



Humanistic Synergy of Ki Hajar Dewantara and Paulo Freire in Educational Total Quality Management

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the synergy between the humanistic values of Ki Hajar Dewantara and Paulo Freire in the implementation of total quality management in educational institutions. The study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive design, utilizing in depth interviews, participatory observations, and document analysis as data collection techniques. Data were analyzed through thematic analysis involving coding, categorization, and triangulation to ensure validity. The findings indicate that integrating Dewantara's humanistic principles particularly the three education centers (family, school, and community) and leadership values with Freire's dialogical pedagogy fosters participatory leadership, reflective learning, and active stakeholder involvement. This integration transforms total quality management from a predominantly administrative framework into a humanistic-transformative approach that emphasizes critical awareness, collaboration, and continuous improvement driven by collective consciousness. The study implies that a humanistic based total quality management model can enhance the effectiveness of educational quality management by strengthening character development, improving interpersonal relationships, and promoting sustainable quality culture. Practically, this approach provides strategic guidance for educational institutions to implement total quality management in a more inclusive, participatory, and socially relevant manner.

INTRODUCTION

Education is the fundamental basis for developing high quality and competitive human resources. In the era of globalization and rapid technological advancement, educational institutions are required not only to provide knowledge but also to instill character values, social awareness, and critical thinking skills in learners. Thus, improving the quality of educational management becomes a crucial matter (Ningrum et al., 2025). One relevant strategy to support the enhancement of education quality is Total Quality Management (TQM), a management concept that focuses on continuous impro-

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vement, the involvement of all organizational members, and an emphasis on stakeholder satisfaction (Dewi et al., 2025).

In its implementation in the education sector, Total Quality Management (TQM) not only emphasizes managerial and administrative aspects but must also be grounded in humanistic values, which serve as the foundation of the educational process itself. In the context of Indonesian education, the ideas of Ki Hajar Dewantara provide a significant contribution to the development of a human oriented educational paradigm. Through the concepts of *ing ngarso sung tulodo, ing madya mangun karsa, and tut wuri handayani*, Ki Hajar emphasized the importance of exemplary leadership, collaboration, and empowering students to become individuals of strong character, independence, and cultural awareness (Purbonuswanto et al., 2024). This viewpoint asserts that education must cultivate human potential holistically, covering moral, social, and intellectual aspects aligning with Total Quality Management (TQM) principles that highlight empowerment and continuous improvement within educational institutions (Warsi, 2025).

Meanwhile, Paulo Freire, through his concept of critical pedagogy, emphasizes education as a process of empowerment and liberation. According to Freire, education is not merely the transfer of knowledge but a dialogical process that stimulates critical consciousness (conscientization) toward social realities. Through dialogical and reflective education, learners are encouraged to become active subjects capable of transforming their social conditions (Warsi, 2025). Freire's perspectives thus contribute significantly to creating educational institutions that are more participatory, inclusive, and focused on social justice.

Although coming from different cultural and historical backgrounds, Ki Hajar Dewantara and Paulo Freire share a common view on education as a humanizing process. Both reject authoritarian or passive forms of education and emphasize the need for student empowerment and dialogical interaction between educators and learners. Their distinctions lie in their orientation: Ki Hajar Dewantara focuses more on moral, social, and local cultural values, while Freire views education as a political and social liberation effort (Rahmadani & Soddiq, 2023). The combination of these ideas can enrich the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in educational institutions, ensuring that quality management is not merely technical but also humanistic and transformative (Syamsi et al., 2023).

Based on these ideas, this study focuses on analyzing the collaboration between the humanistic values of Ki Hajar Dewantara and Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy within the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in educational institutions. The sub focuses of this study include: An examination of Ki Hajar Dewantara's humanistic values from the perspective of educational management. An analysis of Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy principles in empowering learners. The integration of both methodologies in the context of implementing Total Quality Management (TQM) in educational institutions (Ningrum et al., 2025).

The purpose of this study is to analyze and identify the synergy between humanistic values and critical pedagogy in the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM), thereby becoming a conceptual model for the development of sustainable and human centered education management. The benefits of this study are as follows: Theoretically, it contributes to the development of educational management studies by integrating humanistic values with critical pedagogical approaches (Dewi et al., 2025). Practically, it offers strategic recommendations for educational institutions in implementing

Total Quality Management (TQM) that not only prioritizes service quality but also character building and the development of students' critical awareness. From a policy standpoint, it provides input for decision makers in education to develop quality management systems rooted in humanistic values and social justice.

Thus, the synergy between Ki Hajar Dewantara's and Paulo Freire's thoughts in the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) is expected to produce an educational model that is high quality, humanistic, and transformative, suitable for contemporary needs and Indonesia's socio cultural context.

Ki Hajar Dewantara is an Indonesian educational figure who emphasized humanistic principles through the concept of among and the leadership trilogy: *Ing Ngarsa Sung Tulada, Ing Madya Mangun Karsa, and Tut Wuri Handayani* (Anggraini & Wiryanto, 2022). These principles highlight the role of teachers as role models, facilitators, and motivators to help students develop according to their potential. Dewantara's humanistic approach encourages students to think actively, creatively, and responsibly, and highlights mutual respect between teachers and students. Studies Amalah et al., (2024) show that the application of Dewantara's humanistic principles increases student engagement in learning processes and encourages teachers to act as facilitators supporting the development of each learner's potential.

Paulo Freire, through his theory of critical pedagogy, rejects the "banking education" model that positions learners as passive recipients of knowledge. Instead, he advocates for dialogical, participatory education that builds learners' critical consciousness (conscientization). Freire stresses that education should be reflective and dialogical, positioning teachers and students as co learners engaged in mutual dialogue and reflection. Studies Pukada et al., (2025) emphasize that teachers and students function as subjects who learn collaboratively. This approach is relevant to the quality management of education because it promotes participation, awareness, and social responsibility key elements in the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) within educational environments (Rahmadani & Soddiq, 2023).

The implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) emphasizes continuous quality improvement, participation of all stakeholders, and a focus on customers students, teachers, staff, parents, and the community (Nashihin et al., 2021). Total Quality Management (TQM) that focuses solely on administrative or technical aspects tends to be ineffective because it neglects human factors, creativity, and motivation. While many studies have explored Total Quality Management (TQM) implementation and humanistic values separately, the integration of Ki Hajar Dewantara's humanistic principles and Paulo Freire's dialogical approach within the context of Total Quality Management (TQM) has been minimally examined. Previous research indicates that Total Quality Management (TQM) focusing only on administrative aspects overlooks active student participation, creativity, and human empowerment (Argaricha et al., 2025). Thus, integrating Dewantara's humanistic values with Freire's critical pedagogy could make Total Quality Management (TQM) more humane, reflective, and meaningful (Purbonuswanto et al., 2024).

The values of *ing madya* and *tut wuri handayani* from Dewantara create participatory educational leadership, while Freire's dialogical approach promotes awareness and active participation. The collaboration of both approaches can strengthen a school culture that prioritizes human

development rather than merely administrative outcomes. Therefore, the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) aligned with humanistic values and critical pedagogy can create an educational system that is more efficient, sustainable, and socially just (Syamsi et al., 2023).

The results of this study are expected to contribute theoretically by developing a Total Quality Management (TQM) framework based on humanistic values and practically by helping schools or educational institutions build a quality culture that not only focuses on administrative indicators but also supports students' holistic development and improves the quality of relationships among school elements. Thus, this study is expected to enhance the long term effectiveness of Total Quality Management (TQM) while ensuring that education remains socially and humanistically relevant.

METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative approach using a case study design to explore the synergy between the humanistic values of Ki Hajar Dewantara and Paulo Freire in the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in educational institutions. This approach is selected to enable an in depth and contextual understanding of how humanistic principles are internalized and practiced within educational quality management systems (Aryasutha et al., 2025; Engkizar et al., 2018; 2024, 2025; Khusna et al., 2025; Okenova et al., 2025; Saidi et al., 2025; Veradegita et al., 2021).

The data sources consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained from key informants, including school principals, teachers, and students, selected through purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in Total Quality Management (TQM) implementation. Data were collected through in depth semi structured interviews and participatory observations of teaching–learning activities and school management practices. Secondary data were derived from institutional documents such as Total Quality Management (TQM) reports, school policies, internal regulations, and relevant literature on Dewantara's humanistic philosophy, Freire's critical pedagogy, and TQM frameworks.

The research instruments included semi structured interview guides, observation checklists, and document analysis sheets. These instruments were developed based on three analytical dimensions: i) Dewantara's humanistic values, including the Tri Pusat Pendidikan and character based education; ii) Freire's dialogical and critical consciousness principles; and iii) Total Quality Management (TQM) practices encompassing planning, implementation, evaluation, and continuous improvement.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis techniques, involving several stages: data transcription, open coding, categorization based on conceptual frameworks, theme development, and interpretation. To ensure data validity and reliability, the study applied triangulation techniques (source and method triangulation) and member checking with informants.

Through this methodological framework, the study aims to generate a comprehensive and empirically grounded understanding of how the integration of humanistic values contributes to enhancing Total Quality Management (TQM) effectiveness, strengthening interpersonal dynamics within educational institutions, and supporting students' holistic development.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The concept of Total Quality Management (TQM) is a management approach that emphasizes the involvement of all organizational members in

continuous quality improvement efforts (Nashihin et al., 2021). In the context of educational institutions, Total Quality Management (TQM) is not only oriented toward academic outcomes but also toward the quality of learning processes, student satisfaction, and the character development of school members (Kurniawan et al., 2024). The core principles of Total Quality Management (TQM) customer focus, continuous improvement, and total involvement serve as the foundational framework for creating a sustainable culture of quality (Sholeh et al., 2024).

The implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in educational institutions often encounters challenges due to tendencies that emphasize procedures and administrative indicators. In practice, quality improvement is often narrowed down to merely fulfilling accreditation standards or performance targets, resulting in the neglect of the human dimension in education (Argaricha et al., 2025). This highlights the importance of integrating the humanistic values of educational figures such as Ki Hajar Dewantara and Paulo Freire so that Total Quality Management (TQM) does not lose its essence as a process of humanizing humans. In line with the subfocuses outlined in the literature review section, the study examines three aspects: first, a review of Dewantara's humanistic values in the context of educational management; second, an analysis of Freire's critical pedagogical principles in empowering learners; and third, the integration of both methodologies within the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in educational institutions.

Review of the Humanistic Values of Ki Hajar Dewantara in the Context of Educational Management

Findings from observations and interviews conducted in several schools in Panongan District, Tangerang, indicate that Ki Hajar Dewantara's humanistic values have been integrated into quality management practices through role modeling, habitual behaviors, and participatory leadership (Kurniawan et al., 2024). Teachers and school principals consistently demonstrate the 5S values smile, greet, salute, politeness, and courtesy which reflect the principle of *ing ngarsa sung tuladha* and contribute to fostering discipline, positive character, and a conducive school climate. In terms of leadership, principals embody the concept of *ing madya mangun karsa* by acting as facilitators and motivators who encourage collaboration among teachers, students, and staff in maintaining educational quality. Furthermore, the principle of *tut wuri handayani* is evident in the implementation of active learning and lesson study practices, where students are guided to think critically, reflect on their learning experiences, and engage in self evaluation. In addition, the application of the Tri Pusat Pendidikan is reflected in the active involvement of parents and the community through parent associations, caregiving initiatives, social programs, and educational visits, thereby strengthening external participation and supporting sustainable quality improvement within the school environment (Sholeh et al., 2024).

Dewantara's values align with Total Quality Management (TQM) principles that emphasize total involvement and continuous improvement. Educators function as quality drivers who cultivate an internal culture of improvement not due to administrative pressure, but through moral and professional awareness. Thus, Total Quality Management (TQM) is strengthened by spiritual, moral, and cultural aspects that uphold the humanity of all school members.

Analysis of Paulo Freire's Critical Pedagogical Principles in Empowering Learners

Field findings indicate that several teachers have begun applying reflective and dialogical learning approaches consistent with Paulo Freire's concept of

conscientization. In classroom practice, learning activities are increasingly oriented toward real social issues, where students at the junior high school level are encouraged to examine topics such as environmental cleanliness, social inequality, and civic responsibility through case based group discussions, thereby strengthening their critical awareness of surrounding realities (Azizah & Witri, 2021). In addition, reflective dialogue between teachers and students is routinely conducted after learning sessions, allowing both parties to evaluate the process collaboratively and fostering continuous improvement grounded in shared awareness rather than one way instruction. This approach is further reinforced through institutional practices such as end of semester reflection forums, where teachers, students, and educational staff collectively assess achievements and formulate strategies for quality enhancement, ultimately cultivating a school culture characterized by equality, participation, and collective responsibility (Erliyanto & Supriyono, 2024).

Freire's approach broadens the meaning of quality in Total Quality Management (TQM) from efficiency alone to include social and reflective consciousness. His dialogical principles support reciprocal communication within quality decision making processes, positioning every school member as an active subject in transformation (Tripitasari et al., 2023). Therefore, quality improvement becomes not only a technical matter but also a transformation of human awareness within the educational system.

Integration of Both Methodologies in the Context of Total Quality Management (TQM) Implementation in Educational Institutions

Based on the analysis, the integration of Dewantara's humanistic values and Freire's critical principles creates a humanistic–transformative approach to Total Quality Management (TQM). This synergy is reflected in.

Table 1. Integration of Humanistic & Transformative TQM

Aspect	Dewantara's Values	Freire's Principles	Impact on Quality
Leadership	<i>Ing ngarsa sung tuladha</i> (leading by example), role modeling, collaboration	Egalitarian dialogue	School principals become facilitators and motivators, not controllers
Participation	<i>Ing madya mangun karsa</i> and the Three Centers of Education (<i>Three Education Centers</i>)	Conscientization and social reflection	Active participation from all school members and the community
Continuous Improvement	<i>Tut wuri handayani</i> , habituation of character	Continuous reflection	Quality improvement is driven by awareness and empathy
School Culture	Ethics, moral values, local culture	Critical dialogue, social justice	The school becomes a learning community that humanizes individuals

From the table, the integration of these two lines of thought emphasizes that the quality of education cannot be separated from humanistic values.

Administrative Total Quality Management (TQM) risks losing its meaning, whereas Total Quality Management (TQM) that internalizes humanistic values will produce a quality system grounded in awareness, collaboration, and human well being.

The first finding indicates that Ki Hajar Dewantara's Leadership Trilogy *Ing ngarsa sung tuladha, Ing madya mangun karsa, and Tut wuri handayani* can serve as a model of quality leadership within Total Quality Management (TQM). The exemplarity, collaboration, and empowerment embedded in these principles help build a participatory and character oriented work culture. These values strengthen Total Quality Management (TQM) principles such as total involvement and continuous improvement, as quality enhancement is driven not only by systems but also by the moral awareness of the entire school community (Fangestu et al., 2025).

The second finding shows that the application of Paulo Freire's principle of conscientization (critical awareness) can function as a reflective and participatory quality evaluation mechanism. Through interaction among teachers, students, and educational staff, quality improvement is no longer top down but emerges from a shared awareness to continuously enhance learning. This practice of collective reflection expands the meaning of educational quality beyond academic outcomes to a process of developing consciousness and humanity (Permatasari & Noor Miyono, 2024).

In addition, this study finds that Ki Hajar Dewantara's concept of the Three Centers of Education (family, school, and community) can strengthen Total Quality Management (TQM) implementation through the active involvement of parents and the community in school activities. This integration creates a more comprehensive quality ecosystem, as educational quality is built collectively and not limited to the classroom (Mahdhuroh et al., 2026).

In practice, this synergy can be realized through participatory leadership, dialogical learning, and reflection based evaluation. School principals act as facilitators who encourage teachers and students to uphold quality together; teachers employ learning methods that nurture student expression and reflection; and the school's quality assurance system is designed to facilitate participation rather than merely enforce compliance. This process integrates the spirit of *tut wuri handayani* with Freirean dialogical education principles, creating a quality culture that grows from awareness and togetherness.

Thus, the collaboration between the humanistic values of Ki Hajar Dewantara and Paulo Freire within Total Quality Management (TQM) creates a synergistic humanist transformative quality management paradigm. Education is no longer understood merely as an effort to achieve quality standards but as a space for shaping individuals who are independent, conscious, and dignified. In this context, educational quality is not solely about "the excellence of the system," but rather "the excellence of the individuals" within the system (Hasnadi, 2021).

The findings demonstrate that the integration of humanistic values proposed by Ki Hajar Dewantara and the critical pedagogical principles of Paulo Freire forms a humanistic-transformative approach within the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in educational institutions (Mila et al., 2025). This integration confirms that educational quality cannot be reduced to administrative compliance alone, but must incorporate values of humanity, participation, and critical awareness. When interpreted through the lens of Total Quality Management (TQM) theory, particularly the principles of total involvement and continuous improvement, the findings reveal an expansion of meaning in which quality is not only system driven but also value driven, aligning

with perspectives that emphasize the human dimension in quality management (Handayani et al., 2023).

From a leadership perspective, the application of Dewantara's leadership trilogy *ing ngarsa sung tuladha, ing madya mangun karsa*, and *tut wuri handayani* demonstrates strong relevance to participatory and transformational leadership theories. The findings indicate that leadership based on exemplarity, collaboration, and empowerment fosters a work culture oriented toward character building and shared responsibility. This supports previous studies which argue that effective Total Quality Management (TQM) implementation requires leadership that not only controls processes but also inspires and engages all organizational members (Ismail, 2018). Thus, the results directly address the research objective of identifying how humanistic values strengthen Total Quality Management (TQM) practices, particularly in shaping a more inclusive and motivating leadership model (Muh Ibnu Sholeh, 2023).

Furthermore, the incorporation of Freire's concept of conscientization provides a critical dimension to Total Quality Management (TQM) by transforming evaluation processes into reflective and dialogical practices. Unlike conventional topdown quality control mechanisms, the findings show that quality improvement emerges from collective awareness built through interaction among teachers, students, and staff (Pukada et al., 2025). This aligns with constructivist learning theory and reinforces earlier research emphasizing that participatory evaluation enhances both learning outcomes and institutional effectiveness. The implication is that Total Quality Management (TQM) becomes not merely a technical framework but also a process of developing critical consciousness, thereby expanding its relevance in educational contexts.

Another significant finding is the role of the Tri Pusat Pendidikan (family, school, and community) in strengthening Total Quality Management (TQM) implementation. The active involvement of parents and the community creates a broader quality ecosystem, confirming theoretical perspectives that educational quality is socially constructed and cannot be confined within institutional boundaries. This result is consistent with stakeholder theory in Total Quality Management (TQM), which highlights the importance of satisfying and involving all stakeholders in continuous improvement processes. Consequently, the study provides empirical support that integrating local cultural values with modern management concepts enhances both effectiveness and sustainability (Rahayu & Mukhtar, 2024).

In practical terms, the synergy between these two theoretical frameworks is manifested through participatory leadership, dialogical learning, and reflection based evaluation systems. These practices indicate a shift from complianceoriented management to engagement oriented management, where quality is co constructed through collaboration and shared meaning (Amalah et al., 2024). This finding strengthens the argument that Total Quality Management (TQM), when grounded in humanistic and critical pedagogy, is capable of producing not only high performing institutions but also socially responsible and ethically grounded individuals (Permady & Zulfikar, 2021).

Overall, the results successfully answer the research objective by demonstrating that the integration of Dewantara's and Freire's perspectives leads to the development of a humanist transformative Total Quality Management (TQM) model. This model redefines educational quality as a balance between system excellence and human development. Theoretically, it contributes to the enrichment of educational management literature by bridging humanistic philosophy and quality management frameworks. Practically, it offers a strategic direction for educational institutions to adopt a more holistic,

participatory, and sustainable approach to quality improvement (Anggraini & Wiryanto, 2022).

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the integration of humanistic values introduced by Ki Hajar Dewantara and the critical pedagogical framework of Paulo Freire effectively addresses the research objective of formulating a more holistic approach to Total Quality Management (TQM) in educational institutions. This integration shifts the orientation of Total Quality Management (TQM) from a system-centered model toward a human-centered paradigm that emphasizes participation, critical awareness, and character development as core elements of educational quality. The findings confirm that educational quality can be strengthened when leadership, learning processes, and evaluation mechanisms are grounded in dialogical interaction, reflective practices, and collaborative engagement among stakeholders. In this context, the Tri Pusat Pendidikan framework plays a strategic role in expanding quality management beyond institutional boundaries, ensuring that schools, families, and communities contribute collectively to sustainable improvement.

Practically, this study recommends that educational institutions redesign Total Quality Management (TQM) implementation by embedding participatory leadership, reflective learning models, and inclusive evaluation systems that prioritize human development alongside performance indicators. For policymakers, the results suggest the need to incorporate humanistic and dialogical principles into quality assurance standards and educational policies to ensure long-term relevance and sustainability. This approach enables Total Quality Management (TQM) to function not only as a managerial tool but also as a transformative framework for developing conscious, responsible, and socially engaged learners.

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