The Implementation of Internal and External Quality Assurance Systems at the Private Islamic Higher Education (A Case Study at STAI Al Badar Cipulus Purwakarta)

Ani Herniawati[1✉], Ujang Miftahudin[2], Zam zam Lukmanul Jamil[3], Yusuf Hidayat[4], Uus Ruswandi[5]

[1, 4] *STAI Putra Galuh Ciamis, West Java, Indonesia*
[2, 3] *STAI Al Badar Cipulus, Purwakarta, Indonesia*
[5] *UIN Sunan Gunung Djati, Bandung, Indonesia*
✉ email: aniherniawati@staiputragaluh.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Quality assurance at higher education becomes main priority, including at private Islamic higher education (PTKIS). This study analyzes the implementation of SPMI and SPME and identifies the obstacles and strategies taken to optimize the implementation of SPMI and SMPE at STAI Al Badar Cipulus Purwakarta. This study employs qualitative approach under a case study, at which the data were collecyed through interview, observation, and document analysis. The findings of the study show that the implementation of SPMI and SPME at STAI Al Badar Cipulus Purwakarta refers to planning, implementing, monitoring, evaluating, and improving the quality of education which is carried out by involving the entire academic community, including institustion leaders, lecturers, and quality management staff. In addition, the obstacles faced by STAI Al Badar in implementing SPMI and SPME consist of internal and external obstacles. Meanwhile, the strategies taken to optimize the implementation of SPMI and SMPE cover: (a) human resource training, (b) technology use training, and (c) strengthening strategic partnerships.
Keywords: *internal and external quality assurance systems; management; private Islamic higher education*

INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the main pillars to develop superior and competitive human resources in the globalization era (Hambali et al., 2024; UNESCO, 2018). In order to ensure the quality and relevance of education in Indonesia, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (*Kemendikbudristek*) has issued various strategic policies. One of these important policies is *Permendikbudristek* Number 53 of 2023 concerning Higher Education Quality Assurance, which aims to improve the quality of higher education services in Indonesia to be in line with the needs of society and the demands of the era (Abdus Syukur et al., 2022; Herniawati et al., 2024).

Thus, through existing of *Permendikbudristek* Number 53 of 2023, it provides guidance for higher education to implement the Internal and External Quality Assurance Systems. Further, Internal Quality Assurance System as the so-called SPMI emphasizes the internal efforts of higher education to ensure quality through the cycles

of Planning, Implementation, Evaluation, Control, and Improvement (PPEPP). Meanwhile, External Quality Assurance System as the so-called SPME is carried out through an accreditation process involving external institution to ensure the quality of higher education independently and objectively (Gunawan & Waluyo, 2022; Supriatna et al., 2022).

The implementation of SPMI aims to encourage higher education to have a systematic mechanism to improve quality in a sustainable manner (Psomas & Antony, 2017). In this case, higher education is expected to be able to conduct independent evaluation of academic and non-academic processes based on the quality standards ruled by the Indonesian government. This evaluation is the basis for more targeted decision-making in efforts to improve quality in various fields. On the other hand, SPME functions as a mechanism for monitoring and recognizing the quality of higher education by external parties, such as the National Accreditation Board for Higher Education (BAN-PT) or other accreditation institutions (Haris, 2013). Through SPME, higher education gets an objective and credible feedback regarding the quality of services held. The collaboration between SPMI and SPME is expected to be able to create optimal synergy to guarantee and improve the quality of higher education in Indonesia.

To analyse the phenomenon aforementioned, the researchers use the Total Quality Management (TQM) as the theoretical approach which emphasizes the importance of the involvement of entire parties in quality management to achieve continuous improvement (Deming, 1986). TQM is relevant in the context of SPMI, which involves the active participation of the entire academic community in the quality assurance process. Meanwhile, the Stakeholder Approach theoretical framework (Freeman, 1984) is used to analyze the role of external parties in the implementation of SPME.

In practice, each higher education is given the flexibility to prepare SPMI independently without intervention from the government. The SPMI realized by each higher education is compiled based on the historical background of its establishment, the vision and mission to be achieved, the organizational culture applied, the size of the existing organization, the structure and resources available, and the agreed leadership pattern (Gofur et al., 2023; Rohiat, 2010). Thus, the compiled SPMI reflects the ability and self-evaluation of each higher education to accommodate the needs of society (users) that keep changes in line with the demands of the era. Therefore, a good SPMI has to be able to adapt to the development of the era in a sustainable manner (Sulaiman & Wibowo, 2016). The phenomenon aforementioned is experienced by the private Islamic higher education as the so-called STAI Al Badar Cipulus Purwakarta, as one of the beginner higher education in West Java, Indonesia. Recently, STAI Al Badar Cipulus Purwakarta faces various challenges in implementing these Internal and External Quality Assurance Systems. However, STAI Al Badar Cipulus Purwakarta has limited human resources, budget, and regulatory dynamics as the main obstacles. Thus, through the right approach and strategy, the implementation of SPMI and SPME encourage continuous quality improvement.

This study is underpinned by some previous studies that have conducted the similar research inline with the implementation of SPMI and SPME in higher education lavel. Those previous studies are undertaken by Welsh & Dey, (2002); Gvaramadze (2008); Psomas & Antony (2017); Nguyen et al., (2021); Supriatna et al., (2022); Abdus Syukur et al., (2022). The aforementioned previous studies have similar locus to the present study on investigating quality assurance at higher education. Meanwhile the focus investigated by the entire previous studies are dissimilar at which the present study investigates not only internal quality assurance system at higher education, but also external quality assurance system at higher education. Thus, the dismilarity of the present study becomes the novelty that is needed to be investigated deeply.

Based on the background of the study aforementioned, in this present study the researchers formulate two research problems: (1) How does the implementation of SPMI and SPME at STAI Al Badar Cipulus Purwakarta? (2) What are the obstacles and strategies taken to optimize the implementation of SPMI and SMPE at STAI Al Badar Cipulus Purwakarta? From those research problems, the aims of the present study are: (1) to analyze the implementation of SPMI and SPME at STAI Al Badar Cipulus Purwakarta; (2) to identify the obstacles and strategies taken to optimize the implementation of SPMI and SMPE at STAI Al Badar Cipulus Purwakarta. The findings of this study are expected to contribute a significant usefulness to quality management of private Islamic higher education which is in line with the needs of society (users) and the demands of the era.

METHOD

In this study, the researchers employ a qualitative approach under a case study method. A case study method is chosen because it allows deep and detail exploration of specific phenomena in the real contexts (Mulyono et al., 2023; Yin, 2018). The population and sample of the study consist of institutional leaders, lecturers, and staff who involve in quality management. Furthermore, the site of this study is located at STAI Al Badar Cipulus Purwakarta, as one of the private Islamic higher education that is developing the implementation of SPMI and SPME.

Furthermore, the data were gethered through three instruments. First, in-depth interview which is conducted to gain first-hand perspectives and experiences from stakeholders about the quality assurance process. Second, observation which is carried out to directly observe the implementation of SPMI and SPME, including monitoring, evaluation, and quality improvement activities. Third, document analysis which is carried out on quality manuals, evaluation reports, and other supporting documents.

In addition, data analysis was carried out using thematic analysis techniques (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which identify the main patterns and themes of the collected data. To ensure the validity of the data, this study employs the triangulation technique, which is comparing and confirming data from various sources and method (Creswell, 2014).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the findings from interview, observation, and document analysis as the instruments to gather the data, in this study the gathered data are obtained in the form of qualitative. Th e qualitative data consist of: (1) the implementation of SPMI and SPME at STAI Al Badar, (2) the obstacles to implement SPMI and SPME at STAI Al Badar, and (3) the strategies to optimize the implementation of SPMI and SPME at STAI Al Badar. Those three findings are described as follow.

The implementation of SPMI and SPME at STAI Al Badar

The implementation of SPMI and SPME at STAI Al Badar located in Cipulus Purwakarta shows a structured effort in carrying out internal and external quality assurance systems. Based on the results of interview and observation, the process of planning, implementing, monitoring, evaluating, and improving the quality of education is carried out by involving the entire academic community, including institustion leaders, lecturers, and quality management staff. In the planning stage, STAI Al Badar Cipulus Purwakarta has compiled a quality manual document that refers to national standards, as well as establishing the proper policies related to education quality management.

In the implementation stage, STAI Al Badar tries to implement a quality policy through noticing to the quality of teaching and academic services. Then, monitoring is carried out periodically through evaluation of academic activities and assessment of lecturer performance. Further, evaluation is carried out to assess the suitability between the goals and the results achieved. In addition, the improvement process is carried out by responding to the results of the evaluation and feedback obtained, including improvement in learning, curriculum, and facilities. To support the implementation, compliance with national regulation is also carried out at STAI Al Badar Cipulus Purwakarta. It is seen from the efforts to fulfill the requirements set by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology and also the National Accreditation Board for Higher Education (BAN-PT). These efforts are the reflection on the submission and fulfillment of accreditation standards required by the institution of higher education.

Theoretically, the implementation of SPMI and SPME at STAI Al Badar aforementioned, is underpinned by the theory of Total Quality Management (TQM) which is developed by Deming (1986), which emphasizes the importance of cycles on Planning, Doing, Checking, and Acting (PDCA) in quality of management. This concept is in line with the practice carried out at STAI Al Badar Cipulus Purwakarta, at which planning, implementation, monitoring, and quality evaluation are integral parts to improve the quality of education in higher education.

The Obstacles to Implement SPMI and SPME at STAI Al Badar

Although there are significant efforts in the implementation of SPMI and SPME at STAI Al Badar, several internal and external obstacles appear in the effectiveness of the system. The internal obstacles cover (a) limited human resources, (b) the limitation of budgeting, and (c) the limitation of infrastructure. Meanwhile the external obstacles cover: (a) regulatory dynamics, and (b) BAN-PT accreditation. The detail explanation are described as follow.

1. Internal Factors

a. Limited human resource

Limited human resources becomes the first internal obstacle which influence both quantity and quality at the educational process at STAI Al Badar, notably in the implementing SPMI and SPME optimally. Further, it needs the solution in the field of training and developing lecturers' abilities to fulfill quality assurance.

b. The limitation of budgeting

The limitation of budget becomes the second obstacles to procure infrastructure and other supporting resources, such as information technology to monitor and evaluate the quality of education.

c. The limitation of infrastructure

The limitations of infrastructure becomes the third obstacles to support educational activities. The infrastructure also the important factor that affects the implementation of SPMI quality.

2. External Factor

a. Regulatory Dynamics

The change of government policies related to higher education and quality standards often affects the implementation process of SPMI and SPME. It demands STAI Al Badar Cipulus Purwakarta to adapt the new regulations issued by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology and also the National Accreditation Board for Higher Education (BAN-PT).

b. BAN-PT Accreditation

Then, the second regulatory dynamics is due to The BAN-PT accreditation. The accreditation process is also a challenge factor because of several accreditation standards must be fulfilled, such as institutional management, lecturers' quality, and qualified learning outcomes that generally outside are beyond expectation.

The conclusion of the aforementioned obstacles refers to the Resource-based View (RBV) Theory proposed by Barney (1991) at which shows that the limitation of internal resources, such as human resources and budget, can obstruct an organizational capabilities to create a competitive advantage. In this context, STAI Al Badar Cipulus Purwakarta needs to optimize existing resources to face those obstacles.

The Strategies to Optimize the Implementation of SPMI and SPME at STAI Al Badar

To overcome the existing obstacles, STAI Al Badar Cipulus Purwakarta tries to implement several optimization strategies, such as: human resource training, technology use training, and strengthening strategic partnerships. Those strategies are as follow.

1. Human resource training

The first strategy is conducting sustainable training for lecturers and quality management staff. This training is very important to improve understanding and skills to implement SPMI and SPME at higher education level. This training can include mastering new technologies, quality management, and understanding the existing regulations.

2. Technology use training

The second strategy is technology use training. Mastering information technology is able to support human resources' skill to monitor, evaluate, and improve quality more efficiently. For example, the use of an Integrated Academic Management Information System (SIMAK) is easy to be applied. This technology is used to facilitate the data collection, performance analysis, and qualified reporting.

3. Strengthening strategic Partnerships

The last strategy is strengthening strategic partnerships with other institutions, both regional and international. It needs to support the development of qualified education. These partnerships can include joint training programs, exchange of experiences, or curriculum development based on international standard.

The conclusion of the aforementioned obstacles refers to the Dynamic Capabilities Theory suggested by Teece et al., (1998) which emphasizes the importance of an organizational capabilities to adapt and change their resources to cope with changes in the external environment. In this case, STAI Al Badar Cipulus Purwakarta needs to develop internal capacity through training and technology, as well as establish strategic partnerships to optimize the implementation of SPMI and SPME.

After highlighting the findings of the study taken from interview, observation, and document analysis, in this part the reseachers need to answer two research problems proposed in the previous section. The first research problem is: How does the implementation of SPMI and SPME at STAI Al Badar Cipulus Purwakarta? Based on the data gathered from interview, observation, and document analysis such highlighted in the findings aforementioned, those can be the evidences to lead the researchers to answer the first research problem. The implementation of SPMI and SPME at STAI Al Badar Cipulus Purwakarta refers to planning, implementing, monitoring, evaluating, and improving the quality of education which is carried out by involving the entire academic community, including institustion leaders, lecturers, and quality management staff. In the planning stage, STAI Al Badar Cipulus Purwakarta has compiled a quality manual document that refers to national standards, as well as establishing the proper policies related to education quality management. The implementation of SPMI and SPME aforementioned is underpinned by the theory of Total Quality Management (TQM) which is developed by Deming (1986), which emphasizes the importance of cycles on Planning, Doing, Checking, and Acting (PDCA) in quality of management.

Meanwhile the second research problem is: What are the obstacles and strategies taken to optimize the implementation of SPMI and SMPE at STAI Al Badar Cipulus Purwakarta? Based on the data gathered from interview, observation, and document analysis such highlighted in the findings aforementioned, those can be the evidences to lead the researchers to answer the second research problem. The obstacles faced by STAI Al Badar in implementing SPMI and SPME consist of internal and external obstacles. The Internal obstacle covers: (a) limited human resources, (b) the limitation of budgeting, and (c) the limitation of infrastructure. Meanwhile the external obstacles covers: (a) regulatory dynamics, and (b) BAN-PT accreditation. Further, the strategies taken to optimize the implementation of SPMI and SMPE cover: (a) human resource training, (b) technology use training, and (c) strengthening strategic partnerships.

Based on the answers from those two research problems, those become the findings of the study. These findings have similarity to the findings of the previous studies conducted by Welsh & Dey, (2002); Gvaramadze (2008); Psomas & Antony (2017); Nguyen et al., (2021); Supriatna et al., (2022); Abdus Syukur et al., (2022) at which have similar focus and locus on investigating quality assurance at higher education. Meanwhile the dissimilarity of the findings of the present study investigates not only quality assurance, but also internal and external quality assurance systems implemented at the private Islamic higher education. Thus, this dissimilarity becomes the novelty and the originality of the present study.

CONCLUSION

Referring to the findings and discussion, this study is concluded that the implementation of SPMI and SPME at STAI Al Badar Cipulus Purwakarta refers to planning, implementing, monitoring, evaluating, and improving the quality of education which is carried out by involving the entire academic community, including institustion leaders, lecturers, and quality management staff. In the planning stage, STAI Al Badar Cipulus Purwakarta has compiled a quality manual document that refers to national standards, as well as establishing the proper policies related to education quality management. The implementation of SPMI and SPME aforementioned is underpinned by the theory of Total Quality Management (TQM) which is developed by Deming (1986), which emphasizes the importance of cycles on Planning, Doing, Checking, and Acting (PDCA) in quality of management.

In addition, the obstacles faced by STAI Al Badar in implementing SPMI and SPME consist of internal and external obstacles. The Internal obstacle covers: (a) limited human resources, (b) the limitation of budgeting, and (c) the limitation of infrastructure. Meanwhile the external obstacles covers: (a) regulatory dynamics, and (b) BAN-PT accreditation. Further, the strategies taken to optimize the implementation of SPMI and SMPE cover: (a) human resource training, (b) technology use training, and (c) strengthening strategic partnerships.

Based on the aforementioned conclusions, the researchers recommend four recommendations for private Islamic higher education, particularly for STAI Al Badar. The first is human resource capacity building. It is needed to have sustainable training for lecturers and quality management staff to improve their skills in quality assurance. The second is optimizing technology. It is needed to have updated technology to assist the implementation of quality management information system that can assist in monitoring and evaluating the entire educational process at higher education more efficient. The third is strategic partnerships. It is needed to build cooperation with other educational institutions, both regional and international, besides sharing resources and experience in the implementation of educational quality. The last is diversify financing sources. It is needed to diversify financing sources through increasing cooperation with the private sector, donor agencies, and the government to obtain additional sources of financing to support infrastructure development and the implementation of quality assurance.

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