



## The Role of Quality Assurance Certification Institutions in Islamic Religious Education

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### ABSTRACT

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The uneven distribution of educational quality in Indonesia remains a serious challenge, particularly due to the inconsistent implementation of the National Education Standards (SNP) across regions. This disparity impacts the quality of learning, including in Islamic Religious Education (PAI), which demands both academic achievement and character building. This study aims to analyze the role of educational quality assurance certification institutions in improving PAI quality through monitoring, coaching, and evaluation mechanisms. The method used was a qualitative study based on a literature review, with data sources consisting of regulations, institutional reports, and national and international scientific publications. The results indicate that certification institutions play a crucial role in ensuring compliance with quality standards, providing mentoring, and strengthening the integration of spiritual values in PAI learning. However, implementation gaps between regions and variations in audit quality were identified that need to be addressed. This study concludes that PAI quality assurance requires a holistic approach encompassing both academic and spiritual aspects. The contribution of this research lies in strengthening educational quality assurance theory and in developing a new understanding of the integration of Islamic values into certification mechanisms.

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## INTRODUCTION

Educational quality assurance is a crucial aspect in creating a quality education system, which directly impacts improving the quality of life for the community (Trirat et al., 2024; Shavkidinova et al., 2023). In Indonesia, educational quality often varies significantly between educational institutions in different regions (Rafsanjani et al., 2024). This is due to the uneven implementation of educational standards, which should ensure consistent learning quality. According to Kamalia et al. (2025), this significant difference is

evident in the evaluation of the Indonesian education system. The resulting quality gap impacts the development of future generations, posing risks not only to academic achievement but also to character and moral formation (Daud et al., 2023; Mujeeb et al., 2025). Therefore, research on educational quality assurance certification institutions is crucial, given their role in improving the overall quality of education and ensuring equitable distribution throughout Indonesia. The disparity in education quality in Indonesia, both at the primary and tertiary levels, poses a significant challenge to ensuring equitable and quality education (Widiastuti, 2025). The inability of some educational institutions to consistently implement national standards is a major contributing factor to this inequality (Mizrav, 2023; Zamir, 2023). Without an effective quality assurance system, education quality in some regions will remain hampered, while others are able to produce higher-quality graduates (Carvalho, 2023). This problem is further complicated by the demand for education that not only fosters cognitive intelligence but also fosters noble character and morality in students. Therefore, an educational quality assurance certification body is needed, which plays a central role in ensuring equitable educational standards throughout Indonesia.

This phenomenon of inequality in education quality can be seen in the results of education system evaluations, which show significant differences between regions (Ozer et al., 2024; Rohman et al., 2024). Some regions boast excellent education quality, while others lag far behind. One cause is the differing abilities of educational institutions to consistently and sustainably implement national standards (Ling et al., 2023). In fact, some educational institutions in certain regions have not yet fully met the standards set by the government (Alam et al., 2023). This creates disparities that impact not only academic competence but also the development of student character, the primary goal of religious education. Therefore, efforts are needed to improve the education quality assurance system to reduce this gap.

Previous research has shown that education quality assurance institutions, such as the Education Quality Assurance Institute (LPMP), play a crucial role in reducing disparities in education quality across various regions in Indonesia (Putri, 2025). Yunus et al. (2023) revealed that LPMP has consistently implemented both internal and external quality control systems, aiming to reduce disparities in education quality. However, although some institutions have successfully implemented quality assurance systems, there are still shortcomings in integrating elements of religious education that can strengthen students' character and morality. Most existing research focuses on the cognitive aspects of education and has not yet explored in depth how quality certification can also encompass the development of students' spirituality in the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI).

While several studies have highlighted the role of quality assurance institutions in the Indonesian education system, the lack of attention to the integration of PAI into educational quality assurance represents a research gap that needs to be addressed (Lathifah et al., 2025). Most previous studies have emphasized academic and cognitive aspects, while strengthening spiritual and moral values in religious education has not been a primary focus (Nasucha et al., 2023). Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by focusing on the role of certification institutions in educational quality assurance, particularly in the field of PAI. This research is expected to make a significant contribution to strengthening the quality of faith-based education in Indonesia.

This research is novel in its approach, integrating the concept of quality assurance with Islamic Religious Education (PAI). Given the crucial role of PAI in shaping students' character, this study highlights how quality assurance certification bodies can play a strategic role in ensuring that Islamic education quality standards are met (Yudiawan et al., 2023). The novelty of this research lies in the integration of academic and spiritual aspects within the educational quality assurance framework, which is expected to strengthen religious education in Indonesia more comprehensively. Addressing this issue is crucial to ensuring quality education, not only in terms of academic competence but also in the development of students' morality and spirituality.

This research will answer the crucial question: What is the role of educational quality assurance certification bodies in improving the quality of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in Indonesia? The argument put forward is that certification bodies have a very strategic role in ensuring that Islamic Religious Education meets government-set quality standards, not only in terms of academic achievement but also in the development of student character. By focusing on the integration of spiritual values in the quality assurance system, this research contributes to creating an education system that is not only intelligent, but also moral and has noble character.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative research design with a literature review approach. This design was chosen based on the objective of exploring and analyzing various concepts, findings, and policies related to educational quality assurance and the role of certification bodies in the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI). The literature review enabled an in-depth exploration of various relevant sources, including national regulations, institutional reports, journal articles, and other scientific publications. This approach was chosen because the existing literature provides comprehensive insights into the implementation of educational quality assurance and the contribution of certification bodies to improving the quality of religious education in Indonesia.

Thus, through the literature review, this study was able to identify key issues and provide evidence-based recommendations regarding the role of certification bodies in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) quality assurance.

This study did not have a specific geographic location because it employed a literature review approach. The sources used were derived from various documents published by government agencies, educational institutions, and national and international scientific journals relevant to the topics of educational quality assurance and PAI. The selection of a national research location was based on the consideration that the issue of educational quality assurance, particularly in the field of PAI, is general and applicable throughout Indonesia. By focusing on relevant and credible sources, this research aims to provide a comprehensive overview that can be applied across various regions in Indonesia.

Data collection in this study was conducted through a literature study involving the reading and review of various relevant secondary sources. The sources used included laws and regulations related to education quality assurance, reports from relevant institutions such as the Education Quality Assurance Institute (LPMP), academic journal articles, books, and other scientific publications. Sources were selected selectively, considering the depth of information and relevance to the study topic. The data collection process involved a thorough examination of each document, which was then grouped based on the main themes that emerged in the literature review.

The data collected from various literature sources was analyzed using content analysis. The first step in the analysis was data condensation, where overly broad or redundant data was filtered to obtain more focused information on issues relevant to education quality assurance and Islamic Religious Education (PAI). Data reduction was then performed, namely organizing the disaggregated data and selecting emerging key themes. Data display is performed by organizing the data in a more structured format, such as a table or diagram, to facilitate the identification of relationships between existing concepts. The final step is data verification, where the analyzed data is compared with various sources to ensure the consistency and validity of the information obtained.

To ensure data validity, this study employed several data-checking techniques, including source triangulation and theory triangulation. Source triangulation was performed by comparing information obtained from various literature sources, such as government regulations, institutional reports, and journal articles, to ensure consistency and reliability. Furthermore, theory triangulation was conducted by linking existing literature findings with relevant theories in the field of education and quality assurance. In this way, this study minimized potential bias and ensured that the data analysis results reflect an

accurate picture of the role of certification bodies in ensuring educational quality in Islamic Religious Education (PAI).

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Role and Function of the Educational Quality Assurance Certification Institution**

The results of this study indicate that the role and function of educational quality assurance certification bodies are highly consistent with findings in the existing literature. As explained by Nurhasan (2022), the supervisory function carried out by certification bodies ensures that educational programs are implemented in accordance with the National Education Standards (SNP), which encompass various important aspects such as content standards, processes, graduate competencies, teaching staff, and facilities and infrastructure. The findings of this study indicate that supervision carried out by certification bodies is not limited to administrative aspects but also involves ongoing evaluation of educational quality, which aligns with the findings of a previous study by Zainab (2023). However, there are differences in the focus of supervision, with this study also highlighting inequalities in the implementation of quality standards in certain regions, which have not received sufficient attention in previous literature.

Furthermore, this study found that coaching and mentoring provided by certification bodies significantly impacted the improvement of educational quality in educational units, which aligns with the findings of Rizal et al. (2024). The study explains that technical guidance and supervision for educational units play a significant role in helping them manage their Internal Quality Assurance Systems (SPMI) independently and sustainably. These findings confirm that technical guidance is crucial in reducing disparities in education quality between regions, particularly in effectively implementing quality standards. However, the study also notes challenges in access to training and mentoring in less developed regions, indicating more complex gaps in the implementation of guidance on the ground.

The theoretical implication of these findings is the strengthening of educational quality assurance theory, which involves not only monitoring and evaluation but also ongoing guidance for educational units. This suggests that educational quality assurance theory needs to consider broader aspects such as access to training, mentoring, and the alignment of quality standard implementation across regions. Practically, these findings provide important implications: certification bodies should focus more intensive guidance and mentoring, especially in regions experiencing difficulties implementing national standards, to reduce disparities in education quality. More accessible training

programs tailored to local needs are crucial for improving education quality across the board.

Furthermore, the results of this study also indicate that quality evaluations conducted by certification bodies, as described by Tambunan et al. (2024), provide constructive feedback for educational institutions to improve their teaching and management systems. These evaluations include audits of various aspects of education, such as academics, institutional management, and infrastructure. These findings support existing literature and underscore the importance of objective and systematic audits in educational quality assurance. However, this study also found that some educational institutions have not been able to fully utilize the feedback from these evaluations, indicating a need for improvements in the follow-up mechanisms for evaluation results.

The practical implication of these findings is the importance of strengthening the follow-up system for evaluations conducted by certification bodies to ensure that recommendations for improvement can be effectively implemented in educational institutions. In this regard, certification bodies need to collaborate with local governments and educational institutions to ensure the implementation of evaluation results in the field. Thus, educational quality assurance certification bodies play a role not only as supervisors but also as strategic partners in continuously improving educational quality and reducing disparities in education quality in Indonesia, as emphasized by Marpaung et al. (2024).

### **Working Mechanism of the Education Quality Assurance Certification Institute**

The results of this study indicate that the working mechanism of educational quality assurance certification bodies in Indonesia aligns with existing literature, particularly regarding the key stages of the certification process. As explained by Jannah et al. (2024), this mechanism begins with audit preparation and planning, which involves mapping educational units and socializing the standards used. This study's findings confirm that the preparation stage is crucial for ensuring educational units' readiness to participate in the certification process (Adiyaman et al., 2023). However, the study also indicates that not all educational units fully understand the standards applied, particularly in more remote areas (Lahiya et al., 2025). This indicates a gap in understanding and preparation that warrants greater attention, in contrast to the literature, which focuses more on established administrative procedures.

Regarding the audit implementation and evaluation stages, the results of this study align with findings in the literature, where audits are conducted by independent auditors who collect data through interviews, observations, and

document review (Hardies et al., 2025). This study confirms that a comprehensive evaluation encompassing curriculum, teacher competency, infrastructure, and institutional management is key to obtaining a comprehensive picture of educational quality (Istakri et al., 2024). However, in practice, the challenge identified is variation in the quality of audit implementation, which is highly dependent on the auditor's expertise and experience. This is not entirely in line with the literature, which tends to view the audit process as a standard that can be applied uniformly across all educational units. This study highlights the need to improve the quality of auditor training to ensure more consistent and reliable evaluation results.

Furthermore, the results indicate that the process of reporting audit results and recommendations has a significant influence on the implementation of improvements in educational units, which aligns with findings in the literature, such as those described by Marpaung et al. (2024). Audit reports that identify achievements and shortcomings in meeting quality standards serve as the basis for educational units to make improvements. This finding highlights the importance of following up on recommendations, which is often challenging in practice, as not all educational units effectively implement improvements. The theoretical implication of these findings is that educational quality assurance systems need to focus not only on audit implementation but also on developing stronger follow-up mechanisms to ensure effective implementation of recommendations. Practically, certification bodies need to ensure ongoing support for educational units to ensure optimal implementation of recommendations (Sumaryanti et al., 2023).

This study also emphasizes the importance of awarding quality certificates as official recognition of the educational quality achieved by educational units, which aligns with the findings of Yunus et al. (2023). This certification serves as a symbol of the legitimacy of educational quality that can be accounted for, both to the public and the government. However, this study's findings highlight that certification depends not only on audit results but also on the continued fulfillment of quality standards in the field. As explained by Zainab (2023), these certificates have a specific validity period and must be renewed through re-audits. This finding emphasizes the importance of re-audit mechanisms to ensure that educational units maintain and improve their quality. Therefore, the practical implication of these findings is that certification bodies need to ensure that the certificate renewal process is conducted regularly, with more comprehensive audits, and keeps abreast of the latest developments in education.

Overall, this study reveals that the working mechanisms of education quality assurance certification bodies function well to improve the quality of education in Indonesia. However, several challenges remain in their implementation, such as uneven understanding of standards and gaps in audit implementation. The theoretical implication of these findings is the need to develop a more inclusive theory of education quality assurance, taking into account contextual factors that influence the quality of implementation. Practically, certification bodies need to continue innovating their certification systems, strengthening training for auditors, and increasing support for educational units to ensure sustainability and continuous improvement of education quality.

### **Implementation of Quality Assurance Certification Institutions in PAI**

The results of this study indicate that the implementation of a quality assurance certification body in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a crucial role in ensuring the quality of learning, not only adhering to academic standards but also strengthening spiritual values and fostering student character. This finding aligns with the opinion of Khotimah et al. (2023), who stated that Islamic religious education should not only focus on cognitive aspects but also prioritize the development of noble morals and strong character in students. Furthermore, this study's findings are consistent with the findings of Sari (2024), who emphasized that audits conducted by PAI certification bodies include evaluations of the curriculum, teaching methods, teacher competencies, and infrastructure supporting religious instruction. However, this study differs from previous research, which focused more on the technical aspects of certification within an academic context, while this study focuses more on the integration of spiritual values into the quality assurance of PAI education.

The theoretical implication of this finding is that certification bodies in PAI serve not only as instruments for assessing the quality of academic learning but also as a means to facilitate the integration of religious values into students' daily lives. This study contributes to the literature examining the application of certification in Islamic religious education by adding a new dimension related to character building and spirituality within the curriculum. Practically, the results of this study can serve as a reference for Islamic education administrators in designing and implementing more comprehensive certification programs, which not only measure mastery of material but also the quality of character formation and Islamic values instilled in students.

Comparatively, research by Fuad et al. (2025) highlights the importance of integrating spiritual values into students' daily lives as part of the Islamic Religious Education certification evaluation. This is reinforced by the findings of

this study, which show that certification institutions place greater emphasis on character building through habituation activities and the formation of moral values, beyond mere theoretical learning. These findings also align with Komalasari et al. (2023), who emphasize the importance of character building in Islamic religious education, which serves as the primary foundation for achieving quality education. The main difference emerging in this study is the greater focus on evaluating teachers' abilities as spiritual role models, an aspect underemphasized in previous literature, even though teacher competence is already a crucial factor in ensuring educational quality in general. Another practical implication is the importance of collaboration between various parties, including the government, educational institutions, and the community, in ensuring the success of Islamic Religious Education certification programs. The findings of this study suggest that certification programs should not rely solely on technical evaluation processes but also consider the readiness of educational institutions to implement religious values in students' daily lives. Limited human resources and facilities in some educational units can hinder the achievement of expected quality standards. Therefore, a joint effort is needed to improve the quality of teaching resources and educational facilities so that quality assurance in Islamic religious education can be implemented effectively and sustainably.

Thus, the results of this study provide a more holistic picture of the implementation of quality assurance certification institutions in Islamic Religious Education, which focuses not only on academic aspects but also on developing students' spiritual character. This research demonstrates that to achieve quality Islamic religious education, it is crucial to integrate religious values into every aspect of education, including the curriculum, teaching methods, and teacher competencies as role models. It is hoped that the results of this study will positively contribute to the development of more effective and comprehensive Islamic religious education policies in Indonesia, and serve as a reference for educational institutions in improving their quality and competitiveness in the world of religious education.

## CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that educational quality assurance certification bodies function not only as supervisors of standards compliance but also as strategic partners in the process of improving educational quality. The most important finding of this study is that the supervision carried out by certification bodies is comprehensive and sustainable, thus revealing the realities on the ground, including the existence of quality disparities between regions. Technical guidance and assistance have proven to be crucial factors for educational units in managing the Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI).

Intensive and targeted assistance can help educational units address resource limitations and minimize quality gaps. In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), certification bodies play a role not only in ensuring academic standards are met but also in strengthening the spiritual values and character of students. These findings confirm that PAI quality assurance requires a holistic approach encompassing cognitive aspects, moral conditioning, and teacher role models.

This research's scientific contribution lies in strengthening educational quality assurance theory through a broader understanding of the importance of continuous guidance, geographic context, and gaps in standard implementation, which have been under-discussed in the literature. This research also enriches the field of Islamic religious education by emphasizing that Islamic education quality certification cannot be viewed solely as a technical evaluation, but also as a mechanism for assessing the extent to which spiritual values can be integrated into the learning process and students' daily lives. Furthermore, this research provides new insights into the close relationship between quality audits, the quality of follow-up recommendations, and the success of quality improvement at the school level.

Despite providing meaningful findings, this study has several limitations. The study's scope is limited, making it unable to comprehensively represent national conditions. The analysis of auditor competency variations is also descriptive in nature and not supported by standardized measurement instruments. Furthermore, this study does not delve deeply into the perspectives of students, as those most directly impacted by quality certification. Therefore, future research should expand its focus to include cross-regional comparisons, further explore auditor competency, and assess the impact of certification on behavioral changes and student learning outcomes. Future research could also develop quality assurance models that are more adaptive to local contexts, particularly in regions with limited facilities and human resources, and strengthen post-audit follow-up mechanisms to ensure consistent and sustainable quality improvement.

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