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ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

Internal Quality Assurance Management in Islamic Higher Education Institutions

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the management of internal quality assurance in Islamic higher education institutions, particularly in relation to quality planning, implementation, evaluation, control, continuous improvement, and the integration of Islamic values. This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and documentation involving institutional leaders, quality assurance personnel, faculty or study program managers, and lecturers. Data were analyzed thematically through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing, while data credibility was strengthened through source and technique triangulation. The findings indicate that internal quality assurance is implemented through a cycle of quality standard formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, corrective action, and continuous improvement. The study also found that leadership commitment, involvement of academic units, and coordination between quality assurance structures are important factors in ensuring the effectiveness of the quality assurance system. Furthermore, Islamic values such as integrity, responsibility, discipline, ethics, and character development are integrated into institutional quality practices and contribute to the distinctive identity of Islamic higher education. The study concludes that internal quality assurance should not be positioned merely as an accreditation and administrative mechanism but as an integrated institutional management system for developing a sustainable quality culture.

Keywords: Internal Quality Assurance; Quality Management; Islamic Higher Education; Quality Culture; Continuous Improvement; Islamic Values.



ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis manajemen penjaminan mutu internal pada perguruan tinggi Islam, khususnya berkaitan dengan perencanaan mutu, implementasi, evaluasi, pengendalian, peningkatan berkelanjutan, serta integrasi nilai-nilai Islam. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur, observasi, dan dokumentasi yang melibatkan pimpinan perguruan tinggi, pengelola penjaminan mutu, pengelola fakultas atau program studi, serta dosen. Data dianalisis secara tematik melalui tahap kondensasi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan, sedangkan kredibilitas data diperkuat melalui triangulasi sumber dan teknik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penjaminan mutu internal dilaksanakan melalui siklus perumusan standar mutu, implementasi, monitoring dan evaluasi, tindakan perbaikan, serta peningkatan mutu secara berkelanjutan. Penelitian juga menemukan bahwa komitmen kepemimpinan, keterlibatan unit akademik, dan koordinasi antarkomponen penjaminan mutu menjadi faktor penting dalam mendukung efektivitas sistem penjaminan mutu. Selain itu, nilai-nilai Islam seperti integritas, tanggung jawab, kedisiplinan, etika, dan pembentukan karakter diintegrasikan ke dalam praktik mutu kelembagaan dan menjadi bagian dari identitas perguruan tinggi Islam. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa penjaminan mutu internal tidak seharusnya ditempatkan semata-mata sebagai mekanisme administratif dan pemenuhan akreditasi, tetapi sebagai sistem manajemen kelembagaan yang terintegrasi untuk membangun budaya mutu yang berkelanjutan. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi melalui perspektif integratif yang menghubungkan manajemen mutu, kepemimpinan kelembagaan, peningkatan berkelanjutan, dan nilai-nilai Islam dalam sistem penjaminan mutu internal.

Kata Kunci: Penjaminan Mutu Internal; Manajemen Mutu; Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam; Budaya Mutu; Peningkatan Berkelanjutan; Nilai-nilai Islam

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1. INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions are increasingly required to demonstrate their capacity to provide quality, accountable, and continuously improving educational services (Haidlor & Machfudi, 2026). Quality assurance has therefore become an essential component of higher education governance, particularly in responding to changes in academic standards, technological development, stakeholder expectations, and increasingly competitive higher education environments (Ariyanto et al., 2026). In this context, internal quality assurance is not merely an administrative mechanism for fulfilling accreditation requirements, but a strategic management process through which institutions systematically plan, implement, evaluate, control, and improve the quality of academic and non-academic activities (Haningsih et al., 2026). Effective internal quality assurance enables higher education institutions to build a culture of quality in which quality improvement becomes an integral part of institutional decision-making and organizational behavior (Fahmi Husein, Moh Solikul Hadi, 2024).

This issue becomes increasingly significant in Islamic higher education institutions, which have a distinctive institutional mission. In addition to achieving academic excellence, Islamic higher education institutions are expected to integrate Islamic values, character formation, ethical

responsibility, and the development of knowledge with Islamic perspectives into their educational processes (Antonopoulou, 2024; Nurlaila, 2019). Consequently, quality assurance in Islamic higher education cannot be limited to conventional indicators such as curriculum, teaching performance, research productivity, student services, infrastructure, and institutional governance. It also needs to consider how institutional Islamic values are translated into academic policies, learning processes, lecturer and student development, organizational culture, and quality improvement mechanisms (Azizah et al., 2025). The challenge lies in ensuring that the pursuit of academic and managerial quality remains consistent with the philosophical and normative foundations of Islamic higher education (Yuliana et al., 2026).

In practice, however, the implementation of internal quality assurance in higher education institutions still faces a number of challenges (Muslim et al., 2026). Quality assurance units in some institutions tend to function primarily as administrative bodies responsible for preparing accreditation documents, collecting evidence, and monitoring compliance with established standards (Zulhendri et al., 2025). This condition may create a gap between the formal quality assurance system and its actual implementation at the level of study programs, faculties, lecturers, and educational services. Furthermore, the quality assurance cycle may not always be implemented consistently as a continuous process. Evaluation findings are sometimes used primarily to meet reporting requirements rather than becoming a substantive basis for institutional decision-making and quality improvement. In Islamic higher education institutions, another challenge is how to integrate the distinctive values and mission of Islamic education into a systematic internal quality assurance framework without reducing these values to merely formal indicators (Afin Nida Al Hasanah et al., 2026).

From a management perspective, internal quality assurance requires more than the existence of formal policies and institutional quality assurance units (Faiz Romli, Ellen Prima, 2025). It requires effective leadership, clear quality standards, measurable performance indicators, systematic monitoring and evaluation, reliable documentation, stakeholder participation, and mechanisms for follow-up and continuous improvement (Ilmia habibati Laudza'i et al., 2026). Therefore, the effectiveness of internal quality assurance is closely related to how quality assurance is managed as an institutional system. The management perspective is important because quality assurance involves interconnected processes ranging from policy formulation and planning to implementation, evaluation, control, and improvement. Understanding these processes provides a more comprehensive explanation of why some institutions are able to develop a strong culture of quality while others remain focused on procedural compliance.

Previous studies have generally examined quality assurance from several perspectives, including the implementation of internal quality assurance systems, accreditation readiness, quality management, academic standards, quality culture, and the role of leadership in higher education quality improvement (Arif et al., 2025). These studies provide important evidence that systematic quality assurance can contribute to institutional performance and educational quality. Nevertheless, much of the existing literature discusses internal quality assurance within the context of higher education in general, while relatively limited attention has been given to the specific characteristics of Islamic higher education institutions. In addition, previous research frequently emphasizes the implementation of quality assurance instruments or the fulfillment of institutional

standards, rather than examining how internal quality assurance is managed as an integrated organizational process that connects standards, leadership, implementation, evaluation, control, and continuous improvement with the Islamic identity of the institution (Sampe & Arifin, 2024).

This condition indicates a research gap. First, there is a contextual gap, because the distinctive characteristics of Islamic higher education institutions have not been sufficiently integrated into discussions of internal quality assurance management (Siti Nurrahmatin Ni'mah1, 2026). Second, there is a conceptual gap, as internal quality assurance is often examined as a compliance mechanism rather than as an integrated management system for developing a sustainable quality culture. Third, there is a process gap, particularly concerning the relationship among planning, implementation, evaluation, control, and follow-up improvement within the internal quality assurance cycle. Fourth, there is a value-integration gap, namely the limited discussion of how Islamic values and institutional identity can be embedded into quality standards and quality improvement practices. These gaps demonstrate the need for research that views internal quality assurance not only from a technical-academic perspective but also from an institutional management and Islamic educational perspective.

Based on these gaps, this study aims to analyze the management of internal quality assurance in Islamic higher education institutions. Specifically, the study seeks to examine how internal quality standards are formulated and implemented, how quality assurance activities are monitored and evaluated, how evaluation findings are used for institutional control and improvement, and how Islamic values and institutional identity are integrated into the quality assurance process. The study also seeks to identify the managerial factors that support or hinder the development of an effective and sustainable internal quality assurance system.

The novelty of this research lies in the development of an integrated perspective on internal quality assurance management in Islamic higher education, which connects the conventional quality cycle planning, implementation, evaluation, control, and improvement with the distinctive values, mission, and identity of Islamic higher education institutions. Rather than positioning quality assurance merely as a mechanism for accreditation compliance, this study conceptualizes it as a strategic institutional management system for building a sustainable quality culture rooted in Islamic values. The research therefore seeks to bridge the relationship between quality management principles and the philosophical foundations of Islamic higher education. Through this perspective, internal quality assurance is understood not only as a system for measuring institutional performance but also as a mechanism for aligning academic excellence, organizational governance, continuous improvement, and Islamic educational values.

Thus, this study is expected to contribute theoretically by enriching the discourse on quality assurance management through an Islamic higher education perspective and practically by providing a framework that can assist Islamic higher education institutions in strengthening their internal quality assurance systems. The findings are expected to be relevant for institutional leaders, quality assurance units, faculties, study programs, and other stakeholders seeking to transform internal quality assurance from a predominantly administrative and accreditation-oriented activity into a sustainable institutional culture of quality improvement.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to examine the management of internal quality assurance in Islamic higher education institutions. The qualitative approach was chosen to obtain an in-depth understanding of how internal quality assurance is planned, implemented, evaluated, controlled, and continuously improved within the institutional context. The research focused on the implementation of the internal quality assurance cycle, including the formulation of quality standards, implementation of standards, evaluation, control, and continuous improvement, as well as the integration of Islamic values into institutional quality management.

The research was conducted at an Islamic higher education institution that had established and implemented an internal quality assurance system. Research participants were selected through purposive sampling, involving institutional leaders, quality assurance managers or staff, faculty or study program managers, and lecturers who were directly involved in quality assurance activities. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and documentation. Interviews explored institutional quality policies, implementation of quality standards, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, follow-up actions, leadership roles, and the integration of Islamic values. Observations were used to examine the actual implementation of quality assurance practices, while documentation included quality policies, academic standards, standard operating procedures, evaluation reports, monitoring documents, and institutional performance reports (Creswell, 2018).

The data were analyzed thematically through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The analysis focused on several key themes, namely quality planning and standard formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, quality control, continuous improvement, and the integration of Islamic values within the internal quality assurance system. The credibility of the findings was strengthened through source and technique triangulation by comparing information from different participants and examining the consistency between interviews, observations, and institutional documents. Member checking was also conducted to confirm the accuracy of selected interpretations. Through these procedures, the study sought to produce a comprehensive understanding of internal quality assurance management as both a managerial mechanism and an instrument for developing a sustainable quality culture in Islamic higher education institutions (Creswell, 2023).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this research reveal a comprehensive picture of PAI teacher competency at MI Mathlaul Anwar Srirahayu, encompassing pedagogical, professional, social, and personality competencies. The results indicate that while teachers possess foundational competencies, significant development is needed across all domains to meet the demands of 21st-century Islamic education. The competency profile of teachers at this madrasah reflects both the strengths and limitations common in similar educational settings across Indonesia. Recent research by Zaqiah et al. (2024) on competency improvement among Islamic religious education teachers using self-

The findings of this study describe the management of internal quality assurance in an Islamic higher education institution based on data obtained through interviews, observations, and institutional documentation. The findings are organized into several aspects, namely quality planning and standard formulation, implementation of quality standards, monitoring and evaluation, quality control and follow-up, continuous improvement, and integration of Islamic values into the internal quality assurance system.

The findings indicate that internal quality assurance begins with the formulation of institutional quality standards that are aligned with the institution's vision, mission, academic objectives, and applicable higher education regulations. Interviews with institutional management revealed that quality standards are formulated through discussions involving institutional leaders, the quality assurance unit, faculties, study programs, and other relevant academic units. One institutional leader explained:

“We do not formulate quality standards only at the level of the quality assurance unit. The standards are discussed together with the leadership, faculties, study programs, and other related units so that the standards can actually be implemented.”

This statement was supported by observations showing that quality-related meetings involved representatives from several academic and managerial units. Documentation also showed the existence of institutional quality policies, quality standards, and standard operating procedures that serve as references for academic and administrative activities. The findings indicate that quality planning has been positioned as an institutional responsibility rather than the responsibility of a single quality assurance unit. The involvement of different units also shows an effort to establish shared ownership of the quality standards.

The second finding concerns the implementation of established quality standards. The results of interviews showed that quality standards were translated into academic and administrative procedures at the faculty and study program levels. Lecturers, for example, were required to prepare learning plans, conduct learning activities according to established procedures, and carry out student assessment systematically. A study program manager stated:

“The standards are not only stored as documents. We try to translate them into the activities of the study program, starting from planning lectures, implementation, assessment, and reporting.”

Observations of academic activities indicated that several institutional procedures had been implemented through academic planning documents, lecturer teaching preparations, student attendance records, assessment documents, and academic reporting. Institutional documentation also contained various forms and guidelines used by academic units in carrying out their activities. These findings suggest that the internal quality assurance system has been operationalized through institutional procedures and academic administrative practices, although the level of implementation may differ among units.

Monitoring and evaluation constituted an important part of the internal quality assurance process. Interview data showed that the institution periodically evaluated the implementation of established standards through internal monitoring, evaluation meetings, and review of academic and administrative performance. A quality assurance staff member explained:

“Evaluation is conducted to see whether the standards have really been achieved. If there is a discrepancy, we record it and communicate it to the relevant unit for follow-up.”

Observations showed that evaluation activities were supported by documents such as monitoring instruments, evaluation forms, academic reports, and meeting records. Documentation also indicated that several aspects of academic performance were periodically reviewed, including learning implementation, lecturer performance, student services, and administrative processes. The analysis of these findings shows that evaluation was used not only to collect institutional performance data but also to identify areas that required corrective action. Thus, evaluation functioned as an important source of information for subsequent quality management decisions.

The findings further show that evaluation results were followed by quality control measures. When discrepancies between established standards and actual implementation were identified, the responsible units were asked to undertake corrective actions. One institutional manager stated:

“After evaluation, we do not stop at the report. The unit that has not achieved the target is asked to make improvements, and the progress is monitored again.”

This finding was consistent with observations of follow-up meetings in which evaluation results were communicated to academic units. Institutional documents also contained records of recommendations and follow-up actions resulting from monitoring and evaluation activities. The analysis indicates that quality control has been connected to the evaluation process through corrective and follow-up measures. However, the intensity and consistency of follow-up implementation depended on the readiness and responsiveness of each academic unit.

Another finding concerns the institution's efforts to develop continuous quality improvement. Interviews revealed that quality assurance was increasingly understood as a cyclical process rather than a one-time activity conducted only in preparation for accreditation. A quality assurance manager stated:

“Our goal is not simply to obtain a good accreditation result. The important thing is that every evaluation becomes the basis for improvement in the following period.”

Observations showed that several institutional activities were adjusted following the results of previous evaluations, particularly in academic administration, learning services, and institutional management. Documentation also showed revisions to several procedures and academic documents following evaluation activities. These findings indicate the emergence of a continuous improvement orientation in the implementation of internal quality assurance. The evaluation cycle was gradually being used to identify weaknesses, formulate improvements, and adjust institutional practices.

The findings also reveal that the internal quality assurance system was implemented within the institutional context of Islamic higher education. Islamic values were reflected not only in the curriculum but also in institutional policies, academic behavior, lecturer-student relationships, and organizational culture. One institutional leader explained:

“Quality in an Islamic institution is not only about academic achievement. We also have to consider integrity, responsibility, discipline, and Islamic character because these are part of our institutional identity.”

Observations indicated that Islamic values were reflected in institutional activities, academic interactions, religious programs, and expectations regarding the ethical conduct of lecturers and students. Institutional documents also demonstrated that religious and character-related dimensions were incorporated into several institutional policies and academic programs. The analysis shows that the implementation of internal quality assurance in this institution was not entirely separated from its Islamic identity. Quality was understood in a broader sense, encompassing academic, managerial, ethical, and spiritual dimensions.

The final finding relates to the role of leadership and the quality assurance unit in ensuring the sustainability of the internal quality assurance system. Interview data indicated that institutional leaders provided direction, established quality priorities, and encouraged academic units to respond to evaluation results. A quality assurance staff member stated:

“The quality assurance unit can prepare instruments and conduct evaluations, but without commitment from the leadership and the academic units, the system will not work effectively.”

Observations showed that the quality assurance unit coordinated monitoring and evaluation activities and communicated findings to relevant institutional units. Documentation also demonstrated the existence of institutional structures, policies, and assignment documents related to quality assurance responsibilities. The analysis indicates that the quality assurance unit functions primarily as a coordinator and facilitator, while the implementation of quality assurance requires the involvement of institutional leadership and all academic units. Leadership commitment therefore appeared as an important element in maintaining the continuity of the internal quality assurance process.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings show that internal quality assurance in Islamic higher education is implemented through a cycle of planning, implementation, evaluation, control, and continuous improvement. The formulation of quality standards involving institutional leaders, quality assurance units, faculties, and study programs indicates that quality is beginning to be understood as a shared institutional responsibility rather than merely the responsibility of the quality assurance unit. This finding is consistent with the principles of Total Quality Management (TQM), which emphasize collective responsibility, stakeholder involvement, and continuous organizational improvement. Thus, the effectiveness of internal quality assurance depends not only on the availability of quality documents but also on the extent to which all institutional units are involved in implementing them.

The implementation of standards, monitoring, and evaluation found in this study demonstrate that internal quality assurance has moved from the level of formal policy toward actual academic and administrative practices (Kuswadi et al., 2026). Evaluation results are used to identify discrepancies between established standards and implementation and subsequently become the basis for corrective actions (Dinata et al., 2026). This finding is consistent with the Plan-Do-Check-

Act (PDCA) quality cycle, particularly the Check and Act stages, which emphasize evaluation followed by corrective action. Previous studies on higher education quality assurance similarly indicate that one of the main determinants of an effective quality system is the institution's ability to connect evaluation results with concrete improvement programs. Therefore, evaluation should not end with reporting but must produce measurable institutional changes (Dinata Feri Riski et al., 2025).

An important finding of this study is the effort to integrate Islamic values into the internal quality assurance system. Quality is not interpreted solely through academic performance, administrative effectiveness, or accreditation achievement, but also through integrity, responsibility, discipline, ethics, and Islamic character. This finding expands the conventional understanding of quality management because the quality of Islamic higher education is closely connected to its institutional identity and educational mission. In line with the philosophy of Islamic education, educational quality should encompass intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions. Consequently, internal quality assurance in Islamic higher education needs to ensure that institutional excellence remains aligned with Islamic values rather than adopting quality indicators solely from a general higher education management perspective (Sibawaihi et al., 2025).

The findings also highlight the importance of leadership and institutional commitment (S. Suparman et al., 2025). The quality assurance unit acts as a coordinator and evaluator, while institutional leaders provide policy direction and ensure that evaluation results are followed up by academic units. This finding supports previous research emphasizing that leadership commitment is a crucial factor in developing a sustainable quality culture. Without leadership support and active participation from faculties and study programs, quality assurance tends to remain administrative and document-oriented. Conversely, when leadership, quality assurance units, and academic actors work collaboratively, the internal quality assurance system can develop into an institutional culture of continuous improvement (M. S. H. Suparman, 2024).

Overall, this study confirms that internal quality assurance in Islamic higher education is most effective when quality management mechanisms, leadership commitment, continuous improvement, and Islamic institutional values are integrated into one system. This perspective strengthens existing quality assurance theories while providing a contextual contribution by emphasizing that quality in Islamic higher education should reflect not only academic and managerial excellence but also the ethical and spiritual values that constitute the institution's identity.

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