



A CONCEPTUAL EXPLORATION OF SCHOOL ACCREDITATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY

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Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengkaji implementasi akreditasi lembaga pendidikan sebagai instrumen fundamental untuk menjamin kualitas pendidikan dasar di Indonesia melalui analisis konseptual, yuridis, dan operasional. Menggunakan metode *library research* dengan pendekatan kualitatif, studi ini menganalisis konsep akreditasi dalam kerangka *quality assurance*, dasar hukum yang meliputi Undang-Undang No. 20 Tahun 2003, Peraturan Pemerintah No. 19 Tahun 2005, serta Keputusan Menteri Pendidikan Kebudayaan Riset dan Teknologi No. 246/O/2024, serta ruang lingkup sistem penyelenggaraan yang mencakup delapan standar nasional pendidikan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa akreditasi berfungsi sebagai mekanisme evaluasi eksternal yang komplementer dengan Sistem Penjaminan Mutu Internal (SPMI), namun implementasinya menghadapi tantangan multidimensional meliputi disparitas kapasitas satuan pendidikan, keterbatasan kompetensi asesor, dan praktik rekayasa data. Rekomendasi strategis dirumuskan meliputi penguatan pendekatan *Total Quality Management*, revitalisasi pelatihan asesor berbasis kompetensi, dan optimalisasi audit mutu internal. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pengembangan kebijakan akreditasi yang mampu mendorong transformasi substantif kualitas pendidikan dasar Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: Akreditasi Sekolah; Penjaminan Mutu Pendidikan (PMP); Sistem Penjaminan Mutu Internal (SPMI); Pendidikan Dasar Indonesia; Total Quality Management (TQM).

Abstract: This study examines the implementation of school accreditation as a fundamental instrument for quality assurance in basic education in Indonesia through conceptual, legal, and operational analysis. Using library research with a qualitative approach, this study analyzes the concept of accreditation within the quality assurance framework, the legal basis of which includes Law No. 20 of 2003, Government Regulation No. 19 of 2005, and Decree of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology No. 246/O/2024, as well as the implementation system which encompasses eight national education standards. According to the study findings, accreditation acts as an external evaluation tool that supplements the Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI), but its implementation faces multidimensional challenges including disparities in educational unit capacity, limited assessor competency, and data engineering practices. Strategic recommendations are formulated including strengthening the Total Quality Management approach, revitalizing competency-based assessor training, and optimizing internal quality audits. This research contributes to the development of accreditation policies that can encourage substantive transformation of the quality of basic education in Indonesia.

Keywords: *School Accreditation; Educational Quality Assurance; Internal Quality Assurance System; Indonesian Basic Education; Total Quality Management*

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INTRODUCTION

In the national education system, accreditation serves as the primary instrument for sustainable quality assurance in education, as this process requires educational institutions to meet nationally and internationally established educational standards. Accreditation is not merely an administrative mechanism but an evaluative framework that comprehensively and systematically assesses the adequacy of educational delivery to ensure continuous improvement in the quality of educational services. Empirical studies indicate that accreditation can drive improvements in the quality of learning, services, and student learning outcomes when it is strategically understood and implemented by educational institutions. (Setiyani dkk., 2025).

The legal basis for the implementation of accreditation in Indonesia is regulated by Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System (Direktorat Jenderal Peraturan Perundang-undangan, 2003; Hastriana, U. S., 2025), and reinforced by recent policies such as Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Regulation No. 246/O/2024, which updates the accreditation instruments to be more responsive to the dynamics of modern education and the need for more meaningful assessment (Dini, A. P. A. U., 2024).

In the context of education, the relevance of accreditation is increasingly crucial given the ever-growing quality challenges in the modern educational era, such as demands for 21st-century competencies, disparities in quality among schools, and the public's rising expectations regarding educational outcomes. Ideally, accreditation serves as a catalyst for schools to strengthen internal systems, improve teaching practices, and optimize school management as part of efforts to achieve the desired quality standards.

However, the reality in many educational institutions is that there is a significant gap between public expectations regarding educational quality and the implementation of accreditation, which is often perceived merely as an administrative formality; consequently, its contribution to substantive improvements in educational quality is suboptimal. This perception risks obscuring the strategic function of accreditation as a quality assurance tool that must yield tangible impacts on the enhancement of educational quality

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to explore and analyze in depth the phenomenon of school accreditation as an instrument for ensuring educational quality in Indonesia, as this approach enables a holistic understanding of the dynamics of the concept, legal basis, and scope of the accreditation system—from the perspectives of policy, regulation, and implementation practices (Suriandjo, H. S., 2024)..Research data were collected through a literature review of various relevant regulatory documents, textbooks, and scientific articles, as well as through content analysis of the latest accreditation instruments and reports on their implementation in schools.

Subsequently, information analysis was conducted sequentially through data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions to ensure the validity and credibility of the findings, while also identifying gaps between regulations and practices in the field (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research findings indicate that the accreditation of educational institutions has a significant impact on improving school quality, as it encourages schools to engage in systematic self-reflection and continuous improvement through feedback mechanisms derived from external evaluations of teaching practices, management, and educational administration (Sari, R. P.,dkk, 2025). This process also strengthens internal quality culture and enhances stakeholder satisfaction, as transparent, standards-based evaluations foster public trust—from both students’ parents and education policymakers (Maulana, 2022).

Furthermore, accreditation influences student learning outcomes, as evidenced by the positive correlation between accreditation levels and academic achievement as well as teacher quality. This is evident in improved learning outcomes, student participation in the learning process, and teachers’ pedagogical competence, so that accreditation functions not only as a tool for evaluation but also as a strategic driver for improving educational quality and teaching effectiveness (Ridho, A., 2024).

1. Current Concepts and Theories of Accreditation

In modern education systems, accreditation serves as a vital instrument that integrates the principles of accountability and continuous improvement through independent evaluation mechanisms to ensure the quality of educational institutions. Unlike subjective internal evaluations, accreditation is conducted by objective and accountable external parties; it not only ensures the achievement of basic standards (compliance-based) but also drives continuous improvement in educational quality (improvement-oriented) across various aspects of educational delivery.

In the context of basic education in Indonesia, accreditation serves as a gatekeeper ensuring that every educational unit meets the operational eligibility threshold, while also acting as a catalyst driving transformation toward institutional excellence. From an educational epistemological perspective, the definition of accreditation according to educational literature can be understood as “a comprehensive assessment process to determine whether an educational institution meets established quality standards” (BAN-PT., 2023).

This comprehensive process involves a multidimensional evaluation of inputs (curriculum, teaching staff, facilities and infrastructure), processes (teaching methodologies, classroom management, academic supervision), and outputs (graduate competencies, exam results, tracer studies) (Harvey & Stensaker, 2022; Hutahaeen, B., 2021). In their study on quality assurance in higher education, they emphasize that effective accreditation must bridge the gap between intended learning outcomes and actual learning outcomes, while ensuring the relevance of education to social needs and the advancement of knowledge.

Furthermore, accreditation contributes significantly to building a culture of quality in educational institutions through the internalization of quality values within an organization. In Indonesia, the commitment to educational quality assurance is reflected in the existence

of BAN-S/M since 2008, which aligns with the mandate of the National Education System Law, which is regularly updated (BAN-S/M., 2005).

2. Foundations of School Accreditation

The implementation of school accreditation in Indonesia is inseparable from its legal, philosophical, and operational foundations, which are integrated within a national education quality assurance system.

a. Legally,

The constitutional basis for school accreditation is established in Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System (Sisdiknas), which mandates education quality assurance through evaluation, accreditation, and certification of graduate competencies. Article 54(1) of the Sisdiknas Law mandates local governments to implement quality assurance at the elementary and secondary levels, operationalized through Government Regulation No. 19 of 2005 and Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Regulation No. 44 of 2015. This regulatory framework provides constitutional legitimacy for the National Accreditation Board for Schools/Madrasahs (BAN-S/M) as a legitimate and binding external quality assurance authority (BAN-S/M., 2005; Kemendikbud, 2003; Menristekdikti RI, 2015).

b. From a philosophical perspective,

the foundation of school accreditation is rooted in the paradigms of democratic accountability and public trust in education. In the context of a democratic society, educational institutions that utilize public resources—whether in the form of state budgets or public trust—are obligated to be accountable for their performance to stakeholders. Accreditation, within this framework, functions as a mechanism of the social contract that affirms schools' commitment to providing quality education in line with public expectations. As stated by Stensaker and Harvey (2023), “quality assurance mechanisms serve as the bridge between institutional autonomy and societal responsibility, ensuring that educational institutions remain responsive to the communities they serve” (Odiambo-Abuya, I., & Mboya, M. M., 2026). This philosophy aligns with the concept that educational quality is not merely measured by compliance with existing standards, but also by the relevance and contribution of graduates to national development (Irwan, 2025).

c. Operationally,

The foundation for school accreditation is realized through a comprehensive and measurable national education standards system. This system encompasses 8 national education standards: content standards, process standards, graduate competency standards, educator and educational staff standards, facilities and infrastructure standards, management standards, funding standards, and educational evaluation standards, which serve as benchmarks in the accreditation assessment. This approach adopts the input-process-output-outcome (IPOO) model, which enables a holistic evaluation of all aspects of educational delivery. An empirical study conducted by Sallis (2022) shows that the IPOO model in elementary education accreditation is effective in identifying quality bottlenecks and formulating specific and measurable improvement recommendations (Rahmad Nasir & Cepi Safruddin Abdul Jabar, 2022). Furthermore, the implementation of school-based management (SBM), as mandated by Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation No. 44 of 2015, positions accreditation as an instrument of external

validation that complements internal self-evaluation mechanisms, creating a sustainable quality assurance system oriented toward quality enhancement (Mizunoya, S., 2025).

The integration of these three foundations legal, philosophical, and operational will form a solid foundation for the implementation of school accreditation in Indonesia. However, implementation challenges persist, particularly regarding assessor capacity, consistency in evaluation across regions, and budget constraints. Therefore, collaboration between the central government, local governments, and the education community is crucial in strengthening the accreditation infrastructure to ensure it remains relevant to the dynamics of elementary education development in the Society 5.0 era (Surono & Jusuf, 2025).

3. The Scope of the School Accreditation System in the Era of Digital Transformation

The scope of the school accreditation system in Indonesia has undergone significant transformation, reflecting its adaptation to contemporary educational dynamics, advancements in digital technology, and the demands of evidence based policy making.

- a. Substantively, the scope of school accreditation is no longer limited to evaluating compliance with minimum standards (threshold standards), but has evolved into a comprehensive assessment of the learning ecosystem oriented toward holistic student development. Based on the 2024 School/Madrasah Accreditation Instrument published by the National Accreditation Board for Schools/Madrasah (BAN-S/M, 2024), the scope of assessment now covers five main dimensions:
 - 1) Curriculum and learning process standards that integrate higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) and socio-emotional learning (SEL);
 - 2) Graduate competencies measured not only through national exams but also through authentic assessment and portfolio-based evaluation;
 - 3) Teachers' and educational staff's digital capabilities in implementing blended learning;
 - 4) Information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure that supports a smart school ecosystem; and
 - 5) Data-driven governance that includes an integrated educational management information system. These dimensions reflect the Quality 4.0 paradigm, in which educational quality assurance collaborates with the Fourth Industrial Revolution and Society 5.0 (Nashrullah dkk., 2025).
- b. Procedurally, the latest scope of school accreditation adopts a cyclic continuous improvement model consisting of the following stages:
 - 1) Self-assessment using the Simpelka application (System for Evaluating the Implementation of Education and Assessment Performance Services), which enables schools to conduct real-time internal evaluations;
 - 2) Desk evaluation by the BAN-S/M assessment team utilizing machine learning algorithms for analyzing school portfolio data;
 - 3) On-site visit focused on verifying physical evidence and observing in-action learning practices;
 - 4) Peer review involving education practitioners from exemplary schools; and
 - 5) Follow-up in the form of mentoring and coaching programs for schools that received a C accreditation or are not yet accredited.

This model replaces the one-off, summative, and punitive inspection approach with a constructive and sustainable formative assessment system (Dini, A. P. A. U., 2024).

- c. In spatial and institutional contexts, the scope of the latest school accreditation has also expanded significantly. Geographically, the scope of accreditation now covers all basic education units in 38 provinces, including schools located in remote, isolated, and underdeveloped (3T) areas, as well as schools that provide inclusive education for students with special needs. Institutionally, accreditation applies not only to conventional public and private schools, but also includes registered homeschooling, community learning centers (PKBM), and online or distance learning schools, which have been growing rapidly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. This expansion aligns with the concept of flexible accreditation developed by the OECD in 2023 in the report *Education at a Glance 2023*, which emphasizes the need for an accreditation system that is adaptive to the diversification of educational delivery models without compromising the principles of equity and excellence (OECD., 2023).

More fundamentally, the scope of the latest school accreditation has integrated the dimensions of sustainability and global citizenship as inseparable components of the assessment. Schools are evaluated not only on learning outcomes but also on their contributions to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 13 (Climate Action). New indicators such as green school certification, anti-corruption education, and digital literacy have become integral parts of the 2024 accreditation framework (Dini, A. P. A. U., 2024).. This integration reflects the Indonesia Emas 2045 vision, in which basic education is expected to shape a generation that is not only cognitively competent but also of good character, globally competitive, and committed to environmental and social sustainability.

4. Challenges in Implementing Accreditation in Elementary Schools

The implementation of elementary school accreditation in Indonesia faces a complex paradox between the goal of ensuring educational quality and the operational realities on the ground, where external evaluation instruments are often distorted in the internal practices of educational institutions. A compliance-oriented rather than improvement-oriented mindset dominates school behavior, where the accreditation process is perceived more as an administrative ritual to meet minimum standards than as a reflective culture of continuous quality improvement berkelanjutan (Kemendikbudristek, 2017; OECD., 2023).

More critically, disparities in educational human resource capacity lead to significant implementation gaps; elementary schools in remote areas often struggle to meet the graduate competency standards and required learning processes outlined in accreditation instruments, while urban schools with better access to resources are able to optimize their quality evidence portfolios (Daga dkk., 2023; Juharyanto dkk., 2023).

Additionally, paradigmatic challenges arise from the tension between national standardization and local contextuality; overly rigid accreditation instruments often overlook the distinctiveness of local curriculum content and the socio-cultural characteristics of the learning community (Afifuddin dkk., 2025).

Amid the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, elementary school accreditation is required to transform from input-process-output-based evaluation toward an outcome-based education approach that accommodates pedagogical flexibility and the development of the Pancasila learner profile (Rasinus, M. T., & Wamena, S. A., 2025).

Therefore, a systemic reconstruction of the culture, capacity, and characteristics of accreditation instruments is necessary so that they truly become the driving force behind ensuring equitable and high-quality basic education (Susetyo dkk., 2022).

5. Strategies for Strengthening Accreditation

Strengthening the elementary school accreditation system in Indonesia requires a strategic reconstruction that goes beyond conventional inspection-based approaches, moving toward an empowerment evaluation paradigm that integrates internal capacity, information technology, and multi-stakeholder collaboration within the quality assurance ecosystem. The first fundamental strategy is the transformation of quality culture through professional learning communities (PLCs), where elementary schools are developed as learning organizations capable of conducting critical self-assessment and a continuous improvement cycle (plan-do-check-act) prior to external evaluation (Nurhasanah dkk., 2025; Stoll dkk., 2006).

Furthermore, a differentiated accreditation strategy is imperative to accommodate contextual disparities; elementary schools in remote areas are provided with intensive mentoring and flexibility in standards through a tiered accreditation system, while high-performing schools are directed toward accreditation based on pedagogical innovation and the development of best practice models *practice* (Juharyanto dkk., 2023; Jumanah J. et al, 2025; OECD, 2023).

Multi-stakeholder collaboration through public-private partnerships and the involvement of school committees in the accreditation process have also proven effective in optimizing resources and enhancing the social legitimacy of evaluation outcomes. The synergistic implementation of these strategies is expected to reposition accreditation from a bureaucratic burden into an instrument for the sustainable and equitable transformation of basic education quality (Untari, D. T., 2016).

CONCLUSION

Conceptually, elementary school accreditation in Indonesia is a strategic quality assurance instrument that integrates four crucial dimensions: the function of continuous improvement, legal legitimacy, the comprehensiveness of standards, and an orientation toward institutional development. The success of accreditation is determined by its ability to bridge policy and practice, as well as to encourage active stakeholder participation in a responsive and equitable quality assurance ecosystem.

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