

Educational Quality Assurance Systems as a Strategy for Improving the Quality of Educational Institutions: A Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

Educational quality is a major determinant of national competitiveness in the global era. To respond to this challenge, educational institutions are required not only to provide education but also to ensure that educational processes are implemented effectively, efficiently, and in accordance with established quality standards. In this context, an educational quality assurance system serves as a strategic approach to ensuring that educational processes consistently meet predetermined standards. This article aims to comprehensively examine the concepts, principles, and implementation of educational quality assurance systems as a strategy for improving the quality of educational institutions. This study employs a literature review method by analyzing various reputable scientific sources, including international journal articles, academic books, and relevant educational policy documents. The literature search was conducted through scientific databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar using keywords focused on quality assurance and educational quality management. The findings indicate that quality assurance systems play a crucial role in improving institutional quality through three main pillars: the implementation of rigorous quality standards, continuous evaluation mechanisms, and the development of a strong quality culture across all organizational elements. The effectiveness of quality assurance implementation depends not only on formal procedures but also on visionary leadership, the active participation of the entire academic community, and a strong commitment to the principle of continuous quality improvement. This principle enables educational institutions to adaptively improve curricula, learning processes, and organizational governance in response to changing stakeholder needs. Therefore, educational quality assurance systems constitute a strategic instrument that not only strengthens internal quality but also enhances institutional competitiveness at the global level.

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INTRODUCTION

Education plays a central role in national development, serving as a primary catalyst for producing high-quality human resources who are adaptive to advances in science and technology (OECD, 2013; UNESCO, 2015). In an era characterized by disruption and increasingly intense global competition, the urgency of improving educational quality has become more evident. Educational institutions are no longer expected merely to organize

teaching and learning activities; they are also required to produce graduates with strong academic competence, relevant professional skills, and well-developed critical thinking abilities. Consequently, educational quality improvement has become a priority agenda in the education policies of many countries.

Conceptually, quality in education is a multidimensional and complex construct. It cannot be interpreted solely as the achievement of high academic scores. Sallis (2014) defines educational quality as the extent to which an institution successfully meets the needs and expectations of its stakeholders through effective and efficient educational processes. Expanding this definition, Harvey and Green (1993) propose five major perspectives on quality that remain widely referenced: quality as exceptional, quality as perfection or consistency, quality as fitness for purpose, quality as value for money, and quality as transformation. This framework emphasizes that educational quality concerns the ability of institutions to provide added value and transform learners into better and more capable individuals.

As demands for public accountability and transparency have increased, greater attention has been directed toward quality assurance. Many countries have therefore developed and implemented educational quality assurance systems as policy instruments to ensure that educational institutions provide genuinely high-quality services. Harvey and Williams (2010) explain that such systems are designed to ensure that all educational processes comply with established quality standards and achieve their intended objectives effectively. Thus, a quality assurance system is not merely a control mechanism but also a strategic instrument for building public trust.

Quality assurance practices in higher education have been strongly influenced by quality management principles originating in the industrial sector. The concept of continuous improvement, introduced by Deming (1986) through the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle, has become an important foundation. This cycle emphasizes that quality improvement is an ongoing process involving planning, implementation, evaluation, and corrective action. These principles have subsequently been widely adapted in educational management to ensure that quality standards are not only achieved but are also continuously and dynamically improved.

Recent research has confirmed the significance of quality assurance systems. Martin (2018) demonstrated that a well-structured internal quality assurance system can effectively improve the quality of academic programs and enhance graduates' employability. Similarly, Santos et al. (2020) found that the application of continuous improvement principles in quality management is positively associated with improvements in educational service quality and student satisfaction. These findings underline the vital role of quality assurance systems as key drivers of institutional quality.

In Indonesia, the commitment to quality improvement is reflected in the Educational Quality Assurance System, which consists of two main components: the Internal Quality Assurance System, implemented autonomously by educational institutions, and the External Quality Assurance System, conducted through accreditation by independent bodies (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2016). This framework is designed to enable educational institutions to conduct systematic self-evaluation and continuous improvement.

Nevertheless, the implementation of quality assurance systems is not always straightforward. The literature indicates that successful implementation depends heavily on

non-technical factors, including the quality of organizational leadership, the competence of human resources, and, most importantly, the development of a strong quality culture within the institution (Stensaker, 2008; Bendermacher, 2021). Without a strong cultural foundation, the system risks becoming merely an administrative routine that fails to produce substantive improvements in educational quality.

Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of educational quality assurance systems is essential. This article seeks to address that need. Using a literature review approach, it aims to examine in depth the concepts, principles, and implementation of educational quality assurance systems and to analyze their strategic role in improving the quality of educational institutions in a sustainable manner.

Literature Review And Problem Statement

Educational Quality

Educational quality is a multidimensional concept that encompasses inputs, processes, outputs, and outcomes. It should not be understood solely as the achievement of high academic scores or accreditation status. Sallis (2014) defines educational quality as the ability of an institution to provide effective and efficient services that meet the needs and expectations of students, society, government, and the labor market. This perspective emphasizes that educational institutions must continuously evaluate whether their programs and services remain relevant to stakeholder needs.

Harvey and Green (1993) identify five major perspectives on quality: quality as exceptional, quality as perfection or consistency, quality as fitness for purpose, quality as value for money, and quality as transformation. These perspectives indicate that educational quality involves institutional excellence, process consistency, achievement of organizational goals, efficient use of resources, and the ability to transform students' knowledge, skills, and personal development. Therefore, quality is dynamic, contextual, and closely related to the mission of each educational institution.

Educational quality can also be assessed through several operational indicators. Martin and Stella (2007) classify these indicators into input, process, output, and outcome dimensions. Input indicators include student admission quality, lecturer qualifications, facilities, and institutional resources. Process indicators cover teaching effectiveness, academic services, governance, and the academic climate. Output indicators include graduation rates, study duration, and academic achievement, while outcome indicators relate to graduate employability, stakeholder satisfaction, and institutional reputation. These dimensions demonstrate that quality improvement requires an integrated management approach.

Educational Quality Assurance

Educational quality assurance refers to a systematic process designed to ensure that established standards are achieved, maintained, and continuously improved. Harvey and Williams (2010) explain that quality assurance performs two primary functions: accountability and enhancement. The accountability function provides assurance to the public that educational institutions fulfill their responsibilities appropriately, while the enhancement function encourages institutions to conduct self-evaluation and continuous improvement.

Modern educational quality assurance generally consists of internal quality assurance and external quality assurance. Internal quality assurance is developed and implemented independently by educational institutions through policies, standards, internal audits, curriculum reviews, student satisfaction surveys, and institutional self-evaluation. External quality assurance is conducted by external bodies through accreditation, assessment, benchmarking, and independent evaluation (Martin & Stella, 2007; Harvey & Williams, 2010).

In Indonesia, these two mechanisms are implemented through the Internal Quality Assurance System and the External Quality Assurance System. The internal mechanism enables institutions to establish and monitor their own quality standards, whereas the external mechanism validates institutional performance through accreditation by authorized bodies (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2016). The integration of internal and external mechanisms is intended to strengthen institutional accountability and encourage systematic improvement.

Continuous Quality Improvement and the PPEPP Cycle

Continuous quality improvement is a fundamental principle of modern quality management. Deming (1986) introduced the Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle, which emphasizes that quality improvement must be undertaken continuously through planning, implementation, evaluation, and corrective action. In the Indonesian educational context, this principle is reflected in the PPEPP cycle, which consists of standard setting, standard implementation, evaluation, control, and standard improvement.

The first stage, standard setting, involves determining clear and measurable institutional standards. The second stage, standard implementation, requires all academic and administrative units to perform their activities according to the established standards. The third stage, evaluation, assesses the extent to which the standards have been achieved. The fourth stage, control, addresses deviations and weaknesses identified during the evaluation process. The final stage, standard improvement, raises the quality targets after the previous standards have been consistently achieved.

The cyclical nature of PPEPP ensures that quality assurance is not treated as a one-time administrative activity. Instead, it becomes a continuous institutional process. Santos et al. (2020) found that institutions applying continuous improvement principles consistently tend to achieve better service quality and higher levels of student satisfaction. Therefore, the PPEPP cycle can serve as an operational framework for embedding continuous improvement into institutional governance.

Total Quality Management in Education

Total Quality Management is a management philosophy that emphasizes continuous improvement, stakeholder satisfaction, employee involvement, and data-based decision-making. In the educational context, Sallis (2014) defines Total Quality Management as an institutional commitment to improving all organizational processes through the active participation of every member.

Several principles of Total Quality Management are particularly relevant to educational institutions. First, stakeholder focus requires institutions to understand the needs of students, parents, government, society, and employers. Second, continuous improvement requires institutions to regularly review their curriculum, teaching methods, academic services, and governance. Third, total involvement emphasizes that quality is the responsibility of all

institutional members, not only the quality assurance unit. Fourth, evidence-based decision-making requires institutions to use reliable data in planning and evaluation. Fifth, visionary leadership is necessary to direct institutional transformation and sustain commitment to quality.

The application of Total Quality Management strengthens the implementation of quality assurance because it shifts quality from a procedural obligation to an organizational philosophy. When quality principles are integrated into daily activities, quality assurance is no longer viewed merely as a requirement for accreditation but as a shared institutional responsibility.

Quality Culture

A quality assurance system cannot function effectively without a strong quality culture. Harvey and Stensaker (2008) define quality culture as a set of shared values, beliefs, commitments, and practices that encourage organizational members to continuously improve institutional performance. Quality culture represents the internalization of quality principles into everyday behavior.

A strong quality culture is reflected in the willingness of lecturers to improve teaching methods, the commitment of administrative staff to provide responsive services, and the readiness of institutional leaders to use evaluation results for improvement. Bendermacher (2021) emphasizes that quality culture develops through leadership, open communication, reflection, participation, and recognition. It cannot be established merely through formal regulations or administrative documents.

Kleijnen et al. (2014) further explain that flexible organizational structures are more supportive of quality culture because they encourage participation, innovation, and openness to change. In contrast, rigid and highly hierarchical structures may restrict initiatives for improvement. Therefore, developing quality culture requires both structural support and long-term behavioral transformation.

Leadership and Stakeholder Participation

Leadership plays a central role in the successful implementation of quality assurance. Institutional leaders are responsible for establishing the quality vision, allocating resources, developing standards, encouraging participation, and ensuring that evaluation results are followed by corrective actions. Stensaker (2008) argues that leadership commitment is a prerequisite for developing an effective and sustainable quality assurance system.

Visionary and transformational leadership can strengthen quality assurance by linking institutional goals with daily organizational practices. Leaders must not only issue policies but also serve as role models in implementing quality standards. They must communicate the importance of quality, encourage innovation, recognize achievement, and address resistance to change.

Stakeholder participation is equally important. Lecturers, administrative staff, students, graduates, employers, and external partners provide different perspectives on institutional quality. Their participation strengthens the relevance of standards, increases organizational ownership, and improves the accuracy of evaluation. Therefore, quality assurance should be implemented as a participatory process rather than as a centralized administrative activity.

Challenges in the Implementation of Educational Quality Assurance

Although educational quality assurance offers significant benefits, its implementation continues to face several challenges. The first challenge is resistance to change. Some institutional members may perceive quality assurance as an additional workload that provides limited benefits. The second challenge is the misconception that quality assurance is primarily related to document preparation for accreditation. Such a perception can shift institutional attention away from substantive improvement toward administrative compliance.

The third challenge concerns limited human and financial resources. Effective quality assurance requires trained personnel, reliable information systems, sufficient funding, and adequate evaluation instruments. The fourth challenge is weak integration between quality assurance and institutional management. When evaluation results are not used in planning, budgeting, and decision-making, the quality assurance system becomes disconnected from organizational development.

The fifth challenge is the absence of a supportive quality culture. Institutions with rigid, bureaucratic, and hierarchical cultures may experience difficulty in encouraging innovation, openness, and self-evaluation. These challenges show that quality assurance is not merely a technical issue but also an organizational, managerial, and cultural issue.

Problem Statement

The literature demonstrates that educational quality assurance has a strategic role in improving academic services, institutional accountability, graduate quality, and public trust. However, the effectiveness of its implementation varies considerably among educational institutions. In many cases, quality assurance remains focused on administrative compliance, documentation, and accreditation preparation rather than on continuous institutional improvement.

Furthermore, there is often a gap between formal quality assurance mechanisms and actual organizational practices. Institutions may already have quality standards, internal audit procedures, and accreditation documents, but these instruments do not always produce meaningful changes in curriculum, teaching, governance, and stakeholder services. This gap is frequently associated with weak leadership commitment, limited stakeholder participation, insufficient resources, poor integration between evaluation and decision-making, and the absence of a strong quality culture.

Based on these conditions, the central problem addressed in this study is how educational quality assurance systems can be implemented as an effective strategy for sustainably improving the quality of educational institutions. More specifically, this article examines the following questions:

1. How is educational quality conceptualized within the framework of quality assurance?
2. How do internal and external quality assurance mechanisms contribute to institutional quality improvement?
3. What roles do continuous improvement, the PPEPP cycle, and Total Quality Management play in educational quality assurance?
4. How do leadership, stakeholder participation, and quality culture determine the effectiveness of quality assurance implementation?
5. What challenges hinder the implementation of educational quality assurance, and what strategies can be adopted to overcome them?

Accordingly, this literature review aims to synthesize theoretical and empirical findings concerning the concepts, mechanisms, success factors, and implementation challenges of educational quality assurance. It also seeks to develop a comprehensive understanding of how quality assurance can move beyond administrative compliance and function as a strategic instrument for institutional transformation.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach using a systematic literature review that adapted the PRISMA (*Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses*) guidelines. This approach was selected because it enables researchers to explore, analyze, and synthesize concepts, theories, and empirical findings from previous studies relevant to educational quality assurance systems in a comprehensive and transparent manner (Westerheijden et al., 2007). The purpose of this approach was to develop a systematic and comprehensive understanding of the role of quality assurance systems as a strategy for improving the quality of educational institutions.

Protocol and Registration

This review was not registered in a systematic review protocol database such as PROSPERO because it focused on conceptual literature and educational policy. Nevertheless, to ensure transparency and reproducibility, the study followed the PRISMA workflow, which consists of four main stages: identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion. The literature search and selection protocol was formulated before the search process began and did not undergo any significant changes during the review process.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature search was conducted in October 2023 using four reputable international and national academic databases: Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), Google Scholar, and the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). These databases were selected because they provide broad coverage of high-quality publications in the field of education, particularly those related to quality assurance and quality management in higher education.

The keywords used in the search process were designed to capture a broad yet relevant range of topics. The keywords included:

- “quality assurance in education”
- “internal quality assurance”
- “quality assurance in higher education”
- “educational quality management”
- “quality culture in higher education”
- “continuous quality improvement in education”

Boolean operators such as AND and OR were also used to combine keywords. Examples included “quality assurance” AND “higher education” and “quality culture” AND “accreditation.” These combinations were used to broaden or narrow the scope of the search as needed. In addition to database searches, manual searching was conducted by reviewing the reference lists of key articles to ensure that no relevant literature was overlooked. This process was also supported by a snowballing technique.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To ensure the relevance and quality of the literature analyzed, the following selection criteria were applied.

Inclusion Criteria

1. Publications consisted of peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, or official policy reports issued by reputable institutions, such as UNESCO, OECD, and IIEP.
2. The literature substantially discussed the concepts, implementation, or evaluation of educational quality assurance systems, either in the context of higher education or education in general.
3. The publications were issued between 2010 and 2024 to ensure the use of up-to-date information, with exceptions made for classical works that served as major theoretical foundations, such as Deming (1986) and Harvey and Green (1993).
4. The publications were available in full text in either English or Indonesian.

Exclusion Criteria

1. Opinion articles, editorials, or conference proceedings that had not undergone a rigorous peer-review process.
2. Literature that only mentioned quality assurance briefly without providing an in-depth discussion.
3. Publications that were not available in full text.

PRISMA Flow Diagram

The literature selection process followed the PRISMA framework, which consists of four main stages: identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion. Each stage is described below and summarized in Figure 1.

Stage 1: Identification

The literature search was conducted in October 2023 using four reputable academic databases: Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), and the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). The search strategy employed predetermined keywords, including “quality assurance in education,” “internal quality assurance,” and “quality culture in higher education,” as well as combinations of keywords using Boolean operators such as AND and OR.

The initial search identified 430 articles, consisting of 306 articles from Google Scholar, 78 articles from Scopus, and 47 articles from DOAJ.

Stage 2: Initial Screening

The 430 identified articles were examined to remove duplicates across the databases. After duplicate removal, 330 unique articles remained. The titles and abstracts of these articles were then screened to assess their initial relevance to the research topic.

At this stage, 199 articles were excluded for several reasons. Some articles were not relevant to educational quality assurance because they discussed quality in industrial or manufacturing contexts. Other publications consisted of opinion pieces or editorials that had not undergone peer review, while some were written in languages other than English or Indonesian. As a result, 131 articles proceeded to the next stage.

Stage 3: Eligibility Assessment

A total of 131 articles were read in full text to assess their conformity with the predetermined inclusion criteria. Following this assessment, 79 articles were excluded for the following reasons:

1. Thirty-one articles were not substantively relevant because they only referred to quality assurance briefly and did not provide an in-depth discussion.
2. Twenty-one articles focused on contexts outside education, such as companies, healthcare services, or other non-educational sectors.
3. Seventeen articles did not provide a clear methodology or did not qualify as either empirical studies or systematic literature reviews.
4. Ten articles were not available in full text despite efforts to obtain them through libraries and repositories.

Stage 4: Inclusion

After the eligibility assessment, 52 articles were found to meet all inclusion criteria. These articles were then analyzed using a thematic analysis approach and synthesized in this literature review. Based on the selection stages described above, Figure 1 presents the PRISMA flow diagram summarizing the process of identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and final inclusion of the literature.

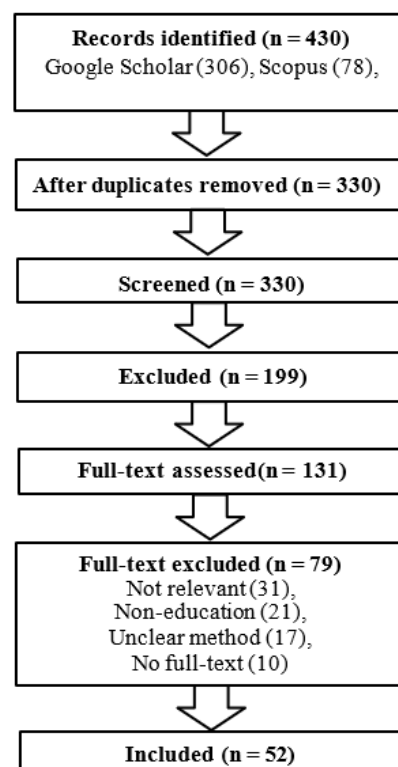


Figure 1. Literature selection flowchart based on the PRISMA protocol.

Literature Analysis

The literature that met the selection criteria was subsequently analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. This approach aims to identify, organize, and interpret recurring thematic patterns within the literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis process involved

an in-depth reading of each selected source, coding relevant sections, and grouping the codes into major themes.

The main themes analyzed in this review include:

1. the conceptualization of quality in education;
2. the definition and scope of educational quality assurance;
3. the roles and mechanisms of the Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI) and the External Quality Assurance System (SPME);
4. the application of Total Quality Management (TQM) principles in the educational context;
5. the development of a quality culture as the foundation for sustainable quality improvement; and
6. the challenges and strategies associated with the implementation of educational quality assurance systems.

Literature Synthesis

The final stage involved literature synthesis, namely the process of integrating findings from various analyzed sources to develop a comprehensive and coherent understanding of the topic. The synthesis was conducted not only by summarizing previous findings, but also by comparing, contrasting, and critically examining different perspectives. The purpose of this process was to identify areas of consensus, ongoing debates, and research gaps related to educational quality assurance systems.

The results of the synthesis were then used to develop a conceptual framework explaining how educational quality assurance systems can function as an effective strategy for improving the quality of educational institutions. This framework also integrates key factors that influence the success of quality assurance implementation, including leadership, stakeholder participation, and quality culture.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Strategies for Implementing Educational Quality Assurance

The implementation of an educational quality assurance system is not merely a short-term administrative project, but rather a managerial and cultural transformation that requires comprehensive and sustainable strategies. Based on the literature synthesis, the successful implementation of such a system depends on several interrelated key strategies.

First, the quality management system must be integrated throughout the entire organizational value chain. Quality assurance should not function as an isolated unit with limited connections to other organizational units. Harvey and Williams (2010) emphasize that an effective system should integrate academic evaluation, resource management, curriculum development, and policy formulation within a coherent quality framework. This means that data and findings generated through quality assurance activities, such as audit results and learning evaluations, should become major inputs for decision-making at all institutional levels, from study programs to university management.

Second, institutions need to establish clear, measurable, and challenging quality standards. Standards serve as a compass that directs all organizational activities. Effective standards should not merely define minimum eligibility requirements but should also encourage institutions to achieve higher levels of performance (Van Vught & Westerheijden,

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1994). At the operational level, these standards should be translated into key performance indicators (KPIs) that are easily understood and measured by all organizational units. The standard-setting process should also involve active participation from internal stakeholders in order to foster a sense of ownership and shared commitment.

Third, visionary and transformational leadership must be strengthened. Institutional leaders, including rectors, deans, and heads of study programs, play a crucial role as the main drivers of quality culture. Their role is not limited to formulating policies, but also includes serving as role models in implementing quality practices. Stensaker (2008) emphasizes that leadership commitment is an essential prerequisite for creating an environment that supports innovation and continuous improvement. Leaders should be able to communicate the quality vision effectively, provide adequate resources, and recognize units or individuals that contribute significantly to quality improvement.

Fourth, institutions should establish continuous evaluation and monitoring mechanisms. Evaluation is a vital component of the quality assurance cycle because it enables institutions to identify both strengths and weaknesses. Martin (2018) shows that institutions with strong internal evaluation systems tend to be more adaptive and demonstrate better organizational performance. Evaluation may be conducted through internal quality audits, student and graduate-user satisfaction surveys, tracer studies, and peer reviews across study programs. Most importantly, evaluation results should be followed by concrete improvement plans and corrective actions.

Fifth, active participation from all stakeholders must be ensured. Quality assurance is a collective responsibility rather than the exclusive responsibility of a particular unit. Lecturers, as the main actors in the learning process, should be actively involved in curriculum evaluation and development. Administrative staff contribute to maintaining the quality of institutional services, while students should be involved as partners in providing feedback and, where appropriate, participating in internal quality audit activities. Such participation creates a stronger sense of ownership and shared responsibility for institutional quality.

The PPEPP Cycle as a Manifestation of Continuous Improvement

The PPEPP cycle, consisting of Standard Setting, Implementation, Evaluation, Control, and Standard Improvement, is not merely bureaucratic terminology, but a strategic managerial instrument. It represents a concrete application of the principle of continuous quality improvement, which has long been a foundation of modern quality management (Deming, 1986). In the context of Indonesian higher education, the PPEPP cycle serves as the backbone of the Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI).

Each stage of the PPEPP cycle has a specific function that reinforces the others. Standard setting is the phase in which institutions determine the expected level of quality and establish common targets. Implementation is the phase in which the established standards are translated into daily practices. Evaluation involves critically assessing the extent to which the standards have been achieved. Control refers to corrective measures undertaken when deviations or weaknesses are identified. Finally, standard improvement involves establishing higher targets after the previous standards have been consistently achieved.

The main strength of the PPEPP cycle lies in its continuous and cyclical nature. It encourages educational institutions to avoid complacency and continuously seek opportunities for improvement. Empirical evidence supports the effectiveness of this

approach. Santos et al. (2020), for example, found that institutions that consistently implement continuous improvement cycles demonstrate significant improvements in academic service quality and student satisfaction. The cycle also fosters a habit of institutional self-evaluation, which gradually strengthens collective awareness of quality-related issues.

The Strategic Role of Quality Culture in Sustaining Quality

Even a well-designed quality assurance system and set of procedures may fail to produce meaningful results if they are not supported by a strong quality culture. Harvey and Stensaker (2008) define quality culture as a set of shared values, beliefs, and practices that consistently encourage all members of an organization to commit to quality improvement. This represents the “soft” dimension of quality assurance, which is often more difficult to develop than the “hard” dimension represented by formal documents and procedures.

Quality culture is reflected in everyday behavior. For example, a lecturer who voluntarily updates teaching materials and learning methods because of a sense of professional responsibility demonstrates quality-oriented behavior. Likewise, an administrative staff member who promptly assists students because of a commitment to delivering excellent service reflects the same culture. These behaviors illustrate that quality culture is embedded in internal motivation rather than merely driven by formal compliance.

Bendermacher (2021) emphasizes that the development of a quality culture requires strong leadership, open communication, and opportunities for reflection and innovation. Quality culture cannot simply be imposed through formal regulations or institutional decrees. Instead, it must be cultivated through role modeling, dialogue, and recognition of individual contributions. Institutions that successfully develop a strong quality culture tend to have greater resilience in responding to challenges because commitment to quality has become deeply embedded in organizational behavior.

Kleijnen et al. (2014) further explain that institutions with flexible organizational structures and openness to change are more capable of integrating quality values into everyday academic practices. In contrast, rigid and highly hierarchical bureaucratic structures tend to inhibit initiatives and innovations that are essential to the development of a quality culture. Therefore, investment in quality culture should be regarded as a long-term institutional investment that is as important as investment in physical infrastructure and information systems.

Implementation Challenges and Strategies to Overcome Them

Although the benefits of quality assurance systems have been widely recognized, their implementation continues to face various challenges. Identifying these challenges is an important first step in developing effective mitigation strategies.

The first challenge is resistance to change. Not all organizational members readily accept new systems, particularly when they perceive them as increasing workloads without providing clear benefits. This challenge can be addressed through intensive and participatory communication and by demonstrating tangible evidence that quality assurance can simplify work processes and improve institutional reputation.

The second challenge is a misunderstanding of the essence of quality assurance. In some institutions, quality assurance is still perceived merely as an activity of preparing documents for accreditation rather than as a continuous improvement cycle. As a result, institutional efforts may focus more on refining documentation than on improving actual

processes. This misconception should be addressed through continuous education and training concerning the fundamental principles and objectives of quality assurance.

The third challenge concerns limited human and financial resources. Effective quality assurance requires trained personnel who understand evaluation methodologies and data management, as well as sufficient financial resources to support audits, surveys, and training activities. A practical strategy is to gradually strengthen internal capacity, utilize information technology to improve efficiency, and allocate a specific quality assurance budget within the Annual Activity and Budget Plan.

The fourth challenge is weak integration between the quality assurance system and the broader organizational management system. When the quality assurance unit operates independently and its findings are not used in strategic decision-making, quality assurance becomes ineffective. Therefore, institutional leaders need to ensure that quality assurance mechanisms are fully integrated into planning, budgeting, evaluation, and organizational decision-making processes.

The fifth challenge is an organizational culture that does not adequately support quality improvement. In institutions characterized by rigid bureaucratic and hierarchical cultures, quality improvement initiatives may be difficult to implement. Cultural transformation is a long-term process that requires consistency and strong leadership role models. Recognition and rewards for units or individuals that demonstrate innovation and achievement in quality improvement may serve as effective incentives.

By recognizing these challenges, educational institutions can formulate more realistic and context-sensitive implementation strategies. This will enable the quality assurance system to function not merely as an administrative mechanism but as a genuine driver of institutional quality improvement.

Proposed Proposition or Conceptual Model

Based on the analysis and synthesis of the literature, together with the discussion of the challenges associated with implementing educational quality assurance systems, this article proposes a refinement of the initial conceptual framework.

The proposed model emphasizes several aspects that have received relatively limited attention in the implementation of quality assurance practices in Indonesia. In particular, the model positions transformational leadership as the principal driver of quality culture, places quality culture as the foundation of the quality assurance system, and emphasizes the importance of continuous feedback in strengthening institutional quality improvement.

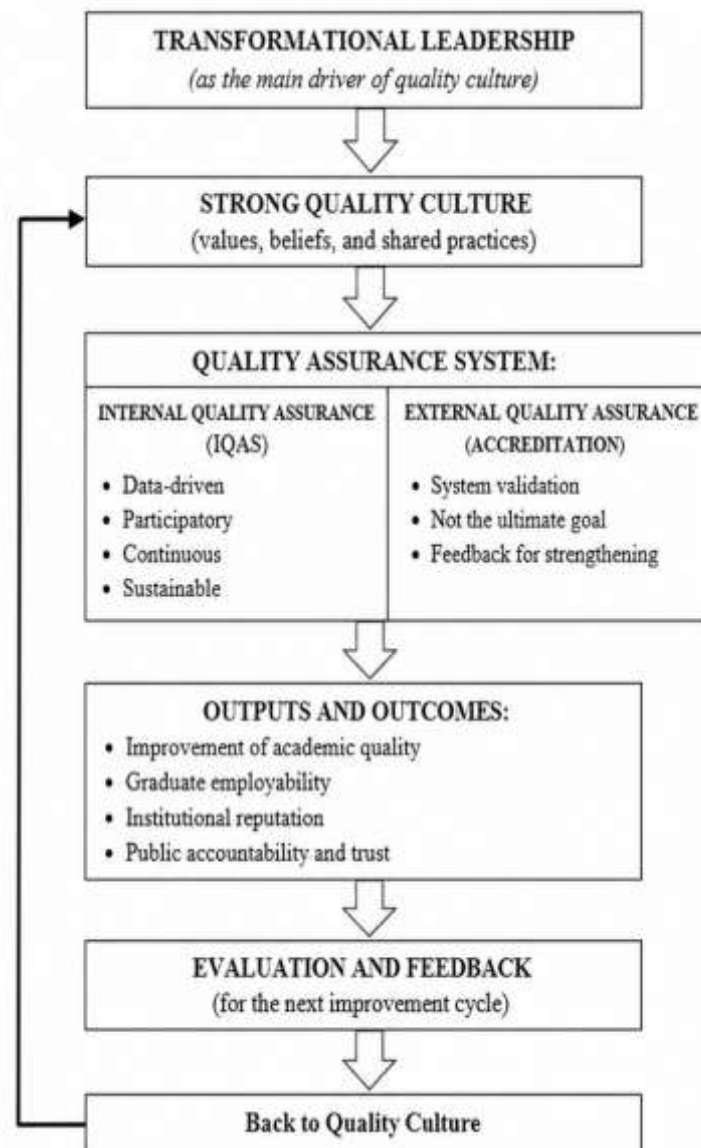


Figure 2. Proposed Conceptual Model of the Educational Quality Assurance System
Main Components of the Model

The model proposed in this article consists of several interrelated components, as follows:

1. Transformational Leadership as the main driver of quality culture.
2. A Strong Quality Culture as the foundation that must be established before the quality assurance system can operate effectively.
3. The Quality Assurance System, consisting of the Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI) through the PPEPP cycle and the External Quality Assurance System (SPME) through accreditation.
4. Outputs and Outcomes, including improved academic quality, graduate competitiveness, institutional reputation, and public accountability.
5. Evaluation and Feedback for improving the subsequent cycle and continuously strengthening the quality culture.

Table 1. Main Differences Between the Proposed Model and the Initial Framework

Aspect	Initial Framework (Based on the Literature)	Proposed Model
Position of Leadership	One of several contributing factors	The primary driver that precedes and influences the entire system
Quality Culture	A supporting factor	The fundamental foundation that must be developed before the system operates
Feedback Cycle	Not explicitly stated	Includes a feedback loop that reinforces quality culture
Accreditation	Treated as an end goal	Used as a validation instrument rather than the final objective

Implications of the Model

The proposed model implies a shift in focus from a procedural-administrative approach toward a cultural-transformational approach. Educational institutions should no longer rely solely on establishing quality assurance units and preparing administrative documents. Instead, they need to actively develop visionary and transformational leadership at all organizational levels while consistently fostering quality values through communication, training, recognition, and institutional practices. Transformational leadership should serve as the main driver of quality improvement by providing direction, inspiring organizational members, and demonstrating a strong commitment to quality. At the same time, educational institutions need to strengthen quality culture through continuous dialogue, recognition of individual and organizational contributions, and the internalization of shared values. Within this framework, the quality assurance system should be positioned as an instrument for continuous institutional improvement rather than as an end in itself. Furthermore, institutions need to establish a continuous feedback cycle so that evaluation results can be systematically used to improve policies, practices, and quality standards while simultaneously reinforcing the existing quality culture.

CONCLUSION

The educational quality assurance system is a strategic instrument for sustainably improving the quality of educational institutions. Based on the literature review, educational quality is a multidimensional concept that encompasses not only academic achievement but also the quality of inputs, processes, outputs, and outcomes in meeting stakeholder needs and expectations. Effective quality assurance requires the integration of the Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI) and the External Quality Assurance System (SPME). In the Indonesian context, the implementation of SPMI through the PPEPP cycle—Standard Setting, Implementation, Evaluation, Control, and Standard Improvement—provides an important framework for realizing the principle of continuous improvement. However, the effectiveness of the system is determined not only by the completeness of standards, procedures, and formal documentation, but also by visionary leadership, active participation of the academic community, and the development of a strong quality culture throughout the institution.

The implementation of quality assurance systems still faces several challenges, including resistance to change, limited resources, inadequate understanding of the substantive meaning of quality assurance, and weak integration between quality systems and institutional governance. Therefore, educational institutions need to strengthen human resource capacity, improve quality literacy, provide adequate budgetary support, develop transformational leadership, and establish continuous evaluation and feedback mechanisms. Quality assurance should also be positioned as an instrument for institutional improvement rather than merely as a means of administrative compliance or accreditation. Through a systematic, participatory, and quality-culture-oriented approach, quality assurance can strengthen academic quality, graduate competitiveness, institutional reputation, and public accountability. Future research should empirically examine the effectiveness of the PPEPP cycle and the role of quality culture across different types and levels of educational institutions.

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