

Implementation of the Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI) as An Effort to Improve the Quality of Higher Education in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the implementation of the Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI) as an effort to improve the quality of education at the Kediri State Islamic Institute (IAIN). It is a qualitative research study conducted using the case study method. The research took place at the State Islamic Institute (IAIN) Kediri, with the Quality Assurance Institute (LPM) IAIN Kediri serving as the subject. The data collection techniques employed were direct observation, document and archive searches, and interviews. The results revealed the following: The policies and concepts of IQAS, in the form of academic and quality documents, were compiled by LPM IAIN Kediri. LPM IAIN Kediri acted as the coordinator for planning and implementing SPMI across all units and faculties. The implementation of SPMI involved the preparation of a design in the form of an SPMI Cycle. The study identified several constraints, including limited leadership time, suboptimal human resources within LPM, and data synchronization that did not align with the Central Template. To address these constraints, steps were taken, such as training auditors and fostering a spirit of quality assurance. An evaluation of SPMI implementation was conducted annually. The utilization of SPMI implementation results included internal benefits such as fostering a culture of quality and achieving strategic plan fulfillment, as well as external benefits in terms of BAN PT/LAM accreditation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Quality assurance in higher education is a process whereby the standards of higher education are planned, implemented, monitored, and continuously developed to ensure consistent quality. This enables both internal and external stakeholders of higher education, including students, faculty members, staff, the community, business entities, professional organizations, and the government, to be satisfied with the performance and outcomes of universities (Musiman & Kristiawan, 2021). Quality assurance is a manifestation of responsibility and transparency in the implementation of higher education.

According to Law No. 12 of 2012 on Higher Education, the Higher Education Quality Assurance System (SMPPT) consists of the Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI) and the External Quality Assurance System (SPME). SPMI is developed by the respective universities, while SPME is implemented through accreditation (Ragil et al., 2020). The Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI) is a self-regulating activity of each higher education institution, allowing the institution to plan, implement, and control the process without

government interference (Haryoko et al., 2020). The government develops guidelines for implementing SPMI, which are intended to serve as inspiration for various aspects typically covered in the internal quality assurance system of a university. This is done because each institution has its own unique characteristics in terms of history, vision and mission, organizational culture, size, structure, resources, and leadership model. To ensure that universities can consistently meet the evolving needs of stakeholders, SPMI also needs to continuously adapt through continuous improvement.

The quality assurance system of higher education institutions, in accordance with the guidelines, can be implemented if several conditions are met. These include the involvement of stakeholders in the higher education process, a shift in paradigms and ways of thinking, and the organization of quality assurance in higher education (Razab Isdendi et al., 2023). However, the implementation of quality assurance systems in universities often faces challenges. These challenges include weak awareness among education process implementers regarding the importance of quality assurance as a stakeholder requirement, inadequate commitment from stakeholders in the higher education process, inadequate quality assurance understanding and implementation, uneven dissemination of quality assurance concepts and practices among the academic community, underdeveloped management and mechanisms of quality assurance, suboptimal human resources (especially within faculties) to support the quality system, and suboptimal use of information and communication technology to support the internal quality system (Sauri et al., 2019).

Kediri State Islamic Institute (IAIN) pioneered and developed the concept of the internal quality assurance system (SPMI) in higher education. This concept encompasses the definition of quality assurance, the cycle of quality assurance implementation, organizational aspects, and human resources. The SPMI at IAIN Kediri is overseen by the Quality Assurance Institute (LPM), which is responsible for planning and implementing the overall quality assurance system at IAIN Kediri. IAIN Kediri is the only public higher education institution in the city of Kediri. The concept and implementation of the Quality Assurance System in IAIN Kediri have been developed and disseminated to all leaders, administrators, faculty members, students, and educational staff at the faculty level. The successful implementation of the Quality Assurance System at IAIN Kediri is attributed to the active participation of the entire academic community in supporting internal quality assurance activities for stakeholder satisfaction.

Despite its successes, several challenges are still encountered in the implementation of the Quality Assurance System at IAIN Kediri. The main perceived challenge is the timeliness of following up on decisions made during meetings due to the busy schedules of the leaders. Another challenge relates to human resources, where assigned tasks are sometimes not promptly completed; however, with the presence of targets, this issue can be addressed. The final challenge concerns data synchronization, as the data held by the institution occasionally does not align with the templates provided by the central authorities. These challenges are not unique to IAIN Kediri but are often encountered in the implementation of Quality Assurance Systems in higher education institutions. Other common issues include low awareness among education process implementers regarding the importance of quality assurance as a stakeholder requirement (Sihombing, 2022), different understandings of the concept of educational quality assurance systems for enhancing educational quality among the academic community, weak commitment from both the leaders and administrators of higher education institutions to ensure and enhance educational quality, and insufficient availability of human resources, particularly auditors, to support the Quality Assurance System. Additionally, the implementation of the Quality Assurance System often becomes routine, making it difficult to measure continuous improvement achievements (Sauri, 2019). These challenges need to be addressed to ensure effective implementation of the Quality Assurance System and to promote continuous improvement in higher education institutions.

This research aims to explore the implementation of an internal quality assurance system in order to enhance the quality of education at IAIN Kediri. Specifically, the objectives of this study are as follows: to describe the planning, implementation, and challenges faced during the overall implementation of the internal quality assurance system at IAIN Kediri, and to examine the evaluation process and utilization of the results of the internal quality assurance system implementation to enhance the quality of education in a sustainable manner at IAIN Kediri. The findings of this research are expected to contribute to the existing knowledge and understanding of the implementation of the internal quality assurance system for the improvement of higher education quality in Indonesia.

2. METHOD

This research utilizes a qualitative approach with a case study method (Tanjung et al., 2022). A case study is a suitable strategy for research when the main questions are related to how or why (Nur'aini, 2020). Additionally, a case study is used when the researcher has little control over the events being studied and when the research focus is on contemporary phenomena in a real-life context (Bahri, 2018). The case examined in this research is the successful implementation of the Internal Quality Management System (SPMI) at Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Kediri to enhance the quality of education. On the other hand, many higher education institutions fail to implement SPMI.

The data collection instrument used in this research is the interview method, where interviews were conducted with the Quality Assurance Unit (LPM) of IAIN Kediri to gather information related to the implementation of SPMI, including the development of standards, implementation, monitoring, internal quality audits, evaluation, and the achievement of continuous quality improvement (Amalia Rizki Pautina dan Nur Ainun Djaena, 2021).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Quality refers to the excellence (level) of a product (work output) in the form of goods or services. The definition of quality is a general description and characteristics of a product or service that demonstrates its ability to meet the needs, expectations, and satisfaction of customers.

Quality is used to indicate the "excellence" of a product or service, and good quality is achieved when it surpasses other products or services (Muhammad & Febriatmoko, 2022). In expressing this, a useful definition is, "quality means conformance to requirements." This definition allows us to measure quality by determining whether or not something meets specific requirements (Altuntas et al., 2021). Quality, on the other hand, refers to the alignment with requirements that enables the measurement of quality by recognizing that something meets certain criteria to be considered of good quality (Turmidzi, 2019). The concept of quality itself is often viewed as a relative measure of the goodness of a product or service, consisting of design quality and conformance. Design quality is a function of product specifications, while conformance measures how well a product meets the required specifications. Quality requirements or specifications can be seen as the criteria for quality. Based on the explanations above, it can be understood that quality is a general description and characteristics of a product or service that demonstrates its ability to meet the needs, expectations, and satisfaction of customers.

Quality orientation requires a quality assurance system in order to continuously improve the quality. The quality assurance system in educational institutions is both an external and internal necessity. The Law Number 20 of 2003 stipulates that the management of higher education is based on the principles of autonomy, responsibility, quality assurance, and transparent assessment. The quality of higher education is largely defined as the alignment with objectives, thus quality assurance refers to the policies, attitudes, actions, and procedures necessary to ensure the maintenance and improvement of quality. The goal of quality assurance is to ensure accountability and/or generate improvement.

Quality assurance is a continuous and ongoing routine task that should be performed consistently, rather than being an ad hoc activity (Arifudin, 2019). Therefore, the process of monitoring and evaluation needs to be conducted continuously, emphasizing that these activities are not just problem-solving measures but part of a continuous improvement process. The quality assurance system produces well-educated graduates from higher education institutions who are creative, innovative, and capable of creating job opportunities through their knowledge and technology, which is a sign of the success of quality higher education. The educational quality assurance system is a system that aims to enhance the quality of education in a planned and sustainable manner through the establishment, implementation, evaluation, monitoring, and improvement of educational standards. The quality assurance system produces graduates who are capable of advancing knowledge and technology, serving as indicators of the success of educational quality.

Total Quality Management (TQM) is a way to improve the competitiveness, efficiency, and flexibility of the entire organization (Othman et al., 2020). TQM is a people-oriented management system aimed at enhancing customer satisfaction at lower costs. It serves as a catalyst for change, leading the organization towards a customer-centric approach. Therefore, all organizational activities are aimed at meeting the needs and satisfaction of customers. TQM works not for the benefit of others but focuses on the interests of customers. This understanding applies not only to managers but to all members of the organization.

Minister of National Education Regulation Number 63 of 2009, Article 1, paragraph (1) states that "educational quality is the level of intelligence of the nation's life that can be achieved through the implementation of the national education system." According to this regulation, quality assurance in education aims to ensure that the processes carried out by educational institutions meet the specified standards. The idea of implementing integrated quality management in the field of education is for educational institutions to establish themselves as service providers or, in other words, become service-oriented companies. The services offered to clients are of high quality, and clients/stakeholders feel satisfied. Therefore, educational institutions require a management system that enables them to achieve higher quality.

The terms "higher education" and "university" are often considered synonymous, but in fact, these two terms have different meanings. Higher education refers to education along the school education pathway at a level higher than secondary education. A university is an educational institution that provides higher education (Prasetyo, 2019). "A university is an educational institution that provides higher education, which refers to education beyond the secondary level and includes diploma, bachelor's, master's, specialist, and doctoral programs. Higher education is provided so that students can prepare themselves to be part of society

and have academic and/or professional capabilities to apply, develop, and/or create knowledge, technology, and/or the arts.

Colleges and universities have characteristics that require a different management model compared to government, business, and industrial models. The administration model of higher education relies more on personal initiative and creativity, operating within a collegial system that aligns with academic freedom and scholarly autonomy. The management model of higher education should be able to realize its vision and mission while meeting the needs of stakeholders.

Accountability in higher education places greater value on specialized knowledge, teaching, educational outcomes, and management processes (Muhlisa, 2018). "All colleges and universities are complex organizations managed by a board of trustees, a president, and other administrators. Institutions of higher education also share an organizational structure that encompasses a number of academic and non-academic departments grouped into four general areas: academic affairs, student affairs, advancement or development, and business and financial affairs. Each of these areas contributes to the institution's societal purposes of accumulating, storing, and disseminating knowledge." Colleges and universities are equipped with an organizational structure consisting of academic and non-academic departments divided into four departments/areas: academic, student affairs, planning and development, and business and finance. Each area/department contributes to the social objectives of the educational institution by collecting, storing, and disseminating information.

Higher education institutions are autonomous and self-governing entities that have the right to establish their own facilities as centers for higher education, scientific research, and community engagement (Koning, 2012). The understanding and purpose of granting autonomy are presented in the context of knowledge and technology development, the personal development of the academic community, and based on the norms and principles of scholarship itself. The administration of higher education institutions as independent units of education must adhere to principles of responsibility, transparency, non-profit status, quality assurance, and efficiency. The mission and role of higher education institutions are of great importance, namely: a) a place for students and society to learn; b) a training ground for future national leaders; c) a center for the development of knowledge and technology; d) a center for the study of welfare and moral strength in the search for truth; and e) a center for the development of national civilization.

The growth and development of higher education in Indonesia are currently facing increasing competition, influenced by globalization, advancements in science and technology, and the rising number of universities. On the other hand, the interest of matriculated students to pursue higher education has declined due to financial and practical reasons. "The commitment of all universities/providers to quality is crucial." This requires active and constructive cooperation from the academic staff. Universities are responsible for the quality of education and the social, cultural, and linguistic significance, as well as the standards of degrees they offer on their behalf, regardless of where or how they are delivered." The commitment of all higher education providers/universities to quality is fundamental. Therefore, active and constructive cooperation from the academic staff is highly necessary. Universities are responsible for the overall quality of education and the social, cultural, and language interests, as well as the appropriate qualification requirements.

Characteristics of a quality assurance system include the development and adoption of standards and minimum performance levels against which quality can be assessed. Standards refer to two aspects: the impact of a university's services on the local community and the technical quality standards of the programs offered. The definition of quality in higher education encompasses the graduation rate and enrollment numbers, alumni employment and salary rates, student placement in graduate institutions, exam scores and standards, effective resource utilization, timely and accountable written reporting, student accessibility, class size and student-to-faculty ratio, assessment through classroom teaching, fostering the ability of students to apply new learning practices, promoting lifelong learning, professional development opportunities for faculty, utilizing student feedback, developing skills and active citizenship habits, fostering critical awareness, cohesion, mutual respect, and a collaborative learning environment between students and faculty, and ensuring academic freedom for students and faculty to engage in academic discussions (Schindler et al., 2015).

By implementing a quality assurance system in higher education, universities are expected to cultivate internal and external quality. Once the understanding process is successful, the next step is to design and implement quality assurance management. The goal of a higher education quality assurance system is to sustain and enhance the quality of higher education continuously. Universities must be able to plan, execute, and monitor a process that ensures the achievement of quality.

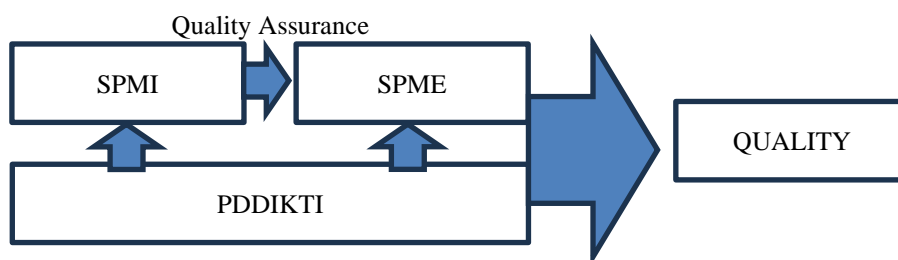


Figure 1. Internal and External Quality Assurance System in Higher Education

The main difference between internal and external quality assurance lies in the fact that internal quality assurance refers to the methods and practices employed by higher education institutions to self-evaluate and improve the quality of education. External quality assurance, on the other hand, is understood as a general policy to ensure the quality of programs and educational institutions. The implementation of the higher education quality assurance system must be supported by the availability of accurate, complete, and up-to-date information and data about the institutions. This information is managed within the databases of each university. The results of internal quality assurance in each institution are crucial for the implementation of external quality assurance or accreditation by BAN-PT (National Accreditation Agency for Higher Education) and/or other independent institutions recognized by the government.

Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI) is a systematic approach to quality assurance in higher education institutions (internally controlled) that aims to monitor the delivery of higher education continuously (Harahap et al., 2023). SPMI is an independent activity carried out by each institution, where the institution itself plans, guides, and controls the process without state interference. Institutions implement SPMI internally to realize their vision and mission and meet the needs of stakeholders through the implementation of the Tridharma of higher education. The concept of SPMI in an institution is considered quality-oriented when it can define and implement its vision. Institutions can describe their vision through various standards and derivative standards. They are capable of implementing and monitoring the development of various standards and derivative standards for their products to meet stakeholders' needs.

The Guidelines for Quality Assurance in implementing SPMI in higher education institutions require certain conditions to achieve its goals, namely: commitment, mindset, and organization. The vision and understanding of the academic community, especially faculty members and education staff, always involve planning each task in a way that supports goal achievement. This work design serves as a crucial framework for measuring work success, enabling continuous quality improvement to be implemented. On the other hand, the success of SPMI implementation also relies on a strong SPMI organization that has the autonomy to carry out quality assurance in education through internal quality control activities. The SPMI organization is expected to foster a positive attitude towards quality assurance efforts in all parts of the institution.

External Quality Assurance System (SPME) is a systematic activity aimed at assessing the suitability of programs and/or higher education institutions by the National Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (BAN-PT) or independent external institutions recognized by the government, to oversee the provision of higher education on behalf of the society as a form of public accountability (Abdurrahmansyah & Rismawati, 2022). The establishment of BAN-PT is regulated in Article 1 Paragraph 27 of Government Regulation No. 19 of 2005, which states: "The National Accreditation Agency for Higher Education, hereinafter referred to as BAN-PT, is an independent assessment body that determines the eligibility of programs and/or education units in higher education in relation to national education standards.

External monitoring or assurance encompasses various quality assessments conducted by individuals or institutions outside the higher education institution, including institutional accreditation, assessment of teaching and research program quality, audits or reviews of institutional processes, and monitoring standards. At the core of SPME or accreditation is the assessment of the suitability and quality assurance of a higher education institution or study program, conducted by independent organizations or bodies external to the institution (external quality assessment). In the implementation of SPME, the quality of the higher education institution/program is a set of conditions and characteristics of inputs, processes, and outputs or services that are measured with predetermined quality criteria that determine and reflect the quality of the respective higher education institution/program.

Quality assurance in higher education is a continuous and sustainable process in which standards of quality in education provision are created and met, aiming to benefit stakeholders (students, faculty, staff,

parents, government, employers, and other interested parties) through their satisfaction. Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Kediri has established a quality assurance organization called the Lembaga Penjaminan Mutu (LPM) on March 31, 2023, as stated in the Rector's Decree Number 076 of 2023. According to the Organizational Structure and Work Procedure (SOTK), LPM IAIN Kediri operates directly under the rector. The main task of LPM IAIN Kediri is to plan and implement the overall quality assurance system at Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Kediri, and to regularly report on the implementation of the quality assurance system to the rector. LPM Kediri is supported by faculty-level quality assurance organizations known as Gugus Penjaminan Mutu (GPM), which serve as partners in quality assurance at the department and study program levels.

Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI) is a systematic activity of quality assurance in education conducted by a higher education institution to continuously oversee the provision of higher education for the satisfaction of stakeholders. The implementation of SPMI at IAIN Kediri is considered essential because the quality of education depends not only on the government but also on the assessments of stakeholders. The implementation of SPMI at IAIN Kediri is an independent activity, where the process of quality assurance is designed, implemented, controlled, and evaluated by the institution itself without government intervention. This is in line with the statement by the Directorate General of Higher Education, Ministry of Education and Culture (Ditjen Dikti Kemendiknas, 42010, p.15), which states that SPMI in higher education institutions is carried out entirely by the institutions themselves, without government interference.

The implementation of SPMI as an integral part of the quality assurance system in education at IAIN Kediri is carried out through the development of an SPMI design, which operationally is referred to as the SPMI Cycle of IAIN Kediri, conducted on an annual basis. The SPMI Cycle at IAIN Kediri consists of seven steps or stages, namely: (a) establishment of Standards, (b) implementation, (c) monitoring, (d) self-evaluation, (e) internal quality audit, (f) evaluation, and (g) quality enhancement.

The establishment of standards is formulated based on legislation, self-evaluation of ongoing performance, input from stakeholders, tracer study results, and the quality assurance development policy of the Directorate General of Higher Education. The standards set in the SPMI of IAIN Kediri refer to the National Education Standards (SNP). The stages of implementing SPMI at IAIN Kediri are as follows: SPMI socialization, technical assistance for study programs, internal quality audit (AMI) socialization and Program Self-Evaluation Instrument (EDPS) dissemination, completion of EDPS, AMI implementation, corrective actions/improvement measures, faculty-level management review meeting to discuss audit findings and program quality enhancement, institution-level management review meeting to address unresolved issues from study programs at the program, department, and faculty levels. These issues will be brought to the institutional level for further discussion.

Monitoring aims to oversee the implementation of SPMI according to the plan. Self-evaluation is a systematic effort to gather and process reliable and valid data (facts and information) in order to draw conclusions that can serve as a basis for management actions in managing the institution's sustainability, such as faculties, departments, and study programs. AMI is an independent and objective quality assurance audit and consultation on academic operational activities or academic processes. The corrective measures are based on the findings of internal quality audits, which are followed up with management review meetings at the program, faculty, and institutional levels. The formulation of corrective measures will then be used to reassess the next internal quality audit, to determine whether any improvement measures have been implemented. The results of the corrective measures guide quality improvement through the establishment of new standards/planning in the next stages. The actual improvement in quality will ultimately be determined by the external stakeholders, namely the community. The overall implementation of SPMI in IAIN Kediri leads to quality improvement.

The implementation of SPMI in IAIN Kediri is supported by human resources (HR) who possess competencies in quality assurance. LPM IAIN Kediri currently has 48 auditors for AMI who collaborate with IPB to obtain Auditor Certification. The implementation of AMI at IAIN Kediri takes two forms: online and offline. The online AMI is carried out in May, where quality data and documents from each unit are uploaded. The offline AMI takes place from July to August. The offline AMI can be likened to the accreditation visitation conducted by BAN PT.

The challenges faced by IAIN Kediri in implementing SPMI, as stated by Mr. Mirza Firdaus, the Secretary 1 of LPM IAIN Kediri, are as follows: Difficulty in finding time for the leadership to follow up on the agreed-upon outcomes during meetings and subsequently disseminate these programs to the units. For example, when organizing the International ISO certification, the first step is to seek permission from the leadership on when they can allocate time for implementation and guidance. Occurrence of negligence from the LPM's own human resources due to their busy schedules and numerous tasks as part of the LPM team, resulting in less than optimal SPMI implementation. However, this can be resolved through effective communication and agreed-upon deadlines. Data synchronization issues where the existing data does not match the templates set by the central authority. For instance, the student admission data generated by the institution does not align with the

predetermined template set by the central authority, necessitating the need for data reprocessing. However, this challenge can be overcome through regular monitoring and evaluation. Please note that the translation provided is an interpretation based on the given information, and slight adjustments may be necessary based on the context.

The implementation of SPMI requires an evaluation system to assess the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance implementation. LPM IAIN Kediri conducts an annual evaluation by seeking input from auditors, faculty and program leaders who undergo the audit, as well as institutional leaders. The evaluation takes the form of workshops, which discuss feedback and corrections regarding the implementation of Internal Quality Audit. In addition to assessing the effectiveness of SPMI implementation, the evaluation also examines whether the fulfillment of SPMI aligns with the standards set by the university. The outcomes of SPMI implementation are utilized not only in educational planning but also to foster a better work spirit and raise awareness to build a culture of quality, leading to continuous improvement. Externally, the results of SPMI implementation are utilized in preparation for external accreditation, such as by the National Accreditation Agency (BAN PT) or Independent Accreditation Agency (LAM).

The implementation of SPMI at IAIN Kediri is based on two documents: the Academic Document and the Quality Document. The Academic Document at the faculty level consists of the Academic Policy, Academic Standards, and Academic Regulations. The Academic Document at the program level includes Program Specifications, Curriculum, Curriculum Mapping, and Semester Program and Learning Activity Plans (RPKPS). The Quality Document, developed at IAIN Kediri for each UNIT, refers to the Quality Document from BAN PT (National Accreditation Agency) and is supplemented with regulations from DIKTIS (Directorate General of Higher Education).

4. CONCLUSION

The concept and policy of SPMI at IAIN Kediri are defined as a continuous process of improving educational quality through the activities of establishing standards and planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, internal quality audit (AMI), formulation of corrections, and benchmarking to determine new standards. This process is referred to as the quality assurance cycle. The organization responsible for SPMI at IAIN Kediri is the Quality Assurance Institution (LPM), which is tasked with planning and implementing comprehensive quality assurance systems. The implementation of SPMI at IAIN Kediri is carried out through the development of an SPMI design, operationally referred to as the SPMI Cycle, which follows an annual period. The SPMI Cycle consists of seven steps or stages, which are: establishment of standards or planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, internal quality audit, formulation of corrections, and quality improvement for stakeholder satisfaction.

The challenges faced in implementing SPMI at IAIN Kediri are as follows: difficulty in finding time for the leadership to follow up on the agreed-upon outcomes during meetings and subsequently disseminate those programs to the units. Negligence occurs from the LPM's own human resources due to their busy schedules and numerous tasks from the LPM team, resulting in suboptimal implementation of SPMI. Another challenge is the lack of synchronization in the data, where the existing data does not align with the templates set by the central authority.




The utilization of SPMI implementation outcomes at IAIN Kediri internally aims to enhance educational quality, foster a better work ethic, raise awareness to build a culture of quality, and contribute to the fulfillment of the institution's strategic plan (renstra). Externally, the outcomes are utilized in preparation for both national and international accreditation. The development of SPMI implementation at IAIN Kediri aligns with the Quality Management System based on the standards set by the National Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (BAN PT), supplemented by regulations from DIKTIS (Directorate General of Higher Education).

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