
Integrated quality assurance frameworks in higher education: Aligning institutional standards with evolving market demands

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Abstract

This research endeavors to evaluate the efficacy of an integrated quality assurance system in enhancing the quality of education to align with market demands. The *'Unggul'* predicate was granted to Padang State University (UNP), which is one of the universities in Indonesia where this study was conducted. Utilizing a qualitative research methodology in phenomenology, data were collected to investigate the implementation of the quality assurance system at UNP, from planning to operation, in order to comprehend its influence on the quality of learning within the university environment. This investigation demonstrated that there is an urgent necessity to enhance the integration of education with the requirements of a job market that is both dynamic and rapidly evolving. While the EPP (Determination, Implementation, Evaluation, Control, and Improvement) model has demonstrated efficacy, technological advancements and global dynamics necessitate additional innovation and adaptation.

Keywords

higher education, integrated quality assurance system, market needs, quality assurance system

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Introduction

In the current era of globalization, the quality of higher education is a critical factor in guaranteeing that university graduates are ready to compete on a global scale. In the context of higher education, which is a setting for the development of academic knowledge, practical skills, and competencies that are pertinent to the current job market. The Indonesian government has implemented a series of regulations with the objective of enhancing the quality of higher education. These regulations include Law Number 12 of 2012 concerning Higher Education, Government Regulation Number 4 of 2014 concerning the Implementation of Higher Education, and Regulation of the Minister of Research, Technology, and Higher Education Number 44 of 2015, which established National Higher Education Standards (SNPT). The purpose of SNPT is to guarantee that Indonesia's higher education institutions have a solid foundation for the enhancement of the quality of their graduates and institutions.

The National Accreditation Board for Higher Education (BAN-PT) has awarded Universitas Negeri Padang (UNP) the title of “Excellent” (or *Unggul*), indicating that the university has met national standards. This predicate indicates that UNP has successfully met national standards; however, a preliminary study revealed that there are still challenges in the consistent implementation and integration of the quality. To equip students with the necessary skills to navigate an increasingly digital work environment, Indonesian higher education institutions, such as UNP, must prioritize the integration of technology into their curricula and instructional methodologies. This is corroborated by a study conducted by [Muhaimin et al. \(2020\)](#) which contends that the integration of outcome-based learning approaches must be enhanced to guarantee that education remains pertinent to the requirements of the global labor market. To enhance the quality and accessibility of education, [UNESCO \(2023\)](#) also underscores the significance of technology. The current quality assurance system is found to be vulnerable due to its failure to adapt to new technology.

UNP has endeavored to incorporate technology into various administrative and educational functions. An integrated academic information system, technology training for administrative staff and lecturers, and the development of an e-learning platform are among the measures that have been implemented. Ultimately, the objective of these measures is to enhance the quality, transparency, and efficiency of education at UNP. Nevertheless, the findings of a bibliometric review conducted using the VOS viewer indicate that there is a dearth of research on strategies for enhancing the quality of higher education, particularly in the Indonesian context, particularly in the qualitative area ([Santoso & Hartono, 2022](#)). This research was conducted to address the gap, with a particular emphasis on the current market needs.

This investigation is pertinent to the objective of enhancing the quality of higher education in Indonesia, particularly in the context of the integration of technology and innovation into the quality assurance system. This research will offer a comprehensive understanding of the internal and external dynamics that affect the effectiveness of the quality assurance system by concentrating on UNP. Therefore, this investigation was undertaken to acquire a more profound comprehension of the variables that impact the efficacy of the quality assurance system's implementation in higher education, as well as to identify effective

strategies for enhancing the quality of education at UNP. The primary objective of this research is to illuminate the extent to which the quality assurance system that UNP has implemented is capable of satisfying the current market demands and the extent to which the strategies of quality improvement can facilitate this process. This research's findings can offer valuable strategic recommendations to educational practitioners, academics, and policymakers to address the obstacles and improve the quality of higher education in Indonesia.

Methodology

This study employed a phenomenological qualitative research design to investigate the implementation of an integrated quality assurance system at Universitas Negeri Padang (UNP) in order to enhance the quality of learning. The purpose of this research design was to investigate the accounts, meanings, and perspectives of individuals regarding a phenomenon and to reveal how they experience it. This approach is designed to reveal a phenomenon that participants have encountered and to investigate the significance they assign to it. Data were gathered through interviews with research participants. Participants in the research were motivated to share their thoughts, recount their experiences, and offer valuable insights into their quality assurance practices through semi-structured interviews (Dörnyei, 2007); (Dudeny & Hockly, 2016); (King, Lai, & May, 2017); (Manion, Morrison, & Cohen, 2018).

This research is based on theoretical insights from Max Van Manen (2014), which provided guidelines for the selection of research locations, sampling procedures, and participant recruitment. The location of this research was Universitas Negeri Padang. The research setting at UNP, a higher education institution situated in Padang, West Sumatra, was selected due to its high relevance to the research objectives and its capacity to encourage the reflection and expression of participants' viewpoints on the implementation of an integrated quality assurance system to enhance the quality of learning. Additionally, UNP has successfully obtained an "Excellent" predicate from the institutions, which is indicative of the sustainable quality of learning that has taken place at the university. Consequently, this research environment is well-suited for conducting a more comprehensive examination of the subject matter. Conducting and implementing purposive sampling techniques in phenomenological research. This research concentrates on the selection of participants who possess a particular characteristic. The objective of this investigation is to identify participants who possess a thorough comprehension and can offer valuable insights into the phenomenon under investigation. participants who possess substantial expertise and experience in the implementation of quality assurance systems at UNP. These are the primary criteria: The primary participants in this research are as follows:

Table 1. *The primary participants*

Deputy of Chancellor/Rector I
Head of Internal Quality Assurance (LPMI & BPMI)
Head of Technical Implementation Unit for Information and Communication Technology Development (UPT IT)

To participate in this investigation, the participants were required to execute a consent form. Subsequently, data were collected through a rigorous data collection process that included five recurring interviews to investigate the strategies, challenges, and experiences that were employed in the implementation of the quality assurance system at the study site. Subsequent to data collection, the recorded interview results were transcribed, and member-checking was implemented with the research participants to verify that the interview contents were not altered. Subsequently, the researcher implemented numerous measures to guarantee the reliability of this investigation. The researcher guaranteed the integrity and comprehensiveness of the research by incorporating repeated interviews, member checking, meticulous recording techniques, and addressing potential bias. Lastly, numerous stages were implemented to analyze the data that emerged from this phenomenological investigation. It necessitated the comprehension of the data, data coding, data interpretation, and structural synthesis in order to determine the essence of individual textual descriptions and address research inquiries.

Results and Discussion

This investigation is designed to investigate the impact of an integrated quality assurance system on the enhancement of learning quality. This research centers on the exploration of the perceptions and experiences of relevant stakeholders regarding the implementation and operation of the integrated quality assurance system at Universitas Negeri Padang (UNP) through a qualitative phenomenological approach.

There were three primary themes that emerged from the data collected through in-depth interviews. These themes offer a perspective on the following: They illuminate the strategies, challenges, and practices that are affiliated with quality assurance in universities. In the subsequent section, the findings are thoroughly examined.

The use of technology in quality assurance

Based on the interview results, several important points can be identified regarding the use of technology in quality assurance at UNP. The most striking finding in this case is the use of the UNP portal. The Head of UPT IT explained:

The UNP portal is used by students and lecturers for various academic purposes, such as taking courses, viewing study results, applying for leave, and completing learning evaluations. This evaluation includes opinions about IT services, lecturers, and the learning process, which must be filled in before students can see their grades.

The Head of UPT IT underscored the significance of training and outreach for students and lecturers in relation to the utilization of IT systems, as this portal is a recent development. The utilization of technology at UNP will simplify academic and administrative procedures, as well as guarantee the consistent fulfillment of quality assurance standards.

At present, UNP utilizes a Single Sign-On (SSO) system, also referred to as "*Rumah Gadang*" to integrate a diverse array of academic and administrative applications, which is a

direct consequence of the portal's varying requirements and objectives. Lessons and students are granted access to all applications and websites through a single account, which encompasses academic systems, finance, personnel, scientific work management, and student services.

To underscore the learning process, UNP implements an e-learning system known as Learning Management Systems (LMS). The learning management system (LMS) is utilized to upload lecture materials, RPS, and assignments. Lecturers are obligated to periodically upload RPS prior to the commencement of their lectures in order to monitor and evaluate learning. Assessments are implemented twice each semester to ensure that students comply with the standards of outcome-based education (OBE). In order to offer feedback and evaluations, students are obligated to complete a questionnaire each semester. This assessment comprises assessments of the lecturer facilities and IT services. The outcomes of this assessment are implemented to facilitate continuous improvement. Evaluation is essential because it offers a comprehensive understanding of student satisfaction and areas that require improvement. The UNP then takes action on any complaints that are made. Any complaints. In response to complaints from students and lecturers, such as those who are absent or experiencing system slowness, server capacity is increased, network improvements are implemented, and training in the use of the system is provided. Additionally, outreach and training initiatives are implemented to guarantee that all academics comprehend and effectively employ the IT system.

This advancement is characterized by the ability to customize and adapt applications independently. The system is consistently maintained and pertinent to academic requirements through this development, which is driven by user feedback and requests. UNP aspires to enhance the quality of learning, as well as the efficiency and accuracy of instruction, in the university setting by incorporating this technology. The following are several significant points pertaining to the use of technology in quality assurance at UNP, as determined by interviews with the Head of Quality Assurance,

- **AI Implementation Plan:** UNP intends to incorporate artificial intelligence (AI) into the monitoring and evaluation endeavors. AI is anticipated to assist in the analysis of qualitative data and its conversion into quantitative data that is more easily interpreted. This objective is to offer a more precise representation of the quality of learning and quality assurance at UNP.
- **Enhanced Data Efficiency and Accuracy:** The implementation of AI is anticipated to enhance the efficiency and accuracy of data collection and analysis. Artificial intelligence (AI) enables the rapid and precise execution of evaluation processes that were previously time-consuming and laborious.
- **Qualitative Data Processing:** The processing and interpretation of qualitative data are frequently challenging. AI will be employed to read and identify keywords in qualitative data, which can subsequently be indexed and converted into quantitative data.
- **Enhancing Graduate Quality:** AI deployment is anticipated to assist in assessing whether the quality assurance efforts have resulted in higher-quality graduates. The correlation between the quality of graduates and quality assurance will be determined through the analysis of data from tracer studies and student surveys.

- Coordination with Other Units: UNP's career development unit and academic quality assurance are distinct departments, but BPMI works closely with other departments like the academic directorate and UPT tracer study. This guarantees the effective utilization of data from a variety of sources for the purpose of continuous improvement.

The theory proposed by Davis in (1989) regarding Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Ahmed, Noor, Chen, & Deng, 2023) underscores the significance of technology integration in guaranteeing the quality of higher education. TAM maintains that the quality assurance process can be enhanced by the utilization of information technology, which enables more precise data collection and more in-depth analysis. UNP's implementation of technology integration into the quality assurance system demonstrates the application of these principles, with the objective of enhancing the quality of education through technological innovation. Furthermore, UNP is currently conducting research on the implementation of artificial intelligence (AI) in the monitoring and evaluation process to enhance the accuracy and efficiency of data.

For example, AI can read important components in the RPS and provide assessments based on the keywords found. This will make the monitoring and evaluation process more efficient and effective.

Also, the significance of collaboration among related units was underscored by the head of LPMI:

We work closely with various units across the university, including data centers and academic directorates, to ensure that all necessary data are available and easily accessible. With AI, we hope to reduce the manual workload and increase the accuracy of the data we obtain.

UNP's objective to preserve the exceptional quality of their operations is aligned with their commitment to providing sufficient training and workshops for future employees. Consequently, they have decided to integrate AI into their operations. As indicated below:

Follow-up to this process may include workshops, development of new curricula, or more stringent policies in line with new needs and standards.

It can be inferred that UNP has implemented a comprehensive and structured integrated quality assurance system to enhance the quality of learning. In other universities, this model may serve as a model for the development of quality assurance systems. "In general, this system guarantees that academic standards are met and promotes ongoing improvement through constructive feedback and regular evaluations," stated the Head of LPMI, demonstrating UNP's dedication to the consistent maintenance and enhancement of the quality of education.

Challenges to implementation

The challenges and implementation of quality assurance at UNP have led to the following important conclusions, as evidenced by the interviews with Deputy Chancellor/Rector 1, the Head of LPMI, and the Head of UPT IT. The discrepancy between the needs of the job market and the quality of graduates is one of the primary obstacles that UNP encounters. Most graduates are either unemployed or have not yet secured employment in their respective fields. This demonstrates the necessity of creativity in education and the ability to adapt to the needs of students. The head of LPMI underscored the necessity of investing more in career development and tracer studies, despite the fact that academic quality assurance is satisfactory. “To prepare the workforce, we have our UPT for tracer study and student career development,” explained the head of LPMI.

The integrated learning system has been in place at UNP for an extended period of time, according to Deputy Chancellor 1. However, there are still obstacles to its successful implementation. “We conduct management review meetings at various levels to look at crucial issues and follow up on them,” he said. This system incorporates integrated monitoring, LMS, and e-learning; however, there are still study programs that have not fully implemented this technology.

Outcome-Based Education (OBE) Curriculum: UNP has been implementing an OBE-based curriculum since 2017, but it continues to encounter numerous roadblocks. “In 2020, the ministry's policy requires us to follow key performance indicators, so we have to create indicators that can be completed,” said Deputy Chancellor 1. This indicates that, despite ongoing efforts to implement OBE, ongoing evaluation and adjustments are still required.

Adaptation to the MBKM (Free Learning Campus) Policy: Implementing the MBKM policy is also a challenge in itself. “We have to ensure that the curriculum can accommodate the MBKM program, which requires curriculum revisions and other adjustments,” said Deputy Chancellor 1. This demonstrates the necessity of effective coordination and collaboration among the various units at UNP in order to adapt to new policies.

Use of Technology in Learning: The Head of UPT IT emphasized the importance of using technology in learning. “We have an integrated UNP portal for lecturers and students, but there are still challenges in terms of infrastructure and training,” he said. It demonstrates that, despite the implementation of technology, there is still a need to enhance user competence and infrastructure.

The implementation of an integrated learning system, an OBE-based curriculum, adaptation to MBKM policies, the use of technology in learning, and the gap between graduates and the job market are all challenges that UNP faces in the process of implementing quality assurance. To surmount these obstacles, it is imperative that the UNP maintains consistent efforts and ensures effective coordination among its various units.

In the quality assurance development system, the significance of PPEPP (planning, implementation, evaluation, control, and improvement) was underscored by this research. A systematic framework for identifying and resolving weaknesses or issues identified in this research is provided by PPEPP. As an illustration, universities may anticipate obstacles such as resistance to change and inadequate resources through meticulous planning (Brown &

Harvey, 2014); (Allam, Farhan, Kommineni, & Deming, 2024). The active participation of all stakeholders is guaranteed by effective implementation, and the identification of areas that require improvement is facilitated by ongoing evaluation. Maintaining the quality assurance system's relevance and efficacy over time requires constant control and improvement. In the same nuance, PDCA cycle (Plan-Do-Check-Act) was originally developed by Walter A. Shewhart and popularized by W. Edwards Deming's theory (Abdul & Nurhayati, 2010) underlines continuous improvement states that the PPEPP cycle can assist colleges in adapting and creating more effective plans for dealing with upcoming difficulties. Consequently, the implementation of PPEPP assists in the mitigation of current deficiencies and positions the university for future growth. Artificial intelligence (AI) is also integrated into the PPEPP model, which adheres to the planning, implementation, evaluation, control, and improvement cycle. The objective of this AI integration is to address quality issues through qualitative data, rather than solely relying on quantitative data that is dedicated to data checklists. The system can conduct a more thorough analysis of qualitative data and offer more insightful information regarding the quality of learning and research through the use of AI.

Quality assurance strategic plan

The present research, in conjunction with the previous issue, offers strategies for enhancing integrated quality assurance by addressing the challenges and issues identified in its practices. The quality assurance strategic plan was subsequently addressed.

Ensuring Lecturer Competence: Vice Chancellor 1 underscored the significance of professional development and training for lecturers to guarantee that they possess the necessary competencies to implement the OBE- and MBKM-based curriculum. Performance-based assessments, innovative learning methods, such as the case method and project-based learning, and the use of technology in learning are all included in this training.

Strengthening the Academic Information System: The Head of UPT IT clarified that the UNP portal, the academic information system at UNP, enables students and lecturers to access a variety of academic services online. This system comprises the completion of RPS, the monitoring of lecturer attendance, and the evaluation of learning. Student evaluations of lecturers and IT services are also carried out regularly to ensure the quality of learning.

Synchronization and Coordination: The importance of coordination between the university, faculty, and study program levels in the implementation of the quality assurance system was underscored by the Head of LPMI. The Quality Assurance Group (GPM) at the faculty level is instrumental in the collection of data and its subsequent reporting to LPMI for further evaluation. Regular management review meetings (RTM) are conducted to deliberate on the outcomes of monitoring and evaluations and to establish the necessary follow-up actions.

Persuasive Approach to Internal Audit: The Head of LPMI also discussed how internal audit is frequently perceived as a "police" action by certain academic programs. It is necessary to implement persuasive strategies and outreach initiatives in order to alter this perception. Auditors are anticipated to assist in witnessing the rigorous conditions of study programs and to offer constructive feedback for their enhancement.

Utilization of Technology in Education: The Head of UPT IT stated that UNP has implemented an IT-based monitoring system and e-learning to incorporate technology into

the learning process. Lecturers are bound to upload RPS and learning materials into the system, which are subsequently monitored to guarantee adherence to OBE standards. Evaluation of learning implementation is conducted on an ongoing basis to guarantee its efficiency and effectiveness.

Using these strategies, UNP is dedicated to enhancing the quality of education and adapting to changes in national education policy. It is anticipated that a quality learning environment that is responsive to the needs of students and lecturers will be established through an integrated and collaborative approach among all university units. Harvey and Williams (2015) assert that the primary objective of quality assurance in higher education is to cultivate a quality culture that involves all members of the institution. UNP's inclusive approach to quality assurance emphasizes the significance of a participatory approach that fosters the active participation of faculty, staff, and students. UNP's inclusive and collaborative approach is a reflection of these principles, as it emphasizes the continuous improvement of the quality assurance process and the participation of all stakeholders. Harvey and Williams (2015) assert that the implementation of an effective quality assurance system can enhance stakeholder satisfaction and educational quality in higher education, as per quality assurance theory. Five perspectives on quality in higher education were identified by Harvey and Green (1993): quality for transformation, quality for added value, quality for improvement, and quality for suitable purpose. The significance of ongoing improvement and the participation of all stakeholders in the quality assurance process are emphasized by Deming's (Abdul & Nurhayati, 2010) theory of total quality management. An approach that incorporates constructive feedback and consistent evaluation illustrates the implementation of these principles in the context of higher education.

Additionally, the UNP approach is bolstered by more recent quality assurance theories. Current research on this study contend that quality assurance in higher education must prioritize the enhancement of student learning outcomes and experiences [(Khuram, Rehman, Nasir, & Elahi, 2023); (Rini, Sudadio, & Muhyidin, 2025); (Serrano, González, & Mourato, 2025); (Sakuroh, Marlina, Krismayanti, & Adiningsih, 2026)]. They stress the value of a comprehensive strategy that incorporates curriculum, instruction, and student support, among other facets of the institution. UNP's comprehensive and structured approach is a reflection of these principles, with a focus on continuous improvement and the involvement of all stakeholders in the quality assurance process. UNP is committed to improving the quality of education and adapting to changes in national education policy by employing these strategies. It is anticipated that a quality learning environment that is responsive to the needs of students and lecturers will be established through an integrated and collaborative approach among all university units.

Conclusion

The objective of this research has been to investigate the influence of quality assurance system implementation on the quality of learning in the university environment, encompassing a variety of aspects from planning to operations. The findings of this investigation underscored the necessity of further enhancing the integration of education with the requirements of a dynamic and rapidly evolving labor market, despite the fact that UNP has been awarded the

title of "Excellent Higher Education." The PPEPP model has been demonstrated to be effective; however, advancements in technology and global dynamics necessitate additional innovation and adaptation. The PPEPP model is tailored to meet these requirements by incorporating a competency-based learning approach, advanced technology, and broader stakeholder participation. This conclusion demonstrates that the initiatives implemented to establish an integrated quality assurance system have yielded favorable results; however, universities are also motivated to innovate and adapt in response to emerging challenges and requirements.

From the results obtained, there are several suggestions that can be given. Initially, the objective is to enhance the alignment of education with the demands of the contemporary market. This is associated with the necessity for UNP to persistently enhance curriculum integration in accordance with the rapidly evolving market requirements, including the implementation of a competency-based approach and the integration of advanced technology into the learning process. Additionally, it is imperative to enhance stakeholder engagement, specifically by actively engaging industry, alumni, and students in the curriculum development and quality assurance process. This will guarantee that the education offered by UNP is pertinent to the requirements of the workplace and society as a whole. In addition, the necessity for enhanced evaluation processes and ongoing improvement to proactively identify and address the discrepancies between the relevance of education and accreditation in relation to the success of graduates in the job market. This will guarantee that the education provided is consistently updated to reflect the most recent advancements in technology and pedagogy.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflicts of interest were reported by the authors.

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