

## Global Research Overview: A Bibliometric Analysis of Quality Management Trend in Higher Education Over the Past 20 Years

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**ABSTRACT:** This study presents a comprehensive bibliometric analysis aimed at elucidating the evolving trends in quality management within higher education over the past two decades. Drawing upon a diverse array of scholarly literature sourced from Scopus databases, the analysis encompasses a broad spectrum of publications spanning from 2003 to 2023. From the search results, there were a total of 915 publications which were processed and visualized using VOS viewer and Bibliophagy software. By examining scholarly contributions globally, the study identifies Germany, the United States, and India as the leading countries in this research area. Analysis of publication sources reveals that journals such as Total Quality Management and Business Excellence and Quality Assurance in Education are the most prolific in disseminating research findings on this topic. Through keyword co-occurrence analysis, the study delineates five primary thematic clusters. These findings underscore the diverse and global nature of research efforts aimed at enhancing quality management practices in higher education. The article not only maps the existing research landscape but also offers valuable insights and actionable strategies for educators, policymakers, and researchers. It aims to inform future research directions and support the continuous improvement and innovation in quality management practices within higher education institutions, thereby contributing to enhanced quality and accountability.

**Keywords:** bibliometric analysis, global research, higher education, publication trends, quality management.

**ABSTRAK:** Studi ini menyajikan analisis bibliometrik komprehensif yang bertujuan untuk menjelaskan tren yang berkembang dalam manajemen mutu dalam pendidikan tinggi selama dua dekade terakhir. Dengan memanfaatkan beragam literatur ilmiah yang bersumber dari database Scopus, analisis ini mencakup spektrum publikasi yang luas mulai dari tahun 2003 hingga 2023. Dari hasil pencarian, terdapat total 915 publikasi yang diproses dan divisualisasikan menggunakan VOS viewer dan perangkat lunak Bibliophagy. Dengan memeriksa kontribusi ilmiah secara global, penelitian ini mengidentifikasi Jerman, Amerika Serikat, dan India sebagai negara-negara terkemuka di bidang penelitian ini. Analisis sumber publikasi menunjukkan bahwa jurnal seperti Total Quality Management dan Business Excellence and Quality Assurance in Education adalah yang paling produktif dalam menyebarkan temuan penelitian tentang topik ini. Melalui analisis kemunculan kata kunci, penelitian ini menggambarkan lima kelompok tematik utama. Temuan-temuan ini menggarisbawahi beragamnya upaya penelitian yang bertujuan untuk meningkatkan praktik manajemen mutu di pendidikan tinggi. Artikel ini tidak hanya memetakan lanskap penelitian yang ada, tetapi juga menawarkan wawasan yang berharga dan strategi yang dapat ditindaklanjuti bagi para pendidik, pembuat kebijakan, dan peneliti. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menginformasikan arah penelitian di masa depan dan mendukung peningkatan berkelanjutan dan inovasi dalam praktik manajemen mutu di dalam institusi pendidikan tinggi, sehingga berkontribusi pada peningkatan kualitas dan akuntabilitas.

***Kata Kunci:*** *analisis bibliometrik, manajemen mutu, pendidikan tinggi, penelitian global, tren publikasi.*

## INTRODUCTION

Bibliometric analysis is an essential tool for understanding the research landscape in quality management, particularly in higher education. It enables researchers to systematically evaluate the scope, trends, and impact of academic work in the field by analyzing large volumes of literature. Through bibliometric analysis, scholars can map the evolution of key ideas, identify influential contributors, and assess the dissemination and influence of significant studies. This approach highlights the progression of methodologies and theoretical frameworks, ensuring that research efforts align with areas of growing importance. For example, understanding trends in integrating technology within quality management or the effectiveness of quality assurance frameworks allows researchers to situate their work within the broader discourse and build upon established findings. Moreover, bibliometric analysis plays a critical role in uncovering research gaps and opportunities, ensuring that new studies address unexplored or underrepresented areas in quality management. It supports data-driven decision-making by identifying best practices and guiding the development of policies and strategies for improving teaching methodologies, curricula, and administrative processes. For higher education institutions, bibliometric insights offer valuable benchmarks and metrics, aiding in accreditation processes and the efficient allocation of resources. By fostering a comprehensive understanding of the research landscape, bibliometric analysis not only supports scholarly advancement but also contributes to the practical improvement of quality management practices, ensuring that they remain relevant, impactful, and aligned with evolving educational needs.

Quality management in higher education involves the systematic planning, implementation, assessment, and improvement of processes to ensure that the educational experience meets or exceeds established standards (Ghaith et al., 2023; Thahir, M et al., 2023; Vykydal et al., 2020). At its core, it's about fostering a culture of excellence and continuous enhancement throughout the institution. This encompasses various dimensions, including academic programs, teaching methodologies, student support services, administrative procedures, and research endeavors (Jayana et al., 2022; Kaplani & Zafiropoulos, 2022; Negron, 2020, Thahir, M. et al., 2023). Quality management stands as a linchpin within the higher education system, serving as a vital mechanism to uphold standards, ensure accountability, and drive continual improvement (Sunaengsih, C., et al., 2020 & Thahir, M, 2023). In the dynamic landscape of higher education, where institutions are tasked with preparing students for the complexities of the modern world, quality management plays a pivotal role in shaping the educational experience. It encompasses a systematic approach to monitoring, evaluating, and enhancing various facets of academic programs, administrative processes, and support services offered by universities and colleges. By implementing robust quality management systems, educational institutions can systematically assess and improve their teaching methodologies, curriculum design, and student support

services. This ensures that academic programs remain relevant, rigorous, and aligned with industry standards and societal needs. Quality management also involves setting clear performance indicators and benchmarks that guide institutions in maintaining high standards of education (Sunaengsih, C., et al., 2020). Regular internal and external reviews, audits, and accreditation processes are integral components of this approach, providing an objective assessment of an institution's strengths and areas for improvement.

Moreover, quality management fosters a culture of accountability and transparency within higher education institutions. It encourages the involvement of all stakeholders, including faculty, students, administrative staff, and external partners, in the continuous improvement process. This collaborative effort ensures that feedback is systematically collected and utilized to make data-driven decisions that enhance educational outcomes. Additionally, quality management drives innovation by promoting best practices and encouraging the adoption of new technologies and pedagogical approaches. It supports faculty development programs that enhance teaching skills and research capabilities, thereby contributing to the professional growth of educators. Ultimately, the comprehensive and systematic nature of quality management in higher education not only enhances the academic experience for students but also strengthens the institution's reputation and competitiveness in the global educational landscape (Thahir, M. et al., 2023).

One of the paramount reasons for the importance of quality management in higher education is its direct impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Through robust quality management frameworks, institutions can establish clear learning objectives, design rigorous curricula, and employ innovative pedagogical approaches to engage students effectively (Thahir, M., 2020 & Fadhli et al., 2022). These frameworks enable institutions to create structured and coherent educational programs that align with academic standards and industry expectations. Moreover, quality management systems facilitate continuous assessment and improvement processes, ensuring that educational practices remain relevant and effective. This involves regular feedback from students, faculty, and other stakeholders, which is essential for adapting and enhancing teaching methods and materials. Furthermore, quality management ensures that faculty members are equipped with the necessary resources, training, and support to deliver high-quality instruction (Thahir, M. et al., 2023). This includes access to professional development opportunities, technological tools, and collaborative platforms that enhance teaching effectiveness. By fostering an environment conducive to academic achievement and intellectual growth, quality management practices contribute to the overall success and satisfaction of both students and faculty. They promote a culture of excellence and accountability, encouraging educators to innovate and excel in their teaching roles. Ultimately, robust quality management in higher education leads to improved student outcomes, higher retention rates, and graduates who are better prepared to meet the demands of the global workforce.

Research on quality management in higher education holds significant importance for several key reasons. Firstly, it directly impacts the educational experience of students (Vyas, 2020; Wang, 2017; Yang, 2016). Quality management practices ensure that academic programs meet rigorous standards of excellence, fostering an environment conducive to learning, innovation, and personal growth (Andronie & Andronie, 2014; Zhang & Hu, 2016). By conducting research in this area, institutions can identify effective strategies for enhancing teaching methodologies, student support services, and overall educational outcomes, ultimately improving student satisfaction and success.

Moreover, quality management research contributes to the advancement of knowledge and innovation in higher education. By synthesizing and analyzing existing literature on quality management, researchers can identify gaps in knowledge, propose theoretical frameworks, and generate new insights that contribute to the scholarly discourse in the field. Bibliometric studies enable researchers to map the intellectual landscape, trace the evolution of ideas, and identify influential scholars and research networks shaping the discourse on quality management in higher education. Furthermore, research on quality management is essential for accountability and quality assurance purposes (Thahir, M. et al., 2021). Accrediting bodies, government agencies, and stakeholders increasingly rely on evidence-based assessments to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of educational institutions. These assessments provide a critical foundation for maintaining high standards and ensuring that educational institutions meet their obligations to students and society. By systematically examining various aspects of quality management, institutions can identify best practices, areas for improvement, and strategies for enhancing overall performance.

Bibliometric analyses, in particular, provide valuable evidence of the scope, impact, and dissemination of research on quality management. These analyses enable stakeholders to track trends, measure the influence of specific studies, and understand the evolution of quality management practices over time. Such insights are crucial for aiding in accreditation processes, where a comprehensive understanding of an institution's strengths and weaknesses is necessary. Bibliometric data can highlight the most influential research, key contributors, and emerging areas of focus within the field of quality management, thereby informing policy development and decision-making at both institutional and governmental levels (Lou et al., 2023; Yoon & Chae, 2022). Moreover, the application of bibliometric analyses supports transparency and accountability by providing objective metrics that can be used to benchmark institutions against national and international standards. This data-driven approach helps ensure that educational institutions remain aligned with evolving educational goals and societal needs. It also assists in the allocation of resources, guiding investments in areas that will have the most significant impact on enhancing educational quality. Overall, research on quality management, bolstered by bibliometric analyses, plays a critical role in shaping effective policies, fostering continuous improvement, and

maintaining the integrity and reputation of higher education institutions worldwide.

Given this, scholars are inclined to conduct a more comprehensive analysis of quality management through bibliometric reviews. Consequently, it is anticipated that such endeavors will furnish valuable insights and an overarching perspective on the prevailing landscape of research pertaining to quality management, as well as delineate prospective avenues for future inquiry within this domain.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The research boundaries for this bibliometric analysis are clearly delineated to ensure a focused and comprehensive examination of quality management in higher education. The study spans a two-decade timeframe, analyzing publications from 2003 to 2023. This period was chosen to capture the evolution and trends in quality management practices, allowing for a detailed exploration of longitudinal developments and emerging themes. Geographically, the study adopts a global perspective, encompassing scholarly contributions from 77 countries. Key contributors identified include Germany, the United States, and India, which have made significant scholarly impacts in this domain. Additionally, the analysis emphasizes the diversity of global collaboration and thematic richness, providing a well-rounded understanding of the research landscape and its implications for higher education worldwide.

This research employs bibliometric methods to conduct a comprehensive analysis of scholarly literature related to quality management in Higher Education. Bibliometrics involves the systematic quantitative examination of bibliographic data from academic publications, enabling us to identify patterns, trends, and relationships within the research domain (Gupta et al., 2023; Vergura et al., 2023).

Firstly, we define our research scope and objectives, delineating the specific aspects of the topic that we aim to explore. This guides the selection of relevant databases, journals, and publications for inclusion in our analysis. We use Scopus database to gather a comprehensive dataset encompassing a wide range of peer-reviewed articles, conference papers, and other scholarly outputs (Pham-Duc et al., 2022). Next, we collect bibliographic data from Scopus publications, including metadata such as publication titles, authors, abstracts, keywords, citation counts, and publication dates. This data serves as the foundation for our analysis, allowing us to quantify various aspects of scholarly output (Rejeb et al., 2023).

We use various bibliometric indicators and techniques to analyze the collected data. This may include citation analysis, co-authorship analysis, keyword occurrence analysis, and publication trend analysis, among others. This method provides insight into citation patterns, collaboration networks, research themes, and research evolution over time. In addition, we used VOSviewer and Bibliometric as bibliometric mapping technique visualization software to visually represent the results of our analysis (Abbas et al., 2022; Hamidah et al., 2020). This improves the interpretation of findings and facilitates the identification of major groups, trends, and influential works in the literature.



## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Search Finding

The study was carried out by utilizing the Scopus database. The search strategy included the following terms: (TITLE ("quality management") AND TITLE-ABS KEY ("highereducation" OR education) AND PUBYEAR > 2002 AND PUBYEAR < 2024). The study period was restricted to 2003–2023, and the search was limited to English-language articles and review articles. The search results obtained a total of 915 publications, The search results obtained a total of 915 publications, consisting of journal articles, proceeding book chapters and other forms of publication. Apart from that, data was also obtained on the number of authors of 2,468 with 216 single authors (Figure 1).

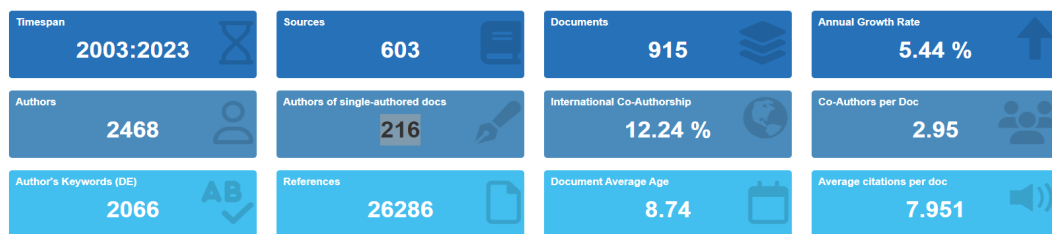


Figure 1. Search Finding

### Annual Publication

As previously delineated, the research delineates a temporal scope limited to the preceding two decades, spanning from 2003 to 2023, allowing for a comprehensive examination of longitudinal trends. Analysis of Figure 2 below illuminates that the pinnacle of publication output occurred in 2020, juxtaposed with notable downturns evident in 2004 and 2006. Furthermore, the annual trend analysis reveals fluctuations within the initial quadrennial period, followed by a consistent upward trajectory culminating in its zenith in 2020, succeeded by declines in 2021 and 2022. Plausible causation for such variations may be attributed to the global Covid-19 pandemic, which emerged in early 2020 and precipitated widespread disruptions across international research landscapes.

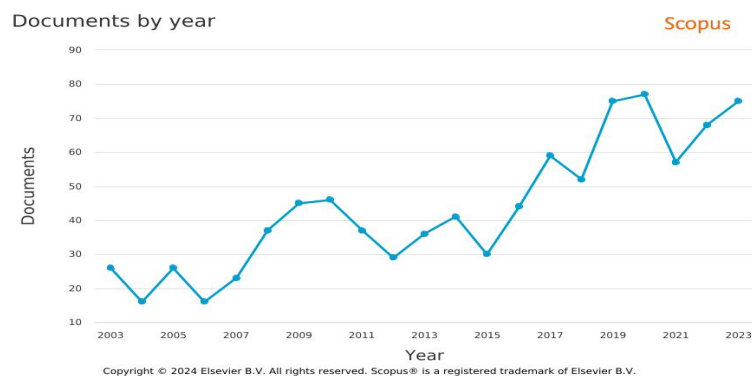


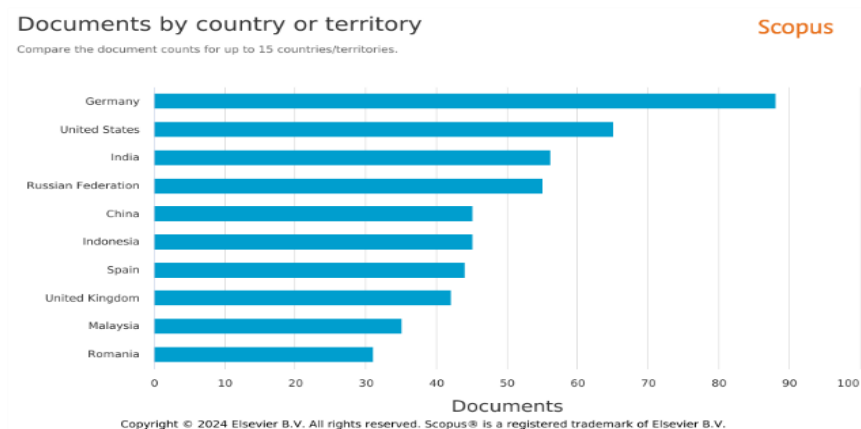
Figure 2. Annual Publication

### Analysis of Country/Region

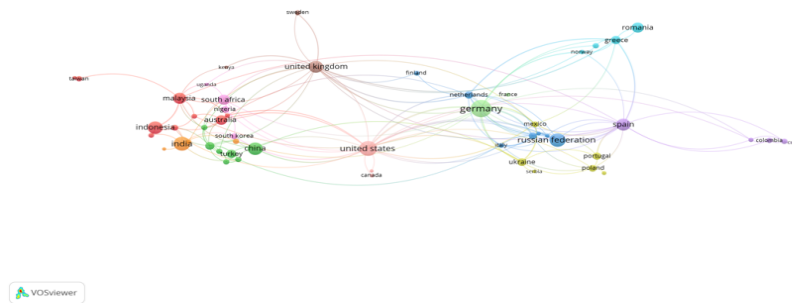
In totality, the corpus of literature under scrutiny emanates from a diverse array of 77 distinct countries, exemplifying the global nature of scholarly contributions in the field. A meticulous examination of the data, as presented in Figure 3, elucidates the delineation of the top 10 countries/regions based on the sheer volume of published papers. Leading this cohort is Germany, which occupies the forefront by contributing a substantial count of 88 papers, showcasing its noteworthy scholarly output

within the domain. Following closely behind is the United States, with an impressive tally of 65 papers, underscoring its prominent position as a prolific contributor to the discourse. India secures the third position with 56 papers, highlighting its significant presence and scholarly engagement in the field. Subsequently, positions four through ten are respectively occupied by Russia, China, Indonesia, Spain, the United Kingdom, Malaysia, and Romania, each making noteworthy contributions to the body of literature under consideration. These findings underscore the global participation and rich diversity of scholarly endeavors across various geographical regions, enriching the discourse and fostering collaboration on a global scale.

Furthermore, in figure 4. Every node corresponds to either a country/region, and the node's size is directly proportional to the quantity of publications from that country/region. The lines linking two nodes signify that they share at least one publication, with thicker lines denoting a higher number of co-authors between the two countries/regions or institutions. According to figure 4 it is evident that the United States exhibits the highest degree of collaboration, boasting a total link strength of 34, followed closely by Germany with 33 link strengths. Occupying the third position is the United Kingdom, with Austria and the Netherlands respectively filling the fourth and fifth positions. These findings diverge from those presented in Figure 3 due to several of the top 10 countries in Figure 3 predominantly engaging in single-country publications, unlike the countries, which are prolific in producing multi-institutional articles.



**Figure 3.** Top 10 Country Publication



**Figure 4.** Country Collaboration Map

### Co-occurrence Keyword Analysis

A keyword co-occurrence analysis was conducted to delve into prevalent research trajectories and primary areas of focus within the domain. The resultant co-occurrence network is showcased, with particular emphasis placed on keywords appearing more than five times, thereby facilitating the categorization of 49 keywords into five distinct groups, each delineated by unique colors. This comprehensive approach sheds light on the interconnectedness of research themes and provides a nuanced understanding of prevalent trends within the field.

Based on the findings elucidated in Figure 6, it becomes apparent that the keyword "quality management" is prominently featured, boasting the highest frequency of occurrence, totaling 225 instances. Following closely behind is "total quality management," observed 128 times, while "higher education" secures the third position with 110 occurrences. Subsequently, "quality" and "education" emerge as the fourth and fifth most prevalent keywords, respectively, with frequencies of 71 and 57.

Furthermore, Figure 6 provides an insightful visualization of the clustering classification predicated upon prevalent keywords. Within this framework, six principal thematic clusters have surfaced, delineated by distinct color-coded patterns in the keyword cluster diagram. These clusters have been meticulously identified and explicated.

Cluster 1 (represented in Red, comprising 12 items) is centered on the critical theme of organizational sustainability, encapsulating various facets including performance, innovation, evaluation, and organizational resilience. Cluster 2 (represented in Yellow, comprising 10 items) sheds light on the profound implications for learning outcomes, particularly in the realm of distance learning, e-learning, critical success factors, and the enhancement of educational quality. Cluster 3 (represented in Green, comprising 8 items) delves into the intricate domain of quality assurance and the strategic integration of technology, exploring domains such as Artificial Intelligence, Certification, ISO 9001 standards, and strategic planning methodologies. Cluster 4 (represented in Blue, comprising 8 items) intricately examines the dynamics of the education system, probing into



## Discussion

Despite showcasing global participation, the study does not address why other countries are underrepresented in quality management research. Limited contributions may stem from resource constraints, differing research priorities, or systemic challenges. Identifying these barriers and suggesting strategies—such as increasing funding, fostering international collaborations, or promoting open-access publications—could help amplify contributions from underrepresented regions. This would enrich the global discourse and ensure a more inclusive understanding of quality management across diverse educational contexts.

The study identifies journals such as *Total Quality Management and Business Excellence* and *Quality Assurance in Education* as influential, yet it does not explore why they hold such prominence. Analyzing their prioritized themes—like sustainability, strategic planning, or technological integration—and editorial policies could clarify their impact on the field. Understanding these aspects would

help researchers effectively target their work to maximize dissemination and influence.

The identified thematic clusters, including organizational sustainability, learning outcomes, and quality assurance, offer a broad overview of key research areas. However, the discussion does not analyze how these themes interact or evolve. Exploring connections, such as the influence of technology integration on quality assurance or the interplay between learning outcomes and organizational strategies, could provide actionable insights. Additionally, tracking how these themes adapt to emerging challenges would ensure their continued relevance. The study notes a peak in publications in 2020, attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic, but does not delve into specific research trends during this period. Examining how the pandemic accelerated the adoption of digital tools or reshaped priorities in quality management would offer valuable lessons for future disruptions. Such insights could guide institutions in maintaining educational standards amid evolving global challenges.

While the study highlights practical applications, it lacks specific recommendations for institutions and policymakers. Concrete suggestions—such as using thematic clusters for quality audits or fostering cross-border collaborations to address underrepresented themes—would enhance the study's utility. Tailored recommendations would make the findings more actionable for diverse stakeholders.

Lastly, the discussion does not critically address potential biases in bibliometric approaches. Issues such as database limitations, language bias, and the overrepresentation of certain regions could skew findings and understate contributions from diverse educational contexts. Addressing these biases would provide a more balanced and inclusive perspective on global quality management research. By incorporating these additional considerations, the discussion gains depth and ensures a nuanced, actionable understanding of the research landscape.

## CONCLUSION

This bibliometric analysis has provided a comprehensive overview of the evolution and current state of quality management in higher education from 2003 to 2023. By meticulously examining a vast array of publications over two decades, the study has illuminated the significant strides made in understanding and implementing quality management practices within the educational sector. The identification of key themes such as distance learning, e-learning, critical success factors, quality assurance, technology integration, and management strategies underscores the multifaceted nature of quality management in higher education. Furthermore, the analysis highlights the global contribution to this critical field, showcasing the pivotal role of scholarly research and leading journals in shaping the discourse around quality management. The insights garnered from this study not only chart a path for future research but also offer actionable strategies for educators, administrators, and policymakers aiming to enhance the quality and accountability of higher education institutions. As the landscape of education

continues to evolve, particularly in response to technological advancements and changing societal needs, the findings of this study serve as a valuable resource for guiding continuous improvement and innovation in quality management practices.

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