

Transforming the Role of LAMDIK in Quality Assurance of Islamic Higher Education in the Global Era

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the transformation of the Independent Education Accreditation Agency (IEAA/LAMDIK) in assuring the quality of education programs at Islamic Higher Education Institutions (IHEI/PTKI) in the global era. The research is grounded in the urgency of reforming Indonesia's higher education quality assurance system in response to globalization, digitalization, and the growing demand for 21st-century competencies. In this context, LAMDIK replaces the National Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (BAN-PT) for education clusters and introduces an Outcome-Based Education (OBE) paradigm. The objectives of this study are to (1) describe the transformation of LAMDIK's role, (2) analyze the implementation of outcome-based accreditation policies, and (3) identify challenges faced by PTKI in the accreditation process. This study employs a qualitative multi-case approach involving three institutions: UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, UIN North Sumatra, and STAI Aceh Tamiang. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis, and analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The findings reveal a significant paradigmatic shift in LAMDIK's policies, instruments, and processes from compliance-based to performance- and outcome-based accreditation. LAMDIK functions as a regulator, facilitator of quality culture, and catalyst for institutional change. However, key challenges include limited human resources, low digital literacy, and difficulties in integrating Islamic epistemology into accreditation instruments. Overall, LAMDIK plays a transformative role in fostering sustainable quality and global competitiveness in PTKI.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, Indonesia's higher education system has faced increasingly complex challenges related to the quality, relevance, and competitiveness of graduates in response to rapid globalisation and digitalisation. Education study programmes, including those in Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKI), are required not only to meet national standards but also to align with global benchmarks and develop 21st-century competencies (Nugroho, 2023). Empirical data indicate that disparities in institutional quality remain significant, with 617 out of 4,401 higher education institutions in Indonesia still unaccredited and 75 institutions having lost their accreditation status as of October 2024. (RAYNARD KRISTIAN BONANIO PARDEDE, n.d.). This condition highlights the urgency of strengthening external quality assurance systems, particularly through accreditation mechanisms that are adaptive, accountable, and responsive to global demands (Thoyib, 2008). The recent research emphasizes that the quality challenges in Indonesian higher education stem from disparities in institutional capacity, slow digital transformation, and inconsistent application of learning outcomes. UNESCO's 2023 report notes that only a small number of institutions in developing countries have effectively adopted outcome-based education and digital quality assurance, which impacts graduate employability and competitiveness globally (Global Education Monitoring Report Team, 2023). In Indonesia, this pattern is reflected in tracer studies revealing uneven employability, especially outside major cities and within Islamic higher education institutions (Asamoah et al., 2025; Hamzah et al., 2024; Indasari, 2026; Irham, 2025). Additionally, highlight that accreditation in Indonesia still focuses more on administrative compliance rather than on performance metrics like learning outcomes, research productivity, and innovation (Avdeeva & Kokodey, 2024; Hetharion et al., 2026; Siregar et al., 2023; Suryanto et al., 2024). Qualitative data also show that many institutions struggle to align curricula with industry needs due to limited human resources, weak data infrastructure, and low digital readiness. These findings underscore the critical need to reform accreditation systems to be outcome-based, data-driven, and aligned with global quality assurance standards. (Jannana et al., 2025; Lathifah et al., 2025; Nurdi & Ahmad, 2025; Sakuroh et al., 2026).

Previous studies have examined various aspects of higher education accreditation and quality assurance in Indonesia. Research by (Khalilah, 2022) discusses the development, readiness, and challenges faced by LAMDIK as an independent accreditation body, while Nuryana et al. analyse its policy implications for education quality. Other studies emphasise the strategic role of accreditation in enhancing institutional accountability, service quality, and graduate competitiveness (Rusydi, 2023; Tharaba et al., 2025). However, these studies tend to be general in scope and have not specifically addressed the transformation of LAMDIK's role within Islamic higher education institutions, nor have they sufficiently linked accreditation practices with the pressures of globalisation and digital transformation (Abdul Malik, Elva Choirum Milati, 2025). This indicates a clear research gap concerning how LAMDIK operates and evolves within the specific context of PTKI.

This study aims to address these limitations by analysing the transformation of LAMDIK's role in ensuring the quality of education study programmes at PTKI. Specifically, the study seeks to (1) describe the transformation of LAMDIK's role in the quality assurance system, (2) analyse the implementation of outcome-based accreditation policies, and (3) identify the challenges faced by PTKI in the accreditation process. By focusing on PTKI and integrating both national regulatory frameworks and global quality demands, this study contributes to the development of a more contextual, adaptive, and forward-looking accreditation model that supports institutional competitiveness and sustainability.

The main focus of this study is to examine how LAMDIK has transformed from a compliance-oriented accreditation body into a performance- and outcome-based quality assurance institution in the global era. This study argues that LAMDIK plays a strategic role not only as a regulator but also as a catalyst for institutional transformation and quality culture development in PTKI. It is hypothesised that the effectiveness of LAMDIK's transformation is influenced by institutional readiness, human resource capacity, digital literacy, and the integration of Islamic epistemological values into accreditation instruments. Through this focus, the study seeks to demonstrate the significance of accreditation reform in enhancing the global competitiveness of Islamic higher education.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research approach with a multi-case study design, as suggested by Creswell, to explore in depth the transformation of LAMDIK's role in quality assurance within Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKI). This approach was selected to capture contextual, process-oriented, and interpretative insights across different institutional settings. The research was conducted from January to August 2025 at three PTKI: UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, UIN North Sumatra, and STAI Aceh Tamiang. The units of analysis were three education study programmes, namely Arabic Language Education (ALE/PBA), Indonesian Language Teaching (ALT/TBI), and Islamic Education (AE/PAI), each of which has undergone the LAMDIK accreditation process using the Study Programme Accreditation Instrument (APS). Informants were selected using purposive sampling based on specific criteria, including involvement in the accreditation process, institutional roles, and willingness to provide in-depth information. Key informants consisted of study programme heads and quality assurance unit members, as follows:

Table. Respondent Profiles

It	Initials	Status	Origin of Higher Education	Regional Origin
1	TN	Head of the Arabic Language Education Study Program	UIN Ar-Raniry	Banda Aceh
2	JS	Head of the Quality Assurance Institute	UIN Ar-Raniry	Banda Aceh
3	YN	Head of the Indonesian Language Education Study Program	UIN Sumatera Utara	Medan
4	SK	Head of the Quality Assurance Institute	UIN Sumatera Utara	Medan
5	DK	Head of the Islamic Education Study Program	STAI Aceh Tamiang	Kuala Simpang
6	MT	Head of the Quality Assurance Institute	STAI Aceh Tamiang	Kuala Simpang

Data were collected through three main techniques: (1) semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted face-to-face and online to explore experiences and perceptions regarding accreditation transformation; (2) non-participant observation of accreditation preparation and quality assurance practices at the study programme level; and (3) documentation study, including analysis of Self-Evaluation Reports (LED), Study Programme Performance Reports (LKPS), LAMDIK accreditation instruments, visitation reports, and relevant national regulations such as Ministerial Regulation No. 53 of 2023.

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (Mozin et al., 2025), which involves three concurrent flows of activity: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Operationally, interview transcripts, field notes, and documents were coded and categorised to identify emerging themes related to policy transformation, implementation practices, and challenges. Data triangulation was applied by comparing findings across sources and cases to ensure validity and reliability. The cross-case analysis was then conducted to identify similarities and differences among the three PTKI contexts, enabling a comprehensive understanding of LAMDIK's transformative role in quality assurance.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Transformation of LAMDIK's Role in the Quality Assurance System at PTKI

The transformation of the higher education accreditation system in Indonesia is an integral part of the national quality reform policy initiated through Law No. 12 of 2012 on Higher Education and reinforced by Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology No. 53 of 2023 on Quality Assurance in Higher Education. Fundamental changes in the accreditation system have emerged with the establishment of LAM, including LAMDIK, which have been given full authority to carry out accreditation of study programmes in the field of education. Prior to the establishment of LAMDIK, the entire programme accreditation process was carried out by BAN-PT (National Accreditation Agency for Higher Education). However, with the increasing number of study programmes and the complexity of scientific fields, the government deemed it necessary to establish specialised accreditation agencies based on scientific disciplines. LAMDIK was established as an agency focused on ensuring the quality of higher education, including PTKI, which has faculties and study programmes in education.

This change is not only administrative, but also conceptual and paradigmatic, as LAMDIK introduces an outcome-based accreditation model that aligns with the OBE paradigm. Based on an interview with TN's informant, it was stated that:

"For us, accreditation from LAMDIK provides clear direction for developing the quality of our study programmes. We have begun to develop an OBE-based curriculum and strengthen our internal quality assurance system to align with the standards set by LAMDIK. Through this process, we realised that accreditation is not merely an administrative obligation, but a strategic instrument for reorganising academic governance, improving documentation systems, and reinforcing a quality culture within the study programme. We see the accreditation process as a tool for self-evaluation to assess the extent to which our performance has aligned with the study programme's vision, mission, and objectives. Through the LAMDIK assessment, we were encouraged to be more honest and open in identifying weaknesses in curriculum, lecturer performance, student services, or research collaboration. This accreditation process also helped us understand the relationship between the internal and external quality assurance systems. We have begun to strengthen the PPEPP cycle to run sustainably and integrate with the programme's strategic planning documents. LAMDIK, through its instruments, encourages us to make quality a work culture, not just an administrative routine ahead of accreditation".

These findings show that LAMDIK catalyses quality management change, particularly fostering awareness of continuous improvement within study programmes. The implementation of accreditation standards encourages study programmes to adjust learning outcome instruments, stakeholder engagement, and alumni tracking.

Observations of LED and LKPS documents show an improvement in the quality of documentation and lecturer involvement in quality assurance. This data aligns with the theory of Total Quality Management. (Carifio, 2012), which emphasises the importance of process improvement and organisational learning as the core of quality assurance in higher education. JS's informant added:

“For us, LAMDIK has emphasised the integration between the vision of the study programme, graduate profiles, and graduate learning outcomes. This emphasis is not merely administrative, but encourages us to truly re-examine the direction and orientation of the education we provide. Through the LAMDIK assessment and mentoring process, we have begun to understand that every element in the curriculum document must be logically and systematically interconnected in order to produce graduate profiles that meet the needs of the times. This approach has positively impacted the programme curriculum, making it more measurable, relevant, and globally-oriented. The curriculum, which was previously descriptive, is now structured with an emphasis on the achievement of real competencies that can be measured and evaluated. This includes pedagogical, professional, social, and personal skills that graduates must master, as well as 21st-century skills such as digital literacy, cross-cultural communication, and critical thinking skills.”

From this description, it is clear that the role of LAMDIK at UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh is not only administrative but also conceptual in guiding study programmes to build academic accountability and a quality culture. LAMDIK is not merely an assessment institution or accreditation provider, but also functions as a strategic partner in the process of academic quality transformation. Through OBE-based accreditation instruments, each standard encourages study programmes to re-examine the essence of academic accountability and scientific and moral responsibility to ensure the quality of graduates and their scientific contributions. In this context, LAMDIK instils a new awareness of the importance of a quality culture that is alive in everyday academic practice. This culture of quality is reflected in the habits of lecturers to document learning outcomes, reflect on the learning process, conduct research relevant to the needs of society, and link the results of this research to curriculum development. Quality is no longer understood as the result of evaluation, but as a continuously renewed process.

Thus, the presence of LAMDIK at UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh has become a catalyst for forming a more adaptive, transparent, and continuous improvement-oriented academic system. Accreditation is now seen as a strategic means to strengthen institutional reputation, improve the performance of lecturers and graduates, and integrate academic, professional, and spiritual values into the governance of high-quality and competitive Islamic higher education globally. YN's informant stated:

“We began to realise that LAMDIK accreditation is not merely an effort to obtain high accreditation scores or rankings, but rather a systemic and continuous process to build a quality culture that directly impacts improving academic performance, governance, and institutional reputation. The new paradigm offered by LAMDIK emphasises that quality is not only measured through administrative documents and formal compliance, but through concrete evidence that all academic activities have been carried out based on quality standards that are integrated with learning outcomes, graduate relevance, and contribution to society.”

Thus, the role of LAMDIK at UIN North Sumatra is stronger regarding capacity building and standard enforcement, namely, encouraging study programme management to become more professional, transparent, and performance-based. This transformation is not only interpreted as an administrative adjustment to accreditation instruments, but more broadly as an institutional learning process oriented towards strengthening institutional capacity and systemic improvements to all aspects of academic quality assurance.

In terms of capacity building, LAMDIK has acted as a facilitator for human resource capacity building, particularly for study programme managers and Quality Assurance Institutions (QAI/LPM) in understanding the new paradigm of outcome based accreditation (OBA). (Almubarak et al., 2023). Through mentoring activities, workshops, and training on quality document preparation, LAMDIK encourages the development of conceptual and technical understanding of the importance of integration between internal quality assurance systems and external accreditation. This process fosters

a new awareness that academic quality cannot be built solely through policy, but also through managerial competence, quality data analysis skills, and the professional integrity of programme managers.

Furthermore, in terms of standard enforcement, LAMDIK functions as a normative authority that ensures all education study programmes at UIN Sumatera Utara operate in accordance with established national and international standards. Through audits, self-evaluations, and field assessments, LAMDIK emphasises the importance of compliance with the principles of good university governance, such as transparency, accountability, participation, and academic policy effectiveness. The accreditation process, using an evidence-based assessment model, compels each academic unit to strengthen its documentation system, improve data-based decision-making processes, and build a measurable and auditable culture of quality. Thus, through a capacity-building and standard enforcement approach, LAMDIK has effectively become an agent of institutional change that encourages UIN Sumatera Utara towards an accreditation system that not only assesses compliance but also fosters a culture of performance and sustainable innovation. This role proves that LAMDIK does not merely perform an evaluative function but also acts as a strategic partner in transforming the quality of Islamic higher education in the digital and global era, with an orientation towards achieving *excellence* and sustainable competitiveness. The following figure illustrates the quality assurance procedures for the implementation of LAMDIK accreditation.

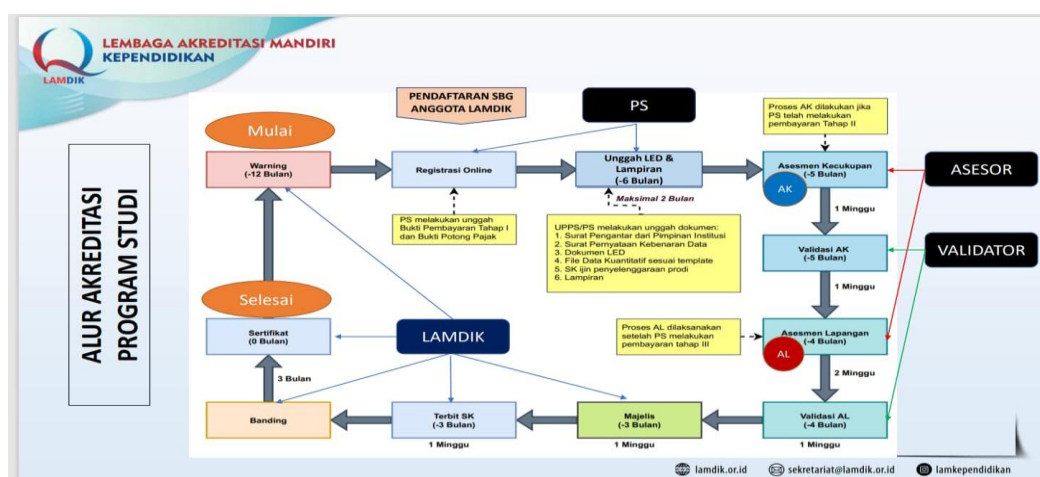


Figure 1: The process of implementing external quality assurance activities or the accreditation process conducted by LAMDIK.

As the only sample from a private university, STAI Aceh Tamiang provided a different perspective. DK's informant stated:

"For us, LAMDIK has been very helpful in understanding the true concept of educational quality. In the past, we only focused on filling out forms as an administrative obligation, but now we understand the core meaning and substance behind each accreditation standard. Each assessment item is not just a number or supporting document, but a part of the quality that lives and functions within our institution. The assistance and socialisation provided by LAMDIK have opened our eyes to the fact that accreditation is actually a means of building a sustainable culture of quality, not just a means of obtaining a certain rating. However, the biggest obstacles we face are in the areas of human resources and internal system readiness. Many of our lecturers and educational staff do not yet fully understand learning outcomes, the learning process, and evidence of graduate performance. Furthermore, our internal quality assurance system has not been fully digitised, so the data collection, evidence."

This argument is consistent with the perspective of MT's informant, who stated that "external quality assurance systems-particularly LAMDIK accreditation-serve as a strategic instrument for fostering a sustainable quality culture." Nevertheless, the main challenges faced by the Islamic Education Study Program (PAI) and STAI Aceh Tamiang as a whole include the high cost of accreditation, amounting to IDR 52,000,000 for a single study program per accreditation cycle, as well as the limited availability of qualified human resources. In addition, inadequate learning technology infrastructure and insufficient information technology facilities further hinder the effective implementation of quality assurance processes."

These findings indicate that LAMDIK acts as a quality enhancer, especially for education study programmes in private Islamic higher education institutions, which are generally still in the process of strengthening their internal quality assurance systems. Through the outcome based accreditation process, LAMDIK not only functions as an external assessment agency but also as a strategic partner that encourages institutional capacity building, quality awareness, and the managerial capabilities of study programmes in systematically managing data, documents, and academic performance.

In the context of the PAI STAI Aceh Tamiang study programme, analysis of accreditation documents shows that this study programme still faces several fundamental limitations, particularly in terms of documentation of Programme Learning Outcomes (PLO) and the implementation of tracer studies. The available GOL documents are not yet fully integrated with the OBE-based curriculum, so the relationship between learning outcomes, the learning process, and evidence of graduate achievement is still partial. Meanwhile, the implementation of tracer studies on graduates has not been carried out regularly and systematically, so that data on the relevance of graduates in the world of work is still limited and cannot be optimally utilised for curriculum improvement or programme development.

However, interviews with informants revealed a strong commitment to continuous quality improvement. The study programme has begun to develop a new awareness that quality is not only measured by the completeness of documents, but also by the functionality of the academic system and the success in producing competent, adaptive, and competitive graduates. This commitment is reflected in various strategic steps that have begun to be pursued, such as preparing PLO documents based on graduate profiles, forming an internal tracer study team, and digitising some academic reporting processes to strengthen transparency and accountability.

This innovation in accreditation digitalisation strengthens data-based quality management. Observations of the accreditation documents for the PBA programme at UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh and the TBI programme at UIN North Sumatra show that most of the LED and LKPS documents have been integrated with the quality system at the university's Quality Assurance Agency. SK's informant stated "we now understand the relationship between accreditation, research performance, and institutional reputation. The LAMDIK instrument has prompted us to review the direction of our study programme development in a global context. Through the OBE and performance-based accreditation process, we have begun to realise that the quality of study programmes is not only measured by administrative aspects and document completeness, but also by our ability to produce scientific work, innovation, and real contributions to the development of science and the needs of society. The LAMDIK assessment process requires us to explore the relationship between the curriculum, lecturer research, and graduate achievements. Each accreditation standard and indicator requires physical evidence demonstrating the sustainability of academic quality. This encourages us to strengthen research at the study programme level, starting from increasing the capacity of lecturers in reputable scientific publications, research collaboration, and integrating research results into the learning process."

This statement reflects a fundamental paradigm shift in the understanding of higher education quality, particularly in the context of Islamic higher education institutions. LAMDIK has successfully instilled an epistemic awareness that the quality of study programmes cannot be separated from

research productivity and scientific contributions to the global community. In an outcome based accreditation system, (P & Upadhyaya, 2021), quality is no longer assessed based on inputs, such as the number of lecturers, facilities, or policy documents, but rather on outputs and outcomes, namely evidence of learning achievements, research innovation, and the social impact of graduates. This aligns with the views of Harvey & Green (Harvey, 2024), which defines quality as *transformational value*, namely the ability of institutions to bring about meaningful change in students and society through academic activities. The LAMDIK assessment process encourages integration between the curriculum, research, and graduate outcomes. This interconnection manifests the *constructive alignment* approach. (John Biggs, 2014), where all components of the academic system must support each other to achieve *intended learning outcomes (ILOs)*.

In the context of PTKI, this integration has a dual meaning, namely, in addition to ensuring compatibility with global and workplace needs, it also affirms a commitment to Islamic and humanitarian values that form the identity of the institution. This description also indicates the emergence of an awareness of the relationship between accreditation, research performance, and institutional reputation, which signifies the occurrence of an institutional learning process. Study programmes are beginning to understand that accreditation not only assesses the past but also shapes the direction of future development. According to Gazi Md. Nazrul Islam (Islam et al., 2017), the accreditation process can serve as an *organisational learning mechanism* that helps higher education institutions understand their strategic position, identify their strengths and weaknesses, and formulate strategies for continuous quality improvement.

The informant's statement above also shows the internalisation of reflective values in the quality culture, namely the awareness that quality cannot be built instantly, but through a long process involving leadership commitment, data integrity, and collaborative engagement among the academic community. Thus, applying the LAMDIK accreditation instrument has gone beyond its evaluative function to a transformative function. It assesses, educates, guides, and accelerates a paradigm shift in quality within Islamic higher education institutions, from mere administrative compliance to an academic culture based on performance, research, and global competitiveness.

Based on the results of interviews and review of the accreditation documents of the three PTKIs above, it was found that LAMDIK plays a vital role in three main areas of the quality assurance system in all research samples, namely:

As an Academic Quality Regulator: LAMDIK sets accreditation standards as a reference for educational programme providers in general and religious universities. These standards are formulated by integrating international quality principles such as learning outcomes, stakeholder engagement, and continuous quality improvement (CQI) (Iradel & Ed, 2018). LAMDIK also emphasises the achievement of Graduate Learning Outcomes as the main indicator of study programme quality. This encourages study programmes in education at the three Islamic higher education institutions to reformulate their curricula, learning strategies and evaluation systems to be more oriented towards graduate competencies, rather than merely administrative processes.

As a Facilitator of Quality Culture Development: LAMDIK not only conducts external evaluations, but also fosters education study programmes at PTKI through coaching clinics, training of assessors, and quality webinars. This effort serves as a means of increasing the capacity of internal quality assurance institutions and lecturers at PTKI so that they can understand the philosophy and technical aspects of the latest accreditation instruments. This transformation shifts the role of accreditation institutions from mere assessors to strategic partners in building a sustainable quality ecosystem. In the context of PTKI, this approach is essential because most still face challenges in terms of human resources, quality data digitisation, and understanding the OBE paradigm. (Amtu et al., 2020).

As an Agent of Institutional Transformation: LAMDIK plays a strategic role in encouraging the adaptation of higher education systems to the era of digitalisation and demands for public accountability. This is in a paradigm shift in higher education quality assurance. (Mayulu & Tricahyadinata, 2024). LAMDIK not only functions as an evaluative institution that assesses the feasibility of education study programmes, but also as a catalyst that directs universities to integrate the principles of transparency, efficiency, and digital technology into the entire accreditation process. This institutional transformation requires LAMDIK to adapt to changes in the increasingly competitive global higher education ecosystem, where digitalisation is a key pillar of quality management and performance reporting. Through the implementation of a digital-based accreditation system, LAMDIK strives to create a quality assurance mechanism that is more open, objective, and measurable. This aligns with the national policy direction in strengthening higher education governance oriented towards good governance and public accountability, as emphasised in the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology regulations.

The transformation of LAMDIK in the quality assurance system in PTKI education study programmes, particularly in the three PTKIs above, confirms that accreditation is no longer seen as an administrative obligation, but as a mechanism for continuous quality improvement. In the LAMDIK accreditation guidelines. (LAMDIK, 2023), it is stated that the purpose of accreditation is to build an internal culture of quality in order to produce graduates who are relevant to the needs of society and the world of work. Furthermore, the transformation of accreditation instruments designed based on *Outcome-Based Accreditation (OBA)* consists of three main components, namely *Input-based criteria* (resource and curriculum readiness), *Process-based criteria* (implementation of learning and internal quality assurance), and *Outcome-based criteria* (achievement of PLO, graduate reputation, and contribution to society). (Hikmah & Aimah, 2025). These changes require digital readiness and evidence-based management, which have not yet been fully established at PTKI. However, they acknowledge that the new system is more transparent and encourages continuous improvement.

The impact of LAMDIK's transformation on the PTKI quality assurance system is strengthening the Quality Assurance Institute. Previously, LPM only functioned as a document collector, but now they have become an active quality coordination centre that conducts internal audits, compiles self-evaluation reports, manages quality databases, and develops learning achievement monitoring instruments. The LPMs at UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, UIN North Sumatra, and STAI Aceh Tamiang have integrated LAMDIK accreditation instruments into the OBE-based AMI system, which links the Semester Learning Plan (SLP/RPS) with PLO. This demonstrates the synergy between external accreditation and internal quality assurance. Another impact is an improvement in the quality of the curriculum and learning, forcing PTKIs to review their curricula to ensure they are oriented towards learning outcomes relevant to the world of employment and the needs of contemporary Islamic society. The curriculum documents of the PBA Study Programme at UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh and the TBI Study Programme at UIN North Sumatra have adjusted their curricula by incorporating elements of digital pedagogy and entrepreneurship education in response to the needs of the 21st century. Thus, accreditation no longer only measures compliance with administrative standards, but also encourages innovation in curriculum and learning methods.

On the one hand, the transformation of LAMDIK has also improved the professionalism of lecturers and assessors, thereby encouraging the creation of a reflective and professional academic ecosystem. Lecturers at PTKI now better understand the relationship between teaching outcomes, assessment methods, and curriculum alignment. LAMDIK has introduced the concept of reflective teaching evidence, which is evidence of lecturers' reflections on the effectiveness of their teaching,

which is one of the assessment components in accreditation. This approach strengthens a self-evaluation-based academic culture. Regarding cooperation, LAMDIK's transformation has encouraged stronger national and international collaboration through joint research, student mobility, and double degrees, as these are considered added value in the accreditation assessment. On the other hand, LAMDIK also collaborates with foreign accreditation agencies such as the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) to align national accreditation standards with international practices and strengthen the quality of teacher and educational personnel education in Indonesia through international standards. (Sibawaihi et al., 2025). This transformation means that PTKI is no longer measured solely based on internal quality, but also based on visibility and competitiveness at the global level. The most significant transformation brought about by LAMDIK is not only in terms of regulations or accreditation instruments, but also in terms of a change in the culture of quality. LAMDIK has turned the concept of accreditation into a strategic reflection tool for institutional development.

Although it has brought many advances, this study also found several challenges in implementing the new role of LAMDIK in PTKI, namely that many lecturers and educational staff at PTKI still have limitations in understanding the OBE and OBA paradigms, and not all PTKIs have an integrated quality information system capable of providing digital evidence in accordance with the LAMDIK format. Meanwhile, in the context of LAMDIK accreditation instruments, lecturers from the PBA Study Programme at UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, the TBI Study Programme at UIN North Sumatra, and the PAI Study Programme at STAI Aceh Tamiang assessed that they did not yet fully reflect the uniqueness of Islamic epistemology, especially in the dimension of integrating religious and scientific knowledge.

Another significant challenge is the limited availability of accreditation funding. The costs involved in preparing accreditation documents and developing quality assurance systems place a heavy financial burden on Islamic higher education institutions, especially private ones like STAI Aceh Tamiang. MT's informant highlighted that the accreditation process by LAMDIK exerts considerable financial pressure on institutions that primarily rely on student enrollment for income. Accreditation expenses extend beyond the mandatory fee of IDR 52,000,000 per study programme paid to LAMDIK; they also include additional costs for preparing accreditation forms, compiling supporting evidence, and organizing field visits, which together substantially increase the institution's overall financial load.

The statement by MT's informant emphasises that the accreditation costs imposed by LAMDIK on a single study programme at a small PTKI, such as STAI Aceh Tamiang, are multi-dimensional, namely direct expenses paid to LAMDIK (IDR 52,000,000/study programme) and a series of indirect costs that are often even greater, such as form preparation, evidence collection and digitisation, team fees, administration costs, field visit logistics, and staff time diverted from their primary duties. Therefore, to overcome this problem, internal measures are required, ranging from budget planning, digitisation, capacity building and policy intervention, such as subsidies, shared services and progressive cost models. Without a responsive financial strategy and public policy, the accreditation process risks becoming merely an administrative burden rather than a tool for sustainable quality improvement.

Implementation of LAMDIK Accreditation Policy in an Outcome-Based Quality Assurance System

The implementation of accreditation policies by LAMDIK within PTKI shows complex but progressive dynamics. LAMDIK has been the official accreditation agency for assessing the quality of education study programmes in Indonesia since 2021, replacing the role of BAN-PT in education. This policy is based on the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture No. 5 of 2020 and the Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology No. 53 of 2023, which mandates a higher education quality assurance system based on *outcomes*.

In general, the results of the study show that the three institutions that were the locations of the study, namely UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, STAI Aceh Tamiang, and UIN North Sumatra Medan, are in the adaptive transformation phase, where their internal quality assurance systems are adjusting to LAMDIK standards and instruments based on *outcomes*. The outcome-based approach used by LAMDIK is rooted in the OBE paradigm, which assesses the effectiveness of education based on graduate learning outcomes, innovation in the three pillars of higher education, and the relevance of graduates to the needs of the world of work. This transformation aligns with national policies that demand autonomy, innovation, and flexibility from higher education institutions in managing academic quality.

Based on the results of observations and interviews, the process of implementing LAMDIK accreditation policies at PTKI, particularly at three PTKI institutions, can be divided into four main stages:

Socialisation and Understanding of Instruments Stage. All LPM Chairpersons and Study Programme Chairpersons at the three PTKIs acknowledged that the initial stage of LAMDIK implementation began with the socialisation and internalisation of the outcome based accreditation concept through webinars, technical guidance, and training in outcome-based form preparation. This activity aimed to comprehensively understand the new accreditation philosophy and paradigm, emphasising the relationship between PLO, the learning process, and programme performance outputs. Through these socialisation activities, study programme managers understood that LAMDIK accreditation is not merely an administrative process, but a strategic instrument for building a quality culture oriented towards continuous quality improvement. The training participants were also equipped with technical skills in identifying performance evidence, compiling reflective self-evaluation documents, and using the LAMDIK digital platform for quality data reporting. This stage is an essential foundation for PTKI in conceptual and technical adaptations to the new accreditation system. Continuous socialisation helps build a common perception among lecturers and leaders regarding the direction of quality policy, strengthens coordination between LPM and study programmes, and fosters awareness that accreditation is part of the internal quality assurance cycle, not a temporary activity. Thus, the socialisation and understanding of the instruments stage is the first step in transforming the quality culture within PTKI, where lecturers and administrators begin to place accreditation as an integral part of academic governance oriented towards performance and public accountability.



Figure 2: Socialization of the LAMDIK accreditation instrument.

Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS/SPMI) Adjustment Stage. The three PTKIs have revised and recontextualised their SPMI documents, including Quality Policy, Quality Manual, Quality

Standards, and Quality Forms. This step was taken in response to changes in the LAMDIK accreditation paradigm, which focuses on learning outcomes and graduate attributes. The SPMI adjustments aim to ensure that the entire quality assurance cycle, from determination, implementation, evaluation, control, to quality improvement, aligns with the principles of OBE and supports the achievement of Continuous Quality Improvement. At UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, for example, the Quality Assurance Institute has innovated by digitising the quality system by integrating SIAKAD Cloud Sevima as a platform for monitoring student PLO achievement and lecturer performance reporting. This system enables real-time data-based monitoring of the learning process, assessment, and academic output, thereby strengthening quality accountability and transparency at the study programme level. Meanwhile, at UIN North Sumatra, SPMI adjustments were made by strengthening internal quality audit mechanisms, updating academic standards in accordance with LAMDIK instruments, and training lecturers in the preparation of a learning outcome matrix that links graduate profiles with courses and assessment methods. At STAI Aceh Tamiang, the adaptation focused on preparing simple but functional quality documents, with intensive guidance from the LPM to ensure compliance with the LAMDIK quality framework. In general, this stage of SPMI adjustment reflects a paradigm shift in quality from compliance-based to performance-based, where quality assurance is no longer understood merely as the fulfilment of administrative standards, but as a system that supports improving academic performance based on data and actual learning outcomes. Through this process, PTKI began to build an integrated, digital, and results-oriented quality ecosystem, in line with the demands of higher education globalisation and national digital transformation policies in education.

Self-Evaluation and Accreditation Reporting Stage. The Programme Study Self-Evaluation process is the most crucial stage in the entire accreditation process, as it is at this stage that each programme study is required to provide authentic evidence of the implementation of academic, managerial, and student activities carried out by the programme study and the programme study implementation unit. The Study Programme Self-Evaluation serves as a reflective instrument to assess the extent to which the vision, mission, goals, and objectives of the study programme have been realised through the consistent and results-oriented implementation of the three pillars of higher education. In the context of LAMDIK accreditation, Study Programme Self-Evaluation not only contains narrative descriptions, but also includes data-based analysis and evidence-based analysis that describe the actual performance of the study programme. The study programme team is required to present evidence of implementation, which provides for the achievement of PLO, the effectiveness of the learning process, the productivity of lecturers' research and publications, student involvement in academic activities, and the contribution of the study programme to the community and the world of work. In addition, the Study Programme Self-Evaluation serves as a means for study programmes to conduct strategic reflection on their Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) in academic governance. The results of this reflection are then used to develop an action plan as a basis for continuous quality improvement. Thus, Study Programme Self-Evaluation serves not only as an administrative report, but also as an organisational learning document that demonstrates the study programme's adaptive capacity to changes in the higher education environment in the digital and global era. At UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh and UIN North Sumatra, the Study Programme Self-Evaluation is compiled collaboratively through focus group discussions (FGDs) between lecturers, students, alumni, and external stakeholders to ensure the involvement of all parties in the quality evaluation process. This approach is in line with the principle of *stakeholder engagement*, which is a crucial component of the LAMDIK instrument. Thus, the Study Programme Self-Evaluation stage reflects the culmination of the internal quality assurance cycle, where the evaluation results form the basis for strategic decision-making for curriculum

development, lecturer capacity building, and strengthening the competitiveness of study programmes on an ongoing basis.

Field Assessment and Follow-up Stage. After document assessment, LAMDIK assessors conduct field assessments to verify and validate the data, information, and physical evidence submitted by the study programme during the Study Programme Self-Evaluation stage. The field assessment process is not only oriented towards administrative checks, but also assesses the consistency between planning, implementation, and quality achievement results at the study programme level. In its implementation, assessors conduct in-depth interviews with faculty leaders, study programme chairs, lecturers, educational staff, students, alumni, and external partners to obtain a comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of the quality assurance system and academic culture within the study programme. Observations of learning facilities and infrastructure, academic information systems, and evidence of the performance of the three pillars of higher education are also essential to the field assessment process. The assessment results are not only in the form of accreditation recommendations, but also include constructive feedback on weaknesses, gaps, and opportunities for quality improvement that can be utilised by study programmes to make continuous improvements. This feedback covers aspects of OBE-based curriculum, learning effectiveness, lecturer research and publication productivity, the relevance of CPL to the needs of the careers life, and internal quality management that is adaptive to digital transformation. For PTKI, the LAMDIK field assessment is an institutional learning moment, where direct interaction with assessors serves as a form of capacity building to deepen understanding of outcome-based accreditation principles. Through this process, study programmes obtain strategic input to strengthen documentation systems, improve the integration of SPMI with academic information systems, and develop follow-up plans based on assessor recommendations. At UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, the results of the LAMDIK field assessment were used by the LPM to develop an integrated quality improvement programme in the form of workshops on the preparation of the Study Programme Quality Strategic Plan and strengthening the capacity of internal auditors. Thus, field assessments are not merely the final stage of assessment, but also an instrument of institutional quality transformation that fosters a reflective, collaborative, and innovative culture in Islamic religious higher education environments. Based on the results of the accreditation assessment in the PBA study programme at UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, the 2024 assessment results show that the quality system is already excellent rating.



Figure 3: Field visitation for the accreditation of the Arabic Language Education Study Program at UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh conducted by LAMDIK assessors.

Implementing LAMDIK accreditation policies in Islamic higher education institutions, particularly at UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, STAI Aceh Tamiang, and UIN Sumatera Utara Medan, shows a positive transformation towards an outcome-based quality assurance system. LAMDIK has

become a driver of quality culture and an agent of academic change that encourages PTKI to develop transparent, digital, and impactful quality management. However, the success of the implementation depends on the ability of PTKI to manage organisational change and improve the capacity of human resources in every outcome-based academic innovation.

Based on a review of the 2023-2024 accreditation reports from the PBA Study Programme at UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, the PAI Study Programme at STAI Aceh Tamiang, and the TBI Study Programme at UIN North Sumatra, several implementation patterns were found that reflect the fundamental transformation of LAMDIK policies, namely: (1) The Arabic Language Education study programme at UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh has adjusted its curriculum based on OBE principles. The self-evaluation report shows a shift in focus from the provision of facilities to the achievement of graduate competencies, which are measured through final projects, student publications, and alumni performance in the world of work. (2) The Islamic Education Study Programme at STAI Aceh Tamiang demonstrates improvements and management of student portfolios, including evidence of learning. (3) The Indonesian Language Education study programme at UIN Sumatera Utara has established a quality system for the LAMDIK accreditation instrument. Study programmes are required to measure CPL achievement through rubric-based evaluation instruments and tracer studies.

The implementation of LAMDIK's outcome-based accreditation policy at these three Islamic higher education institutions has led to several significant changes in the quality assurance system, namely a shift in quality orientation from process to outcome and performance-based, with a focus on the impact of graduates on society and the world of work. \

Obstacles and Challenges in Implementing Accreditation of PTKI Education Study Programmes at LAMDIK in the Era of Digitalisation and Globalisation of Higher Education

Field research conducted in three PTKI education study programmes revealed various significant challenges and obstacles in implementing accreditation by LAMDIK, particularly in the digitisation of the accreditation process and the globalisation of higher education.

Technical and Digital Infrastructure Barriers

Digital transformation in higher education quality assurance and accreditation systems has become a necessity in the era of globalisation. LAMDIK, as the institution authorised to assess the quality of education study programmes, requires all study programmes at PTKI to complete digital-based accreditation instruments through the LAMDIK Accreditation Management Information System (SIMALAMDIK) and various other online platforms. However, the research results on the three educational study programmes above show that implementing this digital accreditation system still faces various technical and infrastructural obstacles, which impact the effectiveness of accreditation and the sustainability of the quality assurance system within the institution.

Based on interviews with the Head of LPM STAI Aceh Tamiang and the Head of LPM UIN North Sumatra, there is a lack of integration between the Academic Information System (AIS/SIAKAD) owned by the campus and Higher Education Database (HEDb/PD-Dikti) and SIMALAMDIK. Obstacles arise because the academic information system (SIAKAD) and the quality document system are poorly integrated. Student, lecturer, research, and community service data are scattered across various internal platforms that are not synchronised with each other. As a result, the accreditation data collection process is often done manually, making it prone to input errors and data inconsistencies. This condition shows the weakness of the digital quality system architecture at the institutional level, which should be directly connected to the LPM system and the PD-Dikti national data system.

Another obstacle STAI Aceh Tamiang, a private university, faces is that the implementation of digital accreditation is highly dependent on one or two technical staff who understand information technology. When these personnel are unavailable, the entire accreditation administration process is delayed. This indicates that the accreditation digitisation process has not been systematically institutionalised but still depends on individuals. This condition has implications for the low sustainability of digital quality assurance systems, especially in small and regional higher education institutions.

The observation results show that not all study programmes have an automatic backup system for accreditation documents. The TBI study programme at UIN Sumatera Utara and the PAI study programme at Aceh Tamiang only store digital data on the personal laptops of team members. This situation poses a high risk of data loss due to device damage or malware attacks. Meanwhile, although the PBA programme at UIN Ar-Raniry has an internal cloud-based storage system, it does not yet have a standardised and multi-layered data security policy. This has the potential to cause leaks or duplication of accreditation data. These technical and digital infrastructure obstacles indicate that accreditation digitisation is not yet fully inclusive and adaptive to the institutional context of PTKI. On the one hand, the demands of globalisation and accreditation digitisation bring opportunities for efficiency, transparency, and quality acceleration. However, without adequate technical and infrastructure readiness, this process can actually create digital quality gaps between PTKIs.

From the perspective of Digital Transformation in Higher Education theory (Petchamé et al., 2023), the success of digitising higher education quality depends not only on technology, but also on the digital competence of organisations, which encompasses institutional culture, structure and policy. Failure to integrate technical aspects and human resources will create what is known as a technological bottleneck, a situation where advanced technology is not matched by system readiness and user capacity. (Mozin et al., 2025). In addition, within the framework of *Outcome-Based Quality Assurance* implemented by LAMDIK, accreditation quality is not only measured by documents and data, but also by the institution's ability to utilise digital systems in data-driven decision-making (*data-driven quality management*). The technical and infrastructural obstacles encountered in the three PTKI education study programmes indicate that the transition to a digital quality system is still in the early stages of adaptation. To overcome these obstacles, integration between SIAKAD, PD-Dikti, and internal quality systems is required to obtain accreditation data automatically, reducing the potential for errors and duplication. Each study programme needs a cloud-based backup system, clear data security policies, and regular audits of the digital security of quality documents.

Regulatory, Policy and Institutional Resource Constraints

The accreditation process for study programmes is a formal mechanism to ensure and improve the quality of higher education. In the era of digitalisation and globalisation, accreditation not only tests administrative completeness but also the readiness of institutions to face the demands of data openness, system interoperability, and evidence-based quality management. However, interviews with informants in the field, document observation, and policy analysis of four PTKI education study programmes indicate substantive obstacles arising from regulations, institutional policies, and institutional resource limitations. These obstacles impact the effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of the accreditation process. (Özen, 2022).

National regulations on higher education standards, learning outcome indicators, and accreditation governance are often subject to top-down revisions. These rapid changes make it difficult for study programmes to adjust their internal policies simultaneously. As a result, faculty and study programme units face changing norms, such as evaluation formats and metrics, which trigger administrative rework and strategic uncertainty. Similarly, several regulations are generic and

insensitive to the characteristics of Islamic higher education institutions, such as religious activities, local content, and forms of assessment based on religious practices. This incompatibility forces study programmes to interpret or modify accreditation documents, thereby potentially reducing the relevance of assessment instruments to graduate profiles and institutional vision and mission.

Based on interviews with informants at three Islamic higher education institutions, there appears to be variation in managerial commitment between large institutions, such as UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh and UIN Sumatera Utara, and small institutions, such as STAI Aceh Tamiang. In institutions with strong management, accreditation is treated as a strategic agenda. Conversely, in institutions with low capacity, accreditation is often considered a periodic administrative activity without the support of sustainable policies, such as incentives and long-term budget planning.

Regulatory, policy, and institutional resource constraints are determining factors that influence the effectiveness of accreditation implementation in the three PTKI education study programmes studied. Without policy harmonisation, sustainable budget planning, and capacity and governance strengthening at the study programme level, the accreditation process risks producing results that do not reflect the substantive quality of education. In the era of digitalisation and globalisation, a more contextual, inclusive, and long-term capacity-building-oriented policy approach is needed so that accreditation can play an effective instrument for quality improvement, rather than merely administrative compliance.

Challenges in Meeting Global and Digital Standards

The digital era and globalisation of higher education require educational institutions, including PTKI, to not only meet national standards, but also adapt to global standards and digital-based quality assurance systems. LAMDIK has become a strategic instrument in ensuring the quality of education study programmes is on par with global practices. (Kareva et al., 2023). However, research conducted on three education study programmes shows that meeting global and digital standards in implementing accreditation still faces several conceptual, structural and operational challenges. These challenges are not only technical but also relate to paradigms, human resources, institutional policies and comprehensive digital infrastructure readiness. LAMDIK and global accreditation standards emphasise the OBE approach and continuous quality improvement. The main challenge for PTKI education study programmes lies in the paradigm shift in quality from mere administrative compliance to measurable proof of graduate competency.

Interviews with TN's informant and YN's informant showed that some lecturers still understand accreditation as a documentary activity rather than a continuous quality assurance system. This conceptual gap hinders the implementation of global standards that require a cycle of evaluation, reflection, and continuous improvement based on data. International quality indicators such as employability, international exposure, research impact, and digital innovation are not yet an inherent part of the quality culture in most Islamic higher education institutions. For example, the PAI STAI Aceh Tamiang programme does not yet have lecturer and student performance indicators linked to international publications or global collaboration. As a result, accreditation achievements are still domestic and incompatible with global benchmarks.

The study programmes have not yet established specific units or teams to handle international accreditation and quality digitisation. STAI Aceh Tamiang, although its LPM is active in quality coordination, still has a system oriented towards BAN-PT/LAMDIK national regulations, with no clear road map towards global accreditation. Meanwhile, UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh and UIN North Sumatra have formed special international accreditation task forces under the coordination of the Vice Rector for Academic and Institutional Affairs. The curricula in the PBA programme at UIN Ar-Raniry

Banda Aceh and the TBI programme at UIN North Sumatra are beginning to move toward OBE, which aligns with global international accreditation requirements. This model ensures that graduate learning outcomes are designed in accordance with global market needs and UNESCO standards.

This phenomenon reflects what is known as the *dual burden of accreditation* (Vardasca, 2023), where PTKI faces two burdens at once: meeting LAMDIK national standards and adapting to global expectations. In this context, three education study programmes are still in the digitalisation and quality globalisation transition phase. The main weaknesses lie in the asymmetry of institutional capacity between large and small study programmes, the lack of long-term investment in digital quality systems, and the absence of results-oriented internationalisation policies.

According to the *Global Quality Assurance Framework* theory (Marginson, 2010), higher education that is globally competitive must build three foundations: governance integration, digital readiness, and knowledge network capability. From the study results, the three study programmes are still operating below the level of these three components. Quality digitalisation has not yet become a culture, and global benchmarking has not been internalised in the academic vision. Nevertheless, the potential and direction of transformation are beginning to emerge, especially at UIN Ar-Raniry and UIN North Sumatra, which have a better digital quality system base. With strategies to strengthen institutional capacity, digital integration, and global collaboration, PTKI has a great opportunity to become part of a competitive and sustainable global higher education ecosystem.

Discussions

The findings of this study demonstrate that the transformation of LAMDIK's role in the quality assurance system at Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKI) reflects a broader paradigm shift in higher education accreditation, from compliance-based evaluation toward outcome-based and performance-oriented quality assurance. This transformation aligns with global trends in higher education, particularly the adoption of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) and Outcome-Based Accreditation (OBA), which emphasise measurable learning outcomes, graduate relevance, and continuous quality improvement. Recent studies also confirm that higher education systems worldwide are increasingly shifting toward outcome-based frameworks to enhance graduate employability and institutional competitiveness (Sakuroh et al., 2026) and (Kareva et al., 2023).

From a theoretical perspective, these findings support the principles of Total Quality Management (TQM), which view quality as a continuous process involving organisational learning, stakeholder engagement, and systematic improvement. The increased integration between curriculum, learning outcomes, and graduate profiles observed in PTKI indicates the application of constructive alignment theory (John Biggs, 2014), where curriculum design, teaching strategies, and assessment methods are interconnected to achieve intended learning outcomes. This is consistent with recent findings that emphasise the importance of aligning curriculum, assessment, and learning outcomes to achieve sustainable quality improvement in higher education (Hikmah & Aimah, 2025; Jannana et al., 2025; Muslim et al., 2025; Rohmadi et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the study highlights the evolving role of LAMDIK as not only a regulatory authority but also a facilitator and catalyst for institutional change. Through mentoring, training, and digital-based accreditation systems, LAMDIK contributes significantly to capacity building, particularly in strengthening internal quality assurance systems (SPMI) and improving institutional governance. This finding reinforces the concept of accreditation as an organisational learning mechanism, where institutions use accreditation processes to reflect on their strengths, identify weaknesses, and develop strategies for sustainable improvement. Similar findings are reported by Mozin et al. (Mozin et al.,

2025), who argue that quality assurance systems must integrate managerial capacity, data literacy, and institutional culture to be effective in the digital era.

However, the transformation process is not uniform across institutions. The study reveals a significant disparity between public and private PTKI in terms of institutional readiness, human resources, and technological infrastructure. While institutions such as UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh and UIN North Sumatra demonstrate stronger adaptation through digital integration and OBE-based curriculum development, STAI Aceh Tamiang still faces fundamental challenges, including limited human resource capacity, inadequate digital infrastructure, and financial constraints. This finding is in line with recent studies showing that institutional inequality remains a major barrier to implementing quality assurance reforms in developing countries.

In the context of digital transformation, the findings reveal that the implementation of digital-based accreditation systems, such as SIMALAMDIK, has not been fully supported by integrated academic information systems. This creates inefficiencies in data management and increases the risk of inconsistency. According to (Petchamé et al., 2023), successful digital transformation in higher education depends not only on technological adoption but also on institutional readiness, governance, and digital competencies. Without these elements, digitalisation may create a “technological bottleneck,” as also highlighted by (Mozin et al., 2025).

Another critical issue identified in this study is the dual burden faced by PTKI, where institutions are required to meet both national accreditation standards and global quality benchmarks simultaneously. This finding supports (Vardasca, 2023), who argues that higher education institutions in developing contexts often struggle to balance local relevance with global competitiveness. Additionally, the limited integration of Islamic epistemology into accreditation frameworks indicates the need for more contextualised and culturally responsive quality assurance models, particularly for faith-based institutions.

Moreover, the study highlights the financial burden of accreditation as a significant barrier, especially for private institutions. The high cost of accreditation, combined with additional expenses for documentation and digitalisation, may shift the perception of accreditation from a quality improvement tool to an administrative burden. This issue has also been identified in recent higher education policy studies, which emphasise the need for more inclusive funding models and differentiated accreditation approaches (Özen, 2022); (Kareva et al., 2023).

Despite these challenges, the findings indicate a positive direction of transformation. LAMDIK has successfully fostered a shift in quality culture within PTKI, where quality is increasingly understood as a continuous, reflective, and performance-based process. The strengthening of Quality Assurance Institutions (LPM), integration of accreditation instruments with internal systems, and emphasis on research productivity and global collaboration demonstrate alignment with global quality assurance frameworks (Henik, 2024; Jomezai et al., 2025; Sibawaihi et al., 2025).

Overall, this study confirms that LAMDIK plays a strategic role in bridging national quality assurance policies with global higher education standards. The transformation of accreditation into a developmental and transformative process provides a strong foundation for enhancing the quality, relevance, and competitiveness of Islamic higher education institutions in the era of digitalisation and globalisation.

CONCLUSION

This study uncovers a fundamental and, in some respects, unexpected transformation in LAMDIK's role within the quality assurance system of Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKI). The findings reveal that LAMDIK has evolved beyond its traditional role as an administrative accreditation body to become a strategic catalyst for institutional change. This shift is not only structural but also paradigmatic, moving from a compliance-based approach to a performance- and outcome-oriented accreditation model. Notably, accreditation is increasingly viewed by study programs as a reflective and developmental tool rather than merely a procedural requirement. Empirical data from UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, UIN North Sumatra, and STAI Aceh Tamiang demonstrate that LAMDIK has effectively driven improvements in governance, curriculum alignment with Outcome-Based Education (OBE), research productivity, and international collaboration. Nevertheless, ongoing challenges-especially regarding digital readiness, human resource capacity, and the contextualization of Islamic epistemology-indicate that this transformation remains uneven across institutions.

This study contributes to the higher education quality assurance literature by offering a contextualized understanding of accreditation transformation within Islamic higher education. It confirms prior findings that accreditation systems are moving toward outcome-based and performance-driven models, while also expanding the discussion by illustrating how this transformation unfolds specifically within PTKI contexts. Notably, the study introduces a new perspective by framing LAMDIK not only as a regulatory authority but also as a facilitator of quality culture and a catalyst for institutional transformation. The integration of national accreditation frameworks with global quality standards, alongside the incorporation of Islamic epistemological values, provides a unique conceptual contribution. Consequently, this research enriches the quality assurance discourse by emphasizing the dynamic interaction among globalization, digitalization, and religion-based higher education systems.

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, it is based on a limited number of cases-three PTKIs-which may not fully capture the diversity of Islamic higher education institutions across Indonesia. Second, the focus on education study programs restricts the generalizability of the findings to other disciplinary fields. Third, variations in institutional capacity, geographical context, and resource availability were not examined in depth. Methodologically, while the qualitative multi-case approach offers rich insights, it may limit the broader generalizability of the results.

Future research is therefore recommended to broaden the scope by including a larger and more diverse range of institutions, utilizing mixed-method approaches, and investigating the longitudinal impacts of accreditation transformation. Additionally, further studies should explore the integration of Islamic epistemology into accreditation frameworks, the advancement of digital-based quality assurance systems, and the relationship between accreditation outcomes and graduate employability on a global scale. Such research will provide a more comprehensive understanding and support the development of more adaptive and inclusive higher education quality policies.

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