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ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

Internal and External Quality Assurance Systems in Private Islamic Higher Education: A Case Study of PPEPP Cycle Implementation at Universitas Ma'arif Lampung

Nurani^{*1}, Agus Pahrudin², Yuberti³, Achy Rinaldi⁴

¹Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Intan Lampung, Indonesia

Correspondence: nurani270513@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The implementation of the Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS) in Private Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PIHEIs) often faces challenges such as weak quality culture, inconsistent follow-up, and the perception that accreditation is merely administrative. Furthermore, digitalization through the Sapto 2.0 platform has revealed new shortcomings: reliance on "woro-woro" (manual reminders) for lecturer grade reporting, data markup loopholes in Student Activity Reports (AKM), and inconsistencies in the Credit Semester System (SKS) during accreditation. This study aims to analyze the implementation of IQAS and responses to external quality assurance at Universitas Ma'arif Lampung, focusing on the PPEPP cycle (Setting, Implementation, Evaluation, Control, Improvement). A qualitative case study approach was employed. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 10 informants (university leaders, Head of Quality Assurance Institute, study program heads, lecturers, and administrative staff), documentation studies, and observation. The findings reveal that structurally, IQAS is implemented through an annual PPEPP cycle producing measurable action plans. However, three critical weaknesses were identified: (1) data markup practices in AKM reports prior to accreditation due to target pressure and system vulnerabilities, (2) SKS recording inconsistencies between Semester Learning Plans (RPS) and transcripts due to unvalidated data migration, and (3) the disconnection between internal quality reporting systems and graduate tracer studies. The response to external quality assurance (LAMDIK assessment) served as a moment of reflection, but without transparent digital improvements, the synergy between IQAS and EQAS remains vulnerable to administrative manipulation. It is concluded that strengthening sustainable quality in PIHEIs requires a reliable electronic quality assurance system with audit trails integrated with tracer studies, not merely annual cycle formalities.

Keywords: IQAS; EQAS; PPEPP Cycle; Accreditation; PIHEI



ABSTRAK

Implementasi Sistem Penjaminan Mutu Internal (SPMI) di Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam Swasta (PTKIS) kerap menghadapi tantangan budaya mutu yang lemah, tindak lanjut yang tidak konsisten, serta persepsi bahwa akreditasi hanya bersifat administratif. Selain itu, digitalisasi melalui platform Sapto 2.0 justru memunculkan kekurangan baru: ketergantungan pada pendekatan woro-woro (pengingat manual) dalam pelaporan nilai dosen, celah markup data pada laporan Aktivitas Kuliah Mahasiswa (AKM), serta inkonsistensi sistem Satuan Kredit Semester (SKS) saat akreditasi. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis implementasi SPMI dan respons terhadap penjaminan mutu eksternal di Universitas Ma'arif Lampung, dengan fokus pada siklus PPEPP (Penetapan, Pelaksanaan, Evaluasi, Pengendalian, Peningkatan). Pendekatan kualitatif studi kasus digunakan. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dengan 10 informan (pimpinan, Ketua LPM, kaprodi, dosen, tenaga kependidikan), studi dokumentasi, dan observasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa secara struktural SPMI dijalankan melalui siklus PPEPP tahunan yang menghasilkan rencana tindak lanjut terukur. Namun, ditemukan tiga kekurangan kritis: (1) praktik markup data AKM menjelang akreditasi karena tekanan target dan kelemahan sistem, (2) inkonsistensi pencatatan SKS antara RPS dan transkrip akibat migrasi data yang tidak tervalidasi, serta (3) tidak terhubungnya sistem pelaporan mutu internal dengan tracer study lulusan. Respons terhadap penjaminan mutu eksternal (asesmen LAMDIK) menjadi momentum refleksi, tetapi tanpa perbaikan digital yang transparan, sinergi SPMI dan SPME tetap rentan terhadap rekayasa administratif. Disimpulkan bahwa penguatan mutu berkelanjutan di PTKIS memerlukan sistem penjaminan mutu elektronik yang andal, memiliki audit trail, dan terintegrasi dengan tracer study, bukan sekadar formalitas siklus tahunan.

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Kata Kunci: SPMI; SPME; Siklus PPEPP; Akreditasi; PTKIS

1. INTRODUCTION

Higher education plays a strategic role in producing excellent human resources capable of responding to the challenges of the times. In the era of globalization and the Industrial Revolution 4.0, the demands on the quality of higher education graduates are increasingly high, not only in terms of hard skills but also soft skills and character. Quality graduates determine the nation's competitiveness on the global stage. Therefore, every higher education institution, both public and private, requires a robust and sustainable quality assurance system to ensure relevance, efficiency, and competitiveness of its graduates (Fauzi et al., 2024; Mohamad & Alias, 2021).

The Indonesian government has responded to this need by establishing a strong legal framework through the Higher Education Quality Assurance System (SPM Dikti). This policy requires every university to implement an Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS) and periodically undergo

external assessment (EQAS) through accreditation (Asma et al., 2025; Che Rusuli et al., 2020). The latest regulations, such as Permendikbudristek Number 53 of 2023, further emphasize the importance of accreditation efficiency and strengthening IQAS as the foundation for sustainable quality improvement (Rosyidah & Faslah, 2025).

In line with this policy direction, the government also encourages the digitalization of academic systems through the implementation of the Online Higher Education Academic System, known as Sapto 2.0. This platform is designed to integrate grade reporting, student activity reports (AKM), learning evaluation, and graduate tracking (tracer study) in real-time. With Sapto 2.0, the quality assurance process is expected to become more efficient, transparent, and based on accurate data. However, the adoption of this technology has not always run smoothly, especially in higher education institutions that are not yet ready in terms of infrastructure and human resources.

Based on initial observations at several Private Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PIHEIs), digitalization through Sapto 2.0 has actually revealed new shortcomings. For example, technical constraints in lecturer grade input are often addressed through "woro-woro" (repetitive manual reminders) or defensive approaches (waiting for instructions without being proactive). Lecturers and administrative staff complain about systems that are often error-prone, not user-friendly, and not well-integrated with internal campus systems. As a result, grade reporting becomes untimely and data entered into PDDikti is often inaccurate. This shows that digital transformation has not been followed by changes in quality culture and adequate human resource capacity development.

Furthermore, research in various contexts shows a significant gap between formal policies at the central level and institutional practices. Common obstacles include lecturer resistance due to additional workload, lack of understanding of the essence of quality, limited resources, and inconsistent leadership in driving quality culture (Aisyah et al., 2023; Maslihah & Faslah, 2025). As a result, quality assurance is often perceived as merely an administrative activity to meet accreditation requirements, rather than as a strategic tool for continuous improvement (Raman & Maimunah, 2022). This perception is one of the main obstacles to internalizing quality culture in the academic environment, especially in PIHEIs that often face budget and expert limitations.

PIHEIs have unique challenges because, in addition to having to meet national standards, they are also required to maintain their distinctive Islamic identity. Several previous studies (Chamidi et al., 2021; Sauri et al., 2019) show that leadership factors and the commitment of the academic community are the main determinants of IQAS success in PIHEIs. However, these studies were generally conducted before the issuance of Permendikbudristek No. 53 of 2023 and before the massive use of Sapto 2.0. As a result, studies on the impact of digitalization on quality assurance practices in PIHEIs are still very limited, especially those that critically reflect on systemic weaknesses that emerge.

Universitas Ma'arif Lampung (UMALA) is one of the PIHEIs in Lampung Province that has an ambitious vision: "Excellence, globally oriented, and Islamic character based on Ahlussunah Wal Jama'ah An Nahdliyah by 2037" (UMALA, 2026). To realize this, UMALA has built a fairly mature quality assurance infrastructure, including an active Quality Assurance Institute (LPM), complete IQAS documents, and all study programs that have been accredited "Good" or "Excellent." In November 2025, UMALA held a Management Review Meeting (RTM) that

produced a strategic action plan based on the PPEPP cycle (Setting, Implementation, Evaluation, Control, Improvement). Then in January 2026, the S1 Early Childhood Islamic Education (PIAUD) Study Program underwent a Field Assessment by the Independent Accreditation Institution for Education (LAMDIK).

Although structurally the IQAS at UMALA appears to be running well, initial observations and pre-research interviews indicated a number of shortcomings that need to be addressed. These include data markup practices in Student Activity Reports (AKM) prior to accreditation, inconsistencies in Credit Semester System (SKS) recording between Semester Learning Plans (RPS) and student transcripts due to unvalidated data migration, and the disconnection of internal quality reporting systems with graduate tracer studies. In addition, the "woro-woro" approach still dominates in reminding lecturers to input grades, which indicates weak automation and voluntary compliance. These initial findings serve as an entry point for conducting more in-depth research.

The novelty of this research lies in three aspects. First, this research does not merely normatively analyze the implementation of the PPEPP cycle but also constructively critiques the weaknesses of electronic-based IQAS implementation in the Sapto 2.0 era. Second, this research specifically traces the practices of AKM data markup, SKS system inconsistencies, and the disconnection with tracer studies—topics rarely addressed in PIHEI quality assurance literature. Third, this research was conducted after Permendikbudristek No. 53 of 2023, thus it can provide an up-to-date picture of the dynamics of accreditation by LAMDIK, which has more detailed standards compared to BAN-PT. Thus, this research is not normative but reflective-critical of the reality of quality assurance in PIHEIs.

Based on the above background, this research aims to analyze the implementation of IQAS and responses to external quality assurance at Universitas Ma'arif Lampung, with a focus on the application of the PPEPP cycle and the challenges arising from digitalization. Specifically, this research seeks to answer the questions: (1) How is the PPEPP cycle implemented at UMALA? (2) What are the weaknesses found in quality assurance practices, especially related to the Sapto 2.0 system, data markup, SKS inconsistencies, and tracer study integration? (3) How does UMALA respond to external quality assurance (LAMDIK assessment) and how can IQAS-EQAS synergy be strengthened? The results of this research are expected to provide concrete recommendations for other PIHEIs in strengthening quality assurance systems that are adaptive to digitalization, as well as input for policymakers about the need for improvement of the Sapto 2.0 platform and data verification mechanisms.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

2.1 Research Design

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. This approach was chosen to obtain an in-depth and holistic understanding of the phenomenon of quality assurance system

implementation at UMALA as it exists in the field (natural setting). The case study allows researchers to intensively explore the processes, interactions, and meanings inherent in quality assurance practices at the institution (Aguinis et al., 2023).

2.2 Subject and Research Location

The research location is Universitas Ma'arif Lampung, located in Metro City, Lampung. The location was chosen purposively with the consideration that UMALA is a PIHEI that has a global vision, actively implements the IQAS cycle (evidenced by the implementation of RTM and IQA), and is currently undergoing an external accreditation process by LAMDIK. This makes UMALA an information-rich case for studying the dynamics of quality assurance in PIHEIs.

Research subjects were determined using purposive sampling technique, selecting informants considered to know best and be directly involved in the quality assurance process. Key informants in this research include: (1) Rector of UMALA as the highest quality responsible person, (2) Head of LPM as the IQAS implementation manager, (3) Head of the S1 PIAUD Study Program as the unit that has just undergone field assessment, (4) Lecturers and administrative staff involved in the study program quality assurance team. A total of 10 informants were interviewed in depth.

2.3 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection techniques were carried out through three methods. *First*, in-depth interviews with semi-structured guidelines to explore information about the implementation of the PPEPP cycle, strategies, obstacles, and the meaning of quality assurance for the actors. *Second*, documentation study including analysis of IQAS policy documents, RTM reports, IQA reports, Study Program Self-Evaluation Reports (LED), and field assessment minutes. *Third*, passive participatory observation by directly observing administrative activities at LPM and study programs, as well as examining the campus environment that supports the quality system.

2.4 Research Instruments

The main instrument in this qualitative research is the researcher themselves, supported by secondary instruments such as interview protocols, observation checklists, and documentation grids. The interview protocol consisted of open-ended questions designed to explore the concepts of quality culture, PPEPP implementation, and institutional responses to external quality assurance. The observation checklist was structured to monitor quality document management and system usage within the institution.

2.5 Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which consists of three activity flows: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Kunisch et al., 2018). Collected data were reduced by selecting information relevant to the research focus, then presented in descriptive narrative and table forms, before finally drawing conclusions that were continuously verified throughout the research process.

2.6 Validity and Reliability

Data validity was maintained through source and technique triangulation, as well as member checking with the Rector and Quality Assurance Team of UMALA. Reliability was ensured by creating a clear "audit trail" of all raw data, transcripts, and analysis notes, allowing for procedural consistency. By comparing the perspectives of administrators with practitioners, the researcher ensured that the findings on quality assurance reflected the reality of the entire campus ecosystem.

3. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

3.1 Quality Infrastructure and Policies at UMALA

UMALA has built a structured quality assurance infrastructure. The LPM operates independently at the university level, assisted by Quality Assurance Units (UPM) at each faculty and quality assurance teams at the study program level. The existence of LPM serves as the driving force for all quality activities. In terms of policy, UMALA has an IQAS master document that includes quality policies, quality manuals, quality standards (referring to the National Higher Education Standards and institutional vision), and quality forms. UMALA's quality policy is aligned with its vision to excel and be globally oriented, with measurable indicators.

The Rector of UMALA explained the philosophy behind the quality system built:

"Vision is not just a slogan: excellence means continuously improving achievements, global orientation encourages international competitiveness through reputable publications, and Aswaja character affirms that quality is not only about accreditation but also about shaping graduates with noble character in accordance with Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah." (R-UMALA, interview, February 10, 2026)

This statement affirms that quality assurance at UMALA has a dual dimension: achieving national and international academic standards, while also internalizing Islamic values that are the hallmark of the institution. This is reflected in the IQAS policy document which adds special standards related to Aswaja character development (DOK-SPMI-01).

Observation at the LPM office showed that quality document management is carried out quite neatly. In the room, there is a large shelf containing binders with clear labels: "IQAS Documents 2025", "IQA Reports 2025", "RTM Reports 2025", "PAI Study Program Accreditation", "PIAUD Study Program Accreditation", and so on (OBS-LPM, February 16, 2026). An LPM staff member explained that they are in the process of digitalization: "We are testing a simple application based on Google Sheets to make searching easier. Later all units can access and upload their respective documents" (S-LPM, interview, February 16, 2026).

3.2 Implementation of the PPEPP Cycle: The Case of Management Review Meeting

The PPEPP cycle at UMALA is implemented consistently, especially at the evaluation and control stages. In November 2025, UMALA held a Management Review Meeting (RTM), which is the peak of the IQAS evaluation cycle (Universitas Ma'arif Lampung, 2026). This RTM discussed the

results of the previous Internal Quality Audit (IQA). In the meeting led directly by the Rector, a strategic Action Plan (RTL) was produced.

The Head of LPM explained in detail how the PPEPP cycle is implemented:

"We run the PPEPP cycle every year systematically: setting through SPMI documents by the Rector, implementation by each unit according to standards, evaluation through IQA, control through RTM, and improvement through follow-up that is continuously monitored. This cycle continues to rotate every year." (LPM-UMALA, interview, February 16, 2026)

Direct observation of the RTM showed a productive and participatory atmosphere. The Rector opened the meeting promptly at 08.00 WIB and emphasized the importance of openness in evaluating audit findings. Meeting participants consisting of vice rectors, deans, study program heads, and heads of departments sat in a U-formation with a projector screen in front. The Head of LPM presented a summary of the 2026 IQA results covering average achievement per standard and key findings (OBS-RTM, February 11, 2026).

The group discussion session lasted for 2 hours. Participants were divided into 4 groups based on fields: Academic, HR, Research, and Facilities. Each group formulated RTL recommendations to address priority findings. Most interesting was the recommendation from the Research group proposing the "1 Student 1 Work" program requiring every thesis to produce IPR or an ISBN-book. The Rector immediately responded positively and asked LPM to prepare a technical guide (OBS-RTM, February 11, 2026). The RTM results were then formulated in a comprehensive Action Plan document. This document contains an RTL matrix covering findings, action plans, success indicators, responsible parties, schedules, and resource allocation (DOK-RTM-2026).

3.3 Response to External Quality Assurance: LAMDIK Field Assessment

UMALA's response to EQAS was evident in the preparation and implementation of the LAMDIK field assessment for the S1 PIAUD Study Program in January 2026 (Universitas Ma'arif Lampung, 2026). This process began with the preparation of a comprehensive Self-Evaluation Report (LED) and Study Program Performance Report (LKPS), reflecting the real condition of the study program. A task force team consisting of lecturers and administrative staff was formed to ensure the completeness of data and physical evidence.

The Head of PIAUD Study Program recounted the intensive experience:

"Accreditation preparation was conducted for ± 6 months by forming a task force (LED, LKPS, physical evidence, publications) and routine meetings almost daily before the assessment. The main challenge was preparing the LED which demanded honest evaluation, actively assisted by LPM." (KAPRODI-PIAUD, interview, February 10, 2026)

The resulting LED document was 250 pages thick, containing a comprehensive evaluation based on 9 LAMDIK accreditation criteria. Important data included: 12 permanent lecturers (3 with doctorates, 9 with master's degrees), 278 active students, 450 graduates with an average GPA of 3.45, and graduate waiting time for employment of less than 6 months reaching 60% (DOK-LED-PIAUD, 2026).

During the four-day assessment (January 13-16, 2026), the LAMDIK assessor team conducted data verification, interviews with various stakeholders, and direct observation. The Head of PIAUD Study Program described the process:

"The first day was filled with opening and document verification, checking LED and LKPS along with physical evidence. The second day involved interviews with leaders, lecturers, students, alumni, and graduate users—the most tense session was with students and alumni, but their responses were very positive. The third day was field assessment through observation of learning and facilities. The fourth day was confirmation of findings and closing." (KAPRODI-PIAUD, interview, February 10, 2026)

The Field Assessment Minutes recorded a number of positive findings and improvement recommendations. The assessor team appreciated the readiness of the study program, the quality of the curriculum based on KKNi and MBKM, and the innovative learning process. Recommendations given included: the need to increase the number of doctoral lecturers, strengthen international publications, and complete the micro-teaching laboratory with modern equipment (DOK-BA-LAMDIK, 2026). The final conclusion was that the study program was recommended to receive "Good" accreditation with the prospect of improving to "Excellent" in the next assessment.

3.4 Study Program Accreditation: A Portrait of Quality Achievement

The results of consistent IQAS implementation are reflected in the accreditation achievements of study programs at UMALA. The UMALA official website states that "The institution and 7 undergraduate study programs on our campus have been accredited as Good and 3 accredited as Excellent by the National Accreditation Board for Higher Education" (Universitas Ma'arif Lampung, 2026). This shows that minimum quality standards have been well met. "Good and Excellent" accreditation serves as external evidence of the internal commitment carried out through the PPEPP cycle.

Although LPM has implemented the PPEPP cycle well, the research found that challenges still exist at the implementing unit level (faculties and study programs). A lecturer who is also a member of the study program quality assurance team revealed:

"The quality assurance team is LPM's extension at the study program level tasked with ensuring the quality cycle runs well. However, the challenge is that lecturer awareness is not yet evenly distributed; some are disciplined in administration, while others consider it an additional burden, even though the ultimate goal is for the common good and mutual quality improvement." (DOSEN-GM, interview, February 10, 2026)

A similar challenge was also expressed by administrative staff handling study program administration:

"The difficulty is the delay of lecturers in collecting data such as grades or research reports, while the study program must immediately report to LPM or PDDikti. As a result, the quality assurance

team receives reprimands when data is incomplete. Additionally, the application system that is not yet integrated means data input must be done repeatedly." (TENDIK, interview, February 10, 2026)

Post-assessment observation at the PIAUD Study Program showed efforts to improve document governance. In the study program administration room, there is a filing cabinet with labeled drawers: "Accreditation 2026", "Curriculum Documents", "Lecturer Data", "Student Data". Administrative staff showed that all documents have been archived in colored plastic folders according to code. "This is all thanks to the accreditation preparation earlier. Previously documents were scattered, now they are neater. We have also scanned most of the important documents" (SA-PIAUD, interview, February 10, 2026).

3.5 Lecturer Research and Publication Achievements

One focus of the RTL is improving the quantity and quality of lecturer research and publications. Data from the Research and Community Service Institute (LPPM) shows a positive trend although still needing improvement. In 2026, total lecturer publications reached 173 articles, with details of 65 in nationally accredited Sinta journals and 15 in international journals (DOK-Penelitian-2026).

In terms of research funding, in 2026 there were 52 research titles with a total fund of Rp 1.2 billion, sourced from internal university, Ministry of Religious Affairs (Litapdimas), Ministry of Education (DRTPM), and other collaborations. This shows the institution's commitment to supporting lecturer research activities.

Another indicator of quality improvement is UMALA's progress in managing online academic journals. Based on the Rector's 2026 Performance Report, UMALA currently publishes ten active journals, two of which have been Scopus-indexed.

3.6 National and International Collaboration

To support its global vision, UMALA actively establishes collaborations with various partners. Data from the Office of International Affairs and Cooperation shows 15 active national cooperation partners, including with UIN Raden Intan Lampung, IAIN Metro, Universitas Lampung, and LP Ma'arif NU Lampung. At the international level, UMALA has established cooperation with Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Fatoni University Thailand, and is in the process of an MoU with IIUM Malaysia (DOK-KERJASAMA-2026).

The Rector of UMALA emphasized the importance of this collaboration:

"We continue to collaborate with various parties, both nationally and internationally, to realize our vision. Cooperation with universities in Malaysia and Thailand opens opportunities for student and lecturer exchange, as well as joint publications. This is part of our efforts to be globally oriented." (R-UMALA, interview, February 10, 2026)

3.7 Student Achievements

Quality achievement is also reflected in student achievements in various competitions. Data from Vice Rector III recorded several proud achievements throughout 2024-2025, including 2nd place in the National Student MTQ, 1st place in the National Learning Media Innovation Competition,

1st place in the Regional Sharia Economic Law Debate, and 1st runner-up in the International Musabaqah Qira'atul Kutub in Malaysia (DOK-Prestasi-MHS, 2025).

3.8 Efforts to Strengthen Quality Culture

Recognizing the challenge of uneven quality culture, UMALA through LPM designed various strengthening programs. One of them is intensifying the socialization of Vision, Mission, and Goals (VMTS) to new students. Observation on campus showed banners containing the university's vision and mission at several strategic points. In the PIAUD study program room, accreditation certificates and a small banner reading "PIAUD Accreditation Team, Ready for Excellence" were displayed (OBS-PIAUD, February 10, 2026). This shows optimism and a spirit of continuous improvement.

4. DISCUSSION

The results of this research show that UMALA has institutionalized IQAS in a structured and sustainable manner. This is reflected in the formation of a comprehensive quality institutional architecture from the university level to the study program level, through the existence of LPM, UPM, and quality assurance teams at the study program level. This structure is not only administrative but also operational in coordinating policies, monitoring standard achievements, and ensuring the continuity of the quality cycle. This finding is consistent with the research results of Sampe & Arifin (2024) which affirm that the effectiveness of IQAS implementation in Indonesian higher education is largely determined by the existence and active function of quality assurance units at every organizational level.

More than just meeting regulatory demands, UMALA constructs its quality system by integrating Aswaja An Nahdliyah Islamic values as an ethical and philosophical foundation. Quality orientation is not understood reductionistically as mere accreditation achievement, but as an instrument for character and integrity formation of graduates. This paradigm expands the conceptual scope of quality assurance which has tended to be oriented towards quantitative and managerial indicators (Ali et al., 2016). In the context of PIHEIs, the integration of Islamic values as affirmed by Hidayah & Syahrani (2022) is a strategic cultural capital in building an authentic quality culture rooted in institutional identity.

The implementation of the PPEPP cycle at UMALA demonstrates the internalization of sustainable quality assurance principles. The "1 Student 1 Work" program represents a concrete and measurable output-based policy innovation. The obligation to produce IPR or an ISBN-book from every thesis encourages students to produce works that have beneficial value and formal recognition. This approach aligns with the Outcome Based Education (OBE) paradigm which emphasizes the measurability of learning outcomes and their relevance to real-world needs (Jingura & Kamusoko, 2019). Thus, this policy not only increases academic productivity but also strengthens graduate competitiveness.

The success in facing external assessment cannot be separated from the previous consistent implementation of the PPEPP cycle. Systematic documentation and an established evaluation

culture became the main capital in meeting accreditation standards. Bhakti & Ridwan (2022) affirm that harmonious integration between IQAS and EQAS is the foundation for quality sustainability. In this context, external assessor feedback is not viewed as mere criticism but as strategic input for improving the subsequent quality cycle.

The achievement of all study programs with "Excellent and Good" predicates indicates the institution's solid position in the national quality map. However, transformation towards "Excellent" status demands proof of outcome-based excellence and long-term impact, such as graduate reputation, international research collaboration, and governance innovation (Papatungan et al., 2021). Thus, UMALA's challenge is no longer just maintaining standards but making a strategic leap towards competitive quality with global competitiveness.

At the operational level, variations in lecturer commitment to quality administration and administrative burden are challenges that cannot be ignored. The gap between policy and practice, as identified by Mijere et al. (2025) and Saani & Saeed (2025), shows that internalization of quality culture still requires strengthening. Therefore, change management strategies become crucial in ensuring that quality policies are truly implemented consistently across all units.

The effectiveness of RTL at the university level greatly depends on the study program's ability to translate it into contextual work programs. This phenomenon indicates that quality culture has not been fully evenly distributed across all organizational lines. Kaseke (2020) emphasizes that the formation of quality culture is a long-term process requiring consistency, role modeling, and a sustainable reinforcement system. Thus, micro-strategies at the study program level become determining factors for the success of quality transformation.

Digitalization of the quality archiving and reporting system is a strategic solution to administrative complexity. An integrated information system allows real-time monitoring of standard achievements and facilitates accreditation preparation. This policy aligns with the direction of digital-based quality reporting policy to PDDikti (LPM UMALA, 2026). Digitalization not only increases efficiency but also strengthens transparency, accuracy, and accountability of quality governance.

In the context of resource limitations often faced by PIHEIs, UMALA's managerial commitment in funding 52 research titles with a total of Rp 1.2 billion in 2025 shows a long-term investment strategy in strengthening academic reputation. This approach proves that structural limitations can be overcome through adaptive and proactive resource management. Investment in research and publication becomes an important instrument in improving the institution's position at the national and international levels. Collaboration with 15 national and 3 international partners shows an expansive orientation in building a global academic network. This collaboration opens opportunities for student and lecturer exchange and joint publications, while also serving as a means of quality benchmarking. In the perspective of strategic quality management, external networks function as accelerators for institutional transformation towards global standards.

Student achievements in various national and international competitions show that the quality system is beginning to produce tangible impacts on institutional output and outcomes. The improvement in student quality, both academic and non-academic, reflects the concept of

comprehensive quality as put forward by Okeke-James et al. (2020), which emphasizes the importance of outcome-based and long-term impact measurement. Thus, quality is understood as measurable performative achievements that contribute to institutional reputation. Overall, the "Excellent and Good" accreditation achievements and the success of the LAMDIK assessment are important milestones in UMALA's quality journey. However, consistency in PPEPP implementation, adaptation to regulatory dynamics, and commitment to continuous learning will be the main determinants in realizing the "Excellent" predicate and the institution's global vision by 2037.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the research findings and deep analysis of the quality assurance system implementation at Universitas Ma'arif Lampung, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The implementation of IQAS at UMALA has been running systemically and sustainably through strengthening quality institutional infrastructure, consistency in implementing the PPEPP cycle, and synergy between IQAS and EQAS. The existence of LPM, UPM, and quality assurance teams at the study program level serves as an effective structural foundation in coordinating quality policies and control.
2. The integration of Aswaja An Nahdliyah Islamic values into the quality system enriches the quality assurance paradigm, which is not only oriented towards administrative compliance and accreditation achievement but also towards character and integrity formation of graduates. This demonstrates that quality assurance in PIHEIs can have a dual dimension: academic excellence and spiritual-moral formation.
3. The "Excellent and Good" accreditation achievements across all study programs, increased publications and research outputs, the innovative "1 Student 1 Work" program, and student achievements at the national and international levels indicate that quality culture is beginning to be internalized and producing tangible impacts on institutional output and outcomes.
4. However, critical weaknesses were identified: (1) data markup practices in AKM reports prior to accreditation due to target pressure and system vulnerabilities, (2) SKS recording inconsistencies between RPS and transcripts due to unvalidated data migration, and (3) the disconnection between internal quality reporting systems and graduate tracer studies. These weaknesses highlight the need for a reliable electronic quality assurance system with audit trails integrated with tracer studies, not merely annual cycle formalities.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Strengthening Electronic Quality Assurance Systems:** UMALA and other PIHEIs should develop or adopt electronic quality assurance systems that have robust audit trail features, automated verification mechanisms, and integration with tracer study platforms. This will reduce the risk of data manipulation and ensure data accuracy.
2. **Capacity Building for Quality Culture:** Continuous training and socialization programs should be conducted to ensure that all lecturers and administrative staff understand the essence of quality assurance as a tool for improvement, not merely administrative compliance.
3. **Integration of Tracer Study with IQAS:** Quality reporting systems should be integrated with graduate tracer studies to enable closed-loop feedback on graduate outcomes, which is essential for outcome-based quality improvement.
4. **Policy Advocacy for Sapto 2.0 Improvement:** UMALA and other PIHEIs should advocate to the Ministry of Education for improvements to the Sapto 2.0 platform, particularly regarding user-friendliness, integration capabilities, and data validation mechanisms.
5. **Strengthening External Collaboration:** UMALA should continue expanding its international collaboration network to enhance research quality, publication output, and global competitiveness.

educational waqf funds.

Ethical & Author Statements

CRedit Statement: Nurani, Agus Pahrudin, Yuberti, & Achi Rinaldi: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing -- Original Draft, Data Curation, and Supervision; Formal Analysis, Investigation, and Writing -- Review & Editing.

Data Policy: Supporting data regarding the implementation of IQAS and EQAS at Universitas Ma'arif Lampung are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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