

Quality assurance in islamic educational institutions: Integrating religious values with global accreditation frameworks

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how Islamic educational institutions can integrate religious values with global accreditation frameworks in order to strengthen their quality assurance systems. Drawing on qualitative analysis of policy documents, institutional reports, and expert perspectives, the research explores the ways in which international quality standards—such as governance structures, curriculum coherence, documentation systems, and continuous evaluation—can be aligned with the ethical and pedagogical traditions that characterise Islamic education. The findings reveal that many institutions are in a transitional phase: increasingly engaged with global benchmarks yet still negotiating how to articulate faith based commitments within technical accreditation instruments. Successful institutions tend to translate religious values into operational indicators, including managerial integrity, professional conduct among teachers, and a sustained culture of accountability. The study also identifies capacity building and leadership character as decisive factors in determining whether integration becomes substantive or merely symbolic. Ultimately, the research argues that combining global frameworks with religious values is not a competing agenda but a strategic and cultural necessity for Islamic educational institutions in the twenty first century. This integration allows institutions to enhance their credibility in international arenas while safeguarding their distinctive intellectual and spiritual heritage.

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Introduction

Islamic educational institutions stand at a unique intersection where tradition, moral formation, and contemporary academic standards converge. Across many Muslim majority societies, these institutions ranging from pesantren and madrasah to Islamic universities remain vital centres for shaping intellectual, ethical, and social development (Sahin, 2018). Amid rapid globalisation, the rise of transnational educational benchmarks, and increasing demands for institutional accountability, Islamic educational providers are now confronted with an unprecedented challenge: how to preserve the integrity of their religious identity while aligning with internationally recognised systems of quality assurance and accreditation (Khaidir & Suud, 2020).

Quality assurance, in its broadest sense, encompasses the systematic processes designed to enhance institutional effectiveness, ensure the continual improvement of learning outcomes, and build public trust in educational delivery (Komsiyah, 2021).

Frameworks such as ISO based models, Outcome Based Education (OBE), and accreditation systems developed by agencies including ASEAN QA, ABET, QAA (UK), and various national quality assurance authorities, have reshaped global expectations of higher and basic education (Almuhaideb & Saeed, 2020). These frameworks emphasise transparency, measurable learning achievements, stakeholder involvement, risk management, and institutional governance (Rosiawan, 2022). While their benefits are widely acknowledged, Islamic institutions often face the additional responsibility of ensuring that such standards do not reduce or overshadow the spiritual, ethical, and communal values embedded in Islamic education.

The history of Islamic education demonstrates that quality was never an unfamiliar concept in the religious tradition. Classical Islamic scholarship relied on rigorous sanad (chains of transmission), peer review mechanisms among ulama, high standards of scholarly credibility, and institutional cultures that valued continuous moral and intellectual refinement (Zarkasyi, 2018). The emergence of renowned institutions such as Al Azhar, Al Qarawiyyin, and Nizamiyya illustrates a long standing tradition of ensuring the reliability of teaching, the integrity of educators, and the holistic formation of learners. What distinguishes the contemporary moment is not the idea of quality itself, but the need to articulate traditional religious commitments within the formalised language of modern accreditation.

For many Islamic educational institutions, global accreditation is no longer optional. International mobility, digital learning environments, and competition in the global academic landscape require a form of recognition that transcends national boundaries. Accreditation establishes credibility with governments, employers, global academic networks, and international funders (Lahmar, 2020). At the same time, Islamic institutions face concerns about homogenisation and the erosion of distinctive educational identities. Some leaders fear that adopting external standards may impose secular assumptions or instrumentalist learning models that conflict with the spiritual aims central to Islamic pedagogy (Moslimany et al., 2024). The challenge, therefore, lies not in choosing between religious values and global standards, but in intelligently integrating both into a coherent system of quality assurance.

Integration in this sense entails aligning fundamental Islamic educational principles—such as *adab* (ethical conduct), *tarbiyah* (character building), and holistic human development—with accreditation dimensions including curriculum design, assessment strategies, institutional governance, and continuous improvement (Abror & Rohmaniyah, 2023). An Islamic institution committed to academic excellence must demonstrate robust teaching methodologies and measurable learning outcomes, yet it must also embody a culture of ethics, sincerity, and communal responsibility. These commitments are not inherently contradictory. Instead, they offer an opportunity to reshape accreditation processes so that they honour religious identity while embracing global expectations of transparency and accountability (Hussin & Tamuri, 2019).

Several contemporary Islamic universities have begun experimenting with such integration. Some have embedded religious values directly into their programme learning outcomes, ensuring that graduates are assessed not only on cognitive mastery but also on ethical reasoning and professional integrity. Others have redesigned governance structures to include advisory roles for religious scholars alongside academic quality experts (Kosim et al., 2023). In some regions, accreditation bodies have begun acknowledging the legitimacy of value based indicators within their evaluation rubrics, demonstrating that

global frameworks can be adapted rather than merely adopted. These developments reflect a broader shift toward a pluralistic accreditation landscape, where cultural and religious identities can coexist with international standards of excellence (Purwati et al., 2018).

Nonetheless, challenges remain persistent. Islamic educational institutions often struggle with limited professional training in quality assurance, inadequate documentation systems, shortages of qualified auditors, and a lack of integration between religious and general academic departments (Tambak & Sukenti, 2023). Many institutions also carry historical administrative cultures that prioritise traditional authority structures over data driven decision making. Some educators express concern that global accreditation burdens them with bureaucratic tasks that detract from direct engagement with students. These tensions underline the necessity of a customised approach that respects the governing philosophies of Islamic institutions while enabling them to participate fully in global quality discourse (Siregar, 2021).

This study seeks to explore how Islamic educational institutions can design a quality assurance framework that simultaneously reflects their religious values and aligns with global accreditation systems. Rather than viewing the two as competing paradigms, the study proposes an integrative model grounded in harmonisation, contextual adaptability, and institutional authenticity. The central premise is straightforward: Islamic institutions need not abandon their spiritual foundations to achieve global recognition, nor should they isolate themselves from international developments in educational quality (Siregar, 2021). Instead, they can merge religious commitments with modern quality systems in a way that enriches both. By examining curriculum structures, governance mechanisms, stakeholder participation, assessment strategies, and the formation of institutional culture, this research highlights concrete pathways through which Islamic educational institutions can engage with global accreditation while maintaining their distinct identity. The intention is not to produce a universal model—since Islamic institutions differ significantly across countries and traditions—but to identify core principles and adaptable strategies that foster quality without compromising religious character.

The contemporary educational landscape demands a delicate balance of authenticity and modernity. Islamic educational institutions, with their centuries long heritage and enduring social relevance, are well positioned to lead innovative models of value infused quality assurance. As the world moves towards increasingly interconnected systems of knowledge and credential recognition, the ability of these institutions to blend faith based principles with global frameworks becomes not only a matter of compliance, but a testament to the adaptability and vitality of Islamic education itself. This study contributes to that unfolding process by articulating a pathway for integration that is academically rigorous, administratively feasible, and spiritually meaningful.

Method

This study employed a qualitative design to investigate how Islamic educational institutions integrate religious values into global accreditation and quality assurance frameworks. The methodological orientation followed an interpretivist approach, acknowledging that institutional practices, leadership decisions, and value systems are shaped by social, cultural, and religious contexts (Atkinson, 2017; Corbin & Strauss, 2014). Rather than seeking generalisable measurements, the study prioritised depth of

understanding, institutional nuance, and the lived experiences of educators and administrators.

Data were collected through three primary techniques: semi structured interviews, document analysis, and limited on site observations. Semi structured interviews were conducted with senior leaders, quality assurance officers, curriculum coordinators, and selected teaching staff from three Islamic educational institutions representing different organisational models: a pesantren based higher education college, a modern Islamic university, and a secondary level madrasah undergoing national accreditation. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure representation from both academic and religious leadership structures (Miles et al., 2014). Interviews explored how institutions interpreted global accreditation standards, how religious values were embedded in internal quality mechanisms, and what tensions or synergies arose during implementation.

Document analysis involved reviewing institutional regulations, strategic plans, quality manuals, curriculum guidelines, annual self evaluation reports, and accreditation assessment documents. These materials provided insight into how institutional values, governance structures, and educational philosophies were formally articulated and operationalised. The analysis helped identify alignment or misalignment between institutional identity statements and the technical expectations of accreditation bodies. Limited observations were undertaken during internal quality review meetings and classroom assessments, providing contextual understanding of how quality assurance practices functioned in daily operations (Zed, 2008). Field notes captured decision making processes, stakeholder interactions, and the interplay between academic and religious considerations. Data analysis was conducted using thematic coding. Initial open coding generated descriptive categories, which were then refined through axial coding to identify core themes related to integration strategies, institutional challenges, value based indicators, and governance practices. Triangulation across interview data, documents, and observations enhanced credibility and reduced interpretive bias.

Ethical considerations included informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for institutional sensitivities relating to religious practices. By focusing on multiple institutions and triangulated sources, the method offered a comprehensive picture of how Islamic educational institutions negotiate the relationship between religious identity and global accreditation demands. The findings emerging from this methodological process are presented in the subsequent Results section.

Result

Institutional Strategies for Integrating Religious Values into Quality Assurance

The first major strand of findings concerns how Islamic educational institutions actively integrate their religious identity into global accreditation and quality assurance frameworks. Rather than treating religious values as peripheral or ceremonial, the institutions studied approached integration as a structural and cultural task—embedding values into curriculum processes, governance mechanisms, assessment systems, and institutional quality culture. The resulting strategies demonstrate that alignment between religious values and global standards is not only possible but can produce an enriched form of quality assurance rooted in both academic excellence and moral formation (Aderibigbe et al., 2023).

Across the three institutions examined—representing a pesantren based HE college, a modern Islamic university, and a secondary level madrasah—leaders consistently emphasised that religious identity must inform every aspect of institutional operations. The concept of “identity

integrity” became central: accreditation was not seen as a process of conforming blindly to external expectations but as an opportunity to articulate the institution’s ethos in a formalised, internationally recognisable format (Hakim et al., 2020). This attitude created a powerful foundation for integration, ensuring that religious values were not added superficially to quality documents but were woven into the practical logic of daily operations.

One of the clearest areas where integration occurred was in the development and refinement of programme learning outcomes (PLOs). Accreditation bodies typically require learning outcomes that are measurable, behaviour based, and aligned with industry or societal needs. Islamic institutions responded by translating core religious values—such as honesty, discipline, social responsibility, and ethical sensitivity—into operational, assessable competencies. Instead of presenting values as abstract ideals, institutions crafted indicators grounded in observable behaviours. For instance, integrity was assessed through academic conduct, adherence to plagiarism policies, and honesty during examinations (Apriyanti et al., 2024). Ethical reasoning was evaluated through case based assessments and reflective assignments. Professional accountability was linked to performance during internships and community engagement programmes. This systematic operationalisation allowed religious values to sit comfortably within accreditation rubrics that prioritise measurability.

In addition to curriculum reform, governance structures were reshaped to ensure that religious perspectives were incorporated into decision making processes. Many global accreditation systems emphasise transparency, collegiality, evidence based decision making, and shared governance. Islamic educational institutions responded by creating hybrid committees: quality assurance bodies that included both academic managers and recognised religious scholars (Asfiati, 2023). In two of the institutions, advisory boards comprising senior ulama or pesantren leaders were formally integrated into curriculum councils and quality committees. Their involvement was substantive rather than symbolic. These scholars reviewed curriculum revisions, advised on coherence between religious identity and academic demands, and contributed to the development of value based institutional policies (Minhaji et al., 2024). This strategic approach allowed institutions to satisfy international expectations for governance documentation while preserving the authority and moral guidance embedded in their religious tradition.

Internal quality audits—the backbone of most accreditation systems—were another arena where integration proved both creative and effective. Institutions expanded audit instruments to incorporate value based indicators. Alongside the typical categories of teaching performance, assessment alignment, and curriculum mapping, institutions added indicators such as educator behaviour, consistency in modelling ethical conduct, student participation in spiritual programmes, discipline patterns, campus culture, and community service involvement. These expanded audit tools allowed institutions to capture the holistic development expected in Islamic education, while still presenting evidence in formats familiar to external reviewers (Setiawan et al., 2024). Institutional documents also underwent significant transformation. Quality manuals, strategic plans, and standard operating procedures were revised to articulate clear linkages between religious values and quality assurance principles. Document analysis showed that institutions positioned religious values as part of their quality philosophy, framing them as foundational drivers of excellence rather than additional components (Saihu, 2020). For example, one institution rewrote its strategic plan to present its commitment to public trust, integrity, and societal service—values that align with both Islamic educational heritage and global expectations for institutional accountability. By expressing identity within professional language, institutions demonstrated how traditional commitments could coexist with contemporary standards.

Teacher development emerged as a crucial integration strategy. While accreditation frameworks require consistent lecturer qualifications, pedagogical competence, and ongoing professional development, Islamic institutions expanded these training programmes to include sessions on integrating values into teaching practice, ethical modelling, and the development of spiritually informed classroom cultures. This approach responded to both internal expectations and

accreditation requirements for development planning, demonstrating that religious identity could complement, rather than obstruct, professional standards (Adiyono et al., 2022).

Curriculum implementation further reflected integration. Religious content was not relegated to isolated courses but infused across the curriculum. Some institutions designed cross disciplinary modules linking religious ethics with disciplines such as business, health sciences, or environmental studies. This approach aligned with accreditation outcomes related to interdisciplinary learning and societal relevance while maintaining a recognisably Islamic educational character. Field observations showed that interdisciplinary discussions encouraged students to see their professional fields through an ethical lens, meeting accreditation expectations for civic and ethical competence (De Bruin et al., 2020). Stakeholder engagement practices were also adapted. Accreditation systems emphasise the involvement of external stakeholders in curriculum review, graduate tracking, and programme evaluation. Islamic institutions expanded this category of stakeholders to include religious community leaders, parents, local pesantren networks, and alumni working in religious or social service fields (Qazi et al., 2021). Their participation ensured that feedback reflected not only labour market needs but also community expectations regarding moral formation, spiritual leadership, and public service. This expanded stakeholder ecosystem fostered community ownership while meeting external demands for accountability.

Furthermore, student support services were redesigned to reflect religious identity without compromising quality indicators related to student welfare, counselling, or career guidance. Institutions developed mentoring systems involving both academic advisors and spiritual mentors, ensuring that students received holistic support. These programmes aligned with accreditation requirements for comprehensive student services while maintaining distinctive Islamic values. Digital systems also played a role in integration. Institutions began using electronic documentation platforms not only for academic records but also for tracking participation in spiritual programmes, ethical training workshops, and community service activities. These digital records contributed to completeness and traceability—two elements often emphasised during accreditation audits. Overall, the first section of results shows that Islamic education institutions approached the integration of religious values with global accreditation frameworks through robust, coherent, and systematic strategies. These strategies extended far beyond rhetorical expressions of identity. They involved structural redesign, policy alignment, curriculum transformation, governance innovation, and the cultivation of a quality culture in which religious values became operational, assessable, and professionally articulated. In this integrated model, religious identity does not sit outside global accreditation systems but becomes an active driver of quality and institutional distinctiveness.

Challenges and Tensions in Aligning Religious Identity with Global Accreditation Frameworks

The second major strand of findings concerns the layered challenges Islamic educational institutions face when attempting to harmonise their religious identity with the technical, managerial, and evidence driven expectations of global accreditation systems. While institutions displayed creativity and determination in integrating religious values, the process was neither smooth nor uniform. Interviews, documents, and field observations revealed multiple tensions—some structural, some cultural, some epistemic—that shaped institutional responses and constrained implementation (Mairita et al., 2023). A central challenge arose from the fundamental difference between oral–traditional institutional cultures and the documentation centred logic of accreditation. In many Islamic institutions, particularly those historically linked to pesantren, educational legitimacy rests on moral authority, exemplary behaviour, and transmission of knowledge through direct mentorship. Accreditation bodies, however, require written evidence, structured reports, measurable indicators, and systematic data collection. Administrators described the difficulty of translating long standing practices into written formats without reducing their spiritual and pedagogical richness. Several staff members expressed discomfort, explaining that

“we have always done these things, but writing them down feels foreign.” This mismatch created gaps in audit readiness, incomplete reporting, and delays in meeting external deadlines.

Another tension emerged regarding governance. Accreditation frameworks typically promote participatory governance, transparency, and distributed authority. Many Islamic institutions operate within a hierarchical leadership system in which religious scholars or kyai hold substantial decision making authority grounded in spiritual legitimacy. Navigating this contrast required delicate negotiation. While institutions sought to maintain respect for religious leadership, accreditation reviewers expected broader stakeholder engagement and clear documentation of deliberative processes. In some cases, leaders had to adjust long standing decision pathways, adopting more participatory structures while ensuring that the role of religious authorities remained intact (Hoerudin et al., 2023). This negotiation often generated internal resistance, especially among senior staff who viewed new governance instruments as administrative burdens or as potential threats to institutional tradition.

Curriculum standardisation posed a further challenge. Accreditation demands coherence, alignment between learning outcomes and assessment, and uniformity across classes and instructors. Yet traditional religious subjects—especially classical texts or kitab turath—are traditionally studied through personalised pedagogical relationships, often involving different interpretative trajectories depending on the teacher (Ayuningsih et al., 2020). These pedagogical traditions emphasise depth, nuance, and the formation of scholarly character, qualities that do not translate neatly into standardised assessment rubrics. Some educators feared that imposing uniform learning outcomes on religious subjects might weaken the organic and dialogical nature of teaching. Others expressed concern that accreditation driven assessment could reduce the role of spiritual maturity or adab (character) to checklist style indicators.

Institutions also struggled with staff capacity limitations. Many lecturers—particularly those with pesantren backgrounds—had strong mastery of religious knowledge but limited training in quality assurance, documentation, curriculum mapping, or data analysis. Administrators noted that significant resources were needed for training, workshops, and mentoring sessions just to bring staff to a baseline understanding of accreditation requirements (Pratama & Qorib, 2024). This challenge was especially visible in the madrasah level institution, where teachers juggled heavy teaching loads alongside administrative demands. Limited staffing made it difficult to maintain continuous cycles of quality improvement, weakening the sustainability of quality initiatives.

Resource availability more broadly deepened these challenges. Smaller Islamic institutions lacked access to advanced management information systems, digital documentation platforms, or specialised quality assurance personnel. While formal accreditation systems often assume such infrastructure, many Islamic institutions operate with modest budgets, relying heavily on community support. Leaders described the tension between meeting accreditation expectations and maintaining financial commitments to scholarships, community programmes, and spiritual activities. This tension often resulted in a trade off: institutions prioritised what was essential for accreditation survival while postponing longer term investments in quality systems (Hibatillah & Husni, 2022).

Cultural translation emerged as an additional layer of complexity. Certain accreditation concepts—such as “risk management,” “stakeholder mapping,” or “quality culture”—did not align intuitively with local institutional language or conceptual traditions. Staff frequently required extended clarification, and leaders had to adapt global terminology into familiar institutional discourse. For example, “continuous improvement” was reframed as *islah* (improvement grounded in moral purpose), while “stakeholders” were reinterpreted to include religious community networks. Even with these adaptations, some terminology remained perceived as external, technical, or disconnected from the daily lived experience of educators (Hendawi et al., 2024).

An unexpected tension surfaced around identity representation. Institutions sought to articulate their religious values prominently within accreditation documents. However, several administrators worried that external reviewers—especially those from secular or non Islamic backgrounds—might misinterpret or undervalue religious elements. This resulted in cautious

balancing: institutions wanted to display their distinctive identity while ensuring that their documentation remained legible to international evaluators (Akrim et al., 2022). Some documents underwent multiple iterations to achieve this equilibrium, demonstrating the effort required to translate religious commitments into professionally acceptable formats.

Student assessment practices also generated challenges. While global frameworks prioritise cognitive competencies, professional skills, and measurable performance, Islamic institutions additionally value spiritual maturity, ethical conduct, and community involvement. The attempt to quantify such dimensions—without reducing their meaning—was a persistent dilemma. Some institutions attempted to develop rubrics for ethical behaviour or participation in spiritual programmes, but staff often noted that these rubrics risked oversimplifying complex qualitative attributes. Furthermore, interviews highlighted interpersonal tensions arising from differing mindsets regarding accreditation. Some educators viewed accreditation as a necessary pathway toward global recognition, improved standards, and institutional growth. Others saw it as bureaucratic intrusion or cultural disruption. These divergent attitudes sometimes impeded collective commitment to quality initiatives, complicating implementation and reducing the effectiveness of quality cycles.

Finally, institutions faced challenges in sustaining momentum after achieving initial accreditation milestones. Without continuous training, monitoring, and incentives, quality assurance activities risked becoming episodic—intensifying only when accreditation deadlines approached. This pattern reflected structural and cultural constraints rather than lack of willingness, showing that long term integration of values and standards requires deep institutional reform. Altogether, the second section of results demonstrates that aligning religious identity with global accreditation frameworks is not merely a technical or administrative undertaking. It is a complex process shaped by cultural norms, epistemological traditions, institutional histories, resource realities, and internal power dynamics. While integration is possible, it demands continuous negotiation, strategic adaptation, and a willingness to re-express identity within the language of contemporary quality assurance.

Discussion

The findings from this study illuminate a landscape in which Islamic educational institutions navigate a delicate and often demanding relationship between their religious identity and the technical expectations of global accreditation frameworks. The interplay between these two domains produces both creative possibilities and structural tensions, shaping how institutions articulate quality, manage governance, and implement continuous improvement (Hanafi, 2019). Rather than viewing this relationship as a clash of incompatible paradigms, the discussion reveals a complex ecosystem in which institutions selectively adapt, reinterpret, negotiate, and hybridise global standards to maintain fidelity to their religious foundations while achieving formal recognition.

One of the central insights lies in understanding that quality assurance within Islamic educational settings is not merely a procedural exercise but an identity laden practice. Traditional Islamic pedagogy places high value on moral authority, mentorship, character formation, and the integrity of the teacher–student relationship. These values create a form of institutional legitimacy that stands somewhat apart from the evidence based logic of accreditation (Wasehudin et al., 2023). When institutions attempt to integrate global frameworks, they are not simply adding administrative tasks; they are fundamentally reconfiguring how knowledge, authority, and accountability are conceptualised. The discomfort expressed by some educators around documentation, for instance, signals deeper epistemological tensions: the shift from orally transmitted wisdom to audit friendly written records represents a cultural transition rather than a technical inconvenience.

Governance issues further highlight this dynamic. Accreditation models emphasise participatory structures, transparency, and shared decision making, whereas many Islamic institutions are built upon hierarchical leadership rooted in scholarly authority and spiritual

legitimacy (Syarnubi et al., 2023). The data suggests that institutions do not simply abandon this hierarchy but instead seek hybrid governance arrangements that allow for broader consultation while preserving the symbolic role of religious leaders. This supports a broader theoretical view that quality assurance systems are most successful when they are culturally embedded rather than externally imposed. Institutions that attempted deep integration without cultural adaptation encountered stronger internal resistance, confirming the importance of contextual alignment.

Curriculum and assessment challenges underscore another core tension: global accreditation frameworks assume measurable, standardised learning outcomes, while traditional Islamic studies often involve interpretive depth, personal guidance, and gradual intellectual maturation. The findings show that attempts to standardise religious subjects risk superficiality, whereas refusing standardisation risks non compliance. The most promising strategies involved selective alignment, where measurable competencies—such as text comprehension, historical contextualisation, or analytical reasoning—were integrated into religious courses without undermining their interpretive richness. This suggests that curriculum integration, when managed carefully, can strengthen academic clarity without erasing traditional pedagogical values (Ibrahim et al., 2024).

The issue of staff capacity reveals a structural challenge commonly faced by faith based institutions worldwide. Teachers steeped in religious scholarship may lack training in quality assurance or data driven decision making, not out of resistance but due to differing intellectual priorities. Institutions that invested in sustained professional development—not one off workshops—were better able to foster a culture of quality awareness (Minhaji et al., 2024). This finding aligns with international research showing that quality assurance becomes institutionalised only when staff understand not just how to perform tasks but why they matter. Without such grounding, compliance becomes episodic and dependent on accreditation deadlines rather than ongoing commitment.

Resource constraints further complicate institutional transformation. Smaller institutions, in particular, experienced misalignment between accreditation expectations and organisational capacity. Management information systems, specialised quality units, and comprehensive monitoring tools are often assumed as baseline requirements in global frameworks, yet they remain beyond the reach of many Islamic educational institutions (Hussin & Tamuri, 2019). The study's findings recommend a differentiated approach to accreditation, one that recognises the diversity of institutional contexts rather than imposing uniform managerial assumptions.

Cultural translation emerged as a surprisingly influential factor in shaping institutional responses. The reinterpretation of technical terminology into familiar conceptual language—such as reframing “continuous improvement” as *islah*—demonstrates how global standards can be made culturally resonant. This phenomenon reflects a broader pattern in which institutions domesticate external frameworks, enabling internal stakeholders to perceive them as extensions of existing values rather than external impositions. Such cultural translation does not dilute quality assurance principles; rather, it strengthens their legitimacy within the institution (Hendawi et al., 2024). Identity representation within accreditation documentation adds another layer to this discussion. Institutions tread a careful line between expressing religious authenticity and ensuring technical legibility for external reviewers. This balancing act highlights a critical insight: accreditation is not simply an evaluation exercise but a communicative act requiring institutions to express themselves in ways that multiple audiences can understand. The iterative process of document refinement reflects an institutional learning curve in articulating identity within professionalised quality language (Pratama & Qorib, 2024).

The tensions around student assessment—particularly in quantifying spiritual growth or ethical behaviour—illustrate a fundamental limit of global accreditation frameworks, which privilege measurable, cognitive outcomes over moral and spiritual development. Institutions responded with creative but imperfect solutions, developing rubrics for ethical conduct or participation while acknowledging that such rubrics inevitably simplify complex attributes (Hakim et al., 2020). This reflects a broader philosophical challenge: the qualitative essence of spiritual

education resists full measurement, reminding us that not all valued outcomes fit neatly into audit categories.

Finally, the issue of sustaining momentum reveals a pattern familiar in many sectors: quality assurance efforts intensify before accreditation visits but diminish afterward. This cyclical behaviour suggests that external pressure alone is insufficient to build a lasting quality culture. Institutions that managed to sustain progress did so by embedding quality principles into internal incentives, leadership expectations, and regular self review processes. Such internalisation transforms accreditation from a periodic obligation into an ongoing institutional habit. Taken together, the discussion reveals that Islamic educational institutions are neither passive recipients of global accreditation frameworks nor rigid defenders of tradition. They operate as adaptive systems, selectively adopting, modifying, and reinterpreting external standards to suit their cultural, religious, and organisational realities. The process is complex, iterative, and sometimes conflict prone, but the evidence suggests that integration is both possible and beneficial when approached through contextual adaptation rather than forced compliance.

This discussion points toward future research pathways, particularly comparative studies across different types of Islamic institutions, analyses of student outcomes under hybrid quality models, and examinations of how accreditation shapes institutional identity over the long term. As global education systems continue to evolve, Islamic institutions will remain important sites for exploring how religious values and global standards can coexist in ways that enrich both domains.

Conclusion

The conclusion of this study draws together two central trajectories: the global demand for rigorous quality assurance in education and the need for Islamic educational institutions to remain firmly rooted in their religious identity. When these trajectories are read in tandem, it becomes evident that institutional success is shaped not only by the ability to satisfy international accreditation requirements but also by the consistency with which an institution preserves the intellectual, moral, and spiritual values that originally justified its establishment. This integrative stance illustrates that global standards and religious values are not opposing poles; rather, they can refine and strengthen one another when translated into thoughtful, context sensitive quality management practices.

The findings indicate that many Islamic educational institutions are currently navigating a transitional phase. They are increasingly connected to global standardisation agendas yet still searching for effective ways to operationalise religious values within accreditation instruments that often lean towards technical and quantitative measurement. In practice, ethical values such as trustworthiness, discipline, exemplary conduct, and sincerity rarely fit neatly into numerical indicators. Nonetheless, the study demonstrates that institutions which succeed in quality assurance tend to locate a pragmatic middle ground: religious values are transformed into operational criteria such as managerial integrity, a culture of professionalism among teachers, clarity in curricular design, robust documentation systems, and consistent data driven evaluation.

Institutional capacity building emerges as a crucial prerequisite. Without sustained professional development, stable governance structures, and the ability to interpret global educational policy shifts, the integration of ethical commitments and international standards risks becoming superficial. However, when this capacity building is coupled with leadership that respects the Islamic intellectual tradition—whether through classical pedagogical ethics, moral philosophy, or the long established adab of teaching and learning—the resulting model of quality assurance becomes more holistic. In such cases, institutions are not judged solely on the basis of accreditation forms but also on their effectiveness in shaping learners of strong character. The study also affirms that quality assurance in Islamic education cannot be governed by market logic alone. A moral compass remains essential. Global accreditation frameworks offer structure, methodological clarity, and systematic reporting mechanisms; religious values provide ethical direction and purposeful meaning that prevent these structures from becoming empty bureaucratic routines.

When the two are thoughtfully integrated, Islamic educational institutions can strengthen their credibility in the global arena while maintaining their spiritual foundation.

In sum, this research concludes that integrating religious values with global accreditation frameworks is not merely an optional enhancement but a strategic necessity for Islamic educational institutions in the twenty first century. Institutions that manage this integration wisely will navigate global competition with greater confidence while continuing their historic role as custodians of Islamic scholarship and ethics. Future research may build on this work by developing more precise instruments to measure values internalisation and by examining leadership strategies that best harmonise these dual imperatives.

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