

IMPROVEMENT OF STUDY PROGRAM'S PERFORMANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION BY IMPLEMENTING INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM AT UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NUSANTARA INDONESIA

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Abstract

This research aimed to describe the improvement of study program's performance in higher education by implementing Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI) as an effort to improve the quality of educational input, processes, and output. This step was considered crucial since problems of study program's performance were extremely complex, starting from input, teaching and learning processes, to the fulfillment of higher education quality standards. Other problems in improving study program's performance was the less-optimal implementation of higher education quality standards, both academically and non-academically. This research used a qualitative approach with a case study method. The research was conducted at Nusantara Islamic University, Bandung, Indonesia. Data collection techniques used: direct observation, searching documents and archives, and in-depth interviews. Research results indicated that there were Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI) policies and concepts in the form of academic quality standard documents and non-academic quality standard documents prepared by the Directorate of Quality Assurance (DPM) as a reference in formulating quality standards at Study Program level. The Directorate of Quality Assurance (DPM) coordinated with the Quality Assurance Cluster (GPM) and the Quality Assurance Unit (UPM) in determining, implementing, evaluating, controlling and improving the quality standards of study programs. In addition, the Internal Quality Assurance System was implemented by arranging a draft in the form of Internal Assurance System cycle. Further, obstacles in conducting this cycle were the low commitment of the leaders and the limited number of auditors. Steps for anticipating these obstacles were providing experts in the implementation of Internal Quality Assurance System, conducting training for young auditors, growing the spirit of quality assurance, and carrying out evaluation every semester.

Keywords: Internal Quality Assurance System, Education Quality

1. Introduction

One of the fundamental problems faced by universities in Indonesia is the lack of access, quality, relevance, and equity. Higher education has not been able to produce entrepreneurs with job-creating orientation and independence. Educated unemployment continues to grow, a problem of community service in which universities are considered to be less responsive and have not been able to maximize their contribution to community problems. Universities and colleges have not yet able to produce graduates with noble and strong characters. It can be seen from the emergence of anarchism by students. Even though many achievements have also been achieved, this problem overwhelms those achievements.

Higher education quality in Indonesia is inferior to our neighboring countries in Southeast Asia [1]. Given this fact, higher education providers are always required to find the root cause of the problem, whether it lies in the higher education quality standards and internal quality assurance system (*SPMI*) that were not fully implemented, curriculum and literature that are not renewable, institutional accreditation that needs improvement, educators that are not certified, or other problems. In this case, the researchers noted various fundamental obstacles existed in higher education, which were the low quality of educators, facilities, infrastructure, as well as mental attitude. Those problems are crucial and be addressed immediately as they have a significant impact on graduates.

In the aspects of input, process, output, outcome, and impact of education, research, and community service, study program's performance still faces various problems related to quality. Quality is defined as an achievement that is satisfying and goes beyond customer expectation. Quality improvement is increasingly important for institutions to gain a better control [2].

In addition, many higher education providers do not fully understand aspects of Higher Education Quality Assurance System (*SPM Dikti*). Based on article 3 paragraph 1 of the Minister of Education Decree No. 50 of 2014 on Higher Education Quality Assurance System [3], Quality Assurance System consists of Internal Quality Assurance System (*SPMI*) and External Quality Assurance System (*SPME*). In article 3 paragraph 2, 3 and 4, *SPMI* is planned, implemented,

controlled, and developed by universities. Meanwhile, *SPME* is planned, implemented, controlled, and developed by the National Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (*BAN-PT*) and/or the Independent Accreditation Institute (*LAM*) through their respective authorities. Results of *SPMI* determination by universities are used by the *BAN-PT* or *LAM* to determine status and ranking of accreditation of universities or study programs. In article 7 paragraph 1, data, information of implementation, as well as results of *SPMI* and *SPME* are reported and stored by universities in Higher Education Database.

Based on fact, in 2017, the Ministry of Research Technology and Higher Education (*Kemendikristek Dikti*) stated that there were 4,504 universities registered in Indonesia, which consisted of 3,136 Private Universities (*PTS*) and 122 State Universities (*PTN*). The rest were religious universities and universities under a ministry or state institution that adopt the employment bond system. However, the figure is not comparable to the gross enrollment rate (*APK*) of universities in Indonesia. Indonesia's *APK* is in 31.5 percent. This situation makes a number of Private Universities have less than 500 students and an unhealthy condition. Prospective students have a high interest at State Universities, which are relatively more affordable. However, the number of State Universities has not been able to cover those students.

Higher education quality in Indonesia still indicates polarization between public and private universities. Some have exceeded quality standards and the majority of which are state universities. On the other hand, only a few private universities occupy the main cluster and most of them are in the middle cluster. The Ministry of Research arranges ranking of university's quality into five clusters based on the quality of human resources, institutions, student activities, research, community service, and innovation. Reddy Siram [4] stated that universities need to pay attention to graduate quality management because many graduates work in an area that does not match their qualification and educational background.

Recently, there are no private universities in cluster 1 (top) of the best non-vocational universities ranking by the Ministry of Research and Technology, 2018. There are fourteen universities in cluster 1, all of them are public universities. This is understandable because they enter higher education market and are supported by quality academic resources and state budget. Today, private universities have only reached cluster 2 in Ministry of Research and Technology ranking 2018.

This research aimed to obtain data and facts on implementation of Internal Quality Assurance System (*SPMI*) as an effort to improve the quality of educational input, processes, output and outcomes at Nusantara Islamic University (*UNINUS*) Bandung, Indonesia. In addition, it aimed to find obstacles faced by *UNINUS* institution in implementing *SPMI*.

2. Literature Review

Implementation of Internal Quality Assurance System (*SPMI*) is a requirement for establishment of a university and development of a study program [5] [6]. This implementation is in the form of a cycle that consists of five stages of activities, namely: determination, implementation, evaluation, control, and improvement. Public accountability on study program is actively implemented by developing an internal quality assurance system. Intended accountability is the responsibility of university on higher education to stakeholders. [7].

The most dominant factor in encouraging quality assurance is that university must conduct quality assurance in addition demands for accountability and graduate qualifications [8]. Relevant with bureaucratic reform activities in the Ministry of Research Technology and Higher Education, study program accreditation service become one of the programs in service reformation to provide excellent services to public as consumers of educational services. This program deals with public services to realize a public service implementation system that is in accordance with the general principles of good governance and corporation. The program aims to provide convenience to stakeholders in obtaining accreditation services [9].

Therefore, reformation of academic services in study programs that is in accordance with the public service law brings changes in working system and mechanism. Changes must be supported by the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to improve service excellence for stakeholders. Software and hardware supports are required to achieve it as they facilitate access for users in obtaining information about study program's performance, including study program's accreditation. Another issue is to evaluate and analyze work processes of the study program's internal quality assurance system (*SPMI*) to ensure that quality standards are running well. Study program's accreditation is the result of all those achievements.

In addition, the purposes and benefits of implementing a study program's internal quality assurance system are to provide an assurance that the study program is accredited and meets quality standards set by the Higher Education Accreditation Agency (*BAN-PT*), protect people

from study programs that do not meet the established standards, and motivate study programs to continuously make sustainable improvements and maintain existing quality [10]. Results of Study Program's Internal Quality Audit (*AMI*) can be used as a basis for consideration of improving other quality standards implemented by a study program. Study program's quality and performance are reflection of conditions and performance characteristics in terms of input, processes, output and outcomes, or services/performance based on the established standards.

Public accountability of a study program is actively implemented by developing an internal quality assurance system. Intended accountability is university's responsibility for the implementation of higher education to stakeholders. The study program ensures that internal quality assurance system (*SPMI*) has been running well and correctly through the cycle of Determination, Implementation, Implementation Evaluation, Control and Implementation (*PPEPP*). The study program must be accredited by the external quality assurance agency (*BAN-PT*). Through a proper internal quality assurance system, the study program will be able to improve the quality of its services, establish autonomy, and develop itself as an organizer of academic programs in accordance with the field of study, and participate in increasing public morality in a sustainable manner.

3. Method

This research used a qualitative approach with a case study. Referred to Yin [11], case study is a more relevant strategy for research whose main research questions are related to how or why. The research was conducted at Nusantara Islamic University, Bandung, Indonesia. The research period was from March 2019 to July 2019.

Data was collected by conducting direct observation and in-depth interviews, as well as tracking documents and archives. Data validity test was performed by using triangulation and source triangulation. Data analysis used a qualitative model, including data collection, data reduction and display, and generalization.

4. Results and Findings

Study program must ensure that it is an academic program institution for a particular field of study dedicated in: mastering, utilizing, disseminating, transforming, and developing Science, Technology, and Arts (*IPTEKS*) in a particular field of study; studying, clarifying, and

preserving culture related to a particular field of study; and improving quality of community life in relation to a particular field of study. Therefore, study program as an implementing institution of higher education in performing the functions of Three Pillars of Higher Education, related to education/teaching, research, and community service, as well as managing science and technology in relevant with its field of study with the orientation to the needs of graduates. To sustain those dedication and functions, a study program must be able to self-regulate to improve academic services and ensure quality with regard to input, processes and output of academic and non-academic programs and services provided to community in relevant with its field of study.

To support the implementation of internal quality assurance system (*SPMI*) in study program, the Ministry of Research Technology and Higher Education, in this case, it is conducted by the National Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (*BAN-PT*) is obliged to perform accreditation for all study programs of universities throughout Indonesia. Referring to applicable legislation and various considerations, then Ministry of Research and Technology provides responsibility of implementing program's accreditation to the National Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (*BAN-PT*).

Study program accreditation is a process of evaluating comprehensively the study program leaders' performance and commitment to quality and capacity of organizing the Three Pillars of Higher Education's programs, to determine study program feasibility to conduct academic programs. The criteria for evaluating and assessing the commitment was set in a number of accreditation standards and their parameters.

In relevant with bureaucratic reform activities in the Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education to implement excellent services to public as consumers of educational services, the study program accreditation service is one the programs in service reformation. Service reformation refers to Law No. 25 of 2009 on Public Services. It is a breakthrough to implement a proper system of public service with general principles of good government and corporation. The accreditation aims to provide convenience to stakeholders in obtaining accreditation services.

Therefore, reformation of academic services in study programs that is in accordance with the public service law brings changes in working system and mechanism. Changes must be supported by the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to improve service excellence for stakeholders. Software and hardware supports are required to achieve it as they

facilitate access for users in obtaining information about study program's performance, including study program's accreditation. Another issue is to evaluate and analyze work process of the study program's internal quality assurance system (*SPMI*) to ensure that quality standards are running well. Study program's accreditation is the result of all those achievements.

Evaluation is focused on improving study program's performance through the implementation internal quality assurance system (*SPMI*). In achieving qualifications and competencies of graduates in the form of vivid images of graduates' profiles and learning outcomes from the study program, tracking graduates, feedback from graduates users, and public perceptions of graduates with learning achievements of graduates/competencies determined by the study program and universities with reference to Indonesian National Qualification Framework (*KKNI*); number and excellence of scientific publications, number of citations, number of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), and usefulness or impact of research on vision and mission implementation, as well as community contribution to the development and empowerment of social, economic, and community welfare.

Objectives from the implementation of internal quality assurance system in study program is to produce evaluation and analysis on identification of determining, implementing, evaluating, controlling, and improving higher education standards to support accreditation for study programs to be evaluated by the National Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (*BAN-PT*), and provide recommendations on mapping the needs in the management of study programs to create excellent services with the principles of service reformation and public service laws.

Accreditation is a process of comprehensive evaluation and assessment on quality and capacity of the implementation of Three Pillars of Higher Education, to determine study program's appropriateness. Evaluation is conducted by a team of assessors consisting of peer experts and/or experts who understand the implementation of academic programs. Decisions regarding quality are based on evaluation of various evidence related to established standards and based on reasoning and consideration of peer experts. Evidence required includes a written report prepared by an accredited study program, verified and validated through a field assessment team visit or assessment to the study program location.

Therefore, the purposes and benefits of implementing a study program's internal quality assurance system are to provide an assurance that study program is accredited and meets the

quality standards set by the BAN-PT by referring to national education standards in the Government Regulation No. 19 of 2005 on National Education Standards, protect people from study programs that do not meet the established standards, and motivate study programs to continuously make improvements in a sustainable manner and maintain current quality.

Results of Study Program internal quality audit (AMI) can be used as a basis for consideration in improving other quality standards implemented by the study program. The quality and performance of a study program is a reflection of whole conditions and performance characteristics in terms of input, processes, output and outcomes, or services/performance are measured by the established standards.

Nusantara Islamic University (*UNINUS*) is located at Jl. Soekarno-Hatta No. 530 Bandung, West Java, Indonesia, with an accreditation predicate of B, has implemented an internal quality assurance system since 2009, based on the Rector Decree Number: 47/Kep-UNIN/V/2009 on the Implementation of Internal Quality Assurance System (*SPMI*) in *UNINUS*. Its implementation refers to Law No. 12 of 2012 on Higher Education [12], regulated in Chapter III article 53, “Higher Education Quality Assurance System (SPM) consists of: Internal Quality Assurance System (*SPMI*) developed by Higher Education; and External Quality Assurance System (*SPME*) conducted through accreditation”.

SPMI is a system of higher education quality assurance conducted by each university autonomously or independently to control and improve implementation of higher education in an organized and sustainable manner. Therefore, *UNINUS* develops *SPMI* according to its historical background, basic values that initiated its establishment and vision, mission, a number of study programs and human resources, facilities and infrastructure without any interference. To implement *SPMI*, there are several prerequisites, for instances commitment, paradigm changes, and mental attitude of higher education practitioners, as well as organizing quality assurance in higher institutions.

Core of internal quality assurance implementation is the establishment, implementation, evaluation, control and improvement of the Directorate General of Higher Education quality standards to maintain quality result. The result is a knowledge sharing system that is allowing everyone to produce same issue with same quality, so, it will reduce dependence on one person [13]. Follow-up step on implementing *SPMI UNINUS* establishes a quality assurance agency named the Directorate of Quality Assurance (*DPM*) on June 28, 2009, in accordance with the

Rector Decree Number: 78/Kep-UIN/VI/2009. According to the Organizational Structure and Work Procedure (*SOTK*), *DPM UNUNUS* is directly under the head of university or the Rector.

Duties and functions of the *DPM* of Nusantara Islamic University are: 1) Developing various quality standards and guidelines as references to perform quality assurance of education, research, community service and academic administration; 2) Developing quality standards in the fields of education, research, and community service by referring to international standards; 3) Coordinating the implementation of quality assurance activities in education, research and community service, as well as academic administration from university to the study program; 4) Reviewing and reporting results of the implementation of quality assurance in a cycle to all units and ranks at Nusantara Islamic University; 5) Submitting recommendations to Rector and other leaders as input for continuous quality improvement. The *UNINUS DPM* is assisted by Postgraduate School-level assurance organizations, i.e. Quality Assurance Team (*GJM*) and Quality Assurance Unit (*UPM*) at the Study Program level. *SPM DIKTI* Structure and Mechanism stipulated in the Minister of Education Decree No. 50 of 2014 [14] on *SPM DIKTI* are arranged in a structure that consists of: 1) *SPMI*, a systemic activity of higher education quality assurance by each university, autonomously or independently to control and improve implementation of higher education in an organized and sustainable manner; 2) *SPME*, an assessment activity through accreditation to determine study program feasibility and higher education; and 3) *PD Dikti*, a collection of nationally-integrated data and information on higher education implementation in all higher education institution in Indonesia.

Internal Quality Assurance System (*SPMI*) is an activity of education quality assurance system by higher education in supervising the implementation of education to stakeholder's satisfaction. Implementation of *SPMI* at *UNINUS* is obligatory because education quality does not only depend on the government, it also depends on stakeholder's assessment. The implementation of *SPMI* at *UNINUS* is an independent activity, so, quality assurance process is planned, implemented, evaluated, controlled, and improved without government intervention.

The implementation of *SPMI* at the Study Program level as an integral part of higher education quality assurance system at *UNINUS* is conducted by preparing a *SPMI* design called the *UNMIUS SPMI* Cycle executed in a one-year period. The *SPMI* cycle consists of seven steps: 1) Standard setting, 2) implementation, 3) monitoring, 4) self-evaluation, 5) internal quality audit, 6) correction formulation, and 7) quality improvement. The standard setting is formulated

based on laws and regulations, and results of self-evaluation on ongoing performance, input from stakeholders, results of a tracer study, and policy to develop quality assurance of Directorate General of Higher Education. The standards set in the *SPMI UNINUS* refer to the National Education Standards (*SNP*). The stages in the implementation are: 1) promoting *SPMI* to students, lecturers, administrative staffs; technical assistance in preparing study program quality standards by *DPM*; 2) familiarizing internal quality audit (*AMI*) and 3) conducting study program self-evaluation (*EDPS*), filling *EDPS*, implementing *AMI*, doing corrective actions, holding Postgraduate School-level management review to discuss audit findings and study program quality improvement in university-level management to discuss findings that cannot be completed at the study program and faculty level.

Monitoring aims to oversee the implementation of *SPMI* according to plan. Self-evaluation is a systematic effort to collect and process reliable data (facts and information). So, the reality can be used as a basis for action management to manage institution's sustainability, such as faculties/graduate schools, and study programs. *AMI* is an independent and objective assurance on academic operational activities or academic processes. Formulation of correction is based on internal audit findings. It is followed up by management review at the study program, graduate school, and university. The next corrective formulation becomes the material to be reviewed in the next internal quality audit, whether there have been corrective actions taken. The results of corrective formulation lead to quality improvement through setting of standards/new planning at a later stage. The actual quality improvement will ultimately be determined by the community as external stakeholders. Quality improvement is a result of the implementation of *SPMI* in Nusantara Islamic University as a whole.

The implementation of *SPMI* at Study Program level at *UNINUS* is supported by human resources (*HR*) with competences in quality assurance, currently has 21 actively registered *AMI* auditors. It is also supported by adequate funding through budget set by the *DPM UNINUS* and adequate facilities and infrastructure by occupying *DPM UNINUS* buildings.

Besides being measured by fulfillment of each Directorate of Higher Education (*Dikti*) standards, output quality must also be measured by fulfillment of interactions among Directorate of Higher Education (*Dikti*) standards to achieve higher education goals. Higher Education *SPM* mechanism is initiated by universities by implementing *SPMI* through a cycle of activities abbreviated as *PPEPP* that consists of: (1) Determination of Higher Education Standards, that is

standard setting activity consists of Higher Education National Standards and Directorate of Higher Education (*Dikti*) Standards set by universities; (2) Implementation of Directorate of Higher Education (*Dikti*) Standards, that is fulfilling standards consist of Directorate of Higher Education (*Dikti*) National Standards and Directorate of Higher Education (*Dikti*) Standards set by universities; (3) Evaluation on the implementation of Directorate of Higher Education Standards. It is an output comparison between output of standard fulfillment with Directorate of Higher Education National Standards and Higher Education Standards established by universities; (4) Controlling the implementation of Directorate of Higher Education Standards. It is an analysis of standards consists Directorate of Higher Education National Standards and Higher Education Standards set by universities but have not been achieved for corrective action; and (5) Improvement of Directorate of Higher Education (*Dikti*) Standards. It is standard improvement activities consists of Directorate of Higher Education (*Dikti*) National Standards and Directorate of Higher Education (*Dikti*) Standards to be higher than the set standards.

The obstacles in implementing SPMI is the lack of leaders' commitment. It is handled by providing experts in quality assurance. Leaders who have multiple tasks, as educators and assurance officials, are not optimal in conducting their work. Lack of auditor capacity possessed by the *DPM* is handled by programming new auditor training. The intensive training program and refreshment program for old auditors are conducted annually. The obstacles in implementing *SPMI* become a routine that is faced by refreshing and building good enthusiasm at the level of university leaders, faculty leaders, and study program leaders, as well as the auditors themselves. *DIN UNINUS* also creates programs for reminding the importance of quality assurance such as regular meeting and refreshing activities to improve the quality of auditors. In addition, interactions with university internal quality assurance activists in the *SPMI* forum of the Directorate of Higher education and National Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (*BAN-PT*).

The implementation of *SPMI* requires an evaluation system to assess internal quality assurance effectiveness. The Nusantara Islamic University *DPM* conducts annual evaluation, asking for input from auditors, faculty/graduate school leaders, audited study programs, and university leaders. The evaluation is conducted in the form of a workshop, which discusses input and correction on Internal Quality Audit implementation. In addition, evaluation of *SPMI* also discusses its effectiveness and evaluates how supporting factors can provide optimal

contributions, for instances financing factors, human resources, supporting facilities and infrastructure.

Externally, *SPMI* implementation results are utilized for dealing with external party accreditation, in this case the National Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (*BAN PT*). The Nusantara Islamic University DPM also has assisted the university in preparing the National Higher Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (*BAN PT*) accreditation forms. *SPMI* implementation results are also utilized for accreditation preparation.

The implementation of *SPMI* at *UNINUS* is based on two documents, namely Academic Documents and Quality Documents. Academic documents at the university and post-graduate level consist of Academic Policy documents, Academic Standards, and Academic Regulations. Academic documents at the study program level consist of specifications of Study Program, Curriculum, Curriculum Map, Program Plans, and Semester Learning Activities (*KPS*). Quality documents consist of quality manuals at university or faculty/post-graduate, Quality Procedures, and Work Instructions. Quality Procedures and Work Instructions are prepared and implemented in each working unit. In guaranteeing quality of research and community service, *DPM UNINUS* provides assistance to ensure that more journals are available. Research quality assurance is also related to laboratories quality owned by Nusantara Islamic University. The *SPMI* design called the *UNMIUS SPMI* Cycle is developed in line with Kaizen model of quality control management. Obstacles in the implementation of *SPMI* become a routine that is faced by refreshing and building enthusiasm at the level of university leaders, faculty/graduate schools, and study programs as well as the auditors themselves. DPM Universitas Islam Nusantara also compiles programs that make the staff aware of the importance of quality assurance such as regular meeting to refresh activities and improve auditor quality. In addition, interactions with university internal quality assurance activists in the Directorate General of Higher Education *SPMI (SPMI-Dikti)* and National Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (*BAN PT*) are conducted to increase awareness in building a quality culture.

Meanwhile, internal implementation of *SPMI* is used internally to gradually improve education quality. The findings in the Implementation are used to improve Higher Education quality standards and improve them for the better. The results are utilized in education, teaching planning, and accreditation form material for strengthening working intention.

5. Conclusion

Strategy of improving Study Program's performance at Nusantara Islamic University, Bandung, Indonesia is conducted through the implementation of a comprehensive quality assurance system. It is defined as a continuous process in improving the quality of educational input, processes, output and outcomes. However, it is conducted through the activities of determining, implementing, evaluating, controlling, improving, self-evaluations, internal quality audits, and benchmarking to determine new standards referred to as the quality assurance cycle. The organization of *SPMI* is conducted by a quality assurance organization called the Directorate of Quality Assurance of Nusantara Islamic University (*DPM-UNINUS*), whose task is to plan and implement a quality assurance system. *SPMI* is implemented by compiling a design called the *SPMI* Cycle, conducted in a one-year period. The *SPMI* cycle goes through stages of: standard setting, implementation, monitoring, self-evaluation, internal quality audits, formulation of corrections, and quality improvement for stakeholder satisfaction.

Obstacles in the Implementation of *SPMI* at *UNINUS* are: the lack of leaders' commitment; and limited number of auditors. Steps for anticipating these obstacles are providing experts in *SPMI* implementation, conducting training for young auditors, growing the spirit of quality assurance, and carrying out evaluation every semester.

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