ASSESSING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION: A THEORETICAL REVIEW OF QUALITY IMPROVEMENT TECHNIQUES AND APPROACHES

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Abstract

The quality of education is a strategic issue that continues to be a concern in the development of the education system, both at the policy level and institutional practice. However, efforts to improve the quality of education are often dominated by technocratic approaches that tend to reduce quality to mere administrative and quantitative indicators. This article aims to examine the concept of educational quality theoretically and examine approaches and techniques for improving the quality of education as stated in the scientific literature. This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature study method, by analyzing relevant textbooks, journal articles, and policy documents. The results of the study show that quality education is a multidimensional concept that includes outcomes, learning processes, and the education system as a whole, and is influenced by social and institutional contexts. Various approaches to quality improvement, such as managerial, systemic, school-based, and quality culture approaches, have different characteristics and focuses, so they cannot be applied uniformly. Quality improvement techniques, such as continuous planning and evaluation, academic supervision, curriculum development, and data utilization, need to be integrated consistently with the approach used. This article emphasizes the importance of theoretical and contextual understanding in efforts to improve the quality of education as a sustainable process.

Keywords: Quality of Education; Quality Improvement; Quality Management

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A. Introduction

The quality of education is a strategic issue that has a central position in human resource development. Quality education not only functions as a means of knowledge transfer, but also as a vehicle for character building, individual capacity development, and increasing the nation's competitiveness (Hanun, 2014; Paramansyah, 2020). In the context of national development, the quality of education is often positioned as an indicator of the success of public policies and social progress. Therefore, efforts to improve the quality of education are an agenda that continues to be carried out by various stakeholders, both the government, educational institutions, and the wider community.

However, efforts to improve the quality of education are faced with increasingly complex challenges, especially in the era of social change, globalization, and digitalization. The development of information technology, the dynamics of the global job market, and changes in people's needs require the education system to adapt quickly and sustainably (Andi Rasyid Pananrangi, 2017; Tanjung et al., 2022). In this situation, the quality of education can no longer be understood statically but as a dynamic process that must be able to respond to changes in the social and cultural environment. These challenges are increasingly felt when the education system is required to produce graduates who are not only academically capable, but also have 21st-century competencies, such as critical thinking skills, creativity, collaboration, and digital literacy.

On the other hand, the problem of quality of education is also reflected in the fact that there is still a quality imbalance between institutions, regions, and levels of education. Differences in access to resources, the quality of educators, infrastructure, and policy support cause the quality of education to develop unevenly. This condition shows that improving the quality of education is not just an internal technical problem of the institution, but is closely related to social structure, public policy, and overall educational governance (Iqbal et al., 2024). This inequality in quality also indicates the need for a more comprehensive approach in understanding and managing the quality of education.

In practice, various efforts to improve the quality of education are often dominated by technocratic and instrumental approaches. Quality is often reduced to a set of quantitative indicators, such as test scores, graduation rates, or educational institution rankings (Suwar, 2022). This kind of approach tends to place quality as an administrative target that must be achieved in the short term, regardless of the learning process, social context, and underlying educational values. As a result, quality improvement is often oriented towards fulfilling formal standards, rather than on developing the quality of education in a substantive and sustainable manner.

This condition shows that there is an urgent need to strengthen the conceptual and theoretical foundations in the study of education quality. The quality of education cannot be understood solely as a technical management problem, but as a concept that has normative and contextual dimensions. From a theoretical perspective, quality is related to the values, goals of education, and views of human beings and society that are to be formed through the educational process. Therefore, theoretical studies are important to reconsider how the quality of education is defined, understood, and implemented in various contexts.

As a theoretical issue, the quality of education has various meanings depending on the perspective used. From a pedagogic perspective, quality is often associated with the quality of the learning process, educational interaction, and holistic student development (Marta et al., 2024). In the perspective of education management, quality is understood as the result of effective and efficient management of resources to achieve institutional goals (Bahri, 2022). Meanwhile, from the perspective of the sociology of education, quality is seen as a social construct influenced by power relations, social structures, and the interests of various actors (Mardizal et al., 2024). This difference in meaning shows that the quality of education is a multidimensional concept that cannot be reduced to one specific point of view.

The risk of simplifying the quality of education into mere quantitative indicators needs to be critically examined. When quality is understood only through numbers and rankings, the ethical, cultural, and humanistic dimensions of education tend to be overlooked. In fact, education is essentially a process of forming a whole human being, which cannot be fully measured numerically. Therefore, a theoretical approach is needed that is able to bridge the gap between the demands of quality measurement and a substantive understanding of educational goals.

Based on this background, this study is directed to examine the concept of educational quality as understood in the theoretical literature, as well as examine various approaches and techniques recommended in an effort to improve the quality of education. In particular, this study seeks to answer questions about how the quality of education is conceptualized by experts, what approaches are used in improving the quality of education, and what techniques are theoretically considered relevant to support such quality improvement. The purpose of this study is to analyze the concept of education quality theoretically, examine approaches and techniques for improving the quality of education, and prepare a conceptual synthesis that can enrich the understanding of education quality.

Theoretically, this study is expected to contribute to the development of education management and policy discourse, especially in strengthening the conceptual understanding of the quality of education. Practically, the results of this study are

expected to be a conceptual reference for education managers in designing and implementing quality improvement efforts that are more contextual, reflective, and sustainable.

B. Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with the type of library research. This approach was chosen because the focus of the study is directed at the study of concepts, approaches, and techniques to improve the quality of education as developed in the theoretical literature (Luthfiyah, 2018). Literature studies allow researchers to explore, understand, and synthesize a variety of relevant academic thoughts, both classical and contemporary, so as to obtain a comprehensive conceptual understanding of the quality of education. The main emphasis of this study is not on hypothesis testing or empirical measurements, but on conceptual analysis and development of theoretical synthesis.

The data sources in this study consist of primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources include educational books, scientific journal articles, and theoretical works that discuss the quality of education, education management, and improving the quality of learning. The literature used includes the thoughts of education experts who have a significant influence on the development of the concept of educational quality. Meanwhile, secondary sources include education policy documents, research reports, and institutional publications relevant to education quality issues. The diversity of data sources is intended to enrich perspectives and strengthen the analysis carried out.

The selection of literature is carried out based on several main criteria, namely relevance, credibility, and novelty. Relevance refers to the suitability of literature with the focus of studies on concepts, approaches, and techniques to improve the quality of education. Credibility has to do with the author's authority, the reputation of the publisher or journal, and the consistency of the arguments presented. Meanwhile, novelty is considered to ensure that this study also refers to the development of cutting-edge thinking in the field of education, without neglecting classical works that have important theoretical contributions.

The data collection technique is carried out through systematic literature search by utilizing various scientific databases, both national and international. The search process was carried out using keywords related to education quality, quality improvement, education quality management, and approaches and techniques to improve the quality of education. The selected literature is then documented and recorded thematically to facilitate the analysis process. This thematic recording aims to identify key ideas, key concepts, and thought patterns that emerge from various sources.

Data analysis was carried out using content analysis techniques. Through this technique, the content of the literature is analyzed in depth to reveal meanings,

concepts, and arguments related to the quality of education (Mendra Wijaya et al., 2025). The analysis stage begins with the categorization of the concept of quality education, approaches to improving quality, and techniques recommended in the literature. Furthermore, theoretical and comparative synthesis is carried out by comparing various existing views, identifying common points and differences, and formulating a more complete conceptual understanding. The results of this analysis are then used as a basis for compiling discussions and drawing conclusions about the theoretical improvement of the quality of education.

C. Finding and Discussion

1. Research Results

a. The Concept of Quality of Education in Literature

The educational literature shows that the concept of educational quality has a variety of definitions and is not single. Experts interpret the quality of education according to their scientific viewpoints and the importance of their respective analyses. In general, the quality of education is often understood as the level of achievement of predetermined educational goals, both in the form of student learning outcomes and the long-term impact of education on individuals and society (Sy, 2022). In this perspective, quality is closely related to the effectiveness of education in producing graduates who have the expected competencies, attitudes, and values.

Some literature views the quality of education as outcomes, which include outputs and outcomes (Anggal et al., 2020). Output refers to the direct achievements of the educational process, such as students' academic achievements, skills, and graduation. Meanwhile, outcomes refer to the long-term impact of education, such as adaptability in the world of work, social participation, and contribution to community development. This approach places quality as something that can be observed and evaluated through certain indicators, although it is often criticized for its tendency to emphasize quantitative aspects.

Apart from being a result, the quality of education is also understood as the quality of the learning process. From a pedagogic perspective, quality is determined by how the teaching and learning process takes place, including the interaction between educators and students, learning methods, classroom climate, and the relevance of teaching materials (Erwinsyah, 2017; Sariman et al., 2021). The quality of the learning process emphasizes the importance of a meaningful, participatory, and student-centered learning experience. This view shifts attention from the mere final result to the quality of the process experienced during education.

Furthermore, the education management literature views quality as a characteristic of the education system as a whole (Siswopranoto, 2022; Susanti, 2021). Quality is not only determined by one component, but is the result of the integration of

various elements, such as policies, curriculum, human resources, infrastructure, and governance of educational institutions. In the framework of the system, the quality of education is understood as the ability of the education system to manage inputs, processes, and outputs effectively and sustainably.

The input–process–output–outcome framework is often used to comprehensively explain the dimensions of education quality. Inputs include learners, educators, curriculum, and supporting resources. The process refers to learning activities and educational management. Outputs and outcomes reflect the immediate outcomes and long-term impact of education. This framework emphasizes that the quality of education is multidimensional and cannot be reduced to just one aspect.

In addition, several studies place the quality of education as a social and institutional construction. Quality is understood as the result of an agreement on values, standards, and interests that apply in a particular social context. Thus, the meaning of the quality of education is not neutral, but is influenced by the power relations, policies, and culture of educational organizations. This perspective reinforces the view that the quality of education is always contextual and dynamic.

b. Approach to Improving the Quality of Education

The literature shows that improving the quality of education can be understood through various approaches that have different pressure points and orientations. One of the most widely used approaches is the managerial approach (Muzakir, 2013; Syamsy et al., 2023). This approach views the quality of education as the result of an effective and efficient management process of educational institutions. In this framework, quality improvement is highly dependent on management functions, such as planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising. Quality is achieved through the arrangement of human resources, the management of infrastructure facilities, and the systematic implementation of work standards and procedures. The managerial approach emphasizes the importance of educational leadership and the capacity of education managers in driving all components of the institution towards achieving quality goals.

In addition to the managerial approach, the system approach is also widely discussed in the literature on improving the quality of education (Nasution et al., 2024). This approach views education as a system consisting of various components that are interrelated and affect each other. Quality improvement cannot be done partially, but must consider the relationship between inputs, processes, outputs, and outcomes. In a systems approach, changes to one component will have an impact on the other. Therefore, improving the quality of education must be carried out in a comprehensive and integrated manner, paying attention to the balance and harmony between elements in the education system.

The school-based approach is another approach that emphasizes the role of educational units as the main actors in improving quality (Hadziq, 2017). This approach was born out of criticism of education policies that are too centralistic and do not pay attention to the local context. In a school-based approach, educational institutions are given greater autonomy to design and implement quality improvement programs according to their needs and characteristics. Teachers, principals, and school residents are positioned as active subjects in decision-making, so it is expected to create a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for the quality of education.

The quality culture approach places quality as a value that must be internalized in the daily life of educational institutions. Quality is not only understood as a formal target or standard, but as an organizational culture that is reflected in the attitudes, behaviors, and commitments of all school residents. This approach emphasizes the importance of habituation, example, and long-term commitment in building the quality of education. Quality improvement is seen as an ongoing process that requires consistency and collective awareness.

Each of these approaches has different characteristics and focuses. The managerial approach emphasizes management and leadership aspects, the systems approach emphasizes integration between components, the school-based approach emphasizes autonomy and participation, while the quality culture approach emphasizes the internalization of values and long-term commitment. This difference shows that there is no one approach that is completely superior, but rather complementary in an effort to improve the quality of education.

c. Techniques for Improving the Quality of Education

In addition to the approach, the literature also proposes various techniques that can be used in efforts to improve the quality of education. One of the techniques that is often discussed is quality planning and continuous evaluation (Agusnawati et al., 2024; Ahmad, 2024). Quality planning includes setting clear and realistic goals, standards, and quality indicators. An ongoing evaluation is conducted to assess the extent to which these goals are being achieved and to identify areas that need improvement. This technique emphasizes the importance of continuous improvement cycles in education management.

Academic supervision and professional development of educators are also seen as important techniques in improving the quality of education. Academic supervision aims to improve the quality of learning through coaching and mentoring educators. Through constructive and reflective supervision, educators are encouraged to improve their pedagogical, professional, and social competencies. The professional development of educators is key because the quality of education is largely determined by the quality of the educators.

Curriculum development and learning innovation are other techniques that are widely recommended in the literature. A curriculum that is relevant and adaptive to the development of the times is an important prerequisite for the quality of education. Learning innovation, both in methods, media, and learning strategies, is seen as an effort to improve student engagement and the quality of the learning process. This technique emphasizes that the quality of education cannot be separated from the dynamics of learning in the classroom.

Stakeholder involvement is also an important technique in improving the quality of education. The literature shows that the quality of education will be easier to achieve when there is cooperation between educational institutions, parents, the community, and the government. Stakeholder involvement allows for moral, material, and social support that strengthens quality improvement efforts. In addition, the participation of various parties also increases the accountability of educational institutions.

Data utilization techniques and institutional reflection are getting more attention in recent studies. Data from evaluation, assessment, and monitoring are used as the basis for decision-making and program improvement. Institutional reflection encourages educational institutions to critically assess the practices that have been carried out and formulate improvement strategies. This technique emphasizes that improving the quality of education must be based on accurate information and a continuous reflective process.

2. Discussion

a. Quality of Education between Concept and Practice

The results of the study show that there is a strong tension between the normative concept of education quality and the practice of quality improvement in the field. Theoretically, quality education is understood as a multidimensional concept that includes aspects of values, educational goals, learning processes, and the long-term impact of education on individuals and society. Quality is not only related to what is produced by the education system, but also to how the educational process takes place and what values are internalized. However, in practice, quality improvement is often reduced to technical and administrative issues.

This tension arises when the normative concept of quality must be translated into policies and operational programs. For management and accountability purposes, quality is often measured through quantitative indicators that are easy to observe and report. Although these indicators have certain functions, the dominance of technical approaches has the potential to obscure the substantive meaning of education quality. Quality is then narrowed down to the achievement of administrative targets, such as meeting standards, grade achievement, or institutional ranking, without being accompanied by deep reflection on the quality of the educational process itself.

The risk of quality reduction as an administrative target also has an impact on the behavior of educational institutions. When quality is understood primarily as an obligation to meet formal standards, educational practices tend to be oriented towards compliance, rather than substantive quality improvement. In this context, quality improvement loses its reflective and transformational dimension. Therefore, efforts are needed to bridge the normative concept of education quality with more meaningful and long-term oriented quality improvement practices.

b. The Relationship of Quality Improvement Approaches and Techniques

The discussion of approaches and techniques for improving the quality of education shows that the two have a complementary relationship and cannot be separated. The quality improvement approach serves as a basic framework or perspective that guides how quality is understood and pursued. Meanwhile, quality improvement techniques are instruments or operational tools used to realize this approach in real practice.

Different approaches will give birth to different engineering choices. The managerial approach, for example, tends to prioritize planning, control, and performance evaluation techniques. The system approach requires techniques that are able to integrate various components of education in a harmonious manner. The school-based approach encourages the use of participatory and contextual techniques, while the quality culture approach emphasizes habituation, exemplary techniques, and strengthening organizational values. This shows that quality improvement techniques are not neutral, but always depart from certain conceptual assumptions.

Problems arise when there is a discrepancy between the approach adopted and the techniques applied. Conceptual inconsistencies can cause quality improvement efforts to run ineffective or even counterproductive. For example, an approach that normatively emphasizes participation and autonomy, but is implemented through top-down and administrative techniques. Therefore, conceptual consistency between approaches and techniques is an important prerequisite for improving the quality of education.

c. Contextualization of Improving the Quality of Education

This discussion also emphasizes that there is no universal approach and technique to improve the quality of education. Each approach and technique has advantages and limitations that depend heavily on the context of its application. Social, cultural, economic, and institutional contexts influence how the quality of education is understood and how efforts to improve quality can be carried out effectively.

In certain social and cultural contexts, a participatory and quality culture approach may be more relevant, while in other contexts managerial and systemic approaches are more needed to strengthen education governance. Similarly, the characteristics of

educational institutions, such as organizational size, level of independence, and human resource capacity, will affect the effectiveness of the quality improvement techniques used. Therefore, improving the quality of education requires the ability to read context and adapt flexibly.

The quality of education also needs to be understood as a continuous and reflective process. Quality improvement is not a short-term project with a definite end point, but rather a continuous organizational learning process. Reflection on practice, data utilization, and openness to change are important parts of this process. Thus, the quality of education develops through a continuous cycle of planning, implementation, evaluation, and improvement.

d. Theoretical Implications for Education Management

From the results and discussions that have been described, there are several important theoretical implications for the study of education management. First, it is necessary to strengthen systemic and critical perspectives in understanding the quality of education. Quality cannot be managed partially or sectorally, but must be understood as the result of the interaction of various components in the education system. A critical perspective is needed to avoid reducing quality to mere fulfillment of administrative indicators.

Second, this discussion leads to the need to reorient the quality of education as a long-term process. Education management needs to view quality as a continuous development process that involves the dimensions of values, organizational culture, and institutional learning. This reorientation demands a paradigm shift from a mechanistic approach to a more reflective and contextual approach. Thus, the quality of education is not only the goal pursued, but also the principle that animates all educational practices.

D. Conclusion

Based on the results of the literature review and the discussion that has been described, it can be concluded that the quality of education is a complex concept and cannot be understood singularly or narrowly. The quality of education is not only related to the achievement of learning outcomes or the fulfillment of formal standards, but also includes the dimensions of processes, systems, and the long-term impact of education on individuals and society. The literature shows that the meaning of education quality is always related to the values, educational goals, and social context that surrounds it. Therefore, the quality of education needs to be understood as a multidimensional concept that is dynamic and continues to develop along with changes in social, cultural, and institutional educational needs.

This study also confirms that improving the quality of education requires consistent integration of quality improvement approaches and techniques. The quality

improvement approach serves as a conceptual framework that guides the perspective on quality, while the quality improvement technique serves as an implementive instrument in educational practice. The mismatch between approaches and techniques has the potential to weaken quality improvement efforts and reduce quality to mere administrative targets. Therefore, the integration of approaches and techniques must be carried out contextually taking into account the characteristics of educational institutions, socio-cultural conditions, and the capacity of available resources. The quality of education needs to be positioned as an ongoing process that emphasizes reflection, organizational learning, and long-term commitment.

Although this study seeks to present a comprehensive theoretical synthesis, there are some limitations that need to be noted. This study is entirely based on literature studies so that it does not accommodate empirical dynamics in the field that may enrich understanding of the implementation of improving the quality of education. In addition, the wide diversity of educational contexts makes the generalization of findings limited. Therefore, further research is recommended to combine theoretical studies with empirical research, both through case studies and comparative approaches, in order to test the relevance of quality improvement approaches and techniques in different contexts. Advanced research can also deepen an analysis of how a culture of quality is constructed and internalized in everyday educational practices.

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