

Strategic Approaches to Fulfill Accreditation Quality Standards: A Case Study of High Schools in Tarakan City

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ABSTRACT

This study examines strategies employed by high schools in Tarakan City to prepare for accreditation and ensure quality standards. A qualitative approach was adopted, involving seven key informants: accreditation coordinators from SMA Negeri 4 Tarakan City, SMK Negeri 4 Tarakan, and SMA NU 1 Tarakan City; two assessors from BAN-S/M North Kalimantan Province; the chair of BAN-S/M North Kalimantan Province; and a representative from the Education and Culture Office of North Kalimantan Province. Data were collected through interviews and document analysis and processed using an interactive model comprising data collection, condensation, display, and conclusion drawing. The study identified three key strategies: (1) forming an accreditation team to coordinate efforts, (2) managing data and information systematically, and (3) maintaining adequate facilities and infrastructure. These strategies underscore the importance of comprehensive preparation before accreditation assessments. The findings highlight the critical role of government support, team coordination, and infrastructure adequacy in addressing accreditation challenges. However, external factors such as geographical conditions, community involvement, and policy effectiveness were not explored, presenting a limitation. This study provides actionable insights for improving school accreditation processes and ensuring sustainable quality assurance. Future research should consider external and environmental factors to develop more comprehensive strategies.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the current era, education determines the existence and progress of a country and nation. A long and systematic process is needed to achieve quality education. The concept of "quality" refers to the ability of teachers, to uphold moral values, satisfactory learning achievements of students, support and contributions from the community and parents of students (Musyaffa, 2019). An intelligent principal is also needed to lead the school and pay close attention to the needs of students. According to Fadhli (2017), the quality of education does not only consider the input or output aspects but also considers the process aspects, which are part of the decision-making process in managing programs, educational

units, teaching and learning, supervision, and evaluation (Welzant et al., 2011). This aspect of the process is the most important of all processes.

Accreditation is a systematic process aimed at evaluating the achievement of educational quality targets in a periodic and continuous manner (Gaston, 2023). It provides an assessment of a school's performance and its eligibility to deliver education, reflected in its accreditation status or rating (Kayyis et al., 2021). Accredited schools are recognized for meeting established quality standards, which include having qualified teachers and staff, adequate facilities and infrastructure, harmonious relationships among school stakeholders, efficient administrative systems, and conducive teaching and learning environments (Azizah & Witri, 2021; Ziemba, 2021). Conversely, schools that lack accreditation often face deficiencies across these critical areas.

As reported by the IT Team of the BAN-S/M Secretariat of North Kalimantan Province on March 17, 2023, three schools—SMAN 4 Tarakan, SMKN 4 Tarakan, and SMA Nahdlatul Ulama Tarakan—remain unaccredited. These schools have been prioritized for accreditation in 2023, as determined during the Accreditation Program Meeting 1 on January 10, 2023. To prepare, these schools must implement a comprehensive strategy, particularly focusing on compiling the necessary physical documents for submission via the SISPENA BAN-S/M application.

The required documents span key areas, including school data, student and teacher profiles, facilities and infrastructure, and evidence of teaching and learning activities. Preparation must be systematic to ensure all documents are complete, accurate, and aligned with accreditation assessment indicators. Additionally, each school should establish a dedicated accreditation team, clearly delegate responsibilities, and maintain close coordination to meet requirements efficiently and within deadlines. By adopting a structured and organized approach, these schools can enhance their chances of achieving favorable accreditation outcomes, thereby contributing to improved educational quality in the region.

The Education Unit Accreditation Instrument is used as an indicator to measure the achievement of National Education Standards. In 2019, BAN-S/M established the latest assessment instrument called the Education Unit Accreditation Instrument (IASP-2020) which in 2020 was simultaneously implemented in all provinces. Dynamics in the world of education, such as the presence of Covid-19 and adjustments to the accreditation work mechanism, are the background of the fundamental changes in the accreditation instrument. The accreditation instrument used in 2020 uses an assessment system based on administrative assessment (compliance) towards performance-based assessment. Changes to the accreditation instrument are an important part of BAN-S/M's efforts as an independent institution in ensuring the quality of education to play a role in encouraging sustainable development in school accreditation activities. Accreditation assessments are carried out through the Accreditation Assessment System (SISPENA) application service. The SISPENA application collects data related to education quality, including evaluation and monitoring results data. BAN-S/M routinely conducts accreditation socialization every year for educational units that will participate in accreditation to ensure that the educational units are ready to fill in each item of the accreditation instrument. BAN-S/M has conducted accreditation socialization on Monday, February 20, 2023. In the agenda, BAN-S/M explained the 2020 educational unit accreditation instrument, the use of the SISPENA application, and the code of ethics for implementing accreditation.

Research by Odritya & Aliyyah (2021) concluded that school accreditation can guarantee the quality of education in DKI Jakarta Province at every level, namely Elementary School, Junior High School, Senior High School, and Vocational School. Meanwhile, in 2019, the number of Educational Units that had not been accredited in DKI Jakarta Province decreased compared to 2018. This shows that educational units in DKI Jakarta Province have an effective system in improving the quality of education through the accreditation process. Furthermore, research by Dimmera & Purnasari, (2021) shows that schools that have been accredited A continuously evaluate the quality of education. The supporting factors for success in fulfilling National Education Standards are: all school components have a high commitment to realizing a culture of quality, and quality fulfillment programs are carried out according to predetermined plans. The inhibiting factors, such as the fulfillment of school

management standards which are still less than optimal, lack of understanding from all parties involved in the implementation of the quality assurance system cycle, and filling in statement items that are not in accordance with actual conditions in the field (Gamar et al., 2016)(Gabor & Ing, 2017). This shows that accreditation is an important program for maintaining and continuously improving the quality of school education.

Sholihin et al. (2018) show that the stages of forming a school accreditation team through assignment to the Head of the Accreditation Team by the principal, drafting a Decree (SK), then continuing with filling in the Education Unit Accreditation Instrument and other documents through accreditation socialization activities, schools re-checking the accreditation instrument and fulfilling other documents. Research by Ulker & Bakioglu (2019) concluded that accreditation makes a greater contribution to improving processes and practices in the academic scope in programs that have been accredited for the first time compared to schools that have been accredited. One of the reasons is that educational institutions that first apply for accreditation, the process and practices will be examined in detail to become quality programs that meet the indicators determined by the accreditation body.

Based on the problems explained above. Researchers are interested in conducting research on the strategies used by high schools in Tarakan City in preparing for school accreditation. So the formulation of the problem in the study is what strategies are used by schools in preparing to fulfill the accreditation of high schools in Tarakan City? The purpose of the study is to determine the strategies used by high schools in Tarakan City in preparing for school accreditation.

2. METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative approach to explore phenomena that cannot be quantified. As noted by Groenland and Dana (2020), qualitative research is a "scientific or natural research" method. The data are presented descriptively, using narratives derived from both written and oral sources, as well as observed behaviors. This approach emphasizes studying situations in their natural context without manipulating the data, ensuring an authentic understanding of the phenomena being examined.

To better understand how schools develop strategies to meet the requirements for quality accreditation, this study presents a comprehensive framework illustrated in Figure 1. The framework highlights key components and processes involved in preparing for accreditation, including strategic planning, resource allocation, and stakeholder engagement. It provides a visual representation of the systematic approach schools can adopt, from forming accreditation teams to managing documentation and aligning practices with accreditation standards.

Figure 1 also emphasizes the importance of collaboration among school leaders, teachers, and staff, as well as the role of external support from government agencies and educational organizations. By detailing these strategies, the framework serves as a practical guide for schools aiming to achieve optimal accreditation outcomes and underscores the critical elements necessary for fostering sustainable educational quality.

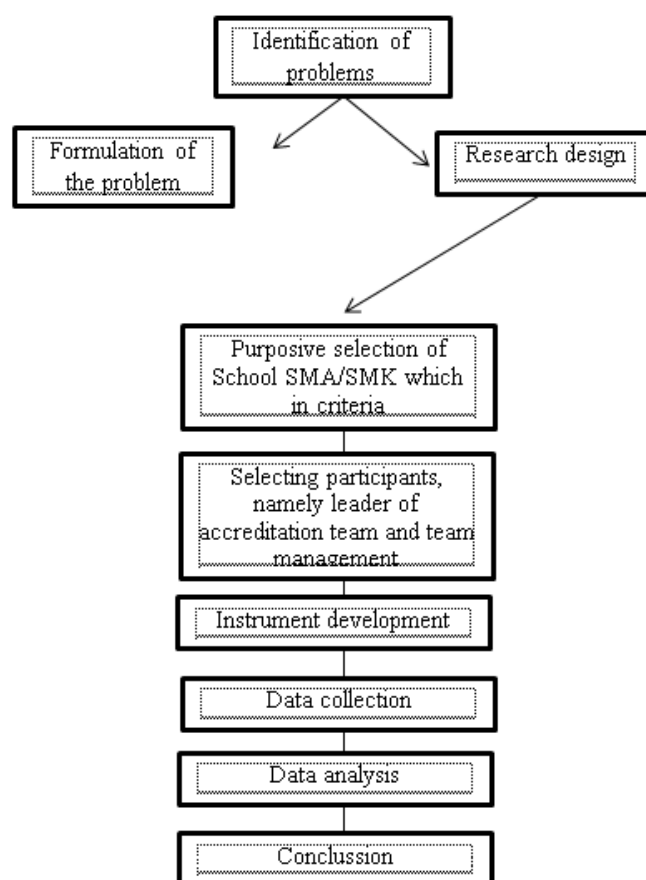


Figure 1. Research Steps

This research was conducted at an unaccredited high school in Tarakan City, North Kalimantan Province. The location was chosen by the author because there are still several high schools whose status has not been accredited, so it can be said that the quality of education is not yet evenly distributed in Tarakan City. The research was conducted over a certain period, namely for 17 months, starting in February 2023 to June 2024. This research focused on 3 schools whose status had not been accredited. The three schools are SMAN 4 Tarakan, SMKN 4 Tarakan and SMANU Tarakan.

The sampling technique used to determine the sample was purposive sampling. According to Sugiyono (2019), "purposive sampling is a technique in research carried out to take samples of data sources with certain considerations". The selection of the three schools was based on school accreditation status data in 2023 taken from BAN-S/M of North Kalimantan Province. The variation of the three unaccredited schools is expected to provide a detailed picture of the school's readiness to meet accreditation quality standards.

The data sources in this study include key informants and supporting informants. The principal or head of the accreditation team appointed from each school studied acted as a key informant. Meanwhile, members of the BAN-S/M of North Kalimantan Province and assessors of the BAN-S/M of North Kalimantan Province acted as supporting informants. Documents in the form of school data and accreditation data were used as supporting data for the study.

This study uses interviews as a data collection technique to obtain information about the condition and readiness of schools to participate in the accreditation stages. According to (2016), "an interview is a meeting conducted by two people to exchange information and ideas through a question and answer session, so that it can be interpreted on a particular topic". The interview technique used is a semi-

structured interview. According to Eastberg (in Sugiyono, 2022) "semi-structured interviews are a data collection technique in the form of data included in in-depth interviews that are oriented towards free implementation." In this study, the Miles & Hubberman model was used to analyze the data. The author analyzes the interviewee's answers during the interview. The author will continue the question until they get reliable information if the answer is not satisfactory. The author uses an interactive model (Miles et al., 2014). The process involves data collecting, data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing.

Data collection is carried out before and after the research through interviews, observations, and existing documents on the problems occurring in the field. Then the data is developed through the next stages. Data condensation is selecting, focusing, abstracting, simplifying, and transforming data. The results come primarily from written field notes, interview transcripts, documents, and other empirical materials. Next, interview transcripts were broken down and selected for empirical material research. Organizing, unifying, and concluding data is called data presentation. This process is carried out because it allows for more in-depth analysis. Presenting the data also helps understand the context of the research.

In qualitative research, effective data presentation is a crucial component of valid analysis. This typically includes the use of charts, matrices, graphs, and similar tools. At this stage, data is presented through concise narratives and tables, ensuring it is systematically organized and easily understood. This structured presentation simplifies the process of drawing conclusions and enhances the accessibility of the findings.

Qualitative research often yields novel insights that address gaps unexplored in prior studies. Through this approach, previously ambiguous issues become clarified, offering a deeper understanding of the subject. Conclusions in qualitative research must be rigorously verified during the study by reviewing and revising field notes, engaging in peer discussions, and employing intersubjective validation to confirm findings. Broader efforts, such as triangulating data and consulting external references, further strengthen the reliability of the conclusions.

The outcomes of this research are intended to provide actionable recommendations and practical guidance, particularly for schools seeking to improve their accreditation status. These findings not only offer clarity but also serve as a foundation for schools to implement targeted strategies, ensuring sustainable improvements in educational quality and accreditation readiness.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the interpretation of the interview data collected during the study, conclusions are drawn that align with the principles of qualitative research, emphasizing authenticity and contextual relevance. To ensure transparency and support the analysis, the researcher presents the interview data in a structured manner, as outlined below.

The displayed data include key narratives, observations, and patterns that emerged during the interviews, providing a clear picture of the insights gathered from participants. These findings are categorized and organized to highlight recurring themes, unique perspectives, and any contradictions that may contribute to a nuanced understanding of the topic.

By presenting the interview data, the researcher aims to offer readers a comprehensive view of the evidence, ensuring that conclusions are rooted in the voices and experiences of the informants. This approach also enhances the credibility and reliability of the study, demonstrating how qualitative research can uncover rich, context-specific insights. Furthermore, presenting the data systematically allows for the identification of gaps, potential biases, and areas for future exploration, adding depth to the discussion and practical relevance to the recommendations.

The inclusion of direct quotes or paraphrased accounts from participants ensures that the findings are both detailed and representative of the diverse perspectives shared during the study.

Table 1. Questioners results

Question	Result
What preparations have been made by senior high schools in Tarakan City to provide quality accreditation strands?	<p>The principal said in the interview that had been conducted as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forming an accreditation team. "I formed an accreditation team with the aim that the entire accreditation preparation process can run more organized, effective, and efficient. This team plays an important role in ensuring that every aspect, especially administrative preparation, can be prepared well in advance, so that there are no shortcomings or omissions in meeting the set standards. With a clear division of tasks within the team, each member can focus on their respective responsibilities, such as document collection, report preparation, and coordination with relevant parties. In addition, this team also serves as a forum to discuss the challenges faced and formulate solutions together, so that the entire accreditation process can be carried out in a more structured and timely manner." • Maintenance of facilities and infrastructure. "The maintenance of facilities and infrastructure is an important aspect of accreditation, as it is a key assessment indicator. The accreditation team that has been formed is tasked with ensuring that all school facilities are in good, proper and complete condition according to the standards. In addition to maintaining physical functions, the team must also verify administrative completeness, such as inventory lists and proof of maintenance. By ensuring the readiness of facilities and infrastructure, schools not only fulfill accreditation requirements but also create a conducive learning environment." • Management of data and information related to needs in accreditation preparation. " I continue to encourage the accreditation team to carefully prepare data on schools, students, teachers and other elements, including supporting information such as administrative documents and activity reports. All data must be accurate and neatly organized so that the evaluation process runs smoothly and in accordance with accreditation standards".

3.1 Forming an Accreditation Team

The strategy found, namely the formation of an accreditation team to ensure the process runs according to standards, can be linked to education management theory that emphasizes the functions of planning, organizing, implementing and evaluating. The formation of the accreditation team reflects the organizing function, where the school divides roles and responsibilities between the principal, vice principal, teachers and education staff. This is in line with the opinion of (Komariah & Mirnawati, 2023), which states that organizational management is important to achieve institutional goals.

In addition, the implementation of continuous internal evaluation by the accreditation team reflects the function of evaluation in education management as described by Dewi, et al., (2022). This function aims to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the institution so that strategic improvement measures can be taken. This strategy also supports the total quality management approach in

education, which emphasizes continuous quality improvement through internal assessment and the participation of all elements of the organization (Alzoubi, et al., 2022). Thus, this strategy not only ensures the school's readiness for accreditation, but also supports the effective and sustainable management of educational institutions.

Intensive evaluation meetings are a routine agenda of the accreditation team in an effort to prepare schools for the accreditation process (Astenia et al., 2019). This evaluation aims to identify deficiencies and determine the necessary corrective steps. In addition, training and development for members of the accreditation team are also a priority. One form of training that is often carried out is socialization from BAN-S/M (National School/Madrasah Accreditation Board) which is invited directly to the school. With this socialization, the accreditation team is expected to be able to understand the accreditation standards comprehensively and be ready to implement them.

The accreditation simulation is the next important step in the preparation process. This simulation provides a real picture of the school's overall readiness, and helps identify weaknesses that still need to be fixed (Musits et al., 2024). By conducting a simulation, schools can prepare themselves better before the actual accreditation process. The hope is that this simulation will make it easier for the accreditation team to follow up on existing deficiencies, so that schools can meet accreditation standards more effectively and efficiently.

3.2 Maintenance of Facilities and Infrastructure

Accreditation is an important aspect of school requirements. Therefore, in preparing for good accreditation (Ghareeb et al., 2018), it is necessary to form a team that is coordinated with existing management. The accreditation team, coordinated by the deputy principal for facilities and infrastructure, has a crucial responsibility in ensuring that the physical and material aspects of the school meet the standards set by the National Accreditation Body (Musa & Uthartianty, 2019). One of the main tasks of this team is to ensure that facilities and infrastructure, such as school buildings, laboratories, libraries and other supporting facilities, are in good condition and adequate to support the learning process. The quality of facilities and infrastructure is not only assessed by their completeness, but also by their functionality and maintenance, so that they can be used optimally by students and teachers (Gaston, 2023).

In the context of research conducted by Komariah & Mirnawati (2023), the importance of the role of the accreditation team coordinated by the vice principal in the field of facilities and infrastructure is becoming increasingly clear. They are responsible not only for maintaining existing facilities but also for developing new facilities that are relevant to modern learning needs (Purwaningsih & Sirojuddin, 2024). Facilities such as computer laboratories, multimedia rooms, and digital infrastructure are becoming increasingly important in supporting the education process in the technological era. Therefore, the accreditation team must periodically evaluate the condition of school facilities and infrastructure to ensure that everything meets the established standards.

In addition, the results of the research by Sholihin et al. (2018) show that accreditation simulations can be used as a tool to evaluate the readiness of facilities and infrastructure. This simulation provides an opportunity for the accreditation team to see firsthand whether the school facilities meet the criteria required in the accreditation process (Adha et al., 2019). The simulation strategy to identify school improvement and development needs can be linked to education management theory, particularly strategic planning, data-driven management and total quality management (TQM). Through simulation, schools can collect data to analyze deficiencies, determine priorities and design targeted action plans according to accreditation standards. This approach reflects the principle of evidence-based decision making in data-driven management and the concept of continuous improvement in TQM, which aims to systematically improve the quality of education. In addition, the strategy also adopts a systems theory approach, where schools are viewed as entities with interrelated components, so development is holistic and comprehensive (Khurshid et al., 2022).

Finally, training and capacity building of the accreditation team in the field of facilities and infrastructure is also an important factor in preparing schools for accreditation (Huges et al., 2023). This training includes an in-depth understanding of the accreditation standards related to school facilities, as well as how to maintain and improve these facilities in a sustainable manner. With the right training, the accreditation team can be better prepared to face challenges that may arise related to the maintenance and development of school facilities (Jamaludin et al., 2022). So, when accreditation is carried out, the school already has facilities and infrastructure that meet all the requirements properly, which will ultimately increase the overall accreditation score.

3.3 Data Management and Documentation

Data and documentation management play a crucial role in supporting the accreditation process for schools. In the accreditation process, schools are required to present accurate and complete data, covering various aspects such as student achievement, attendance, and key policy documents, including the school's vision and mission, curriculum, and regulations (Alim & Subari, 2024). The data serves as physical evidence that needs to be uploaded into the School and Madrasah Accreditation Assessment System (SISPENA). Effective data management not only aids in filling out SISPENA accurately but also demonstrates the school's preparedness in adhering to quality standards required by accreditation guidelines (Muhsin et al., 2022).

Moreover, the proper organization and systematization of school data reflect a strong managerial capability. Schools that efficiently manage their documentation and data are more likely to excel in accreditation assessments (Sholihin et al., 2018), as they can provide real-time, verified information on student performance, curriculum updates, and other essential policies. This allows for more streamlined communication between school administrators and accreditation bodies, reducing the likelihood of errors during the submission process (Michelli & Karp, 2016). Such efficiency showcases the school's commitment to maintaining transparency and accuracy in its operations, which is a critical component of achieving high accreditation scores.

In conclusion, schools that invest time and resources in solid data management systems are positioning themselves for success in the accreditation process. By ensuring all necessary documentation is up-to-date, organized, and easily accessible, schools can not only meet accreditation requirements but also improve their overall managerial effectiveness (Staub, 2019). A strong emphasis on data management can lead to better strategic decision-making, improved educational outcomes, and enhanced institutional credibility in the long run.

3.4. Regional Government Support

The strategy undertaken by the regional government of North Kalimantan in facilitating the establishment of SMA Negeri 4 and SMK Negeri 4 Tarakan aligns with educational management theories, particularly decentralization theory, strategic resource management, and stakeholder collaboration theory. The decentralization era grants regional governments the authority to manage education based on local needs, reflecting the principles of decentralization theory that emphasize localized decision-making to address unique conditions effectively. Additionally, the government's efforts to acquire land and support construction demonstrate strategic resource management, where planning and allocation of resources are tailored to achieve long-term educational goals. Furthermore, the collaboration between regional and central governments illustrates stakeholder theory in education management, highlighting the importance of coordinated efforts among different levels of governance to achieve national education standards and sustainable development goals (Fatkhuri, 2019).

3.5 Community participation and support

The strategies implemented by schools to involve parents, communities, local authorities, and external organizations can be linked to several educational management theories, particularly stakeholder theory, community-based management, and public-private partnership (PPP) theory. The

involvement of parents and the school committee in policy socialization aligns with stakeholder theory, emphasizing the importance of engaging all stakeholders in decision-making to ensure transparency and shared responsibility. Coordination with local authorities, such as village heads and RT leaders, reflects community-based management, which highlights the integration of schools into their local environment to foster a conducive educational ecosystem. Furthermore, collaboration with businesses and industries, especially through CSR programs, is a practical application of PPP theory, where external partnerships enhance school resources and align vocational education with workforce demands, ensuring relevance and sustainability in educational development (Salangka et al., 2024).

3.6 Competent teaching and education staff

Teaching staff and educational staff at SMA/SMK whose status is not yet accredited have met the qualification requirements. Most of them are young teachers who have high enthusiasm and commitment to improving performance and quality of learning. Competent teaching staff support visitation assessments on components of the learning process because during visitations, assessors assess the suitability of the learning implementation plan and the teacher's performance in teaching students directly.

Educational staff also meet the standards, most of whom are undergraduate (S1) graduates. Education staff play a role in assisting with school administration filing and preparing accreditation documents. Schools actively encourage their teachers to develop their competencies by continuing to provide opportunities for teaching staff to participate in various training such as subject teacher conferences and industrial internship education for vocational school teachers.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis and discussion that have been described, the results of this study indicate that the strategies carried out in preparing school accreditation as a form of quality assurance of accreditation in high schools in Tarakan City include the formation of an accreditation team, data and information management, and maintenance of facilities and infrastructure. These findings imply the importance of preparation that can be carried out before the field assessor makes the accreditation assessment.

This study has limitations, namely that researchers have not reviewed other aspects that allow barriers to occur in depth based on the research results. The hope for future research is to expand the scope by considering the environmental context as well as external strategies that can affect school readiness in the accreditation process. External factors that need to be further analyzed include government support, such as allocation of funds, adequate policies, supervision and technical assistance, all of which are crucial to support schools in meeting accreditation standards. Conversely, a lack of this support may hinder the implementation of the designed strategies. On the other hand, internal challenges such as limited human resources, lack of coordination within the accreditation team and suboptimal administrative systems also require attention. In addition, other external contexts, such as inaccessible geographical conditions, limited infrastructure and low community support, play a significant role in determining the effectiveness of school strategies. By expanding the scope of the study to include these external factors, it is hoped that more comprehensive recommendations can be made to support schools' readiness to achieve optimal accreditation.

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