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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study investigates how the integration of Total Quality Management (TQM) and transdisciplinary collaboration supports the curriculum restructuring process at the Department of Educational Management, Universitas Negeri Surabaya (UNESA), in achieving international accreditation standards set by ACQUIN. The abstract clearly and succinctly outlines the process of curriculum reform, emphasizing the systematic stages and quality framework applied. **Method:** A qualitative descriptive method was applied to explore the institutional strategies and processes involved in curriculum reform. Data were collected through observations, interviews, and documentation involving internal and external stakeholders, including lecturers, students, international academics, and partner institutions. The data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, focusing on the stages of planning, implementation, and evaluation. **Results:** The curriculum restructuring process followed three systematic stages: internal review, external review, and sanctioning meetings. Each stage was guided by the PDCA (Plan–Do–Check–Act) cycle, ensuring that quality assurance, reflection, and continuous improvement were embedded throughout the process. Multi-stakeholder participation was central to every stage, promoting alignment with international standards and responsiveness to both institutional and global needs. Transdisciplinary collaboration – particularly with academics from Malaysia and Thailand, as well as local NGOs – enhanced curriculum content, learning outcomes, and pedagogical design, ensuring both contextual relevance and international compatibility. **Novelty:** This study proposes a quality-based curriculum management model that integrates TQM principles with transdisciplinary collaboration. Unlike conventional curriculum reforms, this model positions quality assurance mechanisms and global collaboration as the core drivers of sustainable change. The findings provide both practical and theoretical insights for higher education institutions seeking international recognition, demonstrating that structured, quality-driven curriculum restructuring can strengthen institutional competitiveness and educational relevance in the global landscape.

INTRODUCTION

Globalization and the industrial revolution have brought about fundamental transformations in the landscape of higher education worldwide (Rizvi et al., 2022; Zawawi et al., 2025). Education is no longer merely a vehicle for transmitting knowledge; it has evolved into a strategic instrument for cultivating human resources who are adaptive, innovative, and globally competitive (Lambey et al., 2023; Tight, 2022). These shifts compel higher education institutions to undertake continuous reforms across various institutional domains, particularly in the development and adaptation of curricula (Kennedy & McNaught, 2022). Static and conventional curricula are no longer sufficient; instead, dynamic, contextualized, and future-oriented curricular frameworks are required to address the growing complexity of the labor market and the rapidly changing global environment (Kandiko Howson & Kingsbury, 2023). In this context, the demand for curriculum restructuring cannot be separated from broader quality assurance imperatives, particularly those grounded in Total Quality Management (TQM)

principles, which emphasize continuous improvement, stakeholder satisfaction, and systemic alignment.

In response to these demands, various international initiatives have emerged to promote quality enhancement and accountability in higher education, one of which is the implementation of international accreditation schemes (Duarte & Vardasca, 2023; Gaston, 2023). Institutions such as ACQUIN (Accreditation, Certification and Quality Assurance Institute) serve to recognize higher education institutions that meet international standards in academic management, governance, and curriculum development (Zayachuk & Yamelynets, 2021). ACQUIN is an independent accreditation body based in Germany that plays a vital role in assuring the quality of higher education at the international level (ACQUIN, n.d.). It is recognized by the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) and the German Accreditation Council, and it fosters cross-national collaboration in advancing education quality aligned with the European Standards and Guidelines (Acquin, n.d.; EQAR, n.d.). Consequently, international accreditation such as that granted by ACQUIN is no longer merely a symbol of prestige but has become an indicator of institutional quality and readiness in addressing global challenges through relevant, competitive, and quality-driven curricula. Importantly, because curriculum relevance and responsiveness constitute key indicators in accreditation evaluations, their assessment reinforces the need for systematic curriculum management grounded in the Total Quality Management (TQM) principle of continuous improvement. This alignment underscores that accreditation not only certifies quality but also drives ongoing curricular refinement to meet evolving global expectations.

As an essential component of the higher education system, the curriculum plays a central role in guiding the learning process, defining graduate competencies, and ensuring alignment between learning outcomes and the needs of the labor market and advancements in scientific knowledge (Supriani et al., 2022). The curriculum is not merely an administrative or academic instrument; it also reflects an institution's orientation in responding to ongoing social, economic, and technological changes (Bartunek & Ren, 2022). Due to its strategic importance, international accreditation bodies consider the curriculum as one of the primary indicators in quality assurance evaluations (Demidov et al., 2021). The aspects assessed typically include the curriculum's adaptability to external environmental changes, the active involvement of stakeholders in its design, the integration of relevant global issues, and its ability to remain contextually grounded amid societal dynamics (Kabanda, 2021). Accordingly, many higher education institutions have opted to restructure their curricula as an adaptive strategy to ensure alignment between their academic programs and increasingly stringent international quality standards (Sadiq Sohail et al., 2006; Weiss et al., 2021).

Curriculum restructuring is not merely a revision of content; it constitutes a comprehensive transformation of educational paradigms, development processes, and quality orientation (Shipman et al., 2018). An excellent curriculum is characterized by academic flexibility, interdisciplinary collaboration, and openness to global educational practices and values (Glatthorn et al., 2018). Within the framework of quality-based

educational management, curriculum restructuring becomes an integral part of Total Quality Management (TQM) implementation, as it reflects an institution's commitment to continuous improvement in the learning system (Jamalludin et al., 2021; Noor, 2021). TQM emphasizes the importance of a systematic and participatory approach in every quality enhancement process, including curriculum planning, development, and evaluation (Mulyono et al., 2024; Rahmanto & Ramadhan, 2024). Therefore, curriculum restructuring must be carried out in a planned manner, involving diverse stakeholders to ensure that the changes implemented are truly relevant, sustainable, and impactful in improving educational quality (Brandon & Fukunaga, 2014).

Total Quality Management (TQM) functions as a managerial approach that underscores continuous improvement, stakeholder participation, and a strong focus on user satisfaction in educational services (Hoque et al., 2017; Nasim et al., 2020). In the context of curriculum restructuring, TQM serves as a guiding framework to ensure that the curriculum development process is systematic, holistic, and quality-oriented. Beyond being a technical procedure, TQM fosters a culture of quality embedded throughout the entire academic process (Divoky, 1996).

While Total Quality Management (TQM) provides a robust foundation for ensuring educational quality, its effectiveness can be further enhanced through transdisciplinary and inter-institutional collaboration (Menteşoğullari, 2023). Such collaboration is a key element in generating synergy among stakeholders, including academics, practitioners, industry actors, and international organizations. Through these collaborative efforts, educational institutions can broaden their perspectives, enrich curriculum development with interdisciplinary insights, and increase both the legitimacy and relevance of the curriculum within an ever-evolving global context (Darojah et al., 2025).

The Department of Educational Management at Universitas Negeri Surabaya (UNESA) serves as the focal point of this study due to its integrated implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) and transdisciplinary collaboration in the systematic and sustainable restructuring of its curriculum. This initiative is part of a broader strategy to meet the international accreditation standards set by the Accreditation, Certification and Quality Assurance Institute (ACQUIN). In its efforts, the department not only embraces key principles of quality management—such as data-driven planning, continuous evaluation, and inclusive stakeholder engagement—but also forges strategic partnerships with both domestic and international entities. These collaborations include educational NGOs, internationally oriented schools, and academics from foreign institutions in countries such as Malaysia and Thailand.

The curriculum restructuring process within the Department of Educational Management follows a series of structured phases. The first phase involves an internal review, engaging both faculty members and students from the department. This phase focuses on identifying existing weaknesses and potential areas for curriculum development, including aligning graduate profiles with labor market demands and current scientific advancements. The second phase comprises an external review, in which the department invites international scholars and national education practitioners to provide substantive input on curriculum structure, pedagogical approaches, and the integration of global issues into the learning outcomes.

The insights gained from both internal and external reviews serve as the foundation for drafting the new curriculum document. This is followed by a sanctioning meeting led by the Curriculum Development Team, which includes department leadership, heads of study programs, senior faculty representatives, and internal quality assurance units. The sanctioning meeting functions as the final forum for curriculum validation before official implementation. The outcome of this comprehensive process is a new curriculum that not only responds to national educational priorities and the disciplinary characteristics of educational management but also strategically aligns with the global shift in higher education toward international competitiveness. In this context, international accreditation bodies such as ACQUIN serve as key quality benchmarks, ensuring that the restructured curriculum meets internationally recognized academic and professional standards within the broader framework of higher education internationalization.

Based on this context, the present study aims to explore in depth how the Department of Educational Management at UNESA implements Total Quality Management (TQM) and transdisciplinary collaboration in its curriculum restructuring process, and how these approaches function as key strategies for achieving international accreditation. This study seeks to contribute both theoretically and practically to the development of a collaborative, quality-based curriculum management model, one that is pertinent to strengthening the global competitiveness of Indonesian higher education.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method, which enables a direct and in-depth exploration of the curriculum restructuring processes and strategies within the Department of Educational Management at Universitas Negeri Surabaya (UNESA). This methodological approach is selected for its suitability in capturing the complexity of institutional processes, such as the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) principles and transdisciplinary collaboration in curriculum development. Through this approach, the researcher is able to comprehensively examine the perspectives and experiences of key stakeholders, including faculty members, students, international academics, and external institutional partners involved in curriculum evaluation and validation. According to Sugiyono (2017), qualitative research is descriptive in nature, and the data collected are primarily in the form of words rather than numbers. This type of research seeks to understand and portray phenomena from the perspective of the participants. The approach also offers flexibility in capturing the dynamics of curriculum decision-making, institutional quality assurance practices, and the interaction patterns among stakeholders throughout the curriculum development process. As such, this method allows the researcher to gain rich and nuanced insights into how curriculum restructuring functions as an institutional strategy in the pursuit of international accreditation.

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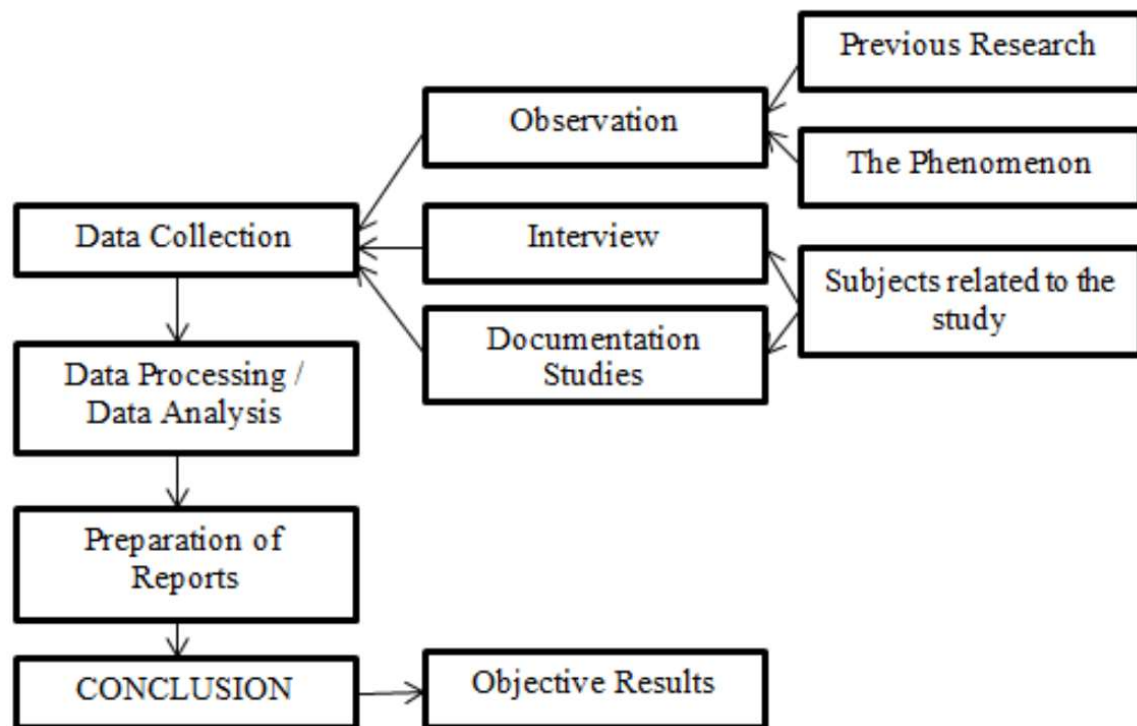

Figure 1. Research Methodology

Several techniques were employed to collect data, including observation, interviews, and documentation, in order to explore the curriculum restructuring processes and quality assurance mechanisms within the Department of Educational Management at Universitas Negeri Surabaya (UNESA). Observations were conducted during internal review meetings, external validation sessions, and sanctioning meetings led by the Curriculum Development Team to record interactions, decision-making dynamics, and implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) principles. Interviews were carried out with key stakeholders, including department leaders, heads of study programs, lecturers, students, international academic partners, and representatives from external institutions, to obtain comprehensive perspectives on curriculum planning, transdisciplinary collaboration, and the pursuit of international accreditation. Documentation—such as curriculum drafts, meeting minutes, quality assurance reports, institutional guidelines, and correspondence with ACQUIN reviewers—was collected to support data triangulation and ensure analytical validity. Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), consisting of data reduction (selecting and categorizing relevant information), data display (organizing findings into thematic patterns and matrices), and conclusion drawing/verification (interpreting relationships and confirming findings). This approach enabled a holistic understanding of how TQM principles and transdisciplinary collaboration function synergistically in driving curriculum reform toward international accreditation standards.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
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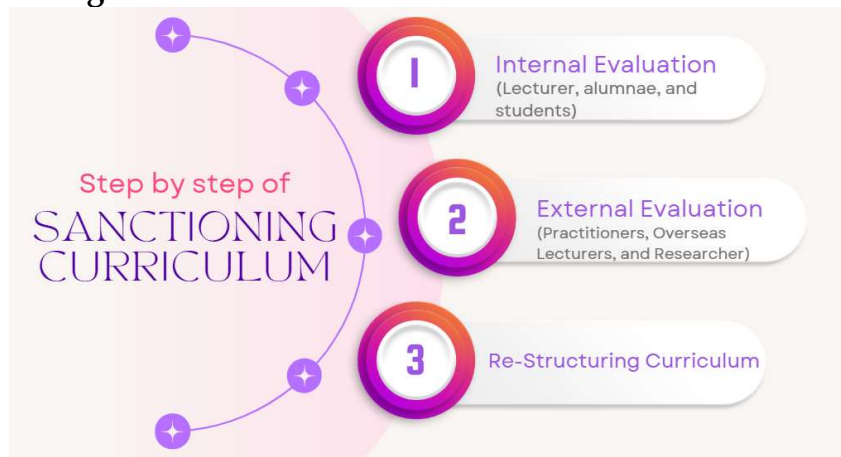### Steps of sanctioning curriculum

Figure 2. Steps of sanctioning curriculum

The curriculum restructuring process in the Department of Educational Management at UNESA is conducted systematically with a strong emphasis on quality. This process involves three main stages: internal review, external review, and curriculum sanctioning meetings, each engaging various stakeholders to ensure that the resulting curriculum is adaptive, relevant, and aligned with international accreditation standards. The first stage, internal review, involves faculty members and students who evaluate the existing curriculum, identify weaknesses, and adjust it based on current disciplinary developments. **As one faculty member noted, "We realized that several courses needed restructuring to better reflect contemporary issues in educational leadership and policy."**

The second stage, external review, invites international academics from Malaysia and Thailand, as well as education practitioners from NGOs and partner schools, to provide feedback on the curriculum's quality and relevance. **An external reviewer from Malaysia emphasized, "The curriculum demonstrates potential, but strengthening its international orientation will significantly improve graduate competitiveness."** The final stage is the curriculum sanctioning meeting conducted by the Curriculum Development Team, which serves as the forum for finalizing and approving the new curriculum structure. **As stated by a department head, "This final meeting embodies our commitment to continuous improvement under TQM—every suggestion is considered before the curriculum is endorsed."**

These three stages reflect the principles of Total Quality Management (TQM), emphasizing continuous evaluation and multi-stakeholder involvement in developing a high-quality curriculum that is competitive at the international level.

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The Implementation of TQM and Transdisciplinary Collaboration

The implementation of the Total Quality Management (TQM) approach in the curriculum restructuring of the Department of Educational Management at UNESA is reflected in the planning, execution, and evaluation processes that involve all stakeholders. Core TQM principles—such as continuous improvement, user-centeredness, and the active participation of all organizational elements—are integrated into each stage of curriculum development. The Curriculum Development Team establishes an organized workflow based on the PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) quality cycle.

The planning phase begins with mapping learning needs and evaluating the existing curriculum, followed by the collaborative design of the new curriculum. **As one lecturer explained, "The PDCA model helps us ensure that every change we propose is evidence-based and aligned with our long-term quality targets."** During the implementation phase, staged review and validation activities are conducted, while the evaluation phase involves analyzing stakeholder feedback and refining the curriculum before official adoption. **A department head emphasized, "Continuous improvement is not optional in our process—it is embedded in every cycle of curriculum revision."**

In addition to TQM, the restructuring process is strengthened by transdisciplinary collaboration at both national and international levels. Academics from Malaysia and Thailand, education practitioners from partner schools, and educational NGOs actively contribute to the external review. **An international reviewer from Malaysia noted, "The collaborative review adds perspectives that the department might not see internally, especially regarding global demands in educational leadership."** This collaboration enriches curriculum content through cross-disciplinary exchanges and ensures that the resulting curriculum has broad relevance and compatibility with global standards. Observations and documentation also indicate that this collaboration is highly influential; **one practitioner remarked, "Our input directly shaped new course topics and pedagogical approaches, making the curriculum more grounded and contextual."**

Discussion

Curriculum Restructuring as a Quality-Based Change Practice

The curriculum restructuring undertaken by the Department of Educational Management at UNESA represents a strategic effort to address the evolving challenges of higher education through a quality-based approach. This process extends beyond mere content revision to encompass a comprehensive transformation of the learning system, academic policy directions, and institutional management. Such an approach aligns closely with the principles of Total Quality Management (TQM), where changes are implemented not in a fragmented manner but through a systemic and participatory process engaging all stakeholders (Deming, 1986; Goetsch & Davis, 2016; Darojah et al., 2025).

Within the TQM framework, curriculum change is inseparable from the cycle of continuous quality improvement. The previous curriculum was critically evaluated through rigorous internal and external reviews, yielding concrete inputs grounded in actual needs. This approach reflects a deliberate effort to bridge the gap between learning outcomes and the realities of the workforce and scientific advancements (Divoky, 1996;

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Nasim, Sikander, & Tian, 2020). Consequently, restructuring serves as a vehicle to harmonize academic policies with national and global expectations.

Moreover, the quality principles applied extend beyond academic aspects to include governance and organizational culture. The establishment of a Curriculum Development Team that operates across departments, combined with the involvement of external parties in the review process, illustrates that quality is regarded as a collective responsibility rather than solely an administrative task. This finding reinforces earlier studies emphasizing that successful curriculum reform is significantly influenced by collective leadership and an internalized culture of quality (Sallis, 2010; Jamalludin, Aziz, & Sarip, 2021).

Therefore, the curriculum restructuring conducted is not merely a response to international accreditation demands but also an institutional commitment to ensuring sustainable educational quality. This strategy demonstrates that quality-based change can act as a transformational force in developing higher education institutions in the global era (Kandiko Howson & Kingsbury, 2023; Weiss, Barth, & von Wehrden, 2021).

Transdisciplinary Collaboration in Advancing Internationalization

The research findings highlight that transdisciplinary collaboration serves as a crucial element in supporting curriculum restructuring aimed at meeting international standards. This collaboration involves actors from diverse academic disciplines, institutions, and geographical regions, including foreign academics from Malaysia and Thailand, educational practitioners from partner schools, and NGOs active in the education sector. Such an approach reflects a commitment to openness toward multiple perspectives as a foundation for designing curricula that are both contextually relevant and globally compatible (Lambey et al., 2023; Zawawi, Suryani, & Museyibzada, 2025).

Within the context of higher education internationalization, cross-disciplinary and cross-institutional collaboration is considered a fundamental prerequisite to ensure curriculum quality and relevance (Knight, 2004). Curricula developed in isolation or exclusively within internal frameworks tend to be limited in capturing global dynamics and cross-sectoral needs. Therefore, engaging external partners in curriculum development not only enriches academic content but also forms part of a strategic approach toward achieving international accreditation requirements, such as those outlined by ACQUIN, which emphasize the integration of global issues and international cooperation (ACQUIN, n.d.; Duarte & Vardasca, 2023).

Furthermore, transdisciplinary collaboration plays a pivotal role in bridging the gap between theory and practice. Insights from educational practitioners and non-academic stakeholders provide relevant input regarding labor market demands and field dynamics—factors often overlooked by purely academic perspectives. This aligns with the Total Quality Management (TQM) framework by reinforcing participatory principles and prioritizing end-user satisfaction, namely students and society, at the core of quality education development (Darojah et al., 2025; Hoque, Hossain, & Zaman, 2017).

Thus, transdisciplinary collaboration is not merely a complementary component in curriculum restructuring but constitutes a primary strategy for institutional internationalization. This approach expands academic networks, enhances graduate competitiveness, and fosters curricula capable of adapting to global changes while maintaining local contextual relevance (Kennedy & McNaught, 2022; Tight, 2022).

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CONCLUSION

This study affirms that the curriculum restructuring undertaken by the Department of Educational Management at Universitas Negeri Surabaya (UNESA) represents a quality-based change management practice that integrates Total Quality Management (TQM) principles with transdisciplinary collaboration. The process was conducted systematically through three main stages—internal review, external review, and sanctioning meetings—each involving multiple stakeholders. The outcome is a new curriculum that is not only relevant to national educational needs but also aligned with international standards, as required by the ACQUIN accreditation agency. **Implication:** The findings of this study imply that higher education institutions in Indonesia can adopt a similar approach to enhance curriculum quality and institutional competitiveness at the global level. By integrating quality assurance principles with transdisciplinary collaboration, universities can strengthen their capacity for international recognition and sustainable academic development. **Limitation:** This study is limited in scope, as it focuses solely on one department within a single institution. Therefore, generalizations to the broader context of Indonesian higher education should be made with caution. Furthermore, the qualitative descriptive nature of the data does not include quantitative indicators that could measure the effectiveness of the restructured curriculum. **Future Research:** Future studies are recommended to examine curriculum restructuring implementation across multiple study programs and institutions using a comparative approach. In addition, it is important to develop evaluation models that assess the impact of curriculum restructuring on graduate quality, student satisfaction, and teaching effectiveness.

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