



## Internal Quality Assurance System of Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions in Improving the Quality of Lecturers: A Case Study of IAI Nusantara Batang Hari Jambi

Qori Kartika<sup>1</sup>, Adrianus Chatib<sup>2</sup>, Abdul Malik<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Universitas Islam Negeri Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup> Universitas Islam Negeri Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi, Indonesia

<sup>3</sup> Universitas Islam Negeri Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi, Indonesia

**Corresponding Author:** Qori Kartika, E-mail; kartikaqori@gmail.com

### Article Information:

Received August 13, 2024

Revised September 09, 2024

Accepted September 10, 2024

### ABSTRACT

Lecturers are the primary instruments in the implementation of the tri dharma, whose quality can be measured through academic rank attainment, educator certification, and doctoral education. To enhance the quality standards of lecturers, it can be done through the implementation of an internal quality assurance system (SPMI) that must be carried out systematically and continuously. "Data collection was carried out through documentation, interviews, and observation. Data analysis was conducted using the interactive analysis model (Miles and Huberman, 2014), and data validity was tested through triangulation to verify the accuracy of the data. The conclusion of this research is (1) the quality of lecturers at IAI Nusantara Batang Hari Jambi in the implementation of tri dharma in the fields of teaching, research, and community service has been running well according to the established regulations, (2) the implementation of SPMI at IAI Nusantara Batang Hari Jambi in the form of planning, execution, evaluation, control, and improvement is still carried out in a simple manner. In this case, only the planning and execution cycles have been implemented, while the evaluation cycle in the form of internal quality audits, the control cycle through management review meetings, and improvement efforts have not yet been conducted, (3) the choice of SPMI model implemented by IAI Nusantara Batang Hari Jambi is not very appropriate for small management and limited resources, as well as minimal financial support. Ideally, the selected SPMI model should integrate SPMI management with university management.

**Keywords:** *Internal Quality Assurance System, Lecturer Quality, Tri Dharma*

Journal Homepage <https://journal.ypidathu.or.id/index.php/lingeduca>

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How to cite:

Kartika, Q., Chatib, A., & Malik, A. (2024). Internal Quality Assurance System of Private Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions in Improving the Quality of Lecturers: A Case Study of IAI Nusantara Batang Hari Jambi. *Lingeduca: Journal of Language and Education Studies*, 3(2). 144-153

<https://doi.org/10.70177/lingeduca.v3i3.1242>

Published by:

Yayasan Pendidikan Islam Daarut Thufulah

## INTRODUCTION

Quality has now become an important issue and a major challenge for universities to develop. To continue surviving in global competition, universities must be able to make fundamental quality changes through continuous improvement efforts. This includes improving the quality of lecturer resources, academic processes, and university management (SPMI Document, 2019).

Quality assurance in higher education is essential as "quality assurance is about designing quality into the process to attempt to ensure that the product is produced to a predetermined specification. Put simply, quality assurance is a means of producing defect- and fault-free products. Quality assurance is about consistently meeting product specification or getting things right the first time, every time" (Edward Sallies, 2002).

The duties related to the *tri dharma* of lecturers in Indonesia are regulated by the Minister of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform Regulation No. 17 of 2013, and subsequently in the Ministry of Religious Affairs through a decree by the Director of Islamic Higher Education. The *dharma* of education/teaching consists of 14 components, the *dharma* of research includes 9 components, and the *dharma* of community service comprises 7 components. Beyond these three areas, there are supporting elements that include 10 components (Permenpanrb 17/2013, Article 7).

Specifically, in the implementation of the Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI) at IAI Nusantara Batang Hari Jambi, various obstacles were found, including: First, the lack of human resources for SPMI-related work. Second, the leadership still holds control over SPMI management, resulting in P2MA (the quality assurance agency) being highly dependent on top management policies. Third, the scarcity of training to enhance knowledge, understanding, and skills for SPMI-related work. Fourth, limited funds to support activities related to quality. Fifth, the lack of quality commitment from the academic community. Nevertheless, there have been efforts by the university leadership to implement SPMI. This is evident with the establishment of an autonomous and independent quality assurance agency accompanied by SPMI implementation documents.

Previous research, including dissertations and international journals, has extensively examined higher education quality assurance systems, such as studies by Arinda Firdianti (Dissertation, 2021), Rismahara Lubis et al. (Journal, 2020), Raphael M. Jingura and Reckson Kamusoko (Journal, 2019), Opan Arifuddin (Journal, 2019), Wiwik Suryandartiwi Anggarawati (Dissertation, 2017), Maria J. et al. (Journal, 2017), Gunawan (Dissertation, 2017), Ahmad Sulaiman and Udik Budi Wibowo (Journal, 2016), P.S. Aithal (Journal, 2015), and Azainil (Dissertation, 2012).

These studies focus on the management and development of higher education quality assurance systems but do not specifically address the enhancement of faculty quality standards. Similarly, the choice of research locus in private Islamic higher education institutions, which have specific regulatory or policy differences under the mandate of the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, adds a unique dimension. Although there are some legal similarities, such as with the Teacher and Lecturer Law,

National Education System Law, SPM-Dikti, PANRB Ministerial Regulations, Ministry of Education and Culture Regulations, and so on, this research is novel in its focus on examining SPMI and faculty quality at IAI Nusantara Batang Hari Jambi.

The discussion in this study focuses on: First, the quality of lecturers at the Institut Agama Islam Nusantara Batang Hari Jambi. Second, the implementation of the internal quality assurance system in improving the quality of lecturers at the Institut Agama Islam Nusantara Batang Hari Jambi. Third, the model of the internal quality assurance system at the Institut Agama Islam Nusantara Batang Hari Jambi.

This research is crucial due to the complexity of the issues faced. It not only concerns SPMI or lecturer quality but also involves regulations, university management, and the policies for the development of private universities implemented by the Directorate General of Islamic Education, which are then passed down to Kopertais, as well as the quality commitment of the university, which needs to be thoroughly examined.

## **RESEARCH METODOLOGY**

The type of data collected in this research is qualitative, using a case study approach and a post-positivism paradigm, which offers a more flexible and reflective approach to research, making it more suitable for understanding the complexity of social and natural phenomena (Creswell, 2019). The social situation of this research includes three elements: actors, place, and activities (Yusuf Muri, 2019). The subjects of this research are the rector, dean, head of P2MA, head of the study program, permanent lecturers of IAI Nusantara Batang Hari Jambi and Regional Coordination Agency for Private Islamic Higher Education XIII Jambi. Data collection was conducted through observation, interviews, and documentation. To test the validity of the data, the researcher employed methods such as extending participation, persistence in observation, and data triangulation. This ensures that the obtained data is valid and can be analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which includes data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusion (Mathew B. Miles et al., 2014).

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

As previously described, there has been extensive research on the topic of SPMI (Internal Quality Assurance Systems) that addresses various aspects of higher education quality. However, no research has specifically focused on strengthening human resources, particularly educators or lecturers. Additionally, no research has been conducted on private Islamic higher education institutions, making this study a significant contribution to this area.

Future research could include examining the management of accreditation processes by higher education institutions to strengthen external quality assurance systems. Furthermore, investigating the motivation of lecturers in implementing the tri

dharma (three obligations) amidst budgetary and human resource constraints in private higher education institutions would also be worthwhile.

### Quality of Lecturers at IAI Nusantara Batang Hari Jambi

Lecturers are the most important human resources in the implementation of *tri dharma*. According to Schermerhorn, as cited by Zahera, human resources are individuals and groups that help organizations produce goods or services (Zahera Mega Utama, 2020).

In this study, the quality of lecturers at IAI Nusantara Batang Hari Jambi can be measured through the following three achievement aspects: doctoral education attainment, academic rank, and educator certification with the following details: First, 15 lecturers have obtained doctoral degrees. Second, in terms of academic rank, 31 lecturers hold the rank of lecturer, 23 are assistant experts, and 10 are instructors. Third, 25 lecturers have obtained educator certificates out of the total number of permanent lecturers (documents, 2022).

From this data, it is evident that the academic ranks are dominated by lecturers, assistant experts, and instructors, with none having reached the ranks of senior lecturer or professor. This presents its own challenges in achieving superior accreditation results at the study program level (APS) or university level (APT), similar to the limited number of educator certificates and doctoral degrees, which are still far below the needed levels.

However, when looking at the quality of lecturers in the implementation of *tri dharma*, particularly in the field of research through four publication activities in non-accredited scientific journals, accredited national scientific journals, reputable international journals, and ISBN-registered book publications (documents, 2022), the quality of lecturers at this university is very productive in producing scientific works as illustrated in the table below:

**Table 1: Number of Scientific Publication Works by Lecturers of IAI Nusantara Batang Hari.**

| No | Type of Publication                    | Amount |
|----|--|--------|
| 1. | Unaccredited Scientific Journal        | 176    |
| 2. | Accredited National Scientific Journal | 51     |
| 3. | Reputable International Journal        | 18     |
| 4. | Books have ISBN/ Book Chapters         | 90     |
|    | Total Number                           | 335    |

The data above was collected over the years 2020, 2021, and 2022 from a total of 64 permanent lecturers who published journal articles and books. It can thus be concluded that the lecturers of IAI Nusantara Batang Hari Jambi are productive in producing scientific works, whether individually or through internal and external collaborations.

To support publications, 28 lecturers of IAI Nusantara Batang Hari Jambi have registered with Sinta Kemdikbud. From this data, it is evident that 20 journal articles have been published in Scopus-indexed journals with 71 citations from 9 articles. Meanwhile, on Google Scholar, there are 227 published articles with a total of 640 citations from 64 articles. However, on the Web of Science and Garuda platforms, their index scores remain empty (Sinta Kemdikbud, 2022).

### **Management of SPMI IAI Nusantara Batang Hari Jambi**

The implementation of the Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI) at IAI Nusantara Batang Hari Jambi can at least be observed through two cycles: the planning and execution of lecturer quality standards (Documents, 2020), as shown in the following table.

**Table 2: Indicators, Targets, and Achievements of Lecturer Quality at IAI Nusantara Batang Hari Jambi.**

| No | Indicator   | 2020             |             | 2021             |             | 2022             |             |
|----|---|------------------|-------------|------------------|-------------|------------------|-------------|
|    |   | Target           | Achievement | Target           | Achievement | Target           | Achievement |
| 1. | Number of study program lecturers with associate professor qualifications                       | 0                | 0           | 0                | 0           | 0                | 0           |
| 2. | Number of lecturers who have the academic position of lecturer                                  | 0                | 10          | 0                | 12          | 2                | 0           |
| 3. | Number of lecturers who have the academic position of expert assistant                          | 2                | 1           | 2                | 8           | 2                | 3           |
| 4. | The number of study program lecturers with doctoral qualifications according to their expertise | 0                | 4           | 0                | 3           | 0                | 1           |
| 5. | Percentage of lecturers who have teaching and/or professional certificates                      | 10% (4 lecturer) | 0           | 10% (4 lecturer) | 3           | 15% (6 lecturer) | 3           |

From the table above, it is evident that the university has set targets and achieved quality standards for lecturers in terms of academic rank and educator certification.

However, the number for senior lecturer positions and doctoral education has not yet been determined. This is referred to as the simple implementation of the Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI).

Due to this simplicity, a SWOT analysis concerning strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats was not conducted in the planning and implementation of lecturer quality standards. For instance, there was no target for the senior lecturer academic rank, yet in 2020 and 2021, 22 lecturers successfully achieved academic rank promotion. Similarly, in doctoral education, which was not targeted, 8 lecturers managed to complete their doctoral studies over the last three years.

Regarding educator certification, although the set target was not fully met, a significant number was achieved, especially when considering the national quota for educator certification and comparing it to other private universities. On average, a university can only obtain a maximum of two quotas, whereas lecturers at IAI Nusantara Batang Hari Jambi were able to secure six quotas over the last two years.

From data exploration, it is known that all lecturers who have obtained educator certification are very consistent in implementing *tri dharma*. Conversely, some lecturers who have not yet been certified still fully implement *tri dharma*, while only a small number have not fully implemented *tri dharma* for various reasons (Interview, 2022).

Conversely, as previously described, the evaluation cycle in the form of internal quality audits has not been implemented. However, the university has normatively conducted evaluations in other forms, such as diagnostic evaluations during improvement activities, focusing on identifying unresolved root problems. Then, formative evaluations in the form of monitoring aim to ensure that no deviations or inconsistencies occur between implementation and planning.

Finally, summative evaluations are conducted at the end of the program or after the completion of the implementation phase, with the goal of assessing the success level of the designed plan. Specifically, summative evaluations are central to the implementation of internal quality audits (by auditors) and accreditation (by assessors) according to higher education standards regulations (Permenristekdikti No. 62/2016, Article 5, Paragraph 2). In this context, SPMI has only been implemented in the form of "external summative" evaluations such as BAN-PT accreditation or independent accreditation agencies (LAM).

The control cycle has not been carried out through management review meetings (RTM) because the understanding and commitment of the leadership have not yet reached the implementation stage. Meetings involving the entire management have been held on several occasions. Although this stage does not involve RTM activities that have not been implemented, the leadership has reviewed records from the findings of monitoring and evaluation discussed before the annual work meeting (Interview, 2022).

Finally, the improvement cycle has not been implemented because the management's main focus has been on maintaining quality achievements and making improvements to other quality standards, such as journal publication. Similarly, while doctoral education standards, academic ranks, and educator certifications have been



achieved, there has been no effort to analyze for improvement in the following year (Interview, 2022).

### **SPMI Model Implemented at IAI Nusantara Batang Hari Jambi**

To establish an Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI), there are at least three model types that universities can implement: First, establish a separate institution. Second, integrate with university management. Third, combine both approaches (SPMI Documents, 2018). In simple terms, IAI Nusantara Batang Hari has adopted the first model by creating a separate institution apart from university management, named the Academic Quality Assurance Center (P2MA).

In broad terms, if we look at the steps taken for developing SPMI, IAI Nusantara has chosen the first model, although its implementation remains simple. This is due to two major issues: a lack of human resources and limited budget and supporting infrastructure for SPMI work.

The shortage of human resources and additional units under the coordination of P2MA is evident from the fact that only the head of P2MA is responsible for a significant amount of quality assurance work. Ideally, a central secretariat structure, and heads/coordinators of SPMI at the institute, faculty, and study program levels should be established. More importantly, the university does not yet have trained quality auditors prepared to support the implementation of the evaluation cycle or internal quality audits (AMI).

Another obstacle is the inadequate workspace for P2MA to support quality assurance activities. The space is still shared with the library, with no clear separation from the library head or the reading area. Although the facilities inside are quite complete for administrative work (Observation, 2022).

However, the existing issues, including the lack of commitment and understanding from the leadership regarding SPMI technicalities, have resulted in suboptimal implementation of SPMI in terms of policies, standards, technical aspects, and a quality culture that has not been comprehensively understood.

The implementation of SPMI at each university is fundamentally the same, even though the form of the institution or organization overseeing it may differ, such as universities, institutes, or higher education schools. Similarly, at IAI Nusantara, since SPMI has become a separate unit, adequate budget and human resources are required. Weaknesses in these two aspects have led to less-than-optimal implementation of SPMI within the complete PPEPP cycle (Interview, 2022).

The absence of supporting units for SPMI at the institute and study program levels has hindered overall quality assurance work. Each unit, such as the study programs, already has clear duties and responsibilities for implementing academic work programs. In this context, the leaders of each unit are quite overwhelmed with overseeing academic quality implementation (Interview, 2022).

According to regulations, ideally, a special unit should be formed under P2MA with an appropriate structure. This unit should be headed by a central coordinator.

Through this center, internal auditors can be formed and regular internal quality audits (AMI) can be conducted. Before conducting audits, prospective auditors should receive training from accredited institutions, such as ISO auditors or similar entities.

Given these issues, a dedicated unit to oversee the implementation of the PPEPP cycle must be established at the institute, faculty, and study program levels. This is to ensure that the circulation of quality assurance work can be more optimal, and the structural officials responsible for quality implementation can be more easily controlled, monitored, and ensured to meet quality standards.

The absence of additional units under the coordination of P2MA presents a specific challenge for implementing SPMI at IAI Nusantara Batang Hari. Relying solely on P2MA, which only has a chairman, makes it impossible for the PPEPP tasks to be carried out effectively and efficiently. Additional human resources under the P2MA structure, focused on developing SPMI and conducting internal quality audits, are needed.

From the data findings, it can be concluded that the SPMI model built by IAI Nusantara is not yet adaptive to support quality assurance activities. The "independence" of the established SPMI still heavily depends on top management policies. Additionally, funding support remains a barrier to implementing SPMI, as the implementation of SPMI work is still hindered by minimal funding and lack of periodic allocation for PPEPP activities.

As a private university, funding management is still highly dependent on foundation policies. So far, the foundation has given freedom to manage SPMI, but the freedom regarding funding has not been optimally provided. Although most of the funding proposals submitted for accreditation efforts are supported by the foundation through a proposal system (Interview, 2022).

In conclusion, the SPMI model established by IAI Nusantara Batang Hari, which involves creating a special unit named the Academic Quality Assurance Center (P2MA), is not the most suitable choice for policy and standard implementation. In practice, it does not yet meet the standards as it is centralized at the institute level, and no additional units specifically implementing SPMI have been established.

The lack of quality assurance units at the faculty and study program levels introduces further issues, as the existing units cannot control the implementation of SPMI due to their distinct duties and functions. Therefore, it is crucial to integrate SPMI with university management. This strategic step is necessary to ensure effective and efficient quality management in higher education.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the research results, the quality of lecturers at IAI Nusantara Batang Hari is considered good, although the implementation of the SPMI (Internal Quality Assurance System) in the form of the PPEPP (Planning, Implementation, Evaluation, Control, and Improvement) cycle is still conducted in a simple manner, focusing only on the planning and implementation stages. This simplicity is further evident in the



evaluation cycle, which lacks internal quality audit activities (AMI), control processes are not conducted through management review meetings (RTM), and the improvement cycle does not consider the achievements or shortcomings of quality targets. The SPMI model at IAI Nusantara Batang Hari is not being implemented effectively due to several weaknesses, including the lack of human resources such as a P2MA (Quality Assurance Unit) secretary, a center coordinator, quality control personnel at the faculty and program study levels, internal auditors, and staff to support overall SPMI administration.

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