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Quality Accreditation for Quality Education

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Abstract. Educational accreditation is a strategic instrument to ensure and improve the quality of education through systematic evaluation based on established national standards. In Indonesia, accreditation is legally mandated as part of the national education system and functions not merely as formal recognition, but as a comprehensive quality mapping mechanism to support continuous school improvement. This article examines the role of school accreditation in promoting quality-oriented educational practices by positioning accreditation as a form of self-regulation that enables schools to identify their strengths and weaknesses. The discussion highlights that, in practice, accreditation is often narrowly interpreted as an administrative requirement to obtain official status, resulting in short-term performance improvements only during the assessment period. Ideally, accreditation outcomes should serve as constructive feedback for school development, capacity building, and sustainable quality enhancement. The article further emphasizes the benefits of accreditation for various stakeholders, including school leaders, teachers, students, government, and the community, particularly in strengthening accountability, transparency, and public trust. As an external quality assurance mechanism, accreditation contributes to educational planning, policy formulation, and equitable distribution of support and resources. Ultimately, accreditation should be understood as an ongoing process that reflects the real conditions of educational institutions and supports the achievement of high-quality education at local, regional, and national levels.

Keywords: accreditation; educational quality; quality assurance; school accountability; national education standards

INTRODUCTION

Educational accreditation, or school accreditation, is defined in Undang-Undang Nomor 20 Tahun 2003 concerning the National Education System, which states that accreditation is the activity of assessing the feasibility of educational unit programs based on established criteria [1]. Accreditation is carried out to determine the eligibility of educational programs and units at every level, type, and educational pathway (formal and non-formal). The accreditation process is carried out by the government and/or independent institutions, ensuring high public accountability. In its implementation, the accreditation process is based on the principle of transparency. More technically, the regulations for implementing accreditation are stipulated in Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset dan Teknologi Nomor 38 Tahun 2023, with instruments stipulated in Keputusan Menteri Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset dan Teknologi Nomor 246/O/2024 [2] [3].

School accreditation aims to provide quality educational services and can be positioned as a self-regulation tool, enabling schools to identify and understand their strengths and weaknesses [4]. In this case, school accreditation is a means to make continuous efforts to improve the strengths of the school and improve its weaknesses. The school accreditation process must reach the point of being open and providing confidence to all stakeholders, both the school community (teachers, students and parents) and the general public, that the school has and will implement various school work programs with its resources seriously so that a quality education process can occur so that it can produce quality outputs.

METHODS

This article is based on an in-depth review of various written sources relevant to the topic of educational accreditation. Data and study materials were obtained through the search and analysis of official documents, such as laws, ministerial regulations, and ministerial decrees governing the educational accreditation system and instruments in Indonesia. Furthermore, the author reviewed previous research published in national scientific journals to strengthen his arguments and enrich his theoretical perspective on the role of accreditation in ensuring and improving educational quality.

The analysis was conducted using a descriptive-analytical approach, describing the concept, function, and benefits of school accreditation, then critically analyzing these to explain the gap between the ideal goals of accreditation and actual practices. This approach enabled the author to develop a conceptual synthesis of

accreditation as an instrument for quality mapping, public accountability, and the sustainable development and development of educational units.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In practice, school accreditation is often understood as a means of obtaining formal status and recognition, while its true meaning remains largely unknown and undecided [5]. School productivity appears to increase when accreditation is underway, with all administrative tools prepared in accordance with existing instruments. However, once accreditation is completed and recognition is achieved, the productivity of school components returns to normal. In reality, accreditation is carried out to obtain an overview of school performance that can be used as a tool for coaching, developing, and improving the quality of education at that school.

The primary benefit of accreditation is to serve as a reference for quality improvement efforts and school development plans, as the results provide feedback for empowering and developing the performance of the school community [6]. For school principals, accreditation results are expected to serve as information for mapping indicators of school eligibility, the performance of the school community, and the principal's performance during their term of office. Principals also need accreditation results as input for program development and the school's revenue and expenditure budget. Meanwhile, for teachers, accreditation encourages them to continuously improve themselves and work hard to provide excellent service to students in order to maintain and improve school quality. Furthermore, teachers enjoy working at a school recognized for its quality.

Accreditation results in continuous self-improvement and hard work in providing the best service to students in order to maintain and improve school quality [7]. Therefore, students will develop confidence that they are receiving a quality education and attending a quality school. Therefore, school accreditation serves the following functions:

Knowledge, namely providing information about the school's suitability based on various related elements that refer to national education standards.

Accountability, as a form of school accountability to the community.

Coaching and development, as a basis for schools, the community, and the government in efforts to develop and improve school quality.

Accreditation can serve as a benchmark for efforts to improve educational quality, ensure the implementation of the vision, mission, and objectives of school programs, and enhance the competitiveness of education quality from the district/city to the national level [8]. Accreditation can facilitate the identification of assistance from the government, the community, or the private sector, whether in the form of training, coaching, or funding. For the government, accreditation serves as a form of assurance and control, as well as a manifestation of public accountability for the quality of educational program units in the Republic of Indonesia. Mapping of educational quality can be conducted to provide coaching programs to each educational unit, and the control function can be implemented so that stakeholders in the education sector work together to achieve quality educational services. For the public, accreditation of educational units represents a reflection of quality, as the primary customer of an educational institution.

Accreditation is a crucial part of obtaining information about the actual conditions of an educational institution based on established minimum standards, leading to targeted educational planning that achieves the goal of quality national education [9]. Accreditation is an effort to accelerate and encourage school growth and development, as well as motivating schools to compete to improve themselves in order to achieve established standards.

Accreditation plays a role in creating a set of quality standards for all educational institutions and programs, as well as maintaining stakeholder trust regarding the provision of education [10]. The results of accreditation and school accountability will increase public trust. When an educational institution or agency is properly accredited, the public can draw conclusions about the overall quality of education delivery.

Accreditation is a form of external quality assurance for educational units, the results of which benefit both the educational unit and its governing body, as the results provide an evaluation of the school's achievements [11]. Quality in educational units means producing and providing the best, aiming to meet or even exceed established standards. Therefore, accreditation results, as input from external parties regarding the overall feasibility of educational programs, are beneficial for meeting national education standards and as a means of fostering, improving, developing, and mapping the quality of education within the educational unit, which ultimately influences the mapping of educational quality throughout the Republic of Indonesia. The meaning of accreditation is more than just an assessment of an educational unit. Accreditation can be interpreted as a realistic depiction of the current condition of an educational unit, so that a guidance and

development plan can be designed, as well as a mapping of educational quality, from the educational unit, regionally, to nationally.

CONCLUSION

Accreditation is a strategic instrument for ensuring and improving educational quality. It serves more than just a form of formal assessment or recognition of educational institutions. Furthermore, accreditation serves as a means of mapping educational quality, providing a clear picture of the condition, performance, and level of achievement of national education standards within educational institutions. Through accreditation, schools can identify their strengths and weaknesses and thus design sustainable improvement and development efforts.

In practice, accreditation is often narrowly interpreted as an administrative activity to obtain a certain status, resulting in temporary and unsustainable improvements in school performance. However, accreditation results should be used as constructive feedback for schools, principals, and teachers to improve the quality of educational services, school management, and student learning outcomes.

Furthermore, accreditation plays a crucial role in strengthening public accountability and public trust in the quality of education delivery. For the government, accreditation serves as a basis for quality control, policy formulation, and targeted guidance and mentoring of educational institutions. Thus, accreditation must be understood and implemented as a continuous process that is oriented towards improving the quality of education in a systematic, planned and sustainable manner, in order to support the realization of quality national education.

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