



QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY IN MARGINALIZED HIGHER EDUCATION: EDUCATOR AND STAFF PERSPECTIVES ON MINISTERIAL REGULATION NO. 39/2025

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Abstract

The issuance of the Regulation of the Minister of Higher Education, Science, and Technology No. 39 of 2025 marks a strategic shift in Indonesia's higher education toward an information-based and continuous quality assurance system. This qualitative case study synthesizes the perspectives of lecturers and administrative staff at the State Islamic Institute (IAIN) Sorong, an Islamic higher education institution in a frontier, outermost, and underdeveloped (3T) region, regarding policy implementation. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. Findings reveal that stakeholders view the policy as a vital step to strengthen internal and external quality assurance, optimize cost-effectiveness, and enhance educational standards. Specifically, lecturers emphasized learning outcome enhancements and curriculum development, whereas administrative staff focused on operational standardization and assessment improvement. However, implementation faces severe contextual challenges, including limited human resources, low digital literacy, tight funding, and geographical barriers inherent to 3T regions. This study concludes that successful policy adoption requires robust governance, adaptive leadership, capacity building, and context-specific support mechanisms to strengthen quality assurance in marginalized higher education contexts.

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INTRODUCTION

Higher education accreditation is used as a strategic way to assess the feasibility and quality of higher education in Indonesia. Accreditation, an important component of the External Quality Assurance System (EQAS), is essential for setting standards for the delivery of quality and accountable higher education. Education quality assurance is a systemic action that aims to improve the quality of higher education regularly and sustainably (Rizal et al., 2020). Accreditation serves as the main measure to achieve these goals. Furthermore, to improve the quality of higher education, an internal and external quality assurance system is very important because it has an impact on institutional accountability and competitiveness at the national and international levels (Bhakti & Ridwan, 2022). Accreditation is an indicator of trust in today's increasingly competitive world of work. This affects stakeholder confidence, the attractiveness of educational investments, and the ability of graduates to compete in the job market. Accreditation plays an important role in improving the quality of services in educational institutions, which includes both academic and non-academic aspects to protect the interests of society and students (Febrianti & Syukri, 2023). Therefore, accreditation is the expansion of higher education towards excellence and relevance to the demands of the times. It is also a guarantee to the public that accredited universities meet the national minimum education standards.

The transformation of national standards and accreditation of higher education aims to accelerate the process of improving the quality of institutions without being burdened by excessive bureaucratic processes. This is in accordance with the vision of *Merdeka Belajar Episode 26*, which emphasizes reducing administrative burdens and accreditation costs. In addition, these important changes include an accreditation process automation mechanism that uses Higher Education Database data. This increases the efficiency and transparency of the assessment process, so that assessments can be carried out more objectively and in real-time. This new policy not only changes the assessment method, but also the accreditation philosophy. The accreditation philosophy now focuses on compliance and encourages universities to make continuous improvements independently by improving the Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS). With this transformation, universities must prepare documents, comply with standards, and prepare information technology and human resources infrastructure to adapt to new systems that are more data- and technology-based (Limbong & Asbari, 2024).

One of the state Islamic religious universities in West Papua, the State Islamic Institute (IAIN) Sorong, faces many challenges when implementing this latest accreditation policy. The empirical conditions at IAIN Sorong show that the implementation of quality assurance faces quite complex challenges and does not always run in accordance with the ideal design of regulations. This shows that many fundamental issues require serious attention in the context of the implementation of Permendiktisaintek Number 39 of 2025. In his study on the

perceptions, needs, and difficulties of policy implementation in private universities in disadvantaged areas, it was found that universities in disadvantaged areas have poor levels of understanding of policies, infrastructure readiness, and institutional support (Dimmera et al., 2022). The geographical state of Papua, which consists of islands with little connectivity, leads to difficulties in coordination, training of the workforce, and obtaining information on the most recent higher education policies. This condition is worse because colleges in remote areas do not have much experience with data-driven accreditation systems and automation. In addition, they do not have much technical assistance from the central government for colleges in remote areas. Ultimately, this can lead to differences in quality between colleges in the center and in the 3T (*Tertinggal, Terluar, dan Terdepan*/ Lagging, Outermost, and Leading) area.

The role of lecturers and education personnel becomes very strategic during the implementation of accreditation policies, and the success of the organization depends on the achievement of the set quality standards. As the center of the implementation of the Tridharma of Higher Education, lecturers are primarily responsible for ensuring the standards of education, research, and community service. In their research on the implementation of the free campus learning curriculum (Kholik et al., 2022). It shows that teachers' understanding and active involvement greatly affect the successful implementation of higher education policies because lecturers are not only policy objects but also people who drive change at the operational level. Meanwhile, education personnel are very important in the management, administrative, and technical fields that support accreditation procedures, such as managing PD-Dikti data, creating accreditation documents, and assisting the assessment process. The perception of education personnel of the Independent Learning-Independent Campus policy greatly influences their participation and contribution in institutional programs because they are the pillars that transform policies into concrete administrative actions (Banda et al., 2022). In addition, Sastaviana (2023) added that the psychological well-being of teachers and employees is influenced by the perception of organizational support. This impacts their performance and their commitment to quality assurance programs. This difference in roles leads to different views, expectations, and difficulties faced by the two groups when facing changes in accreditation policies.

Therefore, it is critical to understand how each group views the situation in order to create an implementation strategy that is broad, participatory, and can meet the unique needs of each group in the college ecosystem. Previous studies on the implementation and accreditation of higher education policies have helped us understand the dynamics of quality assurance in Indonesian universities. Assisting the development of IQAS in universities to increase the accreditation of study programs (Suharyanti et al., 2024) emphasizes the importance of an internal quality assurance system to obtain external accreditation and finds that institutions with strong IQAS tend to do better in the accreditation process. In their study, (Rismawati & Supriadi, 2024) investigate

methods to accelerate quality assurance through strengthening higher education accreditation. They found essential components for the success of universities in obtaining superior accreditation status, such as strong leadership, a quality culture, and the commitment of the entire academic community. In addition,, (Arlina et al., 2024) found that two important factors for the successful implementation of the policy are the readiness of the infrastructure and the understanding of the academic community. However, many PTKIs face difficulties in adjusting to the new policy. However, this research is usually general and normative, focusing on the technical and structural aspects of policy without considering the subjective perspectives and experiences of the main implementation actors, thus not providing an in-depth understanding of the perceptions and experiences of the people responsible for implementing the policy on the ground. According to literature trends, research on internal stakeholder perceptions of accreditation policies is still very limited, especially those that involve an in-depth qualitative approach to study the meanings, expectations, and challenges faced by teachers and education personnel in particular. However, understanding this subjective view is essential to creating an effective and sustainable implementation strategy.

Based on the literature review that has been conducted, it was found that there is a significant research gap in research related to the implementation of higher education accreditation policies. First, although Permendikdisaintek Number 39 of 2025 has just come into effect and will significantly change Indonesia's accreditation system, there has been no research that specifically studies how lecturers and education personnel see it. Second, there are not many studies that compare the views of lecturers and education personnel as two groups that have different roles in the implementation of accreditation policies. As a result, it is not yet known whether there are significant differences in perspectives and support needs between the two groups. Third, research on the implementation of higher education policies has not been widely carried out in Islamic religious universities in disadvantaged, outermost, and frontier (3T) areas, such as Papua. IAIN Sorong has special features and problems that are different from universities in other regions. Fourth, previous studies have not thoroughly studied the contextual issues that organizations face in border areas when adapting to national policies designed from a mainstream perspective. As a result, there are no specific recommendations for organizations with specific geographical and social characteristics. Fifth, there has been no research that combines perception analysis with evidence-based policy recommendations to improve the implementation of accreditation at the institutional level. It can be a practical guide for policymakers at the institutional and national levels. The limitations of this study show how important it is to conduct a thorough study that not only finds perceptions but also looks at how it impacts policy implementation and the achievement of higher education quality assurance goals. Thus, this research can make relevant and contextual suggestions.

The purpose of this study is to see how lecturers and employees of IAIN Sorong see the implementation of Permendikbina Number 39 of 2025 concerning Quality Assurance of Higher Education. This research will specifically investigate the understandings, attitudes, expectations, and difficulties experienced by lecturers and education staff when faced with new accreditation policies. It will also determine what assistance is needed to implement them effectively at the institutional level. This research aims to gain a comprehensive understanding of how accreditation policies are implemented at the micro-institutional level, which includes cognitive, affective, and conative aspects from the perspective of the implementation actors. This will be done through a qualitative approach that uses in-depth interview techniques and focus group discussions. There are many benefits of this study: Theoretically, this study adds to the literature on the implementation of higher education policy by looking at the perspective of implementation actors who are at the forefront, particularly with regard to institutions in marginalized areas that are often overlooked by academic studies. Practically, the results of the research will help IAIN Sorong leaders develop participatory, contextual, and sustainable implementation strategies. This strategy will include training programs, incentive systems, and mentoring mechanisms that are in accordance with the real needs of lecturers and teachers. In terms of policy, the findings of this research can be useful for the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Technology and the National Accreditation Board for Higher Education (BAN-PT) to improve the implementation mechanism and assistance for accreditation. This is especially true for colleges in the 3T region that need special support and treatment. Therefore, this research not only adds to the literature that does not yet exist, but also contributes to improving the quality of the implementation of higher education accreditation policies in Indonesia. Ultimately, this will encourage continuous improvement and equitable distribution of the quality of higher education throughout Indonesia, including in remote areas that have been facing various structural obstacles.

Several previous studies have shown that policy implementation in religious universities often faces obstacles in terms of socialization, infrastructure readiness, and different perceptions between lecturers, education staff, and institutional leaders (Arifin & Muslim, 2020). Although many studies on academic responsiveness to educational bureaucratic policies have been conducted, there is still a research gap related to how policy implementers, especially lecturers and education staff, are perceived in the face of new regulations that demand changes in organizational behavior. There have not been many studies that have explored in depth how actors at the operational level interpret and respond to policies that contain structural and cultural dimensions of change in the context of religious universities. This gap is even more significant considering that the successful implementation of a policy is highly dependent on the understanding, acceptance, and commitment of implementers in the field. Therefore, research that examines the response of implementing actors to Ministerial Regulation 39 of 2025 is important to fill this gap, as well as make a

theoretical contribution to the literature on the implementation of higher education policies.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to obtain an in-depth, comprehensive, and contextual understanding of the perception of lecturers and education staff on the implementation of Ministerial Regulation Number 39 of 2025 at the State Islamic Institute (IAIN) Sorong. Through this approach, researchers directly explore the dynamics, experiences, and responses of policy actors in the context of campus life. The research was carried out on the IAIN Sorong campus, which is undergoing an adaptation process to the regulation, so it has high relevance to be examined from the perspective of the academic community. Data collection took place over a period of 17–20 days in the odd semester of the 2025 academic year through observations, interviews, and documentation studies.

Participants in this study consist of lecturers and education staff who are actively involved in the implementation of policies. Lecturers are selected because of their central role in implementing the Tridharma of Higher Education, which has a direct impact on this regulation, while education personnel are included for their contribution to administrative and technical operational governance. The selection of resource persons was carried out purposively based on data that showed the large role and involvement of the two groups within IAIN Sorong.

The implementation of the research is divided into three main phases, namely the preparation phase, fieldwork, and data analysis. In the preparation phase, the researcher formulates a research design, determines key sources, and prepares observation instruments and interview guidelines. In the fieldwork phase, the researcher was present directly to observe academic and administrative activities, conduct in-depth interviews, and collect relevant documents.

The data collection technique combines observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations were carried out using observation sheets and field notes to observe policy practices directly. In-depth interviews apply semi-structured guidelines to explore the perception and evaluation of the interviewees flexibly. Meanwhile, the documentation study collected supporting documents such as circulars, policy guidelines, and administrative archives. To ensure the credibility, validity, and consistency of scientific findings, this study applies a data triangulation technique by comparing and cross-evaluating information obtained from the three techniques.

Data analysis was carried out interactively and continuously from the beginning of data collection until all data were collected, referring to the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana qualitative analysis model. The analysis stage begins with data reduction, namely sorting, focusing, simplifying, and transforming raw data from field notes, interview results, and documents. Furthermore, the

data is organized in a data display in the form of a descriptive narrative and a qualitative matrix to facilitate understanding the patterns of relationships between phenomena. The final stage is drawing conclusions and verification, in which the researcher formulates the meaning of the findings that are tested for validity periodically through reconfirmation in the field and expert discussions, so as to produce research conclusions that are complete, valid, and scientifically accountable.

RESULT

This research was carried out through three representatives of IAIN Sorong: Mr. Alif (lecturer), Mrs. Hartinah (lecturer), and Mrs. Rahma (education staff) conducted in-depth interviews. The results of the interview provided information that, as lecturers, Mr. Alif and Mrs. Hartinah realized that this policy focused on internal quality assurance (IQAS) and external quality assurance (EQAS), which aimed to improve the standards of higher education through the accreditation system. They also recognized that major changes are needed in the management of education outcomes-based policies (OBEs) and the improvement of the ability of colleges to implement such policies. Meanwhile, as a member of the teaching staff, Ms. Rahma is aware of the direct impact of this policy on the academic administration system by setting standards for education management, graduate competencies, processes, and assessments. Ms. Hartinah emphasized that quality is not only administratively qualified, but also "related to the importance of achieving institutional goals."

Opinions on the impact of policy implementation are mixed, but they remain consistent in several important respects. The following table summarizes the main findings from three sources regarding important issues related to the implementation of Ministerial Regulation 39 of 2025.

Table 1. Interview Results from Resource Persons

No.	Aspects	Mr. Alif (Lecturer)	Mrs. Hartinah (Lecturer)	Mrs. Rahma (Education staff)
1.	Positive Impact	Improving lecturer competence in the tridharma, preparation of RPS, and OBE curriculum	Increased accountability through measurable learning outcomes and routine evaluation every semester	Improvement of the quality of administrative services, transparency, and accountability of management
2.	Key Challenges	Additional burden of academic documentation, high demands on research productivity	Diversity of lecturer literacy, significant workload, and limited human resources through the CPNS route	Lack of IT competence among education personnel, limited resources
3.	Institutional Constraints	Limited infrastructure and human resources in remote areas	No permanent accreditation team yet, high accreditation fees, 3T geographical challenges	Need for continuous training, periodic monitoring and evaluation
4.	Proposed Solutions	Collaboration between parties to achieve superior accreditation	Benchmarking to advanced universities, formation of internal accreditation teams, capacity building	Regular training and workshops, increased stakeholder engagement

The difficulties that arise when implementing policies show the complexity of the problem, which has many dimensions. Mr. Alif and Mrs. Hartinah noticed a significant increase in workload from the teachers' point of view. Teachers are required to balance their responsibilities in teaching, research, and community service while meeting strict administrative demands. Mrs. Hartinah specifically emphasized the problem of labor recruitment through the CPNS route, whose implementation is far below the needs of study programs, and the cost of independent accreditation, which reaches tens of millions of rupiah. Because IAIN Sorong is located in the 3T (Frontier, Remote, Disadvantaged) area, geographical challenges are a barrier to competing at the international level. In terms of education personnel, Mrs. Rahma said that the main problem is not having the ability to use information technology, which is necessary for a digital-based administrative system according to Ministerial Regulation 39 of 2025.

The third speaker agreed that strengthening the effectiveness of the suggested implementation shows linkages in a number of strategy elements. They also agreed that capacity building through continuous training and workshops is a crucial step to improve the quality of human resources. Ms. Hartinah highlighted the significance of collaboration from all parties related to the full support of leaders in the context of policy and funding. In addition, he recommended the establishment of an ongoing internal accreditation team to solve the issue of form creation that is still not fully addressed. Comparative studies or benchmarking practices are also proposed with more advanced educational institutions as an approach to harmonize views on the preparation of accreditation documents in accordance with the standards set by the assessor. Mrs. Rahma emphasized that regular supervision and evaluation are very crucial, as well as increased participation from the authorities in the management and process of education. In general, the findings of the study indicate that although Ministerial Regulation 39 of 2025 is considered an effective means to improve quality, its implementation at IAIN Sorong still faces significant challenges that require deep attention and support from various parties.

DISCUSSION

It has been found in the research that overall, IAIN Sorong supports the implementation of the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Technology Number 39. However, the level of understanding and view of the implications varies depending on the performance of each individual. The three objectives of the curriculum are reinforced by lecturers who consider them important strategies to improve teaching outcomes, effective teaching methods, and teaching quality. Quality assurance is measured based on learning outcomes and academic achievement, which is a key issue in the new accreditation policy. Nevertheless, professionals in the field of education underscore how these strategies impact the education system, which typically requires understanding procedures, correctness of data disclosure, transparency, and information. The study shows that the implementation of this policy is hampered by several

structural factors, including the limited number of teaching staff (such as inadequate number of mathematics teachers), low access to digital resources for students, limited access to and education through direct-to-consumer channels), and lack of support structures (such as mentoring/NGOs where young people can feel confident in their current situation, but unable to provide meaningful support) The presence of IAIN Sorong in the 3T area also exacerbates this problem, especially related to access to education, policy support, and economic development. Therefore, although the policy is theoretically considered a step forward and innovative, its implementation still requires a planned effort.

The results of this study are closely related to the findings of previous research that examined the implementation of quality assurance and accreditation policies in universities. The positive perception of lecturers and education staff regarding the accreditation policy is in line with the findings obtained (Yoga Budi Bhakti et al., 2022). It shows that the quality assurance system, both internal and external, is considered a crucial means of strengthening the accountability and competitiveness of higher education institutions. In addition, the study also reinforces the findings of previous research that accreditation success is highly dependent on preparation within the institution, especially in strengthening the Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS) (Suharyanti et al., 2024). However, the findings regarding obstacles in implementation at IAIN Sorong also show similarities with previous studies, where universities in disadvantaged areas tend to face obstacles in the form of limited human resources, low technological literacy, and lack of infrastructure support (Sadewo et al., 2022; Leha et al., 2024). The main difference between this study and the previous study lies in the focus of the analysis, which explicitly compares the perceptions of lecturers and education personnel as the main actors implementing policies, thus providing a more comprehensive picture of the dynamics of the implementation of accreditation policies at the operational level, especially in the context of Islamic religious universities in the 3T area.

The findings of this study are in line with the theoretical framework of policy implementation and quality assurance in higher education, where the active role of stakeholders is proven to be a key factor in determining the success of a policy. According to policy implementation theory, the success rate of a legal intervention depends on how well employees understand, accept, and implement it. This study found that active support from teachers and students is the key to the successful implementation of Permendikbudristek Number 39 of 2025. In contrast, a theoretical understanding of policy is still difficult to translate into adequate operational readiness due to limitations in resource elements and support systems. These results are in line with good governance theory, which views commitment as a relational construct consisting of complex interactions between actors rather than just transactional mechanisms (Limjong & Asbari, 2024). Therefore, these findings do not weaken existing theories, but rather support the theory that educator teamwork is essential for effective quality assurance.

This study has had a significant impact on higher education views, perspectives, and reforms at the institutional and national policy levels. Permendikbudristek Number 39 of 2025 marks a paradigm shift from a partial approach to a holistic approach to improve the quality of higher education. For lecturers, this policy increases awareness about achieving educational goals and integrating the Tridharma of Higher Education. In addition, this policy is in line with the framework for the development of continuing education. This policy encourages a change in work patterns for education employees, encouraging more digital, responsive, and flexible professional services. These results at the policy level provide an empirical basis for the government to increase technical support to universities in 3T areas through continuous training programs, academic mentoring communities, and the provision of measurable technical assistance. Therefore, this study not only verifies previously identified implementation errors, but also provides a comprehensive overview of strategic objectives, structural challenges, and specific needs for implementing accreditation policies.

Permendikbudristek Number 39 of 2025 is seen by the IAIN Sorong academic community, both lecturers and employees, as a strategic policy to improve the quality of higher education. Therefore, the success of its implementation still depends on organizational readiness, institutional management commitment, and strengthening the capacity of human resources and infrastructure. To meet the different needs of each group, flexible implementation methods must be adapted to the differences in roles that exist between teachers and employees. Therefore, the success of an accreditation policy is determined by national regulations and the institution's ability to adapt local policies. These results confirm that the application of a policy approach that is responsive to regional peculiarities is essential to achieve equitable and sustainable improvement of the quality of higher education, especially for Islamic religious universities in 3T areas.

CONCLUSION

Lecturers and education staff at IAIN Sorong assessed the policy of the Minister of Education and Higher Education Number 39 of 2025 positively in relation to strengthening higher education quality assurance. This policy is not just administrative/regulatory compliance. This policy is part of strengthening the quality of the tridharma of higher education, strengthening achievement-based learning, and improving accountability and academic governance. Lecturers responded positively to this policy to improve the quality of learning and academic activities, while education staff saw this as a systematic effort for service administration at an orderly, structured, and digital system-based service level. However, there are still many problems related to the way the policy is implemented, namely the lack of human resources, lack of mastery of information technology, increased administrative burden, and lack of supporting facilities influenced by the geographical location of the 3T area. The difference in

functions and responsibilities between teaching staff and education staff also affects the diversity of needs and levels of readiness in policy implementation, so that an implementation strategy that is responsive to the institutional context is needed.

Therefore, the implementation of Permendikdisaintek number 39 of 2025 will depend on organizational readiness, leadership commitment, and human resource improvement through continuous training, the formation of an internal accreditation team, and the implementation of systematic monitoring and evaluation. These findings contribute to the development of quality assurance policies in Islamic universities in the 3T region and can also serve as a basis for more quality, equitable, and sustainable higher education.

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