

## **SCHOOL ACCREDITATION SYSTEM: DEFINITION OF ACCREDITATION, BASIS FOR IMPLEMENTATION, AND SCOPE**

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### **Abstract**

This research critically examines the conceptualization of school accreditation, the legal foundations of its implementation, and its scope within the context of national education governance, with a focus on analyzing the role of the National Accreditation Board for Schools and Madrasahs as an independent evaluative body under the coordination of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology. Adopting a qualitative paradigm through a systematic literature review design, this research analyzes a corpus of regulatory documents, particularly Law No. 20 of 2003 along with related regulations on National Education Standards, as well as a curated synthesis of scientific literature from reputable journals and academic publications. The findings indicate that accreditation operates on multiple levels: in addition to serving as an instrument of external verification across the eight domains of educational standards (graduate competencies, curriculum content, teaching practices, educator resources, infrastructure, institutional management, funding allocation, and assessment systems), this practice also functions as a mechanism for continuous quality improvement within the school ecosystem. Therefore, the integrity of the accreditation process—which prioritizes objectivity and transparency—is a fundamental prerequisite for maintaining public accountability and enhancing stakeholders' trust in quality educational services.

**Keywords:** school accreditation, quality assurance, national education standards, school system.

## INTRODUCTION

Education serves as a fundamental pillar in the construction of a nation's civilization, while also acting as a strategic instrument in preparing a golden generation capable of adapting to the dynamics of globalization and technological disruption. Within the context of Indonesia's national education, efforts to elevate the quality of learning have undergone a paradigm shift from conventional approaches toward a structured quality assurance system, in which school accreditation has transformed into a key governance mechanism that integrates national standardization with international benchmarking. Unlike conventional administrative evaluation practices, contemporary accreditation operates at a comprehensive epistemological level—assessing the educational ecosystem holistically from inputs, processes, to outcomes—to foster a sustainable culture of continuous improvement. Recent empirical evidence validates that the implementation of accreditation, combined with pedagogical leadership and institutional commitment, can produce a multiplier effect: significant improvements in instructional quality, optimization of educational services, and a substantial increase in students' competency achievements (Setiyani dkk., 2025).

The conceptual foundation of education within the Indonesian legal framework—as enshrined in No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System—defines education as a deliberate and structured practice designed to create a conducive learning ecosystem, enabling learners to actualize their multidimensional potential, encompassing spiritual, self-control, personal integrity, intellectual, moral, and technical competencies, in order to contribute to both individual and collective national existence (H. A. R. Tilaar, 2012; Kemendikbud, 2003).

This educational modality is realized through a spectrum of formal, non-formal, and informal learning pathways (Coombs, P. H., & Ahmed, M., 1974), where formal education is institutionalized within a tiered educational system, ranging from elementary schools, junior high schools, to senior high schools. In line with the constitutional mandate of Article 5, Paragraph 1 of the National Education System Law, which affirms the equality of citizens' rights to quality education, there is a methodological imperative for every educational institution to undergo the accreditation process as a mechanism for verifying eligibility and excellence—ensuring that educational standards are not merely met but prioritized in operational practices to fulfill the promise of quality to education stakeholders (Republik Indonesia, 2013).

Sustainable educational quality cannot be achieved without a foundation of superior teaching practices within educational institutions (Hattie, J., 2009), given that the pedagogical dynamics occurring in the classroom are the most authentic indicator of an educational institution's excellence or shortcomings. The essence of quality learning is fundamentally reflected in teachers' professional competencies—including their capacity to design differentiated instruction, implement active learning strategies,

and conduct responsive formative assessments—as key actors in the social engineering of shaping the nation’s golden generation (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Shulman, 1987).

This vision of transformation is reinforced by the normative mandate of Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 20 of 2003, Chapter II, Article 3, which conceptualizes national education as a strategic instrument for actualizing integrative human capital: faithful and devout to the One and Only God, possessing noble character, physical resilience, broad knowledge, skills, creativity, independence, and a commitment to civic duty within the framework of constitutional democracy (Kemendikbud, 2003; Republik Indonesia, 2013).

High-quality education does not materialize automatically at every level of education; rather, it requires a systematic quality assurance mechanism through two complementary channels: internal quality assurance, implemented by the educational institution itself through the practices of self-assessment and continuous academic audits, as well as external quality assurance realized through the accreditation process as an independent evaluative mechanism (Deming, W. E., 1986; Stufflebeam, D. L., & Shinkfield, A. J., 2007).

Accreditation, within the epistemological context of educational quality assurance, functions as an assessment of the program’s suitability based on standardized criteria that ensure objectivity, transparency, and public accountability. Specifically, for the elementary and secondary school levels, the authority to conduct accreditation falls under the coordination of the National Accreditation Board for Schools/Madrasahs as the mandated institution with the legitimacy to perform external verification of compliance with national education standards (BAN-S/M., 2020; Kemendikbud, 2016).

Optimizing school productivity is a multidimensional construct influenced by a spectrum of interdependent variables, including the availability of educational infrastructure, the dynamics of teacher motivation, the quality of the learning environment, the consistency of academic supervision practices by institutional leadership, and accreditation mechanisms as external instruments. Among these factors, accreditation stands out as a dominant determinant because it encompasses a comprehensive evaluation of eight critical domains: curriculum and teaching practices, school governance, institutional structure, facilities and infrastructure, educator competencies, student participation, stakeholder engagement, and educational organizational culture. This holistic nature positions accreditation as a strategic catalyst for driving substantial improvements in school productivity. By definition, accreditation operates as a process of institutional eligibility assessment based on standardized criteria formulated and implemented by the National Accreditation Board for Schools/Madrasahs, with the output being a hierarchical recognition of eligibility rankings that serve as a public benchmark for the quality of educational services (BAN-S/M., 2020; Maulana, 2022).

Accreditation serves as a strategic tool within the educational quality assurance ecosystem, particularly in the context of the structural transformations of the reform era, which demand the realization of the principles of equitable access, curricular relevance, operational efficiency, and quality excellence. Operationally, the accreditation process is designed to produce a diagnostic mapping of the institutional performance of madrasahs/schools, which then serves as an empirical foundation for continuous improvement interventions (continuous improvement cycle). The mandate for implementing accreditation in Indonesia stems from the constitutional imperative that every citizen has the right to quality education—a public promise that requires every educational institution to undergo a verification of compliance with established national standards. At the implementation level, accreditation serves as a leveraging mechanism that catalyzes improvements in the quality of learning, based on the assumption that transformations in instructional processes will generate a multiplier effect on overall educational outcomes (Harvey & Green, 1993).

The effectiveness of this mechanism depends on the rigor of the formative evaluation cycle—including diagnostic assessments, progressive monitoring, identification of performance gaps, and structured coaching interventions—which is exclusively carried out by the National Accreditation Board for Schools/Madrasahs as the mandated authority. Therefore, the institutionalization of accreditation for all educational institutions is an indispensable prerequisite for creating a high-quality learning ecosystem and a sustainably accountable education system (BAN-S/M., 2020).

Accreditation policy has been repositioned as a governance instrument that transcends the mere function of administrative legality, positioning itself as a mechanism for public accountability as well as a catalyst for strengthening institutional capacity within the national education ecosystem. In line with the contemporary public service reform paradigm, accreditation has transformed into a strategic pillar that orchestrates improvements in the accessibility and excellence of educational services through the principles of transparency, equity, and evaluative comprehensiveness. (Schles & Robertson, 2019)

The evolution of this instrument reached its climax with the development of the 2020 School/Madrasah Accreditation Instrument (IASP), which epistemologically shifts the focus from input-based verification toward quality-based performance assessment across four critical domains: graduate competency outcomes, quality of teaching practices, educator professionalism, and the effectiveness of institutional governance—a paradigm shift that reflects a commitment to outcome-oriented education (BAN-S/M., 2020; Republik Indonesia., 2005)

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to deeply understand and

describe the concept, underlying principles, and scope of school accreditation within the Indonesian school system. Through this approach, the researcher seeks to comprehensively examine the phenomenon of accreditation from the perspectives of policy, regulation, and educational quality assurance concepts.

This study is a literature review (library research) that utilizes secondary data as its primary source. Data were obtained through the analysis of various official documents, laws and regulations, as well as scientific literature relevant to the research topic. One of the primary legal foundations analyzed is Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System. Additionally, this research examines accreditation documents and guidelines published by the National Accreditation Board for Primary and Secondary Education, as well as various academic sources such as books and scientific journals discussing educational quality assurance.

Data collection was conducted through document analysis and a literature review. The researcher identified, classified, and examined the content of documents related to national education standards and the school accreditation system. The collected data was then analyzed using content analysis, which includes the stages of data processing, systematic presentation of data, and drawing conclusions based on findings relevant to the research focus.

To ensure the validity of the data, this research employed a source triangulation method, which involved comparing various regulations, official documents, and scholarly references to ensure the consistency and validity of the information. Through this method, the study aims to provide a clear, systematic, and in-depth overview of the implementation of accreditation within the Indonesian school system.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Research findings indicate that school accreditation has a significant impact on improving the quality of elementary schools, as the accreditation process encourages schools to engage in systematic self-reflection and continuous improvement through feedback mechanisms generated by external evaluations of teaching practices, school management, and the overall delivery of education, thereby fostering a stronger internal culture of quality (Sari, R. P., et. al., 2025).

Furthermore, accreditation contributes to increased stakeholder satisfaction, as the transparent, standards-based evaluation process fosters public trust in the quality of educational services provided by schools, among both parents of students and education policymakers (Irma & Suparto, 2025).

Further implications are evident in student learning outcomes, where findings indicate a positive correlation between higher accreditation ratings and student academic performance as well as the quality of teaching staff, reflected in learning achievements, active engagement in the learning process, and improved pedagogical

competencies of teachers as part of the school's efforts to meet educational quality standards (Ridho, 2024).

School accreditation is a comprehensive evaluation mechanism for the quality of educational programs based on the National Education Standards, conducted by the government or an authorized independent agency as a form of objective, transparent, and comprehensive public accountability (Awaludin, 2017). This process serves to assess educational quality, provide information on institutional eligibility, and recommend steps for quality improvement and school/madrasah development based on facts and measurable indicators (Maulana, 2022).

Meanwhile, quality—often referred to simply as “quality”—is a comprehensive description of the characteristics of a good or service that indicates its ability to satisfy the needs of users. In the context of school education, educational quality always refers to the specifications of educational services that align with the objectives or benefits of education itself. The meaning of educational quality lies with the users of educational services; however, this does not imply that educational quality lacks standards. The specifications of educational services in schools are always guided by educational standards established by the government (Rogala & Wawak, 2021).

Thus, accreditation serves not only as an evaluative tool but also as a strategic driver for improving educational quality, which directly impacts the effectiveness of learning and student learning outcomes.

#### 1. Purpose of Accreditation

- a. To evaluate and determine the suitability of educational programs.
- b. To provide formal recognition of the quality of schools/madrasahs.
- c. To ensure public accountability of educational institutions.
- d. To map the quality of educational institutions as a basis for guidance and quality improvement.

#### 2. Benefits of Accreditation

- a. To provide feedback for internal quality improvement.
- b. To serve as a tool for self-regulation and institutional strengthening.
- c. To enhance public trust in educational institutions.
- d. Serving as a basis for policy considerations by both local and central governments.

#### 3. Foundations of Accreditation Implementation

The implementation of school accreditation in Indonesia is inseparable from its legal, philosophical, and operational foundations, which are integrated within a national education quality assurance system.

##### a. Legally

The constitutional basis for school accreditation is enshrined in Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System (Sisdiknas), which emphasizes the assurance of educational quality through evaluation, accreditation, and

certification of graduate competencies. Article 54(1) of the Sisdiknas Law mandates local governments to implement quality assurance at the elementary and secondary levels, operationalized through Government Regulation No. 19 of 2005 and Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Regulation No. 54 of 2015. This regulatory framework provides constitutional legitimacy for the National Accreditation Board for Schools/Madrasahs as a legitimate and binding external quality assurance authority (BAN-S/M., 2020; Kemendikbud, 2003, 2016).

b. Philosophically

The foundation of school accreditation is rooted in the paradigms of democratic accountability and public trust in education. In a democratic society, educational institutions that utilize public resources—whether in the form of state budgets or public trust—are obligated to be accountable for their performance to stakeholders. Within this framework, accreditation functions as a mechanism of the social contract that affirms a school’s commitment to providing quality education in accordance with public expectations. As stated by (Stensaker, B., & Harvey, L. (Eds.), 2011), “Quality assurance mechanisms serve as the bridge between institutional autonomy and societal responsibility, ensuring that educational institutions remain responsive to the communities they serve.” This philosophy aligns with the concept that the quality of education is assessed not only by the fulfillment of internal standards but also by the relevance and contribution of graduates to national development (Irwan, 2025).

c. Operational Aspects

The operational foundation of school accreditation is embodied in a system of eight National Education Standards—covers content, processes, graduate competencies, faculty and staff, facilities and infrastructure, management, funding, and assessment—which serve as measurable evaluative benchmarks based on the input-process-output-outcome model. This approach enables a holistic assessment of the educational ecosystem and effectively identifies quality bottlenecks while formulating specific improvement recommendations (Sallis, 2014). The integration of legal, philosophical and operational foundations forms a solid basis for accreditation; however, its implementation faces challenges related to assessor capacity, consistency across regions, and budget constraints. Synergy among the central government, local governments, and the educator community is a strategic imperative to strengthen the accreditation infrastructure so that it remains relevant to the dynamics of basic education in the Society era (Surono & Jusuf, 2025).

4. Scope of School System Accreditation

The scope of accreditation includes a comprehensive evaluation of all components of education delivery based on the National Education Standards, which are stipulated in Government Regulation No. 32 of 2013 as the minimum criteria for the national education system (Republik Indonesia, 2013). The eight areas of the National Education Standards that serve as benchmarks for assessment include:

a. Content Standards

Content standards also cover the scope of modules and the level of proficiency required to achieve graduate competencies at a specific educational level and type of learning. Content standards consist of: (1) Curriculum documents, (2) Availability of syllabi for each subject, (3) Availability of syllabi for local content, counseling, extracurricular activities, and personal development, (4) Availability of plans for the internalization of national character and culture, (5) Curriculum components, (6) Curriculum organization mechanisms, (7) Principles of curriculum implementation, (8) Course load, (9) Approval by the competent authority, (10) Academic calendar.

b. Process Standards

In this context, the Lesson Plan (RPP) is a plan for face-to-face educational activities for one or more sessions. The Lesson Plan is derived from the syllabus to focus students' educational activities on achieving the Basic Competencies (KD). Every teacher in a learning unit is obligated to develop a comprehensive and systematic RPP based on the following principles: (1) Considering individual differences, (2) Student-centered, (3) Promoting a culture of reading and writing, (4) Emphasizing applied skills to produce competent students in line with their expertise, including the implementation of the teaching factory approach, (5) Providing feedback and follow-up, (6) The interconnection and integration of Core Competencies, educational modules, educational activities, Competency Achievement Indicators, evaluation, and learning resources as a unified whole, and general subject education must support the achievement of vocational competency skills.

c. Graduate Competency Standards

The Graduate Competency Standards establish criteria for professional qualifications that encompass behavioral, knowledge, and skill dimensions, serving as the fundamental framework for the development of seven other supporting standards within the educational ecosystem. This framework reflects the competency profile of students expected to be achieved upon completion of their studies at the elementary and secondary education levels, while also serving as an integrative benchmark for standards of content, process, evaluation, human resources, infrastructure, governance, and education funding.

d. Standards for Educators and Educational Personnel

The Standards for Educators and Educational Personnel, as stipulated in Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia No. 19 of 2005 on National Education Standards, require five essential criteria for teaching staff. First, educators must meet academic qualifications and professional competencies as agents of learning, possess physical and spiritual integrity, and be capable of realizing national educational goals—including the roles of teachers, lecturers, counselors, facilitators, and other educational professionals according to their respective specializations (Article 28, Paragraph 1). Second, academic qualifications refer to the minimum level of education demonstrated through a diploma or relevant competency certification in accordance with applicable regulations. Third, educational competencies at the elementary, secondary, and early childhood education levels encompass four domains: pedagogical, personal, professional, and social (Article 28, Paragraph 3). Fourth, this provision applies to individuals who do not yet possess formal qualification documents. Fifth, the enhancement of academic qualifications and teaching competencies is an ongoing prerequisite for the professional development of educational personnel (Republik Indonesia., 2005).

e. Standards for facilities and infrastructure

Educational facilities and infrastructure, as conceptualized by Soetjipto (2004), encompass all movable and immovable assets that functionally support the delivery of the learning process—whether through direct contribution or indirect mediation. As critical infrastructure components, facilities and infrastructure enable the school ecosystem to operate optimally in creating meaningful learning experiences. In the context of curriculum implementation, school facilities serve as a concrete medium that facilitates the transfer of knowledge and the development of students' vocational competencies through applied practice and adequate skill simulations.

f. Management Standards

Education management standards establish criteria for the planning, implementation, and monitoring of educational activities at the school and national levels to optimize the efficiency and effectiveness of education deliver. At the elementary and secondary levels, school-based management emphasizes the principles of autonomy, partnership, participation, transparency, and public accountability. Operational practices encompass a continuous cycle: program planning integrated into the school's vision, mission, and work plan; execution grounded in pedagogical leadership; and monitoring and evaluation supported by a data management system to ensure transparent and responsive governance.

g. Funding Standards

These educational funding standards represent the minimum budget required for an educational institution to conduct educational activities throughout the year. Funding here includes capital expenditures, operational expenditures, and personnel costs. Funding standards are regulated by Ministry of Education Regulation No. 41 of 2007. This regulation specifies the minimum funding that must be allocated for each educational unit and each educational program. Non-personnel operational expenditures include: school stationery expenses (ATS), costs for consumable materials and supplies (BAHP), maintenance and minor repair costs, energy and service costs, transportation or official travel costs, operational expenses, insurance costs, student development or extracurricular activity costs, competency assessment costs, industrial work practice costs, and reporting costs (Badan Standar Nasional Pendidikan, 2007).

h. Assessment Standards

Assessment can be defined as the process of collecting and analyzing data to measure students' learning outcomes (Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation No. 66 of 2013). Assessment is a series of activities designed to collect, analyze, and interpret information about students' learning processes and outcomes, conducted in a systematic and ongoing manner, so that the resulting data can inform decision-making. Evaluation can be conducted throughout the course of education (process evaluation) and after education has been completed (Kemendikbud, 2013)

## CONCLUSION

School accreditation is a comprehensive evaluation mechanism carried out systematically to assess the suitability and quality of educational institutions based on a framework of national standards, while also serving as an external quality assurance instrument that drives continuous transformation within Indonesia's educational ecosystem. Grounded in robust regulations and encompassing comprehensive dimensions ranging from graduate competencies to financial management, the accreditation process not only reinforces public accountability in the delivery of education but also serves as a strategic catalyst in realizing educational services that are high-quality, transparent, and adaptable to the demands of the evolving times.

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