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Preparation And Accreditation Process Of Integrated Islamic Elementary Education Institutions: A Case Study At Sdit Al Hidayah Samarinda

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Abstract

Accreditation serves as a strategic instrument with a crucial role in quality assurance efforts for integrated Islamic primary educational institutions in Indonesia. This study aims to thoroughly describe the preparation and implementation process of accreditation, identify supporting and inhibiting factors that influence the process, and analyze the institutional response and follow-up actions toward accreditation obtained results at SDIT Al Hidayah. This research employed a qualitative approach with an exploratory and contextual single case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with purposively selected informants and a relevant literature review, subsequently analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The findings indicate that accreditation preparation was conducted regularly through the establishment of an internal accreditation team, implementation of data-based school self-evaluation, and comprehensive fulfillment of all eight national education standards in a planned and structured manner. Supporting factors for success included visionary school leadership, internal team cohesiveness, and technical guidance from the JSIT parent institution, while the primary obstacles encountered were operational budget constraints and a weak institutional documentation culture. Following accreditation, the institution responded constructively by translating all assessor recommendations into measurable school work plans. This study firmly affirms that accreditation functions not merely as a formal assessment instrument, but as a genuine catalyst for sustainable quality transformation within integrated Islamic primary education.

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Keywords:school accreditation, education quality, integrated Islamic primary school

INTRODUCTION

Integrated Islamic education in Indonesia has experienced significant development over the past two decades. The emergence of Integrated Islamic Elementary Schools (SDIT), a form of educational institution that integrates the national curriculum with Islamic values, has received an overwhelming response from the public. This phenomenon is inextricably linked to the growing awareness among Muslim parents of the importance of education that not only excels academically but also fosters character and morals in children from an early age. In this context, the quality of educational institutions is a paramount concern, and accreditation serves as the official state instrument for measuring and ensuring these standards of eligibility.(Rivaldy et al., 2024).

Accreditation of educational institutions in Indonesia is conducted by the National Accreditation Board for Schools/Madrasahs (BAN-S/M) based on eight National Education Standards (SNP), which cover standards for content, process, graduate competencies, educators and education personnel, facilities and infrastructure, management, financing, and educational assessment. For integrated Islamic educational institutions, the accreditation process is particularly complex because it must accommodate two systems simultaneously: the curriculum from the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Islamic standards from the Integrated Islamic School Network (JSIT). This requires thorough managerial readiness, orderly documentation, and the commitment of all stakeholders to meet each required indicator.(Arif et al., 2025).

In the context of integrated Islamic educational institutions, the existence of SDIT as an educational unit with a dual institutional identity demands a more holistic and comprehensive approach to quality management. Unlike public schools that only refer to one assessment system, SDIT must prove its worthiness from two directions simultaneously: meeting government standards through BAN-S/M while maintaining Islamic standards that are the institution's main differentiator in the eyes of the public. This condition makes the accreditation process at SDIT not just a routine administrative agenda, but a comprehensive institutional test of managerial capacity, pedagogical, and the values that have been the foundation of the institution since its inception.(Hanim et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the exponential growth in the number of Islamic Elementary Schools (SDIT) across Indonesia presents new challenges in ensuring equal quality across institutions. Not all established SDITs possess equal human resource capacity, infrastructure, and governance, making

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the gap in quality across institutions a significant issue. Accreditation, in this context, serves not only as a screening tool for eligibility but also as a reflection of the extent to which an institution has truly carried out its mission of providing quality and responsible educational services to the community.(Ummi Hani' et al., 2023).

However, various studies show that many integrated Islamic educational institutions still face serious obstacles in preparing for accreditation. These obstacles include weak document management, a lack of understanding of accreditation instruments among principals and teachers, a limited dedicated budget for quality development, and suboptimal involvement of school committees and parents (Rahmawati, Fauzi, & Ningsih, 2023). This situation demonstrates that accreditation preparation is not merely an administrative matter, but rather involves the readiness of the system and a comprehensive culture of quality within the school organization.

*Gap*The research identified in this review is the lack of studies that specifically capture the process of preparing and implementing accreditation at Islamic elementary schools (SDIT) in depth and based on case studies. Most existing research tends to be quantitative and generalizes findings from various types of schools without considering the unique context of integrated Islamic schools.(Pebriana & Julaiha, 2025). In addition, there are not many studies that explore the internal dynamics of institutions, starting from the planning stage, implementation of self-evaluation, to the institution's response to the accreditation results obtained.(Maduningtias et al., 2022). This is where the novelty of this research lies, namely, presenting a rich and contextual empirical narrative of how one Islamic elementary school (SDIT) actually underwent its accreditation journey with all the challenges and strategies it pursued.

Based on the description above, this study formulates the following main questions: how did the preparation and implementation of accreditation at SDIT Al Hidayah take place, what were the supporting and inhibiting factors, and how did the institution respond to and follow up on the accreditation results? The purpose of this study is to describe in depth the stages of accreditation preparation, identify factors that influence the success of the process, and analyze the corrective steps taken post-accreditation at SDIT Al Hidayah (Kurniawan & Maulida, 2024). Practically, the results of this study are expected to provide concrete guidance for other SDIT institutions preparing for accreditation, as well as provide input for policymakers in designing more targeted quality assistance for integrated Islamic schools in Indonesia (Azizah & Hasanah, 2022).

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RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a single case study design focusing on one specific educational institution. This approach was chosen based on the consideration that the research aims to deeply understand the process of preparing and implementing accreditation at SDIT Al Hidayah, not to measure variables or generalize findings to a wider population. A qualitative approach is considered most appropriate because it is able to capture the complexity of human experience, organizational dynamics, and the meaning behind each process that occurs in the field. With a case study design, researchers can explore in detail how this institution responded, prepared, and underwent each stage of accreditation with all the challenges and strategies that accompany it.(Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

The data sources in this study are divided into two, namely primary data and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews conducted with informants directly involved in the accreditation process at SDIT Al Hidayah. Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, with the criteria that informants have an active role and in-depth knowledge regarding the institutional accreditation process. Informants involved included the principal, the vice principal for curriculum, the accreditation team coordinator, and several senior teachers who contributed to the preparation of institutional documents. The school committee was also involved as additional informants to enrich the perspective from the external side of the institution. The number of informants followed the principle of data saturation, meaning the interview process was stopped when the collected data reached saturation point and no longer yielded significant new information.

Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner using an open-ended questionnaire developed based on the research focus. This questionnaire included questions about accreditation preparation planning, team formation and performance, obstacles encountered during the process, strategies adopted to meet each standard, and follow-up steps taken after receiving the accreditation results. Each interview session was recorded with the full consent of the interviewees and then transcribed verbatim for further analysis. Secondary data were obtained through a literature review that included searching scientific journals, government policies related to accreditation, BAN-S/M regulations, and previous research relevant to the research topic. The literature review served as a theoretical foundation and comparative material to deepen the interpretation of the field findings obtained from the interviews.

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which consists of four stages: data collection, data condensation, data presentation, and

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conclusion drawing. Data condensation was carried out by sorting and focusing interview transcripts on themes relevant to the research questions. The results of the condensation were then presented in the form of descriptive narratives and a thematic matrix for easier interpretation. Conclusions were drawn inductively based on patterns emerging from the data. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation techniques, namely by comparing statements from various informants with different roles within the institution, so that the resulting findings have a level of credibility and trustworthiness that can be scientifically justified.(Sugiyono, 2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Preparation and Implementation Process for Accreditation at SDIT Al Hidayah

The accreditation preparation process at SDIT Al Hidayah took place in stages and was planned well before the official visitation schedule of the BAN-S/M assessor team was set. The institution's initial awareness of the importance of accreditation as a quality assurance instrument became the main foundation that motivated all school components to systematically and comprehensively improve. The first step was the formation of an internal accreditation team consisting of the principal, the vice principal for curriculum, the administrative coordinator, and several senior teachers who had a deep understanding of the accreditation assessment instruments. The formation of this team was not merely an organizational formality, but rather a strategic step to ensure that each component of the preparation was managed by the right people with clear and measurable responsibilities. The principal expressed his views on the urgency of forming a solid team:

"We recognize that accreditation is more than just a formality. It's a true reflection of our commitment to building a quality education system. So, long before the assessor team arrived, we had already begun comprehensive and planned internal improvements."

Once the team is formed, the next step is to conduct an initial mapping of the school's actual conditions by directly comparing them to each indicator listed in the 2020 Educational Unit Accreditation Instrument (IASP). This mapping is conducted carefully and comprehensively to identify which components are already met, which still need strengthening, and which are completely missing. The accreditation team coordinator explained the mapping process in more detail:

"The first step we took was to map all existing and missing documents. We created our own checklist based on the IASP 2020 instrument, then we divided the tasks among each team

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member according to their respective areas to ensure the process was more efficient and minimized overlap."

This initial mapping is essentially part of the School Self-Evaluation (SSE) practice, which is the main foundation of a modern education quality assurance system. The SSE is not treated as a mere administrative document, but rather as an instrument of genuine institutional reflection to identify a school's strengths and weaknesses honestly and based on real data. Self-evaluation practices that are meaningfully integrated into the quality assurance system have been proven to encourage more sustainable and contextual educational improvements, as found in a comparative study of four countries with different education systems.(Gardezi, 2024)Based on the EDS results, the team then developed a structured preparation schedule with a target of completing documents per week, which included fulfilling all eight National Education Standards (SNP) simultaneously and in an integrated manner.

Fulfilling the eight National Standards (SNP) is the core of the institution's entire preparation process. For content and process standards, the deputy head of curriculum ensures that each teacher prepares a complete learning toolkit, from syllabi and lesson plans to structured and relevant teaching materials tailored to student needs. Graduate competency standards are prepared by establishing the institution's flagship programs, reflecting the integration of academic and Islamic values as a hallmark of integrated Islamic schools. Meanwhile, standards for educators and education personnel are strengthened through professional development programs designed to enhance their pedagogical and managerial competencies. The deputy head of curriculum emphasized the importance of consistency between documents and actual practice:

"We ensure that every teacher not only prepares the formal documents but also actually implements them in the classroom. We conduct regular supervision to ensure there's no gap between the plans on paper and the actual practice in the field."

During the accreditation process, the BAN-S/M assessor team conducts on-site visits to verify the conformity of submitted documents with actual conditions on the ground. The visitation process includes in-depth interviews with principals, teachers, administrative staff, school committee members, and students, as well as direct observation of available facilities and infrastructure. Accreditation is essentially a comprehensive assessment process of the eligibility of educational programs, referring to the National Standards of Education (SNP) as a form of public accountability and as a mechanism to motivate institutions to continuously strive to achieve desired quality standards.(Koto, 2024)This visitation process lasted several days and required the entire school community to demonstrate concrete evidence supporting every claim stated in the

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accreditation document. Comprehensive efforts to improve educational quality across all components of the National Education Standards (SNP) have proven to have a significant and sustainable positive impact on the overall quality of educational services.(Islamiya & Noor, 2025).

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Accreditation Process

The accreditation process at SDIT Al Hidayah was not without significant obstacles. On the one hand, several supporting factors significantly strengthened the preparation and implementation of accreditation. On the other hand, several structural and technical obstacles also hindered the institution's efforts to meet all the requirements set by BAN-S/M. An honest and comprehensive understanding of these two dimensions is crucial to providing a complete picture of the reality of accreditation on the ground.

The first clearly identified supporting factor was the principal's visionary leadership, capable of motivating all components of the institution collaboratively and synergistically. Strong and consistent leadership has proven to be a key catalyst in building the quality culture necessary to fully prepare for accreditation. The principal served not only as an administrative coordinator but also as a motivator, capable of maintaining team spirit in the face of the pressure and complexity of the lengthy accreditation preparation process. The second supporting factor was the strong cohesiveness of the accreditation team, where each member clearly understood their role and consistently carried out their respective responsibilities without the need for excessive supervision. One senior teacher actively involved in the team shared his experience:

"We feel this isn't just the accreditation team's responsibility. All teachers are involved, from completing teaching portfolios, preparing physical evidence of student activities, to updating classroom administration. Everyone is working together with a common goal and supporting one another."

This comprehensive involvement of the entire school community reflects the formation of a quality culture, which serves as a crucial foundation for the success of a quality management system in educational institutions. Implementing a quality management system that actively involves all stakeholders has been proven to significantly improve school climate and job satisfaction, as demonstrated in research on schools implementing the ISO 9001 quality management system.(Martínez-Zarzuelo et al., 2022). The third supporting factor is the existence of technical assistance from the parent institution JSIT which periodically provides guidance and direction to its member schools in preparing for accreditation, so that SDIT Al Hidayah does not completely work alone in facing the complexity and challenges of the accreditation process which

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is actually quite heavy. The fourth factor is the active support from the school committee and parents of students who also contribute to meeting the needs of facilities and infrastructure that are still lacking, so that the financial burden of the institution can be distributed more evenly and proportionally.

However, despite these various supporting factors, a number of serious obstacles were also encountered during the process. The primary obstacle was the limited budget to meet all the standard facilities and infrastructure components required by the accreditation instrument. This situation forced the team to prioritize the use of the available budget carefully and prudently. School administrative staff revealed another equally significant technical obstacle, related to documentation:

"The hardest part was gathering all the physical evidence of activities that had been going on for years. Much of it wasn't properly documented because we weren't used to documenting every activity systematically and orderly, as we should have done."

These documentation barriers are structural and are common in educational institutions undergoing the accreditation process for the first time. Budget constraints and weak institutional documentation systems are fundamental issues that drive the need for more comprehensive reform of the accreditation system at the national level to make it more relevant to the actual capacity of educational institutions.(Susetyo & Lie, 2025)Another obstacle was time constraints due to the busy academic activities that took place concurrently with the accreditation preparation period, forcing the team to work under double pressure between meeting daily operational demands and completing the accreditation documentation within a very tight deadline.

To address these obstacles, SDIT Al Hidayah implemented several adaptive strategies that proved quite effective. First, a special documentation task force was formed to systematically track and archive evidence of past activities. Second, budget reallocations were carried out selectively, prioritizing compliance with the most critical standards and those most influential on the final assessment results. Third, communication with the school committee was intensified to garner additional resource support from the parent community, which is highly concerned about the institution's progress. These adaptive strategies reflect the institution's dynamic capacity to address accreditation challenges, in line with the finding that structured and comparative quality assurance measures can produce tangible and measurable quality improvements.(Muhartini et al., 2022).

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Institutional Response and Follow-up to Accreditation Results

An equally crucial stage of the entire accreditation cycle is how the institution responds to and follows up on the results in a meaningful and sustainable manner. At SDIT Al Hidayah, accreditation results are not treated as the end of a formal obligation that must be completed, but rather as the starting point of a more serious, more planned, and more measurable quality improvement cycle than the previous period. The acceptance of the accreditation results is greeted with a reflective and constructive attitude, not with complacency that stops the institution from improving. The principal firmly conveys this institutional commitment to the entire school community:

"Receiving a good accreditation score is not our ultimate goal. It's actually the beginning of a greater responsibility. We use the assessors' recommendations as an improvement agenda that we must complete one by one in a measured and responsible manner."

This institutional stance reflects a genuine and profound internalization of quality assurance values. The assessors' recommendations are then detailed into concrete work programs included in the School Work Plan (RKS) for the following period, with measurable achievement indicators, clear responsibilities, and realistic deadlines. Each recommendation is treated as a priority for improvement that must be followed up consistently, not simply a note kept in an archive without concrete action. Consistent and structured quality assurance in education has been proven to increase the competitiveness of institutions while providing real assurance to the community in choosing truly high-quality schools for their children.(Sakdiyah et al., 2024).

In addition to translating assessor recommendations into concrete work plans, the accreditation process also triggered a fundamental shift in work culture within SDIT Al Hidayah. One of the most tangible and noticeable changes was the increased awareness among all teaching and administrative staff of the importance of orderly, consistent, and continuous activity documentation as part of their daily work routine. This change did not occur instantly, but rather resulted from the internalization of values formed during the long and challenging accreditation preparation process. A senior teacher shared the tangible transformation she experienced personally:

"After accreditation, we've become more disciplined in documenting every learning activity. Now, every activity is immediately photographed, recorded, and neatly archived. This is a new habit formed through the accreditation process, and it's been very helpful in streamlining our daily work."

This shift in work culture has very positive long-term implications for overall institutional

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development. Research shows that strong school governance significantly impacts teacher quality and the learning process, which ultimately has a direct impact on overall student learning outcomes.(Susetyo & Lie, 2025)This change at the organizational culture level is far more meaningful than simply fulfilling paperwork, as it fundamentally and sustainably transforms the way the entire school community thinks and works. The school committee also feels the positive impact of this change, as the institution's transparency and accountability significantly improve post-accreditation.

Furthermore, SDIT Al Hidayah has also begun developing an indicator-based internal quality monitoring system that can be monitored periodically and independently, so that the actual condition of the quality of educational services can be known continuously without having to wait for the next accreditation cycle. This system is designed to provide early warnings if any quality components begin to decline, so that corrective actions can be taken immediately before the problem escalates into a larger and more complex one. The accreditation team coordinator explained the system development plan:

"We don't want to just focus on accreditation. We're currently building our own internal monitoring system so we know the true state of our school's quality at all times and can act immediately if there are any deficiencies."

The overall response and follow-up actions taken by SDIT Al Hidayah after its accreditation confirm that accreditation, when understood deeply and carried out with sincerity, is truly the most powerful instrument of institutional transformation within Indonesia's integrated Islamic education ecosystem. Effective accreditation not only produces a certificate of administrative eligibility but also transforms the way an institution works, thinks, and develops organizationally toward higher and more sustainable quality standards over time.(Muhartini et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the results of research conducted at SDIT Al Hidayah, it can be concluded that the preparation and implementation of accreditation were carried out systematically through the formation of a solid internal team, mapping institutional conditions based on the 2020 IASP instrument, fulfilling the eight National Education Standards, and implementing honest and data-based School Self-Evaluation. Supporting factors for successful accreditation include the principal's visionary leadership, team cohesion, JSIT mentoring, and school committee support, while the main obstacles faced were budget constraints and a weak institutional documentation culture. Post-accreditation, the institution responded constructively to the assessment results by

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translating assessor recommendations into concrete work plans, establishing an internal quality monitoring system, and transforming the work culture of all school members towards higher standards. Thus, accreditation has proven to function not merely as a formal assessment instrument, but as a catalyst for the sustainable transformation of the quality of integrated Islamic education.

As a recommendation, other integrated Islamic educational institutions are advised to begin accreditation preparations well before the visitation schedule is set by establishing an orderly documentation system from the start of school operations. The government and BAN-S/M are expected to strengthen technical assistance programs for integrated Islamic schools with complex dual curricula, so that the accreditation process can be more fair, equitable, and meaningful for all educational institutions in Indonesia.

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