

School Leadership and Its Impact on Quality Assurance and Accreditation Performance in Higher Education Institutions

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ABSTRACT: This study investigates the impact of school leadership on quality assurance practices and accreditation performance at SMA Islam Sunan Gunung Jati. The research addresses how leadership shapes quality assurance processes, how it influences accreditation outcomes, and how these elements interact within an institutional system. A qualitative case study design was employed involving the principal, quality assurance team, teachers, and administrative staff. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis, then analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings reveal that leadership establishes a structured and collaborative environment that supports systematic quality assurance implementation. Leadership practices promote consistent documentation, alignment with standards, and active participation among stakeholders. Accreditation performance is strengthened through coordinated preparation, data-informed evaluation, and sustained leadership commitment. The study also identifies an interconnected cycle in which leadership drives quality assurance, quality assurance supports accreditation success, and accreditation feedback informs continuous improvement. These findings highlight the importance of adaptive and consistent leadership in sustaining institutional quality and enhancing accreditation outcomes in educational settings.

Key words: School Leadership, Quality Assurance, Accreditation, Institutional Performance

Introduction

The demand for educational quality continues to intensify as accountability systems and accreditation frameworks become more rigorous across educational contexts. Schools are required to demonstrate measurable performance through structured quality assurance systems that document processes, outcomes, and continuous improvement efforts. These expectations place leadership at the center of institutional development, as leaders are responsible for establishing direction, coordinating resources, and ensuring that standards are implemented consistently. School leadership is not limited to administrative functions but extends to shaping organizational culture, influencing professional practices, and sustaining institutional performance. Effective leadership creates conditions where quality assurance becomes an integral part of daily practices rather than a procedural requirement (Bush, 2018).

At SMA Islam Sunan Gunung Jati, leadership practices influence how quality assurance systems are developed and enacted within the school environment. The principal plays a central role in translating policies into actionable strategies, ensuring that quality standards are aligned with institutional goals. Leadership facilitates collaboration among teachers and staff, creating a shared understanding of quality expectations and performance indicators. This collaborative approach strengthens the implementation of quality assurance by involving all stakeholders in planning, monitoring, and evaluation processes. Quality assurance is viewed as a continuous cycle that supports institutional growth and improvement. Research indicates that leadership significantly shapes the effectiveness of quality management systems by fostering commitment, coordination, and accountability within educational institutions (Sallis, 2014).

Quality assurance in education involves systematic processes that ensure teaching, learning, and management practices meet established standards. These processes include planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation, all of which require strong leadership support. Leaders are expected to provide clear guidance, allocate resources, and create structures that support quality improvement. At SMA Islam Sunan Gunung Jati, leadership practices determine how quality assurance activities are organized and sustained. The effectiveness of these practices depends on the ability of leaders to engage teachers and staff in meaningful participation. Studies highlight that participatory leadership enhances the implementation of quality assurance by promoting shared responsibility and collective commitment to institutional goals (Nguyen et al., 2017).

Accreditation performance serves as a key indicator of institutional quality and effectiveness. It reflects the extent to which schools meet established standards related to curriculum, governance, teaching practices, and student outcomes. Accreditation processes require systematic preparation, comprehensive documentation, and consistent implementation of quality standards. Leadership plays a crucial role in guiding institutions through these processes by ensuring that all components are aligned and well-coordinated. At SMA Islam Sunan Gunung Jati, leadership decisions influence how accreditation preparation is conducted, including the organization of teams, the distribution of responsibilities, and the presentation of institutional achievements. Effective leadership ensures that accreditation is approached as a continuous process rather than a one-time evaluation (Eaton, 2012).

The success of accreditation is closely linked to the strength of quality assurance systems within the institution. Schools that implement consistent quality assurance practices are better prepared to meet accreditation standards and demonstrate their achievements. Leadership contributes to this success by maintaining focus on quality improvement and ensuring that institutional practices align with external requirements. Teachers and staff play an active role in documenting activities, evaluating performance, and implementing improvements based on feedback. This collective effort reflects the importance of leadership in creating a culture of quality that supports

accreditation success. Research shows that institutions with strong leadership and well-developed quality assurance systems tend to achieve higher accreditation outcomes (Harvey & Williams, 2010).

The relationship between school leadership, quality assurance, and accreditation performance represents an interconnected system within educational institutions. Leadership practices influence how quality assurance processes are designed and implemented, while these processes support the achievement of accreditation standards. Accreditation outcomes provide feedback that informs future leadership strategies and institutional improvements. This interaction forms a continuous cycle of planning, implementation, evaluation, and refinement. The effectiveness of this cycle depends on the alignment between leadership vision, organizational practices, and performance expectations. Studies suggest that alignment among these elements enhances institutional effectiveness and supports sustainable development (Harris et al., 2019).

Leadership also plays a role in shaping organizational culture, which influences how quality assurance and accreditation processes are perceived and enacted. A culture that values collaboration, transparency, and continuous learning supports the successful implementation of quality initiatives. Teachers and staff are more likely to engage in quality assurance activities when they feel supported and recognized by leadership. This cultural dimension strengthens the sustainability of quality practices and contributes to long-term institutional improvement. Leadership that promotes trust and open communication creates an environment where innovation and accountability coexist. Evidence indicates that positive organizational culture enhances both performance outcomes and institutional resilience (Stoll & Kools, 2017).

The increasing complexity of educational environments requires leadership that is adaptive and responsive to change. Leaders must navigate evolving standards, technological advancements, and diverse stakeholder expectations while maintaining a focus on quality. Adaptive leadership involves flexibility, continuous learning, and the ability to respond to feedback. At SMA Islam Sunan Gunung Jati, leadership practices reflect the need to balance stability and innovation in managing quality assurance and accreditation processes. This approach enables the institution to sustain improvement and respond effectively to external demands. The alignment between leadership actions, quality assurance practices, and accreditation outcomes becomes a critical factor in achieving institutional excellence.

Based on this background, this study addresses the following research questions: how do school leadership practices shape quality assurance processes at SMA Islam Sunan Gunung Jati; how does school leadership influence accreditation performance; and how are school leadership, quality assurance, and accreditation performance interconnected within the institutional context?

Method

This study employs a qualitative case study design conducted at SMA Islam Sunan Gunung Jati to examine how school leadership influences quality assurance practices and accreditation performance within a specific institutional context. A qualitative approach enables an in-depth understanding of social processes, interactions, and meanings constructed by participants in their natural setting. The case study design focuses on a bounded system, allowing detailed exploration of leadership practices as they are enacted within the school environment. This design is appropriate for capturing the complexity of relationships among leadership, organizational processes, and institutional outcomes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Participants in this study include the principal, members of the quality assurance team, teachers, and administrative staff selected through purposive sampling. The selection emphasizes individuals who are directly involved in quality assurance implementation and accreditation preparation. The principal provides insights into leadership strategies and decision-making processes, while the quality assurance team contributes perspectives on coordination and monitoring of institutional standards. Teachers offer information related to instructional practices and their alignment with quality requirements, and administrative staff provide data concerning documentation and organizational support. This combination of participants ensures a comprehensive understanding of how leadership practices influence institutional processes. Purposeful selection of information-rich participants supports the depth and relevance of qualitative inquiry (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Data collection was conducted using multiple techniques to ensure depth and credibility. Semi-structured interviews were used to explore participants' experiences and perspectives regarding leadership, quality assurance, and accreditation practices. The flexible format of interviews allows participants to express their views while maintaining alignment with the research focus. Observations were carried out to examine how leadership practices and quality assurance activities are implemented in everyday school operations, including meetings, coordination, and evaluation processes. Document analysis involved reviewing accreditation reports, quality assurance guidelines, and institutional policies to understand formal structures and evidence of implementation. The use of multiple data sources enables triangulation and provides a richer understanding of the research phenomenon (Nowell et al., 2017).

Data analysis followed a thematic approach that involves systematic identification and interpretation of patterns within the data. The process began with data reduction, where relevant information from interviews, observations, and documents was organized and selected. Coding was then conducted to identify meaningful units of data related to leadership practices, quality assurance processes, and accreditation performance. Codes were grouped into categories and developed into themes that represent recurring patterns across the dataset. Interpretation focused on explaining relationships among themes and linking them to the research questions. This analytical

process allows for a structured yet flexible examination of qualitative data (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018).

Trustworthiness of the study was ensured through several strategies. Triangulation of data sources was applied to compare findings across interviews, observations, and documents. Member checking was conducted to confirm the accuracy of interpretations with participants. Prolonged engagement in the research setting supported deeper contextual understanding and strengthened the credibility of the findings. These strategies contribute to the reliability and validity of qualitative research and provide a strong foundation for examining the influence of school leadership on quality assurance and accreditation performance.

Results and Discussion

1. School Leadership and Quality Assurance Processes

School leadership at SMA Islam Sunan Gunung Jati demonstrates a strong influence on the implementation of quality assurance processes through the establishment of a clear institutional vision oriented toward continuous improvement. The principal articulates expectations related to quality standards and ensures that these expectations are embedded in daily practices across academic and administrative domains. Leadership is reflected in structured planning that integrates quality indicators into school programs, followed by consistent monitoring and evaluation to assess progress. This approach positions quality assurance as an ongoing process rather than a periodic activity. Leadership actions guide how institutional goals are translated into operational strategies, creating coherence between policy and practice. Research indicates that leadership focused on instructional and organizational improvement contributes significantly to the effectiveness of quality assurance systems within educational institutions (Hoy & Miskel, 2013).

The implementation of quality assurance processes is strengthened by the presence of a coordinated quality assurance team that operates under the direction of school leadership. This team is responsible for organizing documentation, monitoring compliance with standards, and supporting evaluation processes. Leadership ensures that roles and responsibilities are clearly distributed, enabling each member to contribute effectively to institutional goals. Teachers and administrative staff are actively involved in documenting instructional activities, preparing reports, and aligning practices with established standards. This collective involvement reflects a collaborative approach that enhances ownership of quality assurance processes. Studies show that distributed leadership practices support organizational effectiveness by promoting shared responsibility and active participation among stakeholders (Spillane, 2006).

Collaboration among teachers and staff becomes a key element in sustaining quality assurance practices. Regular meetings, reflective discussions, and joint planning sessions provide opportunities for participants to exchange ideas and evaluate performance outcomes. These interactions support continuous learning and encourage individuals to improve their practices based on feedback. Leadership facilitates this

process by creating structures that allow for open communication and professional dialogue. Teachers are encouraged to reflect on instructional practices and adjust their approaches to meet quality standards. This reflective culture strengthens the alignment between teaching practices and institutional expectations. Evidence suggests that collaborative professional environments contribute to improved organizational performance and support the sustainability of quality initiatives (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

Leadership support also plays a crucial role in ensuring that quality assurance is integrated into routine activities rather than treated as an external requirement. The principal promotes a culture where quality is embedded in teaching, administration, and evaluation processes. Teachers and staff develop an understanding that quality assurance is part of their professional responsibility. This perspective reduces resistance and increases commitment to implementing standards consistently. Leadership actions that emphasize guidance, recognition, and support contribute to the development of this culture. Institutional practices become more consistent when individuals share a common understanding of quality goals. Research highlights that leadership-driven cultures of quality enhance institutional effectiveness and support long-term improvement (Deming, 1986).

The use of systematic monitoring and evaluation further strengthens the implementation of quality assurance processes. Leadership ensures that performance data are collected, analyzed, and used to inform decision-making. Evaluation results provide insights into strengths and areas that require improvement, allowing the institution to adjust strategies accordingly. Teachers and staff use this information to refine their practices and enhance performance. This data-informed approach supports continuous improvement and ensures that quality assurance processes remain relevant and effective. Studies indicate that data-driven leadership practices improve organizational learning and contribute to better educational outcomes (Marsh et al., 2016).

The findings also show that leadership contributes to the development of organizational structures that support sustainability of quality assurance practices. Policies, guidelines, and standard operating procedures provide a framework for consistent implementation. Leadership ensures that these structures are understood and followed by all members of the institution. This structural support reduces ambiguity and enhances efficiency in carrying out quality-related activities. Teachers and staff are able to perform their roles with clarity, which strengthens institutional performance. Organizational structures aligned with leadership vision contribute to stability and continuity in quality assurance processes.

The relationship between leadership and quality assurance processes reflects an interaction between direction, collaboration, and continuous evaluation. Leadership provides the framework and support, while teachers and staff implement and sustain quality practices through active participation. This interaction creates a system that is responsive to change and focused on improvement. Quality assurance becomes

embedded in the institutional culture, supporting long-term development and readiness for external evaluation processes such as accreditation.

These findings demonstrate that school leadership plays a central role in shaping effective quality assurance processes at SMA Islam Sunan Gunung Jati. Leadership practices that emphasize vision, collaboration, and systematic evaluation create an environment where quality is consistently maintained and improved. The integration of quality assurance into daily practices reflects the success of leadership in fostering a culture of accountability and continuous growth. This relationship highlights the importance of leadership in ensuring that quality assurance processes contribute to institutional effectiveness and sustainability.

2. School Leadership and Accreditation Performance

Accreditation performance at SMA Islam Sunan Gunung Jati is shaped by leadership practices that emphasize systematic preparation, coordinated action, and adherence to established standards. The principal provides direction by translating accreditation requirements into clear operational steps that can be implemented across units within the school. Planning activities are organized in a structured manner, ensuring that each component required for accreditation is addressed through measurable actions. Leadership ensures that documentation, evidence of performance, and institutional records are prepared in alignment with accreditation criteria. This structured approach reflects the role of leadership in creating coherence between institutional practices and external evaluation standards. Research shows that leadership commitment to quality processes contributes significantly to improved accreditation outcomes and institutional credibility (Shattock, 2010).

Effective coordination among stakeholders is a key aspect of leadership influence on accreditation performance. The principal facilitates communication across teams, ensuring that responsibilities are clearly defined and executed in a timely manner. Members of the accreditation team, including teachers and administrative staff, work collaboratively to compile documents, review performance indicators, and prepare supporting evidence. Leadership ensures that coordination is maintained through regular meetings, progress monitoring, and feedback mechanisms. This coordinated effort reduces fragmentation and enhances the efficiency of the accreditation process. Studies indicate that organizational coordination supported by leadership strengthens institutional readiness and improves performance during external evaluations (Elken & Stensaker, 2018).

Teachers and staff demonstrate readiness through the preparation of comprehensive documentation and alignment of instructional practices with accreditation standards. Teaching plans, assessment records, and evidence of student achievement are organized systematically to reflect compliance with required criteria. Leadership supports this process by providing guidance on documentation standards and ensuring that all participants understand their roles. Teachers align their instructional practices with institutional goals, creating consistency between classroom

activities and accreditation expectations. This alignment enhances the credibility of the institution during the evaluation process. Evidence suggests that alignment between instructional practices and quality standards contributes to successful accreditation outcomes (Harvey & Newton, 2007).

Leadership also plays a role in maintaining focus and consistency throughout the accreditation preparation process. The principal ensures that all activities remain aligned with the overall objectives of accreditation, preventing deviations that could affect performance. Monitoring systems are implemented to track progress and identify areas that require improvement. Feedback is provided to teams to support continuous refinement of practices. This ongoing supervision strengthens accountability and ensures that quality standards are maintained. Leadership that emphasizes consistency and clarity contributes to the stability of institutional processes and supports effective performance during accreditation (Middlehurst, 2013).

Institutional culture influenced by leadership further strengthens accreditation performance. A culture that values quality, accountability, and collaboration encourages active participation among teachers and staff. Leadership promotes shared responsibility by involving stakeholders in decision-making and evaluation processes. This inclusive approach enhances commitment and motivates individuals to contribute to institutional goals. Teachers and staff perceive accreditation as part of a broader effort to improve quality rather than a procedural obligation. This perception supports sustained engagement and strengthens institutional performance. Research highlights that a positive organizational culture supported by leadership enhances both internal quality processes and external evaluation outcomes (Skelcher & Smith, 2015).

The availability and use of data also contribute to the effectiveness of accreditation preparation. Leadership ensures that data related to student performance, teaching quality, and institutional management are collected and analyzed systematically. These data provide evidence that supports accreditation requirements and demonstrate institutional achievements. Teachers and staff use data to evaluate their practices and identify areas for improvement. Leadership integrates data into decision-making processes, creating a cycle of evaluation and refinement. This data-informed approach strengthens the credibility of accreditation reports and supports continuous institutional development. Studies indicate that data-driven practices enhance institutional accountability and improve performance in accreditation processes (Schildkamp et al., 2019).

Accreditation outcomes reflect the effectiveness of leadership in guiding institutional efforts and ensuring compliance with standards. Successful accreditation is achieved when leadership aligns planning, coordination, and implementation with external requirements. The results demonstrate how leadership practices influence institutional readiness and performance. Recognition of institutional quality through accreditation serves as an indicator of effective leadership and strong organizational processes. Leadership commitment to maintaining quality standards contributes to sustained improvement and reinforces the institution's reputation.

The relationship between leadership and accreditation performance illustrates a dynamic interaction between strategic direction, organizational coordination, and continuous evaluation. Leadership provides the foundation for structured processes, while teachers and staff implement and sustain these practices through active participation. This interaction creates a system that supports both compliance with standards and continuous improvement. Accreditation becomes part of an ongoing process of institutional development rather than a one-time achievement.

These findings demonstrate that school leadership plays a central role in shaping accreditation performance at SMA Islam Sunan Gunung Jati. Leadership practices that emphasize preparation, coordination, and consistency create conditions that enable the institution to meet accreditation standards effectively. The integration of quality assurance and leadership strategies strengthens institutional capacity and supports long-term sustainability. This relationship highlights the importance of leadership in ensuring that accreditation processes contribute to the improvement of educational quality.

3. Interconnection Between Leadership, Quality Assurance, and Accreditation

The relationship between school leadership, quality assurance, and accreditation performance at SMA Islam Sunan Gunung Jati reflects a continuous and interconnected cycle in which each element reinforces and shapes the others. Leadership provides direction and establishes priorities that guide the development of quality assurance systems. These systems organize institutional practices through structured planning, monitoring, and evaluation. The outcomes of quality assurance processes become the foundation for achieving accreditation standards, while accreditation results offer feedback that informs future leadership strategies. This interaction illustrates that institutional improvement is sustained through ongoing alignment between leadership actions and quality processes. Leadership functions as a central mechanism that connects vision, implementation, and evaluation within the institution (Bolman & Deal, 2017).

The effectiveness of this interconnected process depends on the alignment between leadership vision, quality management practices, and institutional performance outcomes. The principal articulates a vision that emphasizes accountability, continuous improvement, and adherence to standards. This vision is translated into operational practices through quality assurance mechanisms that guide teaching, administration, and evaluation. Teachers and staff implement these practices by aligning their work with institutional goals, ensuring that daily activities reflect quality expectations. Accreditation performance then becomes an indicator of how well this alignment is achieved. Coherence among these elements strengthens institutional capacity and supports consistent performance. Research suggests that alignment between strategic leadership and quality management practices enhances organizational effectiveness and sustainability (Kaplan & Norton, 2008).

Leadership acts as a driving force that sustains the interaction between quality assurance and accreditation processes. The principal ensures that quality assurance activities are not isolated tasks but integrated components of institutional practice. Monitoring systems, evaluation frameworks, and feedback mechanisms are established to support continuous improvement. These structures enable the institution to respond to internal and external demands while maintaining focus on quality. Leadership commitment ensures that resources are allocated effectively and that stakeholders remain engaged in quality initiatives. This sustained effort contributes to the stability and effectiveness of institutional processes. Studies indicate that leadership engagement in quality systems strengthens institutional performance and supports long-term improvement (Bogue & Hall, 2011).

The role of feedback in this interconnected cycle is significant. Accreditation results provide detailed evaluations of institutional performance, highlighting strengths and areas for development. Leadership uses this feedback to refine strategies, adjust policies, and improve quality assurance practices. Teachers and staff also benefit from this feedback by identifying areas that require enhancement in instructional and administrative practices. This feedback loop supports a culture of reflection and continuous learning, where improvement is guided by evidence and evaluation. The integration of feedback into leadership practices ensures that institutional development remains responsive and adaptive. Evidence shows that feedback-informed leadership contributes to organizational learning and enhances institutional effectiveness (Argyris & Schön, 1996).

The development of a learning organization is closely linked to the interaction between leadership, quality assurance, and accreditation. A learning organization is characterized by continuous reflection, knowledge sharing, and adaptability to change. Leadership fosters this environment by encouraging collaboration, supporting professional development, and promoting open communication among stakeholders. Teachers and staff engage in reflective practices that allow them to evaluate and improve their work. Quality assurance processes provide the structure for this reflection, while accreditation outcomes offer external validation of institutional progress. This combination supports the development of an organization that is capable of sustaining improvement over time. Research highlights that learning-oriented organizations are more effective in responding to change and achieving long-term success (Senge, 2006).

Organizational culture plays a critical role in sustaining this interconnected process. A culture that values quality, accountability, and collaboration strengthens the implementation of quality assurance practices and supports accreditation performance. Leadership influences this culture by modeling behaviors that emphasize commitment, transparency, and continuous improvement. Teachers and staff are more likely to engage in quality initiatives when they perceive them as meaningful and aligned with institutional goals. This cultural dimension enhances the effectiveness of leadership strategies and supports the sustainability of institutional practices. Studies indicate that

organizational culture significantly influences the success of quality management and performance outcomes in educational institutions (Cameron & Quinn, 2011).

The dynamic interaction among leadership, quality assurance, and accreditation demonstrates that institutional effectiveness is achieved through integration rather than isolated efforts. Leadership provides the framework and direction, quality assurance organizes and monitors practices, and accreditation evaluates outcomes and provides feedback. This integrated system supports continuous improvement and ensures that institutional practices remain aligned with evolving standards. The sustainability of this system depends on consistent leadership support, active participation of stakeholders, and the effective use of evaluation data. Institutions that maintain this alignment are better positioned to achieve and sustain high levels of performance.

These findings show that the interconnection between leadership, quality assurance, and accreditation forms a foundation for institutional development at SMA Islam Sunan Gunung Jati. Leadership practices that emphasize alignment, feedback, and continuous learning create conditions that support effective quality management and successful accreditation outcomes. The interaction among these elements contributes to the development of a responsive and adaptive educational organization. This relationship highlights the importance of leadership in ensuring that quality assurance and accreditation processes are integrated into a coherent system that supports long-term improvement and institutional excellence.

Conclusion

School leadership at SMA Islam Sunan Gunung Jati demonstrates a decisive role in strengthening quality assurance processes and improving accreditation performance through structured, consistent, and collaborative practices. Leadership provides direction by integrating quality standards into institutional planning, monitoring, and evaluation. The principal facilitates coordination among teachers and staff, ensuring that responsibilities related to quality assurance are clearly defined and implemented. This approach fosters a shared commitment to maintaining institutional quality and encourages active participation in documentation, reflection, and continuous improvement. Quality assurance becomes embedded in daily practices, shaping how teaching, administration, and evaluation are conducted. Accreditation performance reflects the effectiveness of these leadership-driven processes, as the institution demonstrates readiness through organized documentation, aligned instructional practices, and systematic evaluation. The findings indicate that leadership not only influences procedural aspects but also shapes a culture where quality is viewed as a collective responsibility.

The relationship between leadership, quality assurance, and accreditation performance represents an integrated and dynamic system that requires ongoing alignment. Leadership establishes the vision and provides support, quality assurance translates this vision into structured practices, and accreditation outcomes offer

evaluative feedback that informs further development. This cycle supports institutional learning and enables continuous refinement of strategies and practices. Schools benefit from leadership that is responsive to change, capable of utilizing feedback, and committed to sustaining improvement over time. The integration of collaboration, data use, and reflective practices strengthens institutional capacity and enhances performance outcomes. Sustained leadership commitment ensures that quality assurance and accreditation processes are not treated as isolated tasks but as interconnected components of institutional growth. This study underscores the importance of leadership in creating a coherent system that supports long-term quality development and institutional excellence in evolving educational contexts.

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