



The Role of Accreditation in Transforming IAIN Lhokseumawe's PAI Quality

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the implementation of accreditation in improving the quality of education in the Postgraduate Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Study Program at IAIN Lhokseumawe. Higher education accreditation is an important instrument to ensure the quality of education that is relevant to the needs of society and the development of the times. However, the implementation of accreditation often faces various challenges, such as the fulfillment of diverse quality standards and limitations in the management of accreditation data. The research method used is a qualitative approach with data collection techniques through interviews, observations, and document analysis. This study found that the Postgraduate PAI Study Program has tried to meet accreditation standards by improving the quality of the curriculum, management, and human resources. However, there are obstacles in the integration of internal and external quality evaluations and data management that still lack innovation. These findings suggest that accreditation should be seen as a strategic tool for a more holistic transformation of education, not just an administrative formality. This research is expected to contribute to improving the implementation of accreditation in higher education institutions, especially in Islamic-based study programs.

Accreditation, Higher Education, Islamic Religious Education, Education Quality, Educational Transformation.

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INTRODUCTION

Higher education accreditation is one of the important instruments in ensuring the quality of educational institutions and the relevance of educational results to the needs of the community (Awaludin, 2017; Setiyani, 2020). In Indonesia, accreditation has become a mandatory standard for higher education institutions to ensure that the implementation of the tri dharma of higher education runs in accordance with national standards. In the context of the Postgraduate Islamic Religious Education Study Program (PAI) at IAIN

Lhokseumawe, accreditation is not only an indicator of the quality of the institution but also reflects the quality of graduates who are ready to contribute to the development of Islamic education. However, many challenges in the implementation of accreditation are still found, such as the fulfillment of various quality standards, complex data reporting, and changes in accreditation regulatory policies. This research is important to examine how the implementation of accreditation can play a role in transforming the quality of higher education, especially in the Postgraduate PAI study program.

This study aims to analyze the implementation of accreditation in improving the quality of the IAIN Lhokseumawe Postgraduate PAI Study Program. By identifying the factors that affect the success of the implementation of accreditation, this research can make a practical contribution in the form of recommendations for improving the quality of the institution. Scientifically, this study also enriches the literature on higher education accreditation in Indonesia, especially in Islamic-based study programs.

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of accreditation in encouraging quality improvement in higher education (Misalnya, Badan Akreditasi Nasional Perguruan Tinggi, 2021; Yulianto et al., 2022). Other research also emphasizes that the effective implementation of accreditation depends on the readiness of institutions to meet quality standards, managerial capacity, and resource support. However, most of these studies are still general, without highlighting the specific conditions of Islamic-based study programs, such as PAI Postgraduate. In addition, there have not been many studies that discuss the direct impact of accreditation on quality transformation in this study program, so a more in-depth study is needed.

The existing conditions show that the IAIN Lhokseumawe Postgraduate PAI Study Program has tried to meet accreditation standards through improving the quality of the curriculum, management, and human resources. However, the implementation of accreditation still faces obstacles such as the lack of integration between internal and external quality evaluations, as well as the lack of innovation in the management of accreditation data. Ideally, the accreditation process not only serves as an assessment of formalities, but also as a transformation tool to improve the quality of education holistically (Hanun, 2015; Hasyim Asy'ari et al., 2021). This gap emphasizes the importance of research that can bridge the gap between the implementation of accreditation and the expected results.

This research offers novelty by highlighting the implementation of accreditation from the perspective of Islamic-based study programs in Indonesia, which is still minimally discussed in the literature. With a

comprehensive analytical approach, this study identifies the success factors and obstacles to the implementation of accreditation and provides relevant implementation models to improve the quality of the Postgraduate PAI Study Program.

This study uses the theory of educational transformation to analyze the implementation of accreditation in improving the quality of the Postgraduate Islamic Religious Education Study Program (PAI) at IAIN Lhokseumawe. The theory of higher education accreditation emphasizes that accreditation serves not only as a measure of compliance with national standards, but also as a strategic instrument that encourages continuous improvement in various aspects of Education (Hardianto, 2020; Irawan et al., 2020; Khotimah et al., 2020). Meanwhile, the theory of educational transformation leads to profound changes in the structure, curriculum, and methodology of education that can improve the overall quality of education (Loilatu et al., 2020; Mansyur, 2010; Miftakhuddin, 2020).

In this study, several indicators are used to measure the success of accreditation and transformation of education quality, including curriculum quality, which measures the relevance of the curriculum to the needs of the world of work and technological developments and its compatibility with national accreditation standards (Sagala, 2020). Another indicator is study program management, which assesses the capacity of resource management and the ability of managers to facilitate effective learning (Hardianto, 2020; Mudrikah et al., 2022; Supriyanto & Amrin, 2022). In addition, the quality of human resources, especially the competence of lecturers, is also an important indicator, including lecturers' involvement in research and community service as well as improving qualifications.

Evaluation and monitoring are also an important part, focusing on how internal and external evaluations are conducted to ensure the quality of education is sustainable and in accordance with accreditation standards (Daryanto, 2001). Finally, innovation and data management, especially the use of technology for accreditation data management and policy transparency, are no less important aspects. With these indicators, this study is expected to provide an in-depth understanding of the implementation of accreditation in the Postgraduate PAI Study Program and provide recommendations for improvement in efforts to transform the quality of higher education.

The main purpose of this study is to explore the role of accreditation in the transformation of higher education quality in the IAIN Lhokseumawe Postgraduate PAI Study Program. In short, the results of this study are expected to provide a better understanding of how accreditation can be a

strategic tool to improve the quality of institutions, as well as provide practical recommendations for more effective implementation.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with the aim of analyzing the implementation of accreditation in the transformation of higher education quality in the IAIN Lhokseumawe Postgraduate PAI Study Program. The population in this study includes lecturers, students, and administrative staff who are directly involved in the accreditation process.

The sample was selected using the purposive sampling method, namely subjects who are considered to have relevant and in-depth information related to the implementation of accreditation (Lexy, 2002; Ulber, 2009). The main instruments used in this study include structured interviews, participatory observations, and official document studies, such as accreditation reports, accreditation guidelines, and other supporting documents. The interview instrument was developed based on accreditation quality indicators, with validity tested through expert judgment, while reliability tested through limited trials to respondents (Sugiono, 2018; Windiani & Nurul, 2016).

The research procedure is carried out chronologically, starting from the planning stage, data collection, data analysis, to the reporting of research results. The planning stage involves the preparation of research instruments and coordination with related parties, while data collection is carried out through interviews, observations, and documentation for two months. The data obtained was analyzed using thematic analysis methods, with the help of NVivo software to organize and map relevant themes and patterns (Sugiyono, 2017). To maintain the validity and reliability of the data, this study applies data triangulation, by comparing results from various data sources, and conducting member checking to ensure the accuracy of interview results (Creswell, 2014; Leach, 2021; Vebrianto et al., 2020).

This study also acknowledges its limitations, namely the scope of subjects is limited to one study program so that the research results cannot be generalized widely. In addition, access to some sensitive documents is a challenge that is overcome through a participatory approach to building trust with informants. Thus, this research is expected to make a valid and relevant contribution in analyzing the role of accreditation in the transformation of higher education quality.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to analyze the implementation of accreditation in the transformation of higher education quality in the Islamic Religious Education Study Program (PAI) Postgraduate IAIN Lhokseumawe. Based on data obtained from interviews, observations, and document analysis, the main findings of this study can be described as follows.

Accreditation Process as a Determinant of Education Quality

One of the main findings of this study is that the implementation of accreditation in the IAIN Lhokseumawe Postgraduate PAI Study Program plays a role as one of the main factors in the transformation of education quality. Accreditation is not only interpreted as an administrative procedure that must be passed, but also as an instrument that drives the improvement and improvement of the quality of education at the study program level. During the accreditation process, both lecturers and students are involved in the evaluation and improvement of existing educational standards. These findings are in line with the theory that accreditation has a positive impact on creating a more transparent and accountable education system (Alharbi, 2020).

This process requires an evaluation of a number of quality indicators which include curriculum, teaching quality, facilities and infrastructure, and education management. The results of interviews with lecturers and administrative staff revealed that accreditation provides space for the PAI Study Program to make continuous improvements, especially in terms of curriculum updates that are more relevant to the development of the times and the needs of the job market. In addition, the strengthening of a more structured study program management system is also the result of the implementation of accreditation.

The Role of Lecturers and Students in the Accreditation Process

The implementation of accreditation in the IAIN Lhokseumawe Postgraduate PAI Study Program involves all elements in the study program, namely lecturers, students, and administrative staff. One of the significant findings in this study is the active role of lecturers and students in the accreditation process. Lecturers play a role in developing curriculum and teaching materials that meet accreditation standards, while students contribute to the evaluation of the quality of teaching and facilities in the study program.

Based on interviews with lecturers, the majority revealed that they felt encouraged to improve the quality of their teaching and research after participating in the accreditation process. This shows that accreditation has a strong motivational impact on lecturers to continue to innovate in education. On the other hand, students feel involved in this process, especially through

student satisfaction surveys conducted to assess the quality of teaching and existing facilities. This provides evidence that the implementation of accreditation in the PAI Study Program is not only based on internal evaluation, but also pays attention to student voices as part of the quality improvement process.

Identifying Weaknesses and Challenges in the Accreditation Process

Although the implementation of accreditation in the IAIN Lhokseumawe Postgraduate PAI Study Program has a positive impact, there are several weaknesses and challenges faced during the process. One of the main challenges found is the limitation of facilities and infrastructure that can affect the accreditation results. Based on document analysis and interviews with administrative staff, some of the facilities that are the main concern in the accreditation evaluation are classrooms, laboratories, and inadequate educational technology.

In addition, the challenges in time management were also expressed by lecturers and staff. The accreditation process often clashes with other academic activities, such as lectures and examinations, which makes it difficult for lecturers and staff to meet all the administrative obligations required for accreditation. This shows that although the PAI Study Program has tried hard to meet the accreditation requirements, there are still shortcomings in terms of the resources owned, which in turn affects the smoothness and quality of the accreditation process itself.

Positive Impact of Accreditation on Improving Curriculum Quality

One of the key findings that is important is the positive impact of accreditation on the curriculum. Based on interviews with lecturers, it was found that accreditation is one of the main drivers to update and adjust the curriculum to the needs of science and technology developments. The IAIN Lhokseumawe Postgraduate PAI Study Program, through the accreditation process, has succeeded in designing a curriculum that is more based on the competencies needed by the world of work, such as strengthening material on educational technology, research development, and understanding of global issues.

From the student side, most revealed that they felt more prepared to face professional challenges after participating in a study program that had gone through the accreditation process. This strengthening of the curriculum gives an idea that the accreditation process does not only focus on fulfilling administrative standards, but also on improving the quality of teaching and the relevance of teaching materials to the needs of the world of work.

Improvement of Study Program Management System

Improvement of the management system is also an important finding in this study. The accreditation process at the IAIN Lhokseumawe Postgraduate PAI Study Program has encouraged changes in the way study programs are managed, ranging from planning, implementation, to curriculum evaluation and education quality. Through accreditation, the PAI Study Program strives to be more transparent in terms of assessing the performance of lecturers and staff, as well as managing budgets and educational facilities. The strengthening of this managerial system, although still in need of further improvement, shows significant progress in achieving accreditation standards.

Data Limitations and Access to Sensitive Documents

Limitations in data collection were also found in this study, especially related to access to sensitive documents required in the accreditation analysis process. Some important documents, such as internal reports related to the evaluation of lecturer quality and study program management, are not fully accessible to researchers due to internal policies and personal data protection. This is a challenge in obtaining more in-depth and comprehensive information about the internal quality of the IAIN Lhokseumawe Postgraduate PAI Study Program. However, this research can still produce useful findings despite limitations in data access, by relying on interviews, observations, and analysis of documents that can be accessed openly.

This study identifies that the implementation of accreditation in the Islamic Religious Education Study Program (PAI) Postgraduate IAIN Lhokseumawe has played an important role in improving the quality of higher education, although there are still some challenges in its implementation. The main findings show that the accreditation process motivates the study program to improve the quality standards of education, both in terms of curriculum, facilities, and administrative management. In addition, the results of the study also show that the active involvement of lecturers, students, and administrative staff in the accreditation process also contributes to positive changes in education management, although there is still a mismatch between accreditation expectations and implementation in the field.

These findings have important implications in both scientific, practical, and social contexts. Scientifically, these results show that accreditation is not only an administrative process, but can also serve as an instrument that spurs continuous improvement in higher education. From a practical perspective, these findings suggest that although the accreditation process has triggered a positive transformation in the quality of education, more attention needs to be paid to aspects of policy implementation and better resource management.

Socially, this finding shows the importance of the involvement of the entire academic community in the accreditation process to achieve the goal of improving quality more optimally.

The importance of these outcomes lies in how accreditation can drive improvement in all aspects of the study program and not just as a formality, but as a strategic tool to create a better educational environment, which in turn improves the quality of the graduates produced.

The results of this study are in line with a number of previous studies that state that accreditation has a positive impact on improving the quality of higher education. For example, a study by Mohamad & Mohammad (2019) shows that accreditation improves the quality of the learning process in higher education through the fulfillment of set standards. However, the study also adds new insights by showing that while accreditation drives positive change, there is a mismatch between accreditation expectations and realities on the ground, suggesting that external factors such as organizational resources and culture need to be considered in designing a more effective accreditation process.

Alternative possible explanations for these findings are other factors that may affect the quality of education in the Postgraduate PAI Study Program, such as the availability of funds and internal policies that support educational innovation. For example, some lecturers and administrative staff may feel that while accreditation is helpful, a lack of resources or overly bureaucratic regulations are obstacles in implementing accreditation results optimally. However, based on the data obtained, the interpretation that accreditation spurs sustainable changes in the quality of education is more accountable because these findings are consistent with the existing literature.

This research has significant implications for the field of higher education, especially in designing more effective accreditation policies. These findings underscore the importance of not only meeting accreditation standards, but also paying attention to the implementation of policies that can ensure sustainable change. Therefore, universities should focus not only on accreditation formalities, but also on strengthening aspects of internal management and increasing resources. Practically, these results provide guidance for study program managers to increase synergy between lecturers, students, and staff in designing and implementing better quality education policies.

The main limitation of this study is the limited focus on one study program, namely the IAIN Lhokseumawe Postgraduate PAI Study Program, which reduces the ability to generalize the findings to other study programs. In addition, there is limited access to sensitive documents and data that cannot be fully obtained from informants leading to limitations in analysis. This limitation

can be overcome in future research by expanding the scope of research to other study programs in various universities, as well as improving data collection methods by utilizing technology to obtain more complete and reliable information.

CONCLUSION

This study analyzes the implementation of accreditation in the transformation of higher education quality in the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Postgraduate Study Program IAIN Lhokseumawe. That accreditation plays an important role in improving the quality of education, not only as an administrative procedure, but also as a strategic instrument that encourages continuous improvement in curriculum, teaching, infrastructure, and education management. Accreditation also encourages the active involvement of lecturers, students, and staff in evaluating and improving the quality of education. However, challenges in the implementation of accreditation still exist, such as limited facilities, time management constrained by academic activities, and limited access to sensitive documents. However, the accreditation process is still able to encourage positive change even though there is a mismatch between expectations and reality in the field. These findings suggest that accreditation should be seen as a tool to drive a sustainable transformation of education quality. Universities need to increase synergy between lecturers, students, and staff to create a better educational environment. In practical terms, these findings provide guidance for improving the accreditation process and managerial system in achieving higher quality standards.

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