evaluation is conducted at the end of December to plan for the next year's budget. Technology Adaptation Without Losing Identity: Continuous improvement at this institution is seen in its gradual digitalization of administration and learning methods, while still maintaining boundaries for decent values and regulations on gadget use the pesantren environment.

The Relationship of Three Variables at MA Islamiyah Syafi'iyah Paiton To clarify the flow of the research thinking, the relationship of the three variables in this locus can be summarized as follows:

Variables	Role at MA Islamiyah Syafi'iyah Paiton	Real Output
Strategic Management	Determining the direction, vision for science-religion integration, and the school's positioning in Paiton and surrounding areas.	Madrasah Strategic Plan (Renstra) and Quality Policy with a pesantren-oriented perspective. With outputs like quality reports, EDM, RKJM, RKTm, RKAM.

Quality Design	Designing the curriculum, HR standards, and an integrated learning environment from the start to achieve the strategic vision.	Integrative syllabi, learning SOPs, and rules based on moral values. The creation of a Cultural, Safe, and Comfortable School.
Continuous Improvement	Regularly evaluating program progress and making daily improvements to keep quality adaptive.	Teacher training, gradual facility improvements, and innovative teaching methods.

CONCLUSION

Sustainable strategic management is not just an administrative tool, but a moral and operational compass for educational institutions to face the future. By combining long-term vision, adaptability, and environmental awareness, educational institutions can continue to produce outstanding generations ready to tackle the challenges of the times without sacrificing the essential values of education. Quality Design in educational institutions is about building a systemic foundation. When a school or university has a well-planned quality design, everyday activities within it will naturally lead to achieving the highest educational standards. Continuous Improvement turns educational institutions from rigid organizations into learning organizations. With a commitment to making even the smallest improvements every day, educational institutions can ensure the sustainability of their quality and competitiveness in the long run. Research at MA Islamiyah Syafi'iyah Paiton shows that the success of managing a competitive Islamic educational institution lies in harmonizing these three aspects. Strategic Management provides the directional compass, Quality Design ensures the system's foundation is strong and valuable, and Continuous Improvement guarantees that the organization keeps growing, stays relevant, and remains sustainable in the midst of changing times.

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