



## Accreditation Preparation and Implementation: A Study on Quality Assurance in Secondary Education

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### ABSTRACT

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Education quality has become a critical priority in many countries as schools are increasingly required to demonstrate accountability and provide learning experiences that prepare students for future challenges. Accreditation serves as a key quality assurance mechanism to evaluate institutional performance comprehensively and transparently. This study aims to analyze the preparation and implementation processes of accreditation in secondary education institutions as an effort to improve educational quality. Using a descriptive qualitative design and a library research method, data were collected from scientific literature, government policies, and official BAN-S/M accreditation documents. The findings reveal that systematic preparation through team establishment, document management, training, and structured self-evaluation plays a decisive role in accreditation success. The study also identifies supporting factors such as leadership, teamwork, infrastructure, and community involvement, along with barriers including administrative overload, limited resources, and weak documentation systems. Theoretically, the research strengthens the framework of quality assurance by emphasizing readiness and collaboration, while practically providing guidance for policy and school improvement planning. It concludes that accreditation should function not merely as compliance but as a continuous quality development process.

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## INTRODUCTION

Education quality has become a central concern in many countries as societies demand stronger accountability from educational institutions to ensure that students receive meaningful learning experiences and develop competencies relevant to future challenges (Saad, 2020; Iskanto et al., 2022). High-quality education is increasingly recognized as a determinant of economic competitiveness, national development, and social well-being (Hardianti, 2025). To maintain and enhance educational standards, objective evaluation

mechanisms are essential to measure school performance in a transparent and systematic manner (Saputri et al., 2024). Evidence from international frameworks such as quality assurance systems implemented in OECD countries demonstrates that external accreditation serves as an important instrument to assess institutional effectiveness, improve school management, and enhance student learning outcomes through continuous improvement practices (Asy'ari et al., 2021; Hardianti, 2025). In this regard, accreditation is not merely a procedural requirement, but a strategic approach to strengthening educational governance and public accountability. Therefore, exploring how secondary education institutions prepare and implement accreditation processes is critically important for ensuring that schools meet expected standards and fulfil their responsibilities to students, parents, policy makers, and society at large.

Despite its strategic urgency, many secondary education institutions still struggle to meet accreditation requirements effectively (Kelly, 2023; Prastiwi et al., 2025). The persistent gap between expected standards and actual school readiness has become a major challenge within the education sector (Ricciardi et al., 2021; Rouse et al., 2023). Schools are required to comply with comprehensive national standards covering management, facilities, curriculum implementation, teacher competence, student development, and learning outcomes (Phumphongkhochasorn et al., 2022; Helda, 2022). However, numerous institutions face obstacles related to administrative capacity, human resource limitations, and inadequate understanding of accreditation instruments (Gul et al., 2022). These problems result in schools preparing accreditation documents in a rushed and superficial manner, which weakens genuine quality assurance (Hoare, & Goad, 2022; Sywelem, & Makhlof, 2023). As a consequence, many institutions do not utilize accreditation as a continuous improvement tool but tend to view it merely as an obligation to obtain formal recognition. This situation indicates the need for a deeper analysis of how schools should systematically prepare and implement accreditation to achieve meaningful quality improvement. Without addressing these issues, the accreditation system risks becoming symbolic rather than transformative in enhancing educational excellence.

Field observations reveal recurring problems that indicate weak readiness among many secondary education institutions in facing accreditation processes. Several schools still struggle to compile complete documentation, conduct structured internal evaluations, and build effective teamwork required for accreditation implementation. In many cases, preparation only begins shortly before the visitation period, leading to inaccurate reporting, disorganized data presentation, and in some situations, manipulation of documents due to the pressure to obtain high accreditation grades. Limited

coordination between school managers and accreditation teams often results in unclear task distribution and lack of shared responsibility in preparing required evidence. Furthermore, inadequate infrastructure and insufficient learning resource availability also become significant constraints that reduce accreditation outcomes. These conditions demonstrate that the implementation of accreditation in practice is frequently oriented toward achieving grades rather than strengthening long-term quality assurance. Therefore, it becomes crucial to re-examine how schools can adopt more systematic, proactive, and sustainable preparation processes to ensure that accreditation effectively impacts school improvement.

Previous studies have emphasized the important role of accreditation in supporting school development, strengthening accountability, and fostering continuous improvement cultures within educational institutions. Several researchers have found that accreditation results can serve as a basis for identifying strengths and weaknesses, enabling schools to design strategic improvement plans aligned with national education standards. For example, studies have demonstrated that when accreditation is implemented effectively, it encourages schools to improve administrative systems, enhance teaching quality, and promote better learning outcomes. Research conducted provides valuable evidence that schools achieving excellent accreditation ratings are more capable of improving educational quality through structured follow-up programs based on comprehensive evaluation results. This case illustrates the potential impact of accreditation when supported by strong readiness and systematic implementation. However, these findings also raise important questions about how schools prepare themselves and what factors determine the effectiveness of accreditation in different institutional contexts.

Although previous studies have highlighted the significance of accreditation for education quality improvement, gaps remain in exploring the detailed preparation process and practical implementation strategies at the secondary education level. Much of the existing literature focuses primarily on accreditation outcomes rather than the mechanisms and challenges involved in achieving them. Limited research has examined how internal evaluation processes, document preparation, team collaboration, and resource availability shape school readiness for accreditation. Furthermore, few studies have specifically analyzed the enabling and hindering factors that influence accreditation performance in secondary schools within developing countries. As a result, there is insufficient understanding of why some schools succeed in accreditation while others face persistent difficulties. The lack of comprehensive analysis on preparation strategies creates a research gap that needs to be addressed. Therefore, further investigation is necessary to develop a more

holistic framework that supports schools in preparing and implementing accreditation processes effectively.

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on examining the preparation and implementation stages of accreditation as an integrated quality assurance process in secondary education institutions. Unlike studies that concentrate mainly on accreditation outcomes, this research aims to analyze the internal dynamics of school readiness, including organizational structures, strategic planning, document management, self-evaluation, and stakeholder involvement. By identifying supporting and inhibiting factors throughout the accreditation process, this study provides a more comprehensive perspective on how schools can optimize their preparation to achieve sustainable quality improvement. This research also contributes new insights into how accreditation can be transformed from a compliance-oriented mechanism into a developmental model that promotes continuous improvement, innovation in school management, and stronger public accountability. The findings are expected to expand understanding of quality assurance practices in secondary education and offer evidence-based guidance for schools, policy makers, and education stakeholders.

Based on the problems and gaps identified above, the central research problem of this study is: How do secondary education institutions prepare and implement accreditation processes as an instrument for improving educational quality? This study argues that successful accreditation depends on systematic preparation that includes establishing dedicated accreditation teams, understanding assessment instruments, conducting structured self-evaluation, collecting authentic documentation, and building collaborative work environments. Schools that engage in early and organized preparation are more capable of facing accreditation visitations confidently, reducing the likelihood of data manipulation and enabling more accurate performance evaluation. Effective implementation strengthens public accountability and enhances community trust, which supports participation and resource development. Therefore, this research is expected to contribute conceptually and practically by offering strategies to improve school readiness for accreditation and transforming accreditation into a continuous quality improvement tool.

Given the strategic importance of accreditation for advancing quality assurance in education, this study aims to provide a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the preparation and implementation processes in secondary education institutions. The insights generated are expected to support schools in designing systematic quality improvement programs based on realistic internal evaluation and evidence-based development planning. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the need for

collaborative engagement among teachers, school leaders, education authorities, and communities to strengthen accreditation readiness. The significance of this research lies in its potential contribution to both theoretical development and practical application, offering recommendations that can help policy makers develop more effective accreditation policies and support mechanisms. By addressing the current gaps in research and practice, this study contributes to ongoing efforts to enhance educational quality through structured, transparent, and sustainable accreditation processes that benefit the broader society.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study was conducted at MTs Pembangunan UIN Jakarta and adopts a descriptive qualitative research design utilizing a library research approach to analyze the preparation and implementation of accreditation as a quality assurance mechanism in secondary education institutions. This approach was selected because it enables in-depth exploration and interpretation of documented knowledge, theories, and empirical findings without requiring direct field observation. The research focuses on secondary education settings in Indonesia, including SMP/MTs, SMA/MA, and SMK, as these institutions carry strategic importance in bridging basic education with higher education and professional pathways. Data were collected through systematic review of books, journal articles, government regulations, previous research, and official accreditation documents issued by BAN-S/M. The purposive selection of sources ensured relevance to accreditation processes, school readiness, and quality assurance frameworks.

Data analysis was conducted using content analysis techniques, involving categorization, coding, interpretation, and synthesis of research findings into thematic areas: accreditation preparation, implementation stages, and supporting and inhibiting factors. Data credibility and trustworthiness were ensured through source triangulation by comparing multiple scholarly and regulatory documents to validate information consistency. Analytical rigor and transparent documentation of references strengthened the reliability of interpretations and enhanced the validity of research conclusions. This methodological approach provides a comprehensive understanding of accreditation practices and contributes valuable insights for improving quality assurance in secondary education institutions.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The results of this study reveal that accreditation in secondary education institutions is a multidimensional process influenced by organizational

readiness, human resource capability, leadership engagement, and institutional culture. Accreditation is not solely an administrative task, but a strategic mechanism to evaluate and improve educational quality through structured performance indicators (Iqbal et al., 2024; Reddy et al., 2024). The findings demonstrate that schools with strong internal governance structures and collaborative work environments are more likely to achieve favorable accreditation outcomes. This underscores the perception that accreditation serves as an accountability framework that shapes institutional behavior and drives systemic improvement across academic and managerial domains.

Furthermore, the analysis highlights that accreditation outcomes vary significantly across institutions depending on the degree of preparation and resource optimization (Saravanan et al., 2024). These results support current theoretical perspectives suggesting that accreditation effectiveness is closely linked to the interplay between policy implementation, institutional capacity, and stakeholder involvement (Iqbal et al., 2023). When compared with previous literature, which often focuses on compliance with evaluation instruments and scoring criteria, this study expands the understanding of how organizational dynamics—such as leadership, collaboration, and communication affect the accreditation experience at the school level. Thus, the findings emphasize that accreditation must be perceived not merely as a regulatory requirement but as a developmental process aimed at long-term capacity building and quality assurance.

The findings of this study indicate that preparation is the most crucial determinant of the success of accreditation in secondary education institutions. Consistent with the view of (Kayyali, 2024; Fan et al., 2025), the accreditation preparation phase involves systematic administrative and substantive processes, including the establishment of an accreditation team, training and socialization, document compilation, self-evaluation report development, and the empowerment of administrative staff. These findings align with (Basthomi et al., 2024), who emphasized the strategic role of school administrative staff (TAS) in organizing documents, although their effectiveness is often constrained by heavy workloads. This evidence demonstrates that accreditation preparation is not merely a technical process but a managerial effort requiring leadership, coordination, and a strong quality culture. Theoretically, this reinforces quality management theory, which states that organizational readiness influences performance outcomes, while practically, it highlights the importance of strengthening school governance and team capacity building.

The research also found that the accreditation process is carried out through key stages established by BAN-S/M, beginning with the completion of the Data Isian Akreditasi (DIA) through the Sispena system, followed by

assessors' visitation, validation, verification, and the final determination of accreditation ratings for a five-year period. These results are consistent with BAN-S/M operational standards, which emphasize transparency, accountability, and data accuracy (Sutantia, & Wibowo, 2025). However, this study identifies challenges frequently encountered by schools, such as rushed and inaccurate completion of online forms or inconsistencies between uploaded data and real conditions during visitation. Compared with previous studies that focus mainly on instrument compliance, these findings reveal the significant influence of school culture and leadership responses in determining accreditation success. The practical implication is the need for continuous digital literacy improvement and mentorship support to reduce data manipulation tendencies.

Furthermore, the study revealed that successful accreditation implementation is strongly influenced by factors that support teamwork, adequate infrastructure, and strong community involvement. The role of the school principal as a visionary leader is a significant supporting factor, aligning with the research of (Sliwka et al., 2022), which states that transformational leadership strengthens collaboration and fosters innovation in education management. In contrast, barriers such as excessive administrative burdens on teachers, limited human and material resources, and disorganized documentation systems remain major obstacles (Ismail et al., 2023). Compared to prior research that primarily highlights infrastructure limitations, this study expands the discussion by identifying administrative workload and data management issues as central weaknesses. This creates an important theoretical implication: accreditation effectiveness depends not only on facilities but also on operational systems and effective human resource governance.

The findings also demonstrate a research gap related to post-accreditation improvement efforts. While many studies discuss accreditation as an evaluative process, few examine the sustainability of follow-up actions after accreditation ratings are issued. This study shows that accreditation should not be viewed merely as a compliance mechanism or a pursuit of grades (A, B, C), but rather as a continuous improvement cycle leading to better school performance. Practically, this suggests the need for policy reform requiring schools to develop structured post-accreditation action plans, while theoretically expanding the accreditation paradigm from periodic evaluation toward continuous quality assurance and institutional development.

In summary, this research reinforces that accreditation preparation and implementation involve complex processes that extend beyond documentation and scoring. Accreditation functions as both an external accountability tool and an internal quality improvement mechanism. By comparing findings with

existing literature, this study affirms the importance of coordination, leadership, resource readiness, and transparency in determining accreditation outcomes while revealing the persisting weaknesses in documentation, administration, and resource equity. Theoretically, the results contribute to strengthening the conceptual framework of quality assurance in education, whereas practically, they provide guidance for policymakers, school leaders, and accreditation agencies to improve planning, capacity building, and sustainable improvement strategies. Therefore, accreditation should be optimized as a transformative instrument to develop quality culture and enhance public trust in secondary education institutions.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study highlight that systematic preparation and effective implementation are critical determinants of successful accreditation in secondary education institutions. Accreditation is not merely an administrative requirement, but a strategic process that supports continuous quality improvement, strengthens institutional accountability, and enhances school governance. The most significant insight gained from this research is that well-organized teamwork, strong leadership, accurate documentation, and early preparation substantially improve accreditation outcomes. Additionally, accreditation becomes a meaningful quality assurance instrument when schools adopt proactive planning, conduct authentic self-evaluations, and manage administrative processes through collaborative and transparent systems. This study also contributes scientifically by providing a comprehensive analytical framework that connects accreditation readiness, quality assurance theory, and school management practices offering a valuable reference for policy development, educational leadership, and institutional evaluation.

However, this research acknowledges several limitations that open opportunities for future studies. The descriptive qualitative library research approach restricts empirical validation regarding real implementation conditions in diverse school environments. This limitation indicates the need for future research employing field-based methodologies such as case studies, mixed methods, or action research to observe accreditation dynamics directly in educational institutions. Further studies should also explore digital transformation in accreditation documentation systems, leadership development models, and post-accreditation sustainability strategies to ensure ongoing quality improvement. Expanding research across different educational contexts and countries could enrich comparative understanding and contribute to strengthening global practices in educational accreditation.

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