



Developing a school quality ecosystem in Tapin Regency: A best practice of accreditation enhancement by the principal of SMP IT An-Nur

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Abstract

School accreditation is a strategic instrument in the education quality assurance system that not only serves as an evaluation of the suitability of educational units, but also as a driver for continuous quality improvement. However, high accreditation achievements do not always reflect the formation of an integrated school quality ecosystem, especially in regions that still face challenges in equalizing education quality. This study aims to describe and analyze good practices in strengthening accreditation through the development of a school quality ecosystem at SMP IT An-Nur in Tapin Regency. The study used a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques in the form of document review, observation, and interviews. Data were analyzed through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, and validated through triangulation of sources and techniques. The results show that SMP IT An-Nur's success in achieving A accreditation is supported by integrated data-based school governance, consistent implementation of the Internal Quality Assurance System, contextual learning innovation, a collaborative work culture, and academic supervision oriented towards teacher professional development. These findings indicate that superior accreditation is the output of a quality ecosystem that is built systematically and sustainably, not simply the result of fulfilling administrative documents. The novelty of this research lies in the introduction of the school quality ecosystem concept as an integrative framework connecting school leadership, quality culture, internal quality assurance, and learning practices to support educational quality improvement. This model has the potential to serve as a reference for schools and education stakeholders in strengthening the quality and equity of education at the regional level.

Keyword: school accreditation; school quality ecosystem; education quality management; principal leadership; quality assurance

Abstrak. Akreditasi sekolah merupakan instrumen strategis dalam sistem penjaminan mutu pendidikan yang tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai evaluasi kelayakan satuan pendidikan, tetapi juga sebagai pendorong peningkatan mutu secara berkelanjutan. Namun, capaian akreditasi yang tinggi belum selalu mencerminkan terbentuknya ekosistem mutu sekolah yang terintegrasi, khususnya pada daerah yang masih menghadapi tantangan pemerataan mutu pendidikan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan dan menganalisis praktik baik penguatan akreditasi melalui pembangunan ekosistem mutu sekolah di SMP IT An-Nur Kabupaten Tapin. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan teknik pengumpulan data berupa telaah dokumen, observasi, dan wawancara. Data dianalisis melalui tahapan reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan, serta divalidasi melalui triangulasi sumber dan teknik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa keberhasilan SMP IT An-Nur dalam meraih akreditasi A didukung oleh keterpaduan tata kelola sekolah berbasis data, implementasi Sistem Penjaminan Mutu Internal yang konsisten, inovasi pembelajaran kontekstual, budaya kerja kolaboratif, dan supervisi akademik yang berorientasi pada pembinaan profesional guru. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa akreditasi unggul merupakan luaran dari ekosistem mutu yang dibangun secara sistematis dan berkelanjutan, bukan sekadar hasil pemenuhan dokumen administratif. Kebaruan penelitian terletak pada pengenalan konsep school quality ecosystem sebagai kerangka integratif yang menghubungkan kepemimpinan sekolah, budaya mutu, penjaminan mutu internal, dan praktik pembelajaran dalam mendukung peningkatan mutu pendidikan. Model ini berpotensi menjadi rujukan bagi sekolah dan pemangku kepentingan pendidikan dalam memperkuat mutu dan pemerataan pendidikan di tingkat daerah.

INTRODUCTION

School accreditation is a strategic instrument within Indonesia's national educational quality assurance system that functions to assess the feasibility and performance of educational institutions based on the National Education Standards (SNP). From the perspective of contemporary educational policy, accreditation is no longer viewed merely as an administrative evaluation process but rather as part of an external quality assurance mechanism that encourages schools to continuously improve their performance. Accreditation serves as a means of institutional reflection, enabling schools to identify their strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for development in order to enhance the quality of educational services (Ranisa et al., 2025; UNESCO, 2023). Therefore, the success of accreditation should not be measured solely by accreditation ratings but also by schools' ability to translate evaluation findings into systematic and sustainable quality improvement programs (Sammara & Hasbi, 2023).

At the national level, the accreditation performance of junior secondary schools (Sekolah Menengah Pertama/SMP) demonstrates a relatively positive trend. According to BAN-PDM (2025), approximately 30% of SMPs in Indonesia have achieved Grade A accreditation, 40% Grade B, 20% Grade C, and about 10% remain unaccredited. Although these figures indicate an overall improvement in educational quality, they also reveal persistent disparities in educational quality across regions. This condition is consistent with reports by OECD (2023) and UNESCO (2023), which identify educational quality disparities as one of the major challenges in contemporary educational governance. Accordingly, high accreditation achievement does not necessarily guarantee equitable educational quality across different regions.

At the regional level, the accreditation profile of SMPs in South Kalimantan Province exhibits a similar pattern. Of approximately 615 SMPs, the majority have obtained Grade A accreditation (57%) and Grade B accreditation (27%), while the remainder fall into Grade C (13%) or remain unaccredited (3%). These achievements reflect schools' commitment to meeting national quality standards. However, studies indicate that schools with high accreditation performance are generally supported by effective principal leadership, a strong quality culture, and data-driven school governance (Komariah, Mutoharoh, & Sariwardani, 2025). These findings reinforce the view that school principals play a central role in strengthening organizational capacity and promoting continuous quality improvement (Bush, 2023; Hallinger, 2023).

More substantial challenges can be observed in the context of Tapin Regency. Among the 28 SMPs that have been assessed, only seven schools (25%) have achieved Grade A accreditation, while the majority remain in Grade B (45%) and Grade C (28%), with one school still unaccredited. This distribution indicates that improvements in educational quality have not yet been achieved evenly across schools. Low accreditation performance is frequently associated with weak school governance, limited teacher professional development, and the suboptimal implementation of academic supervision and the Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI) (Mardiah et al., 2023). Beyond resource-related constraints, numerous studies have also emphasized that the quality of school leadership plays a critical role in determining the success of educational quality improvement initiatives (Ali, 2022).

These findings suggest that educational quality issues cannot be addressed solely through compliance with accreditation requirements. Schools require a quality ecosystem capable of integrating various organizational components in a sustainable manner. Such a quality ecosystem encompasses the interconnectedness of school leadership, organizational culture, SPMI implementation, teacher professional development, the utilization of quality-related data, and stakeholder support within a mutually reinforcing system. Ridwan and Yuliana (2024) argue that the sustainability of educational quality largely depends on schools' ability to establish systemic relationships among internal and external components. This perspective aligns with the principles of Total Quality Management (TQM), which conceptualize processes, human resources, organizational culture, and leadership as integral components of a unified and integrated quality system (Sallis, 2002; Hosang et al., 2021).

Although numerous studies have examined the relationship between accreditation, principal leadership, and educational quality improvement, most have primarily focused on factors influencing accreditation outcomes or the partial implementation of quality assurance programs. Research specifically explaining how school principals develop an integrated quality ecosystem capable of producing outstanding accreditation outcomes remains relatively limited, particularly in the context of junior secondary schools in

regional areas. Furthermore, studies documenting best practices that can be replicated by other schools to support equitable educational quality across regions are still scarce. Consequently, there is a need for research that not only explains accreditation outcomes but also reveals the underlying processes and strategies involved in developing the quality ecosystem that contributes to such success.

Within this context, SMP IT An-Nur in Tapin Regency represents a compelling case for investigation. The school successfully achieved Grade A accreditation through the strengthening of data-driven governance, consistent implementation of the Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI), a collaborative organizational culture, developmental academic supervision, and continuous instructional innovation. This achievement reflects not only administrative success but also a substantive and sustainable transformation in educational quality (Heck & Hallinger, 2010). The practices implemented at SMP IT An-Nur are consistent with previous studies emphasizing the importance of adaptive leadership, collective learning culture, and organizational commitment in maintaining the quality of educational services (Leithwood et al., 2020; Fullan, 2023).

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study aims to describe and analyze the best practices of strengthening accreditation through the development of a quality ecosystem at SMP IT An-Nur, Tapin Regency. The study is expected to contribute conceptually to the understanding of the relationship between accreditation and the development of school quality ecosystems, while also providing a practical contribution in the form of a quality management model that can serve as a reference for schools and stakeholders in accelerating and promoting equitable educational quality at the regional level.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design. This approach was selected because the study aimed to obtain an in-depth understanding of accreditation strengthening practices through the development of a school quality ecosystem within the real-life context of SMP IT An-Nur in Tapin Regency. The case study design enabled a comprehensive exploration of the strategies, practices, and experiences undertaken by the school in fostering a quality culture and sustaining outstanding accreditation performance.

The study was conducted at SMP IT An-Nur, Tapin Regency, from January to March 2026. The research site was selected using purposive sampling, considering the school's achievement of Grade A accreditation and its success in implementing sustainable quality management practices.

Research informants were selected through purposive sampling based on their involvement in and understanding of the school's quality management processes. The participants consisted of the principal, vice principals, teachers, and members of the school quality assurance team. The characteristics of the informants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Characteristics of the Research Informants

No.	Informant	Number	Selection criteria
1	Principal	1	Primary person responsible for school quality management and accreditation
2	Vice principals	2	Involved in planning and implementing school programs
3	Teachers	5	Minimum of three years of teaching experience
4	School quality assurance team	2	Directly involved in the implementation of the Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI) and accreditation
Total		10	

Data were collected using three primary methods: semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis. The interviews were conducted to obtain information regarding quality improvement strategies, accreditation experiences, and participants' perceptions of the development of the school's quality ecosystem. Observations focused on classroom instruction, academic supervision activities, quality management meetings, and school quality assurance practices. Document analysis involved reviewing key institutional documents, including the School Work Plan (RKS), School Activity and Budget Plan (RKAS), School Self-Evaluation (EDS) reports, education report cards, academic supervision reports, Internal Quality

Assurance System (SPMI) documents, and school accreditation documents. The research procedure was conducted in four main stages, as illustrated in Figure 1.

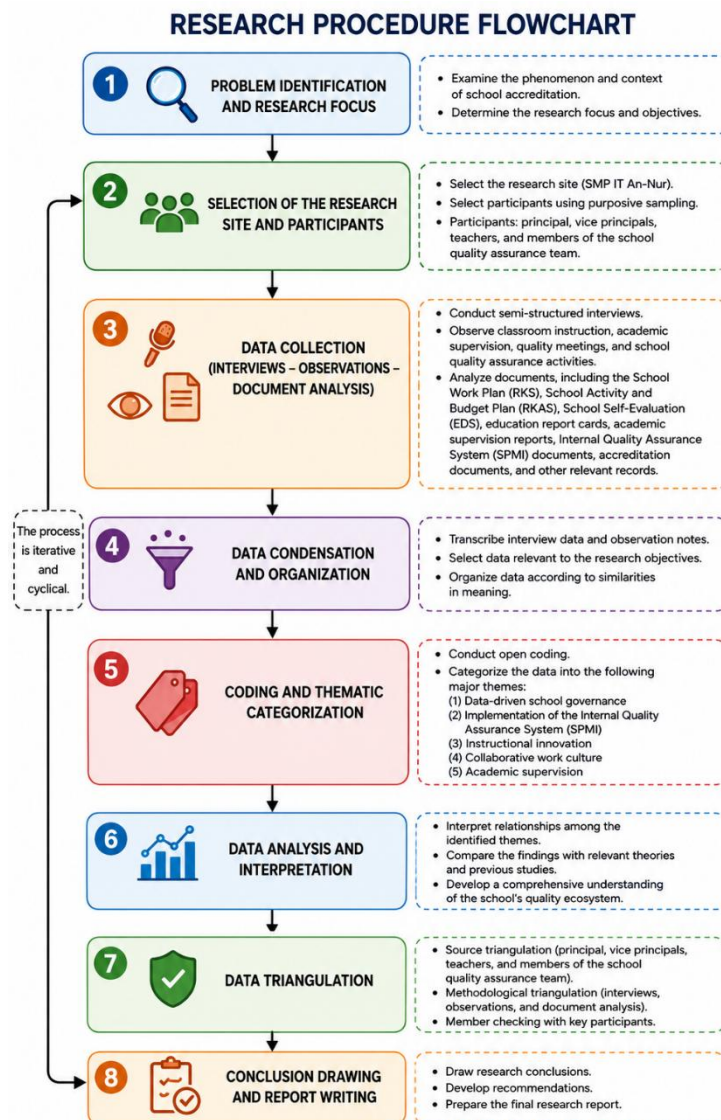


Figure 1 Research procedure flowchart

Data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. During the data condensation stage, all interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentary evidence were transcribed, screened, and organized according to the research objectives. Subsequently, open coding was performed to identify meaningful units relevant to school quality improvement.

The coding results were then organized into five major themes: (1) data-driven school governance, (2) implementation of the Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI), (3) instructional innovation, (4) collaborative work culture, and (5) academic supervision. These themes were analyzed in depth to identify the relationships among the components that collectively constitute the school's quality ecosystem.

The interpretation stage involved comparing the empirical findings with relevant theories and previous studies on educational quality management, school leadership, and Total Quality Management (TQM). This process facilitated a more comprehensive understanding of how accreditation strengthening practices were developed through the management of an integrated quality ecosystem.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study employed both source triangulation and methodological triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from the principal, vice principals, teachers, and members of the school quality assurance team. Methodological triangulation was achieved by comparing evidence derived from interviews, observations, and document analysis. In addition, member checking was conducted with several key informants to ensure consistency between the researcher's interpretations and the participants' intended meanings. Through these procedures, the study is expected to provide a credible description and interpretation of the development of a school quality ecosystem as a strategy for strengthening accreditation at SMP IT An-Nur, Tapin Regency.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the success of SMP IT An-Nur in achieving Grade A accreditation was not merely the result of fulfilling administrative accreditation requirements. Rather, it stemmed from the systematic and sustainable development of a school quality ecosystem. This ecosystem was established through the integration of data-driven school governance, innovative instructional practices, a collaborative work culture, continuous academic supervision, and the commitment of all school members to continuous quality improvement. The findings demonstrate that these components are interconnected and mutually reinforcing, thereby fostering a quality culture that supports both the enhancement of educational services and outstanding accreditation performance.

Data-driven school governance for quality improvement

The findings reveal that SMP IT An-Nur has implemented data-driven school governance as the primary foundation for strengthening educational quality. Quality-related data are obtained from education report cards, School Self-Evaluation (EDS), academic supervision results, and accreditation documents. These data are subsequently utilized as the basis for planning and implementing school improvement programs.

Table 2 Utilization of Quality Data in School Governance at SMP IT An-Nur

Data source	Utilization	Contribution to school quality
Education report cards	Used to map school quality and determine priority improvement programs	School programs become more targeted and responsive to actual needs
School self-evaluation (EDS)	Identifies the school's internal strengths and weaknesses	Promotes continuous quality improvement
Academic supervision results	Used as the basis for coaching and improving teachers' instructional practices	Enhances the quality of the teaching and learning process
Accreditation documents	Aligned with the School Work Plan (RKS) and School Activity and Budget Plan (RKAS)	Ensures consistency in quality standards and educational services

As presented in Table 2, multiple sources of quality-related data are systematically utilized throughout the planning, implementation, and evaluation of school programs. This practice demonstrates that school governance has evolved beyond administrative compliance toward evidence-based decision making. These findings are consistent with Robinson et al. (2008), who argued that data-driven school management enhances the effectiveness of program planning and organizational accountability. Similar findings were reported by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), who found that schools consistently utilizing quality data tend to achieve more stable educational outcomes. Furthermore, Ridwan and Yuliana (2024) emphasized that the use of quality data constitutes a fundamental component in developing a sustainable school quality ecosystem.

The synthesis of these studies suggests that data function not only as an evaluation tool but also as a strategic instrument for guiding organizational change within schools. From the perspective of Total Quality Management (TQM), organizational decision-making should be grounded in objective facts and reliable data to ensure that quality improvement efforts remain systematic, objective, and sustainable (Sallis, 2002). These findings have important implications for addressing educational quality disparities in Tapin Regency, where significant variations in school performance still exist. Nevertheless, the study also

identified a challenge: some teachers still require further capacity building to effectively interpret and utilize quality data as a basis for improving instructional practices.

Curriculum implementation and instructional innovation

The findings indicate that SMP IT An-Nur has developed contextual learning by integrating literacy, numeracy, project-based learning, and character education into its curriculum. Teachers are encouraged to implement active learning approaches that foster students' twenty-first-century competencies. These findings are consistent with the study by Mulyasa and Aryani (2022), which reported that instructional innovation contributes significantly to improving the quality of the teaching and learning process. Similarly, Adriantoni et al. (2023) found that innovative instructional practices constitute a key factor in sustaining school quality improvement. Furthermore, Leithwood et al. (2020) emphasized that high-performing schools are typically characterized by a strong culture of instructional innovation supported by effective instructional leadership.

Taken together, these studies suggest that instructional quality represents the core of an effective school quality system. The present findings demonstrate that instructional innovation not only enhances the quality of learning experiences but also strengthens accreditation indicators related to the Process Standards and Graduate Competency Standards. From the perspective of Total Quality Management (TQM), students are regarded as the primary customers of educational services; therefore, quality improvement efforts should prioritize enhancing the quality of teaching and learning (Sallis, 2002). Consequently, instructional innovation becomes a strategic instrument in developing a sustainable school quality ecosystem. Nevertheless, the study also identified a significant challenge. Maintaining consistent instructional innovation has become increasingly difficult due to growing administrative demands and the dynamic nature of educational policy changes.

Collaborative work culture as the foundation of the school quality ecosystem

The findings reveal that a collaborative work culture constitutes one of the principal strengths of SMP IT An-Nur in fostering educational quality. Organizational practices such as morning briefings, weekly reflection sessions, and collaborative instructional discussions are routinely conducted as integral components of the school's organizational culture.

Table 3 Collaborative Work Culture and Its Contribution to School Quality

Collaborative practice	Implementation	Contribution to school quality
Morning briefing	Conducted every morning before classroom instruction	Improves coordination and program consistency
Weekly reflection	Joint evaluation of school activities and instructional practices	Promotes continuous improvement
Teacher collaboration	Collaborative lesson discussions and sharing of best practices	Enhances teacher professionalism

As shown in Table 3, collaborative work practices have become embedded in the school's daily operations. These practices facilitate intensive communication, effective coordination, and continuous organizational learning. These findings support the study by Balela et al. (2024), which concluded that a collaborative culture enhances organizational effectiveness within schools. Likewise, Lastri et al. (2023) reported that teacher collaboration contributes to greater professional competence and instructional innovation. Similar conclusions were reached by Fullan (2023), who argued that sustainable school improvement can only be achieved through the collective commitment of all members of the school community.

The synthesis of these studies indicates that a collaborative culture functions as the social foundation that binds together the components of a school quality ecosystem. From the perspective of a learning organization, collaboration facilitates knowledge sharing, collective learning, and continuous professional growth, thereby accelerating organizational quality improvement. Despite these advantages, maintaining a collaborative culture remains challenging when schools experience teacher turnover or changes in

organizational structure. Sustaining collaborative practices therefore requires strong institutional commitment and leadership to preserve organizational continuity.

Academic supervision and strengthening teacher professionalism

The findings indicate that academic supervision at SMP IT An-Nur is conducted in a systematic, continuous, and developmental manner. Follow-up coaching is incorporated into the supervision process to ensure that it functions not merely as a mechanism for monitoring instructional practices but also as a means of fostering teachers' professional growth. These findings are consistent with the study by Novebri and Lubis (2022), which demonstrated that developmental supervision is more effective than administrative supervision in enhancing teachers' instructional performance. Similarly, Muttaqin et al. (2023) reported that academic supervision significantly improves teachers' pedagogical competence. Anggriani et al. (2023) further emphasized that follow-up actions after supervision are a critical factor in improving instructional quality.

The synthesis of these studies highlights the strategic role of academic supervision in developing the school's human resources. From the perspective of instructional leadership, supervision serves as a primary mechanism for ensuring the quality of teaching and learning while simultaneously strengthening teachers' professional capacity (Hallinger, 2023). The implementation of continuous academic supervision has contributed positively to improving instructional quality at SMP IT An-Nur. Nevertheless, the study also identified a practical challenge. The limited availability of principals' time to conduct intensive supervision remains an issue that requires effective management to ensure the sustainability of professional development activities.

The school quality ecosystem and its contribution to accreditation excellence

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the achievement of Grade A accreditation at SMP IT An-Nur is the outcome of an integrated school quality ecosystem rather than the result of isolated quality improvement initiatives. Data-driven school governance, instructional innovation, a collaborative work culture, and continuous academic supervision operate as interconnected components that collectively foster a sustainable culture of quality. These findings support the study by Frihastama and Hermanto (2022), who argued that sustainable school quality depends on the integration of multiple organizational components. Likewise, Gunawan et al. (2021) found that well-documented best practices in quality management contribute to continuous school improvement. Furthermore, UNESCO (2023) emphasized that an effective quality assurance system should integrate leadership, organizational culture, teaching and learning, and evaluation within a comprehensive quality framework.

The synthesis of these studies suggests that school quality is not generated by a single program or a single organizational actor. Rather, it emerges from the dynamic interaction of multiple components that reinforce one another within a school quality ecosystem. This finding represents the principal contribution of the present study by demonstrating that accreditation excellence is the product of a systematically developed and sustainable quality ecosystem rather than merely the fulfillment of administrative accreditation requirements. Although this model has proven effective at SMP IT An-Nur, its successful implementation depends on consistent leadership, a strong culture of quality, and the active commitment of all stakeholders. Therefore, the replication of these best practices in other schools should carefully consider each institution's organizational readiness, human resource capacity, and local contextual characteristics.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the success of SMP IT An-Nur, Tapin Regency, in achieving and sustaining Grade A accreditation is not merely the result of fulfilling administrative accreditation requirements but rather of developing a sustainable school quality ecosystem. This ecosystem is built upon the integration of data-driven school governance, the Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI), student-centered instructional innovation, a collaborative work culture, and developmental academic supervision. The interaction of these components strengthens instructional quality, teacher professionalism, organizational effectiveness, and overall school performance, thereby supporting accreditation excellence. The findings

also reinforce the concept of the school quality ecosystem, suggesting that school quality emerges from the dynamic interaction of organizational components rather than from isolated quality improvement initiatives. Practically, the findings suggest that strengthening the school quality ecosystem provides a sustainable strategy for improving educational quality beyond accreditation compliance. The best practices identified in this study may serve as a reference for schools and policymakers seeking to establish a continuous quality improvement culture. However, as this study was conducted in a single junior secondary school using a qualitative case study approach, future research should examine the applicability of this model across diverse educational settings using comparative, quantitative, or mixed-methods designs to further validate and refine the proposed framework.

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