

# Analyzing the Implementation of the LAMDIK Accreditation System at a Leading State Islamic University in Indonesia

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## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This study aims to analyze the implementation of the LAMDIK accreditation system at a leading State Islamic University in Indonesia, focusing on institutional readiness, implementation challenges, and the extent to which accreditation reforms have fostered a sustainable quality culture. **Method:** A qualitative case study approach was employed within the Early Childhood Islamic Education (ECIE) program at UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya. Data were collected through semi structured interviews, non-participant observation, and document analysis. The data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's (2014) interactive model data condensation, display, and conclusion drawing supported by triangulation and member checking to ensure validity. **Results:** The findings reveal a moderate level of implementation success. The university achieved structural compliance with LAMDIK standards meeting lecturer qualifications, curriculum alignment, and operational SPMI systems but struggled with deep cultural internalization of quality principles. Limited doctoral qualified lecturers, fragmented data management, and inconsistent communication across units were identified as major barriers. Nevertheless, institutional initiatives in digital accreditation systems, curriculum revision, and quality assurance mark tangible progress. **Novelty:** This study extends Edwards III's policy implementation framework to the context of Islamic higher education accreditation, showing that accreditation success depends not only on compliance but also on organizational learning and cultural transformation. The findings highlight how UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya is transitioning from procedural compliance toward a developing quality driven academic culture.

## INTRODUCTION

Quality assurance in higher education has increasingly positioned itself as a central pillar in the global education agenda, driven by the growing pressures on universities to demonstrate academic excellence, produce globally competitive graduates, and maintain institutional relevance in rapidly evolving socio-economic landscapes. As higher education systems confront globalization, technological advancement, and shifting labor market demands, the assurance and enhancement of academic quality are no longer optional but constitute a fundamental institutional mandate. Internationally, accreditation has been institutionalized as a key evaluative tool to benchmark institutional performance, guarantee minimum quality standards, and ensure accountability to students, employers, and society at large. Mature higher education systems such as those in the United States and United Kingdom, alongside regional frameworks like the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), emphasize quality culture, stakeholder engagement, international mobility, and transparent governance in their accreditation models. Their longstanding experiences have shown that accreditation

functions not merely as a compliance mechanism but as a transformative instrument that fosters institutional innovation, system accountability, and academic competitiveness. Inspired by these developments, numerous developing countries have undertaken robust reforms to align their educational systems with global norms, gradually strengthening institutional capacities and embedding continuous improvement principles into academic governance structures.

Within this global trajectory, Indonesia is undergoing significant reforms in its quality assurance ecosystem, aiming to enhance the competitiveness and credibility of its higher education institutions. A cornerstone of this reform is the establishment of independent accreditation agencies tailored to specific scientific clusters, including the Independent Accreditation Agency for Education (LAMDIK) for education-related disciplines. The shift marks a departure from centralized accreditation by BAN-PT toward a more specialized and autonomous model intended to sharpen discipline-based assessment criteria, strengthen institutional autonomy, and reinforce merit-based analytical frameworks. This transformation is aligned with national education policy priorities to accelerate university internationalization, advance academic professionalism, and enhance public accountability through more transparent and rigorous quality assurance mechanisms. However, the effectiveness of this policy depends not solely on regulatory architecture but also on institutional readiness, capacity building, and the ability to internalize accreditation standards as part of organizational culture rather than mere administrative obligations. Successful accreditation thus requires synergy between regulatory excellence, robust leadership, and institutional commitment to continuous quality improvement.

Despite its strategic vision, the transition toward LAMDIK-based accreditation has introduced substantive challenges for higher education institutions across Indonesia. Universities are required to realign academic standards with outcome-based education (OBE) principles, redesign curricula to reflect competency-based learning, strengthen academic qualifications and professional development of lecturers, and upgrade internal governance systems, including quality assurance units and digital management tools. Emerging studies suggest that institutional responses to LAMDIK vary widely due to disparities in financial resources, human capital, leadership commitment, and organizational culture (Gunawan et al., 2023; Aristya & Mahmud, 2023). International evidence also reveals that accreditation reforms often sit within tensions between compliance-driven administrative tasks and genuine quality enhancement (Hou et al., 2018; Ulker & Bakioglu, 2019). Institutions may experience bureaucratic fatigue, uneven capacity development, or conflicting priorities between meeting accreditation standards and pursuing academic innovation. These complexities underscore that accreditation is not merely procedural; it is a developmental process requiring sustained organizational learning, effective communication, resource adequacy, and adaptive management.

Within this national landscape, State Islamic Universities (Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam Negeri/PTKIN) occupy a distinctive institutional space. They carry a dual mandate to integrate Islamic knowledge traditions with modern scientific disciplines while fulfilling national accreditation requirements. PTKIN institutions

exhibit growing progress in strengthening academic governance, enhancing research performance, and expanding educational services. However, they simultaneously face structural and cultural challenges, including disparities in digital capacity, limitations in international partnerships, moderate research productivity, and varied lecturer competencies (Hakiem & Afrizal, 2024; Yuhertiana et al., 2020). These institutional characteristics may influence the pace and effectiveness of quality assurance reforms, particularly for teacher education programs that must harmonize religious pedagogical identity with contemporary professional education standards.

The Early Childhood Islamic Education (ECIE) program stands as a particularly strategic academic unit within PTKIN, preparing educators equipped to serve in Islamic early childhood learning environments. As societal expectations evolve, ECIE programs face increasing demands to modernize pedagogical approaches, adopt competency-based and child-centered learning frameworks, strengthen research-based teaching practices, and engage more actively with community-based early education stakeholders. However, scholarly attention to how ECIE programs navigate LAMDIK standards remains limited. There is insufficient empirical understanding of the institutional strategies, support mechanisms, and cultural transformations shaping accreditation implementation within Islamic higher education contexts. This knowledge gap highlights the need to closely examine quality assurance implementation at the program level, where policy translates into operational practices and academic culture.

Although the body of research on higher education accreditation has continued to expand, existing studies still concentrate largely on BAN-PT evaluations or broad comparisons across teacher education programs, leaving a significant empirical gap in understanding how LAMDIK standards are implemented specifically within Islamic higher education environments. In particular, little is known about how accreditation requirements are operationalized at the program level, how lecturers and administrators interpret and respond to LAMDIK's performance-based indicators, and how institutional constraints shape implementation outcomes. This gap becomes more evident when considering that LAMDIK introduces discipline-specific criteria that differ substantively from prior accreditation frameworks, yet empirical literature documenting institutional adaptation remains scarce.

Furthermore, research focusing on ECIE programs in PTKIN overwhelmingly discusses pedagogical or institutional development issues but does not examine how these programs navigate LAMDIK's accreditation demands. ECIE units carry a unique dual mandate integrating Islamic educational philosophy with modern early childhood pedagogy, yet there is insufficient empirical evidence explaining how these specific academic identities influence accreditation readiness, documentation practices, or quality assurance processes. This absence of program-level evidence highlights an important gap in the literature that this study seeks to address.

This study also introduces conceptual novelty by applying Edwards III's policy implementation model to accreditation in Islamic higher education a framework that has rarely been used in this context. By examining communication clarity, resource availability, dispositions of implementers, and bureaucratic structures, the study offers a

theoretically grounded analysis that extends previous works and demonstrates the relevance of policy implementation theory for understanding accreditation dynamics. This theoretical extension strengthens the study's contribution to both the fields of public policy and higher education quality assurance.

Given these gaps, there is a pressing need to present empirical evidence on how LAMDIK accreditation is practiced within ECIE programs at PTKIN, what institutional factors shape its implementation, and how such processes contribute to the broader development of a sustainable quality culture. The present study addresses these limitations by offering a detailed analysis of accreditation implementation grounded in real institutional experiences.

Grounded in this context, the present study seeks to examine the implementation of the LAMDIK accreditation system within the ECIE program of a leading Indonesian State Islamic University. Employing Edwards III's policy implementation framework, this research investigates how communication clarity, resource sufficiency, implementer attitudes, and bureaucratic structures collectively influence accreditation outcomes. The study extends beyond identifying compliance challenges by exploring how accreditation reforms foster a quality-driven institutional culture, strengthen governance structures, and enhance academic accountability within an Islamic higher education environment. Ultimately, this research contributes to theoretical discourses on accreditation implementation and practical insights for higher education institutions navigating discipline-specific quality assurance reforms.

The primary objective of this study is to analyze institutional challenges, strategic responses, and the broader impacts of LAMDIK accreditation implementation on academic governance and quality enhancement within the ECIE program. Key research questions include: How is the LAMDIK accreditation policy implemented at the program level? What internal and external factors influence implementation success? And to what extent does the policy foster a sustainable quality culture within an Islamic educational context.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study design to investigate the implementation of the LAMDIK accreditation policy in the Early Childhood Islamic Education (ECIE) Study Program at a State Islamic University in Indonesia (Dawson, 2007; Cairney, 2019). The ECIE program was strategically selected for three reasons. First, it represents a highly regulated unit within PTKIN that must simultaneously meet national teacher education standards and preserve its Islamic educational identity, making it analytically significant for examining accreditation reforms (Aristya & Mahmud, 2023). Second, the program had recently undergone a full LAMDIK accreditation cycle, which provided rich and timely institutional evidence for analysis (Yuhertiana et al., 2020). Third, the university itself is recognized as one of the leading Islamic universities in Indonesia, allowing this case to offer insights that are both context specific and potentially transferable to similar institutions facing comparable accreditation pressures (Gunawan et al., 2023). These characteristics position the ECIE program as a unique and information rich site for

understanding how discipline specific accreditation standards are operationalized within Islamic higher education.

Data were collected over a four-month period (February–May 2024) using three complementary techniques: semi structured interviews, non-participant observation, and document analysis (Dawson, 2007; Chugh et al., 2023). A purposive sampling strategy was applied to ensure the inclusion of participants who possessed direct involvement in, or substantive knowledge of, the accreditation process (Mussawy & Rossman, 2021). In total, twelve participants were interviewed, consisting of the program head, academic coordinator, four lecturers with 5–20 years of teaching experience, two representatives from the internal quality assurance unit, two faculty level quality controllers, and three student representatives. Each interview lasted between 45 and 90 minutes and was audio recorded with consent. Observations were carried out during coordination meetings, accreditation evidence preparation activities, and quality assurance monitoring sessions, enabling the researcher to capture real time interactions and institutional routines. Document analysis covered a comprehensive set of materials, including LAMDIK accreditation instruments, self-evaluation reports, internal audit documentation, quality manuals, curriculum guidelines, meeting minutes, tracer study data, and strategic planning documents, supporting the triangulation of institutional records (Shah & Nair, 2014; Blackmur, 2010). These multiple data sources made it possible to contextualize interview findings and corroborate institutional processes through verifiable records.

Data analysis followed Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's (2014) interactive model, consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing, a process widely utilized in qualitative studies of accreditation and policy implementation (Alhaddab, 2023; Niroo & Glass, 2022). Interview transcripts, observation field notes, and institutional documents were coded inductively and deductively, guided by both emerging themes and the core components of Edwards III's (1980) policy implementation framework. Codes were organized into thematic clusters such as communication clarity, resource sufficiency, implementer attitudes, and bureaucratic structure which facilitated cross case comparison across units and data types. Thematic matrices and visual maps were developed to analyze relationships between institutional factors and accreditation outcomes. This analytic process enabled the identification of patterns, inconsistencies, and explanatory mechanisms underlying the successes and constraints of LAMDIK implementation.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study applied methodological triangulation, investigator validation, and systematic bias mitigation strategies, consistent with global standards of qualitative rigor (Brennan & Shah, 2011; Harvey & Williams, 2010). Triangulation was achieved by cross checking interview accounts with observation data and documentary evidence, ensuring that interpretations reflected institutional realities rather than isolated perspectives. Member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary summaries with selected participants through follow up meetings and written feedback, allowing them to confirm the accuracy of interpretations or clarify misrepresentations (Mussawy & Rossman, 2021). Potential researcher bias was minimized through reflexive journaling, regular peer debriefing with external qualitative experts, and maintenance of a transparent audit trail that documented analytic decisions

throughout the study. The trustworthiness strategies applied in this research enhanced credibility, dependability, and confirmability, ensuring that interpretations were grounded in authentic institutional conditions rather than subjective assumptions (Stensaker, 2018; Strydom et al., 2017).

Through this methodological framework, the study provides a rigorous and context sensitive examination of how accreditation standards shape program level governance, academic practices, and emerging quality assurance cultures within Islamic higher education, aligned with recognized scholarship on external quality assurance and institutional change (Dill, 2010; Martin, 2018). The methodological rigor ensures that the findings can offer meaningful theoretical and practical insights for similar institutions undergoing LAMDIK accreditation reforms.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

The implementation of the LAMDIK accreditation policy in the Early Childhood Islamic Education (ECIE) Study Program at UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya demonstrated a mixed pattern of procedural compliance and uneven substantive transformation (Brennan & Shah, 2011; Alhaddab, 2023). The results indicate varying levels of readiness across human resources, infrastructure, curriculum alignment, quality assurance operations, external collaboration, communication, and organizational responsiveness. Collectively, these findings suggest that accreditation implementation progressed, yet remained constrained by structural and cultural limitations that influenced its overall effectiveness (Harvey & Williams, 2010).

Human resource capacity emerged as one of the most decisive components shaping accreditation outcomes. The study program fulfilled the basic lecturer–student ratio requirement and showed increased engagement in research-based teaching; however, only approximately 20% of lecturers held doctoral qualifications, below the LAMDIK benchmark of 30%. Limited mentoring schemes, restricted access to international publication platforms, and heavy administrative workloads further inhibited academic productivity (Mussawy & Rossman, 2021; Hasanah, 2024). These issues interacted with each other: lower qualification levels constrained research output, while administrative burdens reduced the time available for pedagogical improvement. Compared with other PTKINs, such as UIN Malang and UIN Yogyakarta both of which have reported higher doctoral lecturer proportions and stronger research ecosystems UINSA's human resource limitations contributed to its slower cultural internalization of LAMDIK standards (Gunawan et al., 2023; Aristya & Mahmud, 2023).

Infrastructure and facility provision showed moderate progress, with approximately 70% achievement of LAMDIK requirements. Although laboratories, digital classrooms, and integrated library systems were operational, their use for pedagogical innovation remained inconsistent. Connectivity disruptions, fragmented data systems, and delayed maintenance reduced the full functionality of digital accreditation platforms. These challenges echoed findings from international cases where inadequate technological integration hindered accreditation implementation, such as reported in Afghani and Turkish higher education systems (Niroo & Glass, 2022; Ulker & Bakioglu, 2019; Chugh

et al., 2023). In UINSA, infrastructure gaps limited the effectiveness of evidence-based reporting and continuous quality monitoring (Dill, 2010).

Curriculum alignment with LAMDIK and SNIKTI standards reached formal compliance, as demonstrated by updated learning outcomes and revised curriculum documents. Nevertheless, substantive alignment was partial. Stakeholder involvement was minimal, with external partners participating only at the validation stage. As a result, the updated curriculum did not fully integrate emerging competencies such as socio-emotional learning, inclusive education, and digital pedagogy (Hou et al., 2020; González & Wagenaar, 2015; Biggs, 2014). The tracer study system was established but had not yet been consistently utilized as input for curriculum enhancement (Altbach et al., 2019).

The Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI) was formally operational, with all units completing quality manuals, internal audits, and documentation cycles. However, implementation remained inconsistent, especially in the monitoring and improvement stages. Weak data integration limited the institution's ability to generate timely and accurate quality reports, while the insufficient number of trained internal auditors reduced audit reliability (Yuhertiana et al., 2020; Luthfi et al., 2024). These gaps indicate that SPMI functioned primarily as an administrative mechanism rather than an analytical tool for decision making (Shah & Nair, 2014; Blackmur, 2010).

External collaboration showed modest development. Partnerships with local early childhood institutions met LAMDIK's minimum criteria, yet the functional impact on graduate quality, research activities, and professional certification remained limited. International cooperation was constrained by financial and administrative challenges (Gunawan et al., 2023). Compared with PTKINs that have broader global networks such as UIN Jakarta's partnerships with Southeast Asian teacher education institutions UINSA's collaboration remained relatively narrow and project based (Lane, 2012).

Communication represented one of the weakest dimensions of the implementation process. Official circulars and directives were disseminated, but inconsistencies in timing and clarity produced gaps in understanding among program units. Coordination meetings tended to be reactive, often held only when deadlines approached. Fragmented communication also contributed to delays in evidence preparation and discrepancies in data submissions. Similar communication barriers have been identified as key impediments in policy implementation literature (DeLeon & DeLeon, 2002; Cairney, 2019), reinforcing the importance of coherent information flows.

Variation in implementer acceptance further influenced the overall implementation pattern. Some academic and administrative staff demonstrated high commitment and initiative, whereas others perceived accreditation as a burdensome reporting exercise. This divergence stemmed from differences in understanding of LAMDIK's developmental philosophy, leading to inconsistent participation in document preparation and quality assurance activities (Huges et al., 2023; Ryan, 2015). Limited institutional incentives exacerbated this issue, reducing motivation for active involvement (Robbins & Judge, 2003).

Administrative complexity and financial constraints also played significant roles in shaping outcomes. Multilevel verification procedures slowed document processing, while limited budgets restricted professional development, laboratory upgrades, and

research funding. The reliance on short term grants affected program continuity and limited the scalability of improvement initiatives. These financial and bureaucratic barriers interacted with human resource and infrastructure limitations, generating a cumulative effect that reduced implementation efficiency (Niroo & Glass, 2022; Maguire & Gibbs, 2013).

The results indicate that UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya achieved essential procedural compliance with LAMDIK accreditation standards; yet substantive transformation particularly in terms of quality culture, internal integration, and long term sustainability remained incomplete (Stensaker, 2018; Strydom et al., 2017). The interplay among human resource shortages, fragmented data systems, weak communication channels, and financial constraints shaped the uneven implementation trajectory observed in this study (Martin, 2018; Brennan & Shah, 2011).

## **Discussion**

The analysis indicates that the implementation of the LAMDIK accreditation system at UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya reflects a moderate level of success; however, a deeper examination using Edwards III's four variables communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure reveal important dynamics that extend beyond procedural compliance. The university has demonstrated substantial progress in establishing formal structures and meeting basic accreditation indicators, yet the institutionalization of a sustainable quality culture remains uneven across units. This strengthens the argument that accreditation effectiveness depends not only on technical fulfillment but on how policy elements interact within complex organizational settings.

Communication emerges as one of the most critical determinants of implementation quality. Although official circulars and instructions from LAMDIK are regularly disseminated, the clarity and timeliness of information flow across institutional layers remain inconsistent. Misinterpretation of standards, reactive rather than planned coordination meetings, and limited dialogic communication between quality assurance units and study programs hinder shared understanding of accreditation expectations. Similar communication challenges have been reported in other PTKINs, where fragmented information often leads to redundant work and document inaccuracies (Yuhertiana et al., 2020). As Edwards III posits, policy ambiguity undermines implementers' ability to act effectively. Thus, strengthening structured communication channels such as integrated digital dashboards, periodic alignment meetings, and shared interpretation sessions becomes essential for building coherence across academic units.

Resources, both human and material, represent the second determinant that profoundly shapes policy outcomes. The shortage of doctoral qualified lecturers, limited professional development opportunities, and heavy administrative workloads weaken the academic capacity required for sustained accreditation performance. Although UINSA has initiated doctoral scholarships and collaborative supervision, these measures have not yet closed the expertise gap. This situation mirrors findings in other Indonesian teacher education programs, where misalignment between human resource capacity and accreditation requirements delays cultural transformation (Hasanah, 2024). Material resources also show an uneven pattern: while digital accreditation tools, early childhood

learning laboratories, and integrated library systems exist, their optimization is hampered by technical limitations, inconsistent data integration, and maintenance gaps. These findings reinforce Edwards III's premise that inadequate resources constrain the extent to which policy directives can be meaningfully executed.

The disposition or attitudes of implementers constitute a third influential factor. The analysis reveals varying degrees of acceptance among lecturers and administrative staff. Some demonstrate strong commitment to documentation, evidence organization, and academic improvement, whereas others view accreditation as an externally imposed administrative burden. This diversity of attitudes indicates differing levels of internalization of LAMDIK's developmental philosophy, which emphasizes continuous improvement rather than punitive evaluation. In several PTKINs, similar challenges occur when quality assurance is perceived merely as a compliance task rather than a catalyst for academic innovation (Huges et al., 2023). A more supportive incentive structure linking lecturer performance, research productivity, and teaching innovation to accreditation goals may strengthen implementer enthusiasm and long-term ownership of quality assurance processes.

Finally, the bureaucratic structure at UINSA provides both enabling and limiting effects. The university has established clear formal procedures, internal audit mechanisms, and documentation workflows, demonstrating strong procedural alignment with LAMDIK's expectations. However, the bureaucratic hierarchy remains rigid, causing delays in evidence verification, limiting agility in decision making, and inhibiting collaborative quality assurance practices. These challenges reflect what DeLeon and DeLeon (2002) describe as "procedural compliance," where structures exist but do not yet foster a dynamic quality culture. Emerging innovations such as decentralized documentation workflows in some faculties have shown promise in accelerating responsiveness without sacrificing accountability. Comparative insights from international accreditation studies also highlight that flexible governance and distributed leadership often lead to more substantive cultural transformation.

Taken together, these four variables reveal that UINSA's progress lies primarily in meeting structural indicators, while deeper cultural internalization is still evolving. The interactive nature of communication gaps, resource constraints, mixed implementer dispositions, and rigid bureaucratic processes explains why accreditation outcomes remain partially realized. Strengthening data driven decision making, enhancing cross unit collaboration, and investing in continuous professional development can accelerate the transition from compliance-oriented behavior toward a more learning oriented, improvement driven academic culture. In this trajectory, UINSA has laid a strong foundation, yet sustaining long term excellence requires synchronizing leadership commitment, human resource development, digital infrastructure, and quality culture across the institution.

## CONCLUSION

**Fundamentals finding:** The implementation of the LAMDIK accreditation system at UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya shows a moderate level of success. The ECIE program has met several key requirements such as OBE-aligned curriculum, an appropriate lecturer-

student ratio, and an operational internal quality assurance system. However, substantive implementation remains uneven because quality assurance practices are not yet fully integrated into daily academic routines. Implementation is influenced by limited doctoral-level human resources, fragmented data management, inconsistent communication, and varying levels of implementer commitment. Cultural transformation has begun to appear through improved documentation and planning, but deeper behavioral and mindset changes are still not fully realized across academic units.

**Implications:** The findings provide several practical implications. Lecturer professional development needs to be strengthened, especially in doctoral qualifications, pedagogical renewal, and research productivity. Digital integration should be enhanced by developing a unified data ecosystem that connects SPMI outputs, academic indicators, and accreditation evidence. Communication governance requires improvement through scheduled coordination, clearer procedural guidelines, and structured feedback mechanisms. Budgeting systems should be aligned with quality enhancement priorities through multi-year accreditation funding, laboratory modernization, and support for research-based teaching. These steps can help ensure that accreditation becomes a continuous institutional learning process rather than a compliance-oriented activity.

**Limitations:** This study is limited to a single program within one university, which reduces the generalizability of its findings. Differences in institutional size, resources, governance, and culture across PTKIN and private universities may produce different accreditation dynamics. The reliance on qualitative data also limits the ability to measure performance variations quantitatively. **Future Research:** Future studies should include multiple PTKIN and private universities to capture diverse accreditation implementation patterns. Quantitative approaches can be developed to examine relationships between accreditation outcomes and variables such as lecturer professionalism, digital system readiness, or student learning achievements. Longitudinal research is also needed to understand how accreditation-driven cultural changes evolve over time and how leadership, communication, and resource allocation interact to sustain quality assurance.

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