

# Continuous Quality- Instructional Improvement through Implementation of an Internal Quality Assurance System

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze and find out about continuous quality-instructional improvement through the implementation of an Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS). This is important, considering the instructional as the core business of higher education are very complex; starting from student characteristic, instructional design, learning process, evaluation, fulfillment of graduation standards, facilities and human resources. This research uses a qualitative approach with case study design at Nusantara Islamic University. Data was collected through direct observation, documentation study, and in-depth interviews. The results of study show that: Improving the quality of instructional can be done continuously through the implementation of IQAS. Improving the quality of instructional is an ongoing process

through the one-year IQAS Cycle, which consists of seven stages, namely: instructional standard setting, instructional implementation, monitoring, self-evaluation, internal quality audits, formulation of corrections, and quality improvement to improve instructional service and student satisfaction as internal stakeholders.

**Keywords:** instructional, quality, implementation, assurance

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## INTRODUCTION

The quality of higher education is very closely related to the achievement of instructional objectives and graduate competency standards set by the institution education in its strategic plan, or suitability of objectives and competence with established standards. In this case, instructional as the core business of higher education that must receive serious attention with clear quality assurance.

In the current millennial era, instructional must pay attention to the rapid development of science, technology and art, as well as the high mobility of humans because space and time are very relative. Various challenges and problems that come and go in the millennial era are inevitable, because even if we close the door, the effects of millennial will enter through the window or penetrate through various methods. The Indonesian people must enter the flow of change, and come into play in the millennial era; even must be able to take the opportunity to be able to take advantage of it to improve the welfare of society and the nation as a whole.

Continuous quality instructional improvement is needed to enhance competitiveness, the ability to understand the nature of change, and take advantage of opportunities that arise, as well as anticipate the erosion of nationalism and the erosion of national ideology, and the inculcation of the Indonesian nation's value system. For this reason, research on continuous quality instructional improvement through the implementation of an IQAS needs to be done logically and systematically.

Continuous quality instructional improvement is also needed to prepare graduates to enter the era of millennial, so as to produce continuous quality improvement, aimed at the realization of the future human figure, and rooted in national cultural values. Continuous quality instructional improvement must foster philosophical values and practice the entire character of the nation as a whole and thoroughly. In this case, Dewantara (1967) has stated several things that must be carried out; namely: *ngerti-ngroso-nglakoni* (understand, realize, and do). This is in line with the

functions and objectives of national education as stated in the National Education System Law Number 20 Year 2003 (Chapter II Article 3), as follows.

National Education functions to develop capabilities and form a dignified character and national civilization in order to educate the nation's life, aiming at the development of potential students to become human beings who believe, and have devotion to God Almighty, noble, healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent and become a democratic and responsible citizen.

The main pillar in reconstructing human resources in Indonesia is carried out through an educational process that is in accordance with the National Education Standards (NES). Therefore, education must refer to the NES, as the main means of providing important access for the community in educating the life of the nation and achieving a good, advanced, and just life. In this context, instructional not only provides strength and intellectual property, but also makes Indonesian people have competitiveness, based on intelligent thinking and reasoning, and can provide moral and ethical provisions that are commendable. Education must be oriented to developing Indonesia's human potential which implies giving birth to creative, independent and highly working people. Therefore; education must be a vehicle that can provide and provide life skills for every Indonesian human being according to their needs, including those who need special education and special services.

The question are: how to ensure that the quality of education in Indonesia is well-maintained, consistent and sustainable? Then who has the authority to carry out education quality assurance? These questions indicate the need to develop a well-organized and systematic education quality assurance system. The educational quality assurance system requires appropriate, objective, relevant, and comprehensive instruments, so that every activity carried out is reliable and accountable. On the other hand, there is a need for special independent and professional institutions to carry out the

tasks of educational quality assurance, especially in instructional.

Higher education quality assurance aims to ensure the quality of the implementation of higher education both in input, process, and output based on legislation, basic values, vision and mission of the college. Quality assurance activities are an embodiment of college accountability and transparency. The obligation of universities to carry out quality assurance in the implementation of education (instructional), regulated in legislation, namely: Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System. Article 51 paragraph (2) which basically stipulates that the management of higher education units is carried out based on the principles of autonomy, accountability, quality assurance, and transparent evaluation.

The characteristics of quality assurance system are developing and adopting minimum standards and levels of performance on quality that can be assessed. There are two aspects that are interrelated with standard, namely the impact of higher education services on local communities, and the technical quality standards of the programs offered. Worthen & Berry (2002: 1-2) states that the definition of quality in higher education includes the calculation of student graduation and total levels, the rate of absorption of alumni in employment and wage rates, the level of placement of students in further education, test scores and standards, efficient use of resources, timely reporting and written accountability, educational accessibility for everyone, class size and ratio of lecturers and students, instructional evaluation, developing students' ability to apply new instructional practices, encouragement and facilitation in lifelong learning, professional development opportunities for lecturers, usability instructional for students, developing skills and active habits as citizens, developing critical awareness, creating togetherness, a mutually respectful and reciprocal instructional environment among students and lecturers, and guaranteeing academic freedom for discussion for students and lecturer.

Implementation of IQAS is a systemic activity of quality assurance in university by university (internally driven), to oversee the implementation of higher education by universities in a continuous (continuous improvement) manner. The IQAS is an independent activity of the university, so that its activities are designed, implemented and controlled by the university itself without government intervention. That is runing by higher education institutions internally to realize its vision and mission, and to fulfill the needs of stakeholders through the implementation of Tridharma of Higher Education. The concept of IQAS, as stated in the Ministry of National Education (2010: 17), is that a higher education is qualified if it is able to: establish and realize its vision; describes its vision into a number of derived standards; apply, control; developing a number of standards for derivative items to meet the needs of stakeholders. The Higher Education Quality Assurance Guide (2003: 16-18) further states that the implementation of IQAS in higher education requires a requirement to achieve its objectives, namely: commitment, mental attitude, and organization. Matching vision and perception to the academic community, especially lecturers

and education staff to always plan all work to support the achievement of goals. Planning for this work is very important as a framework for measuring work success, so that continuous quality improvement can be realized. On the other hand, the success of implementation also needs to be supported by organizations that are strong with the independence they have to carry out internal quality assurance. The organization is expected to be able to foster a supportive attitude from all components of the university towards educational quality assurance efforts.

Implementation of the IQAS must be supported by the availability of data and information about higher education in an accurate, complete and up-to-date manner. The data and information are managed by a data base at each university. The results of the implementation of internal quality assurance by each higher education are material in the implementation of external quality assurance or accreditation by National Accreditation Institution-Higher Education (NAI-HI) and/or other independent institutions recognized by the government.

The principles of internal quality assurance must be in accordance with the higher education law: 1) Autonomy, developed and implemented autonomously by each university, including at the level of department; 2) Standard, uses National Higher Education Standards set by the minister and standards set by universities; 3) Accuracy, uses accurate data and information on data based of higher education; 4) Planned and sustainability, implemented using five steps of quality assurance, namely the establishment, implementation, evaluation, control and improvement of higher education standards in the form of cycles.

Nusantara Islamic University has pioneered and developed the concept of the university's internal quality assurance system (IQAS) since 2009. The concept includes the definition of quality assurance, implementation, organization, documentation systems, and human resources. The IQAS are carried out by the Quality Assurance Institution (QAI) which is in charge of planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating the overall quality assurance system. The concept and implementation of the University Quality Assurance System has been made and socialized to all leaders, lecturers, students, and education staff at the university, faculty and department levels. The implementation cannot be separated from the participation of all academics in supporting internal quality assurance activities to fulfill stakeholder satisfaction. Therefore; this study aims to analyze and find out about continuous quality instructional improvement through the implementation of an IQAS. The results of study are expected to be able to enrich of knowledge to improve the quality of higher education organized by communities in Indonesia, especially in instructional.

## METHOD

This study used a "qualitative approach in form of case studies" (Yin (2013), the setting of the research was Nusantara Islamic University. The data are collected through direct observation, documentation study, and in-depth interviews. The validity test of data was done by using

triangulation techniques and triangulation of sources. The data analysis was use “qualitative models that included collecting data, reduction and display of data and generalization”. (Bogdan and Taylor; 1975).

## RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of study showed that continuous quality-instructional improvement through the implementation of an internal quality assurance system (IQAS) at Nusantara Islamic University was needed especially to prepare graduates to enter the millennial era. This is a major part of IQAS as a whole, and is included in the university's strategic plan. Improving the quality of learning is not only to improve students' knowledge, skills and attitudes, but also to empowerment the students to understand themselves, understand opportunities that can be utilized in their environment; so that in the end they can live independently and become useful human beings for their community.

The results of study indicate that continuous quality-instructional improvement through the implementation of an IQAS at the Nusantara Islamic University is operationally carried out by the Quality Assurance Institution (QAI). Nusantara Islamic University has drafted the concept and policy of the internal quality assurance system; which includes the definition of a quality assurance system, the implementation cycle of quality assurance, organization, documentation systems, and human resources.

The QAI at Nusantara Islamic University was established on June 28, 2009, with Rector's Decree Number: 47-SK/UIN/VI/2009; domiciled directly under the Rector. QAI's tasks and functions are: 1) Compile and develop various standards and guidelines as a reference for the implementation of education quality assurance, research and community service as well as academic administration; 2) Developing quality standards in the fields of education, research, and community service referring to international standards; 3) Coordinating the implementation of education quality assurance, research and community service activities, as well as academic administration from the university level to the department; 4) Reviewing and reporting on the results of the implementation of quality assurance in a cycle, for all units and staff; 5) Submitting recommendations to the Rector and other leaders as input for continuous quality improvement. The QAI Nusantara Islamic University is assisted by faculties of quality assurance/ graduate schools, the Quality Assurance Group (QAG) and the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) at the department level.

The results of study showed that continuous quality-instructional improvement through the implementation of an IQAS is a necessity, because the quality of instructional depends not only on the government but also on the assessment of stakeholders. The implementation is an independent activity, so the quality assurance process is planned, implemented, evaluated, controlled and improved without the government's intervention. This refers to the provisions of the Directorate General of Higher Education (2010: 15) which states that IQAS in higher education is

carried out entirely by universities themselves, without government's intervention.

The continuous quality-instructional improvement through the implementation of an IQAS is an integral part of higher education quality assurance system at the Nusantara Islamic University, carried out with the preparation of design which is operationally called the annual IQAS Cycle period. The cycle consists of seven stages, namely: (1) standard setting, (2) implementation, (2) monitoring, (4) self-evaluation, (5) internal quality audit, (6) correction, and (7) formulation quality improvement. Determination of standards is formulated based on legislation, the results of self-evaluation of ongoing performance, input from stakeholders, the results of tracer studies, and policies on the development of quality assurance Directorate General of Higher Education. The standards set refer to the National Higher Education Standards. The stages of implementing are: socialization; department technical assistance; socialization of Internal Quality Audits (IQA) and Department Self-Evaluation Instruments (DSEI), charging DSEI; implementation; corrective actions; faculty level/ graduate school management review meeting to discuss audit findings and improve the quality of department; university level management review meeting to discuss findings obtained in department that cannot be completed at the faculty level. Monitoring aims to oversee the implementation carried out based on the plan. Self evaluation is a systematic effort to collect and process reliable and valid data (facts and information) so that can be used as a basis for management actions to manage the continuity of the institution, such as faculty/ graduate schools, and department.

The IQA is an independent and objective guarantee and consultation audit of academic operational activities or academic processes. Therefore, their findings are corrective material followed up by management review meetings at the department level, faculty/ graduate schools, and universities. The corrective formulation is the material, then to review whether there have been corrective actions taken. The results of the correction formula lead to quality improvement through new standards/ planning at the next stage. Nevertheless, actual quality improvement will ultimately be determined by the community as stakeholders; as a result of implementing as a whole.

The implementation of IQAS at the instructional level at the Nusantara Islamic University is supported by human resources who have competencies in the field of quality assurance, although the number is still limited. The QAI Nusantara Islamic University currently has 21 active and registered auditors. The implementation is also supported by facilities and infrastructure, as well as adequate funding through the budget that has been set.

The quality of the output of instructional is measured not only from the fulfillment of each higher education standards, but also from the fulfillment of inter-standard interactions to achieve the goals of higher education. The higher education of quality assurance system mechanism is initiated by universities by implementing IQAS through an activity cycle abbreviated as: (1) Determination of higher education standards, namely standard setting activities

consisting of National Standards of Higher Education and Higher Education Standards set by universities; (2) Higher Education Standard Implementation, namely standard fulfillment activities consisting of national standards of higher education and standards set by universities; (3) Evaluation of the implementation of the higher education standards, namely benchmarking activities between outputs of standard compliance activities with standards consisting of national standards and higher education standards set by universities; (4) Control of the implementation of higher education standards, namely standard cause analysis activities consisting of national standards of higher education and higher education standards set by universities that have not been achieved for corrective action; and (5) Improvement of higher education standards, standard improvement activities consisting of national standards of higher education and higher education standards set by universities to be higher than the standard set.

The obstacles to implementing IQAS due to the lack of leadership commitment are faced by providing workers who are experts in the field of quality assurance. Another obstacle, the lack of the number of auditors owned by Quality Assurance Group, is taken by programming the new auditor training. New auditor training programs and refreshing old auditors are carried out intensively every year.

Constraints to Implementation IQAS is often trapped into a routine activity faced by refreshing and building enthusiasm both at the leadership level of universities, faculties, department and the auditors themselves. The IQA Nusantara Islamic University also organizes programs that are aware of the important position of quality assurance; for example, periodically meet in a forum for refresher activities and improve the quality of auditors. In addition, interactions with activists of higher education internal quality assurance in the IQAS Higher Education and National Accreditation Institution of Higher Education (NAI-HE) forums were directed at increasing awareness in order to build a quality culture.

The results of study show that: The IQA at Nusantara Islamic University annually conducts evaluations, by asking for input from auditors, from faculty leaders / graduate schools and audited department, and university leaders. The evaluation was carried out in form of workshops, which discussed inputs and corrections to the implementation of Internal Quality Audit. The evaluation in addition to discussing the effectiveness, also evaluates how supporting factors can provide optimal contributions, such as financing factors, human resources, and supporting facilities and infrastructure. Externally, the results of the implementation are utilized related to preparation in the face of external accreditation, in this case the National Accreditation Institution of Higher Education (NAI-HE). NAI Nusantara Islamic University has also helped the university in the preparation of the institution's accreditation forms for the NAI-HE.

The implementation of IQAS at Nusantara Islamic University is based on two documents, namely academic documents and quality documents. Academic documents at the university and faculty/ graduate school level consist of

academic policy, academic standards and academic regulations. Academic documents at the department consist of department specifications, curriculum, curriculum map, semester learning and program plan. Quality documents consist of a quality manual at the university or faculty/ graduate school level, quality procedure, and work instruction, which prepared and implemented in each work unit. The design of IQAS which is operationally called the IQAS Cycle of Nusantara Islamic University was developed in line with the management model of the quality control of the Kaizen Model.

The implementation of IQAS is very useful to continuous quality improvement of education and instructional. Findings in the implementation are input to improve standards and improve them to be even better. Utilizing the results of the implementation in addition to being used in instructional planning, it was also used to foster the spirit of working better.

Finally, it can be stated here that Nusantara Islamic University is a private university which has not recently implemented the quality assurance, so what has achieved is certainly still far from what was expected, but with this limited experience, he continues to strive and work in preparing competent and professional graduates at the field. The university quality assurance system has a variety of positive uses that can be picked up both directly and indirectly affecting the effort to implement continuous quality improvement, especially in improving the quality of instructional.

## CONCLUSION

The continuous quality-instructional improvement through the implementation of an internal quality assurance system (IQAS) is an ongoing process in improving the quality of instructional process through activities of determination, implementation, evaluation, control and improvement, then self-evaluation, internal quality audit, up to benchmarking to determine new standards, called the quality assurance cycle. The organization is carried out by a quality assurance organization named the Institution of Quality Assurance whose task is to plan and implement a complete and comprehensive quality assurance system. The implementation was carried out by drafting design which was operationally called the IQAS Cycle which was carried out following the one-year period. The cycle consists of seven stages, namely: instructional standard setting, instructional implementation, monitoring, self-evaluation, internal quality audit, correction formula, and quality improvement for stakeholder satisfaction.

The obstacles faced in the continuous quality-instructional improvement are: leadership commitment is relatively lacking, the number of auditors is still limited, the activities are often trapped into routine activities. The steps taken in dealing with obstacles are providing expert staff in the field of quality assurance, programming new auditor training and refreshing the old auditor to be carried out intensively, building enthusiasm for both university leaders, faculty/ graduate schools, and department. The evaluation of the continuous quality instructional improvement is conducted every year, by asking for input from auditors, faculty

leaders/ graduate schools and audited department, and university leaders.

The results of implementation of continuous quality-instructional improvement internally utilization to improve the quality of instructional, foster the spirit of working better, raise awareness to build a quality culture. Externally, utilized related to preparation in facing accreditation. The development of implementation refers to the quality management system that supports of achievement of the minimum standard for the management of department and universities.

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