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## **Challenges of Top-Down Policy as Stakeholder Engagement Strategy in the Implementation of Internal Quality Assurance in Higher Education Institutions: An Empirical Research**

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**Abstract.** Higher education plays a significant role in shaping the future national competitiveness. In Indonesia, its governance drives a massive transformation and is more focused on the internal quality assurance over the external one. There are several changes from aspects related to the implementation of internal quality assurance system, especially on the transformation of higher education which faces internal challenges that consider the managerial-based work as a highly complex and heavy-duty work and is less relevant to individual achievement. Further, the biggest challenge in implementing a quality management is the lack of stakeholder management. It gets worse with the top-down policy being implemented to improve the quality of higher education. This present study gives an overview of the internal quality assurance of higher education institutions experiencing challenges in stakeholder management and their top-down-policy-based initiatives. There was a total of 67 private universities in Central Java, Indonesia involved in this study. The data was collected in April – July 2019 using questionnaire and focus group discussion (FGD). The FGD involving the executives of the quality board of each university discussed the implementation of new quality assurance regulations. The results show a consistency of the respondents who apparently had incomplete documents of internal quality assurance, followed by skepticism about the future of institution which simultaneously affected the policy in the future.

**Keywords.** competitiveness, quality assurance, higher education, Indonesia

### **Introduction**

Sustainability growth of national competitiveness is less likely to happen without the support from its competitive manpower. The higher the country's competitiveness, the higher the support from its manpower. A competitive manpower helps the country to achieve a sustainable competitiveness. In this case, the higher education institutions are responsible for creating the competitive manpower (Ansah & Swanzy, 2019; Naseer & Al-Hidabi, 2019). A low-quality higher education institution can only produce uncompetitive graduates. Equipped with a profound mission, the higher education institution is not solely about teaching and learning organization, but also an institution reflecting the intellectuality and competitiveness of a region (Aurangzeb, 2019; Batool, Rashid, & Riaz, 2013; Sánchez-Chaparro, Gómez-Frías, & González-Benito, 2020). A strategic role of higher education institution requires quality-

based governance standards managed by internal and external stakeholders. Changes in the higher education governance based on the independent quality management in accordance with the international standards is a national effort to create competitive manpower.

In 2018, there was a total of 4,500 higher education institutions in Indonesia. This number was the largest in ASEAN. For this reason, Indonesia's manpower competitiveness should have led in ASEAN. However, a quality manpower had not been achieved (Rahayuningtyas & Triana, 2017). Hence, Indonesia has been focusing on the higher education institutions to be one of the targets in improving the competitiveness. Implementing a top-down policy in the quality management of the higher education institution is one way to improve the competitiveness. This top-down policy should be implemented in all private and state universities. However, this has led to many questions about the leaders' response, especially on the readiness to implement the policy.

The implementation of quality management in higher education institution is such a big job that requires the cooperation of all parties in the institution. Implementing a quality management is not only the responsibility of leaders in each department, but all parties or so-called stakeholders. The application of new rules in the implementation of integrated quality management can be perceived as an effort to increase the stakeholder engagement in the higher education institution in Indonesia. Previous researches have proven the need for stakeholder engagement for the management of higher education institutions (Bartlett, McDonald, & Pini, 2015; Mathur, Price, & Austin, 2008; Sandhya et al., 2020). A previous study mentioned several variables that can shape the stakeholder engagement in the higher education institutions (Abuzeinab & Arif, 2014). The variables including top-level support, staff empowerment, collaboration / team work, effective communication and partnering are described in a framework for stakeholder engagement.

The changes in national regulations regarding the quality assurance in higher education in Indonesia lead to the following research problems: 1) How is the level of readiness for the implementation of quality assurance in the higher education institutions?; and 2) How is the framework for the implementation of quality assurance in the higher education institutions? This paper is presented in the following order: the first section is introduction explaining the implementation of quality management as the top-down policy. The second section presents a literature review of research framework. The third section explains the research method. The fourth section describes the research results of quality management system using the framework for stakeholder engagement as the basis of analysis. Meanwhile, the last section explains the conclusion and practical implications of this study.

### **Literature review**

#### **Top-Down Policy in The Implementation of Quality Management in Higher Education Institutions**

In Indonesia, the quality assurance of higher education institutions has become more important as the society begins to associate the global competitiveness with the competitive quality of manpower. As mentioned by Siburian (2010), implementing a quality management in an organization – including the higher education institutions – based on the customer needs is highly essential in terms of business. The creation of competitive manpower depends on the internal quality assurance of higher education institutions which focuses on the quality of each academic and non-academic activity. The efforts to build a quality culture require a great effort and commitment from each higher education institution, considering that the quality control is in the hands of each institution.

The implementation of top-down policy to be based on the internal quality assurance in the management of higher education institutions has become a mandatory to enhance Indonesia's competitiveness. The main point of the implementation of top-down policy is through the internal quality assurance in higher education institutions. However, it is such a challenge as it requires commitment from various parties in the organization. In many countries, this has been an issue because the quality of education system determines the country's economic success (Pavel, 2012). Further, European countries have been using the Bologna Process framework as part of the Berlin Communiqué. This means that there are efforts to ensure the quality of higher education institutions and continuous improvement at the institutional level, both nationally and the European Union as a whole (Hećimović & Legčević, 2016; Williams & Harvey, 2015).

In 2003, the government granted freedom to the higher education institutions in various forms, including the national curriculum exclusion. At the same time, Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System assigned a higher education autonomy. The higher education institutions have the autonomy to determine policies for managing education in their institutions. The autonomy - which means the freedom in governance of higher education institutions governance - also indicates that the higher education institutions are responsible for determining, implementing, controlling, and improving the quality of their institutions independently. In order to reinforce the higher education's freedom in managing their institutions, the government also issued a new top down policy that ensures that all freedom is carried out based on an accountable quality assurance.

The government established a quality assurance policy that must be implemented by the higher education institution internally. Based on The Higher Education Institutions Quality Assurance Guidebook (2018), the integration of the Higher Education Quality Assurance System consists of the Internal Quality Assurance System and the External Quality Assurance System (accreditation). In other words, the new regulation seen as the top-down policy of higher education institutions in Indonesia provides freedom that also demands the quality assurance of all activities. This change is such a challenge for the implementation of quality higher education institutions, considering that most of them have not received the best accreditation title previously. Thus, it can be assumed that there is a lack of understanding of the new quality assurance instruments. The quality assurance is becoming an essential aspect of the good governance of higher education institutions.

Furthermore, one of the provinces in Indonesia with a population density of 35 million people is Central Java province which has over 256 private higher education institutions. In 2019, the ranking system of higher education institutions gave accreditation status of A, B, or C according to the quality. A total of 5 private higher education institutions got accreditation status of A, indicating that they were able to serve based on the standard determined or had served beyond the standard determined. Meanwhile, 87 private higher education institutions got predicate B, 45 private higher education institutions got predicate C, and the rest were still applying for the re-accreditation process. This situation shows that to improve the competitiveness of human resources, it is necessary to improve the implementation of quality assurance of higher education institutions.

Previous researches on the quality assurance in higher education institutions have shown the relevance of service quality to quality assurance implementation. A research by Kwek, Lau, and Piew (2010) in Malaysia proved that the higher the implementation of quality culture, the higher the quality of service. Meanwhile, the research of Sulaiman and Wibowo (2016) concluded that the successful implementation of the internal quality assurance system was the contribution of the entire academic community. These studies show that quality assurance

activities must be carried out on all elements in the higher education institution, and the perceived quality of the users also depends on the performance of all elements in the higher education institution. Further, Sulaiman and Wibowo (2016) found that the higher education institutions experienced problems in implementing the internal quality assurance system, specifically due to the lack of commitment from leaders at the university, faculty, department, and study program levels, and the lack of number of auditors. Furthermore, the quality assurance activities are also perceived as a boring regular activity and are not followed up with improvements. In addition to the uneven understanding of the academic community about the concept of internal quality assurance, the awareness of the importance of an internal quality assurance system is still low.

The two researches by Sulaiman and Wibowo (2016) and Kwek, Lau, and Tan (2010) acknowledged that the disappointing quality assurance activity had led to the decrease in the service quality of higher education institutions. A quality higher education is the reflection of the quality of competitive manpower. One of the excellences of higher education services can be found from the output that produces a qualified graduates who are able to compete in the world of work. A higher education institution with an excellent quality produce excellent graduates as well. However, not all higher education institutions get the predicate of being superior in quality-based education services. In other words, many higher education face challenges to implement sustainable quality-based services. This present study specifically aims to: 1) identify the level of understanding of the leaders of higher education institutions on the quality assurance, and 2) identify the ownership of quality assurance documents in the higher education institutions. The results of this study are expected to provide an explanation on the challenges of the implementation of quality culture in the higher education institutions in Indonesia.

### **Quality Assurance System**

The concept of quality and quality assurance was originally proposed in the manufacturing before later developed in the educational service. Juran and De Feo (2010) defined quality as “fitness for use”. In order to achieve this, Juran (year) developed an approach that includes the cycle of “*design through vendor relations, process development, manufacturing control, inspection, test, distribution, customer relations, and field service.*” According to Juran (year), the three important pillars in the quality management are known as Juran's Trilogy, namely Quality Planning, Quality Control, and Quality Improvement. The understanding of quality assurance, as continued by Crosby (1979), refers to the statement of “quality is free”, by considering that “if the quality are improved, the total cost will inevitably fall.” Furthermore, Crosby (year) also claimed that zero defects were possible if high-performance standards were strictly applied. From these three views, it can be concluded that the concept of quality implies improvement and continuous improvement. The next development in quality assurance basic concept was also introduced by Deming (1982) who focused more on the process of improvement, providing employees with clear standards for work, and at the same time providing the necessary means to achieve these standards. The Plan-Do-Check-Act steps which are now widely recognized in the development of quality policies are the important contributions of Deming (year) in developing the concept of improvement.

The quality assurance in institutions can be implemented or be hindered, depending on numerous supporting factors. A research by Almeida, Muniz, and Costa (2014) revealed factors supporting the successful implementation of quality. Those factors include: leadership commitment, team commitment, training for the team involved, clarity of authority and responsibility of the team involved, implementation schedule, organizational culture, resource

allocation; integration among the areas involved; management system without bureaucracy and awareness of the people about the importance of quality management. In other words, the implementation of quality assurance in an organization requires commitment to establish quality culture.

### **The Internal Quality Assurance of Higher Education Institutions**

The higher education with its role as an institution that provides in-depth knowledge to students, so that they become leaders in the society and competitive manpower who develop great responsibilities (Liu, 2020). The higher education institutions are expected to produce quality graduates, thus providing educational services must be based on the internal quality assurance (Adomaitienė, Ruževičius, & Serafinas, 2007). The quality assurance in higher education institutions reflects the public trust in the institutions that create competitive manpower. The society from various elements, including academia, government, and industry, hopes that they can be operated based on the internal quality insurance. The implementation of quality assurance system in the higher education institutions will support the creation of good, creative, innovative graduates who are able to create jobs with the knowledge and technology they have. Further, it is also an indicator of the success of higher education institutions that guarantees quality (Sulaiman & Wibowo, 2016). They need to carry out educational services based on the sustainable quality management and demonstrate the quality of educational services that refers to the achievement of the organization's vision and mission. In other words, a quality higher education institution is the one that does not only implement the national standards, but also operates beyond those standards.

The quality assurance in the higher education institutions is a process of planning, implementing, controlling, and developing the standards consistently and continuously (Sulaiman & Wibowo, 2016). One of the goals of implementing internal quality assurance in the higher education institutions is related to quality-based service assurance to stakeholders, both internal and external to the higher education institutions, which include students, lecturers, employees, the business world, professional associations, and the government. The internal quality assurance activities are part of the realization of the accountability and transparency of the higher education management. The implementation of internal quality assurance in the higher education institutions is not easy. Yingqiang and Yongjian (2016) mentioned that the quality management in the higher educations was a complex challenge, both institutionally and individually. It is not easy to implement the quality assurance internally, in the higher education institutions driven by elements of human resources (Primayana, 2016). Sulaiman and Wibowo (2016) revealed that there are 5 main challenges for the higher education institutions in implementing quality assurance management particularly: the lack of quality assurance awareness, low commitment and human resources, and difficulty in measuring the achievement of continuous improvement.

The definition of quality becomes complex amid high technological developments, and becomes the basis for understanding quality assurance in the higher education institutions (Williams & Harvey, 2015). The internal quality assurance implemented by the higher education institutions in Indonesia follows the technological developments and changes as well as the needs of society, so that it demands its implementation in a planned, well organized, and documented manner, as well as continuous improvements. The top-down policy regulated by the government requires the internal quality assurance of the higher education institutions as systemic activities supporting the national competitiveness. It is expected to become a culture that is carried out continuously and in accordance with the basic management concepts which include planning, control, and improvement (Juran 2010). According to Deming (1982), the

activities of planning, implementing, evaluating, and taking action can be interpreted as improvement. Crosby (1979) added that they are the importance of continuous improvement. The Three Pillars of Higher Education comprises 3 main tasks for organizations and individuals, including Education, Research, and Community Service. The top-down policy in 2018 regulates the Three Pillars of Higher Education based on 5 phases of internal quality assurance; establishment, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and continuous improvement. These 5 stages are used in reviewing the data collected.

### **Methodology**

This research was conducted in 2019 with a primary data obtained through questionnaire and focus group discussions to measure the understanding of leaders of private higher education institutions in Central Java on the new new quality assurance instruments known as the top-down policy since 2018. The primary data was obtained from the questionnaire distributed to 67 higher education institutions in Central Java or 25% of the total population of 256 higher education institutions. Meanwhile, the focused group discussion was attended by 27 private higher education institutions with accreditation status of B and C.

The data was collected using questionnaire and focus group discussion involving the quality assurance team of the higher education institutions in Central Java Province as the primary data. There was a total of 25% of the total population of 256 higher education institutions filled the questionnaire distributed (67 higher education institutions). Meanwhile, the focus group discussion was attended by 48 leaders of higher education institutions. The data was analyzed statistically using qualitative data software Minerlite V2.05.

The data collection and analysis are based on the quality assurance implementation that proved by the ownership of documents related to the quality assurance cycle applicable in the higher education institutions in Indonesia: establishment, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and continuous improvement.

### **Findings and Discussion**

This study investigates the ownership of documents of quality assurance as evidence of its implementation. The data shows that 56% of respondents are female, 71% represents the higher education institutions as a member of quality assurance team, and on average, each higher education institution has 7 departments. Table 1 shows the sources of data obtained in this study.

Table 1. Data resources

<b>Type of Data</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Profile Respondents</b>
Questionnaire	67 Universities	Quality Assurance Team
Focus Group Discussion	48 Universities	Manager/Head of program

Source: Processed primary data (2019)

The following Table 2. displays the ownership of quality assurance documents owned by the respondents:

Table 2. Ownership of Quality Assurance Documents

<b>No.</b>	<b>Document</b>	<b>Ownership (N=67)</b>
1.	Education	79.75%
2.	Research	75%
3.	Community Service	73.75%

4.	Students	74.75%
5.	Social Impact	71.25%
6.	Establishment	67.10%
7.	Monitoring and Evaluation	74.08%

Source: Processed primary data (2019)

We found that 71% respondents are already aware of the top-down policy as a new mandatory in conducting the higher education management. Based on Table 2., it can be seen that most of the respondents have the documents related to Education (75%), followed by documents of Research (75%), Students (74.75%), Monitoring and Evaluation (74.08%), Community Service (73.75%), Social Impact (71.25%), and Establishment (67.10%). Therefore, it can be concluded that the ownership of quality assurance documents in the higher education institutions on average reaches more than 70%.

Further, the focus group discussion also revealed that although they lacked of the ownership of quality assurance documents, most of the respondents understood that they had to implement the new quality assurance policy in their institutions. They revealed that they were confused of the changes made by the government where the previous regulations had not been worked out properly as expected, but the new top-down policy had to be implemented. They also found that the new top-down policy was even more confusing in the execution process. In relation to the quality assurance cycle, the respondents had shown that they have complied with the applicable regulation. The cycle begins with establishment phase. Below, Table 3. shows the ownership of documents related to the establishment phase.

Table 3. Ownership of Establishment Documents

No.	Document	Ownership (N=67)
1.	Vision, Mission, Goals, and Strategies	83.6%
2.	Strategic Planning with key performance indicators for a period of 5-15 years	41.8%
3.	Strategic Planning with key performance indicators for a period of 5 years	80.6%
4.	Annual Operational Planning	71.6%
5.	Vision and Mission Drafting Team	68.7%
6.	<i>Evaluation report</i>	56.7%

Source: Processed primary data (2019)

Based on Table 3., it can be seen that most of the respondents have the documents of vision, mission, goals and strategies (83.6%), followed by strategic planning with key performance indicators for a period of 5 years (80.6%), Annual Operational Planning (71.6%), vision and mission drafting team (68.7%), *evaluation report* (56.7%), and strategic planning with key performance indicators for a period of 5-15 years (41.8%).

In the establishment phase, there was an element of monitoring and evaluation on the understanding of the implementation of Vision, Mission, Goals and Strategies. The researchers also asked the respondents whether they regularly monitored and evaluated them. It was revealed that 41.8% respondents do not do it regularly, 40.3% respondents do it once a year, and 13.4% respondents do it once every 2 years. Further, 29.9% respondents reveal that they also do follow up activities, while 59.7% respondents do not. In this stage, the average response

rate reaches 67.10%. Therefore, it can be implied that the respondents owned the documents related to Vision, Mission, Goals and Strategies and followed by documents of decision letter and internal quality assurance standards. However, they were not equipped with the standard operating procedure (SOP) documents.

The second phase of the cycle is implementation which requires the higher education institutions to demonstrate the ownership of documents of good governance, including evidences of primary activities consisting of the Three Pillars of Higher Education: Education, Research and Community Services; along with aspects of students, employees, and external affairs monitored continuously. Below, Table 4. shows the ownership of documents related to implementation phase.

Table 4. Ownership of Implementation Documents

No.	Document	Ownership (N=67)
1.	Quality assurance implementation plan	55%
2.	<b>Accidental documents</b>	94%

Source: Processed primary data (2019)

This study finds that 55% respondents (each representing one institution) have the documents of the plan to implement the quality assurance as regulated. Further, 94% respondents admit that they have incidental quality implementation. Therefore, it can be implied that the implementation of quality is not reliable. The third phase of the cycle is monitoring and evaluation. It was important to note that this phase was important to ensure that the standards were met and to ensure that the higher education institutions actually complied with the regulation. Below, Table 5. shows the ownership of documents related to monitoring and evaluation phase.

Table 5. Ownership of Monitoring and Evaluation Documents

No.	Document	Ownership (N=67)
1.	Monitoring and evaluation of Vision, Mission, Goals and Strategies	80.6%
2.	Reports of survey of Vision, Mission, Goals and Strategies	73.1%
3.	Monitoring reports of understanding the Vision, Mission, Goals and Strategies	43.3%
4.	Attendance (students, lecturers, research implementation, student affairs)	94%
Monitoring frequency:		
	Once a year	38.8%
	Once every semester	34.4%
	Irregularly	26.8%
Monitored by:		
	Quality assurance team	53.8%
	Head of study program	35.4%
	Dean	10.8%



5.	Stakeholder satisfaction survey & graduate tracer study	76.1%
6.	Monitoring of governance and external cooperation	53.7%
7.	Evaluation of governance and external cooperation	88.1%
8.	Student service activities	64.2%
9.	Students' satisfaction of student service activities	85%
10.	Implementation and evaluation control of financial management, facilities and infrastructure	78%
11.	Users' satisfaction survey on financial management, facilities and infrastructure	52%
12.	Monitoring reports on financial management, facilities and infrastructure	58%
13.	Students' satisfaction on learning process	77%
14.	Monitoring of learning process	65%
15.	Unable to provide documents	89%
16.	Research indicator: relevant quality document	75%
17.	Report of users' satisfaction survey of community services	36%
18.	Form of external audit:	
	ISO-based	20.9%
	Done by public accounting firms	47.8%
	Done by independent accreditation institutions	56.7%
	Internal accreditation institutions	3%

Source: Processed primary data (2019)

The results show that 80.6% respondents have the monitoring and evaluation of Vision, Mission, Goals and Strategies document. In addition, 73.1% respondents have the reports of the understanding of vision and mission survey distributed to students, lecturers and staff, while 43.3% respondents have the monitoring reports on the understanding of Vision, Mission, Goals and Strategies. As seen in Table 5, 94% respondents have documents on attendance of students, lecturers, research implication, and student affairs. The monitoring frequency varies, ranging from once a year (38.8%), once every semester (34.4%), to irregularly / poorly monitored (23.9). Further, it was found that the one responsible for monitoring these documents also depends on each higher education institution. For example, 92.3 respondents state that these documents are monitored by quality assurance team, while the rest are monitored by the head of study program (35.4%) and dean (10.8%). Further, most of respondents also have documents on the stakeholder satisfaction survey and graduate tracer study (76.1%), monitoring of governance and external cooperation (53.7%) and its evaluation (88.1). In addition, they also

have documents of the activities of student service (64.2%) and reports on students' satisfaction (85%).

Furthermore, the higher education institutions also own documents of the implementation and evaluation control of financial management, facilities and infrastructure, and documents of its users' satisfaction and monitoring reports respectively as many as 78%, 52% and 58% respondents. Similarly, learning process which becomes the main activity in the institution was also monitored where 77% respondents have the documents of students' satisfaction on learning process. A total of 65% respondents also claim that they have documents of learning process. However, 11% respondents state that they are not supported by documents. Meanwhile, in the research indicators, 75% respondents have relevant quality documents and in relation to the community service, 36% respondents claim that they have the reports of users' satisfaction survey of the community services.

Last, in relation to the form of external audit, each higher education institution had their own preferences. 20.9% respondents conduct ISO-based external audit. Further, 47.8% respondents have their external audit done by public accounting firms and 56.7% respondents have their external audit done by independent accreditation institutions. Meanwhile, only 3% respondents have their audit with international accreditation institutions. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the monitoring and evaluation aspects in the higher education institutions faced several challenges in implementing the internal quality assurance.

The last phase of the cycle is the continuous improvement. The willingness to improve quality standards was one of the characteristics of implementing a quality culture in a higher education institution. The implementation of internal quality assurance of higher education institutions was through the activities to improve the key performance indicators on academic standards, research standards as well as community service standards. The improvement was made based on the commitment to strive for continuous improvement in education also carried out under the principles of continuous quality improvement to achieve the vision of higher education institutions. The continuous improvement was also expected to be an aspect of quality implementation ensuring that the higher education institutions would always be in accordance with the developments in industry, science, technology and society, so that they could meet the demands of external stakeholders who expected better education services. Below, Figure 1. shows the ownership of documents related to continuous improvement phase.

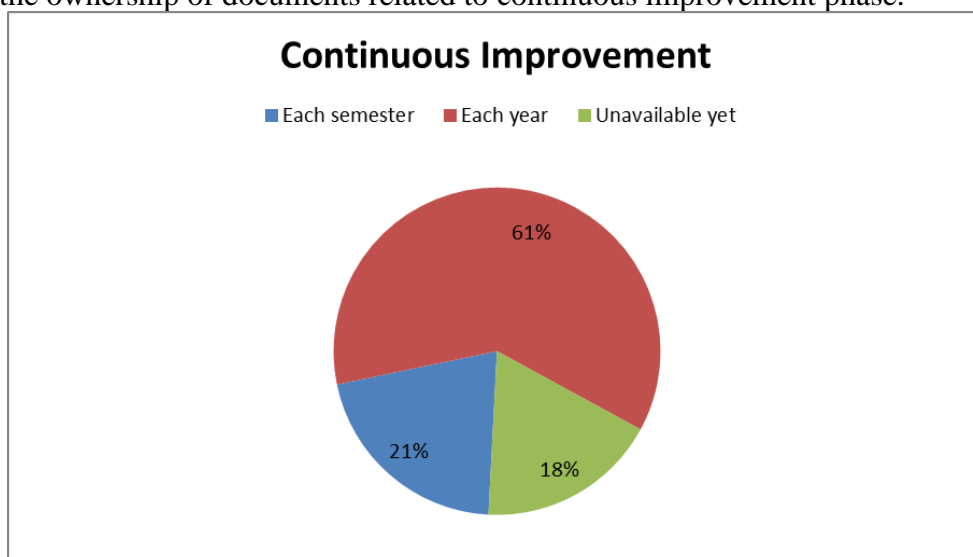


Figure 1: Continuous Improvement Quality Documentation Ownership

61% respondents said that they had made continuous improvement efforts regarding the understanding of the academic community on the vision, mission, goals, and strategies of higher education and well-documented. The remaining 18% did not make any continuous efforts to improve the understanding of the academic community on the vision, mission, goals, and strategies of higher education.

### **Top down policy in higher-education’s internal quality assurance, in the midst of expectation and reality**

The implementation of internal quality assurance in the higher education institutions aimed to gain public trust. However, the changes in regulations were still a hard work for most of the higher education institutions. Suci (2017) explained that external experts would help the higher education institution in its quality assurance system, considering that implementing the quality assurance required a hard work when the lecturers were already busy with their daily workload. Meanwhile, the implementation of a sustainable quality management was such an absolute obligation to support the government in increasing the national competitiveness.

Using the Minerlite V2.05, challenges in implementing the internal quality assurance related to quality documents including standards, instruments, and quality criteria are revealed. The first challenge is the resources in implementing the internal quality assurance which followed the regulations and standards determined by the government. The implementation demanded a high integrity and commitment from the actors (Garwe, 2019; Hou, 2011). At least, the implementation required 9 criteria to be met yet they left confusion over resources, sources of funds, and leader's commitment. It was proven from the focus group discussion attended by 48 respondents representing 48 private higher education institutions in Central Java. Meanwhile, the second challenge is the actors’ ignorance. Below, the challenges in implementing the internal quality assurance in private higher education institutions in Central Java are presented in Figure 2.:

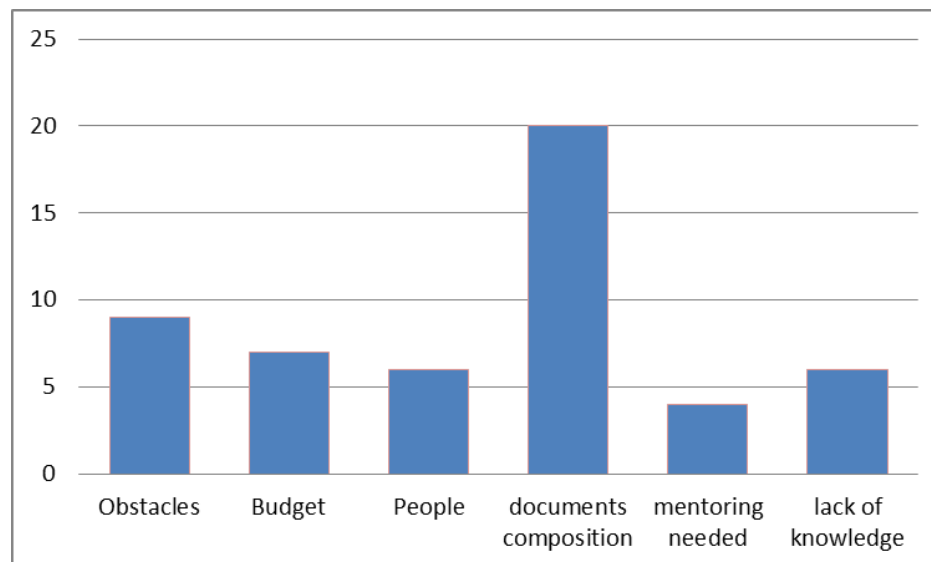


Figure 2. Challenges in the implementation of Internal Quality Assurance  
Source: Processed primary data (2019)

As shown in Figure 2 the challenges of implementing the internal quality assurance include obstacles, lack of funds, lack of leaders’ involvement, lack of documentation guideline, lack of implementation procedure and lack of knowledge. Previous studies also reported similar

findings (Lucander & Christersson, 2020; Silman, Gökçekuş, & İşman, 2012). The lack of leaders' involvement was revealed in the result of focus group discussion as there was a need for leaders' involvement in creating a culture of quality for obtaining a better accreditation.

This study reveals that the quality assurance in the higher education institutions was not yet optimal due to the low awareness of quality, which made it more difficult during the implementation process. The leaders of the higher education institutions recognized the weaknesses of implementing the quality management. Figure 2. shows that there is no document that proves the existence of continuous improvement, which means that there were problems related to people (leaders' involvement) in implementing the quality management. This finding is in accordance with O'Mahony and Garavan (2012) regarding the quality assurance in higher education institutions that could only work if they were supported by human resources, including the role of leaders and stakeholder engagement.

The stakeholders in higher education institutions were both internal and external parties who directly or indirectly contributed to the implementation of quality assurance. The internal stakeholders included leaders, lecturers, administration support, and students. The higher the stakeholder engagement, the higher the implementation of quality assurance. The analysis of the implementation of quality management in the higher education finally used the stakeholder engagement framework proposed by Amal (2014) to explain the challenges of generating stakeholder engagement in order to produce a sustainable quality assurance.

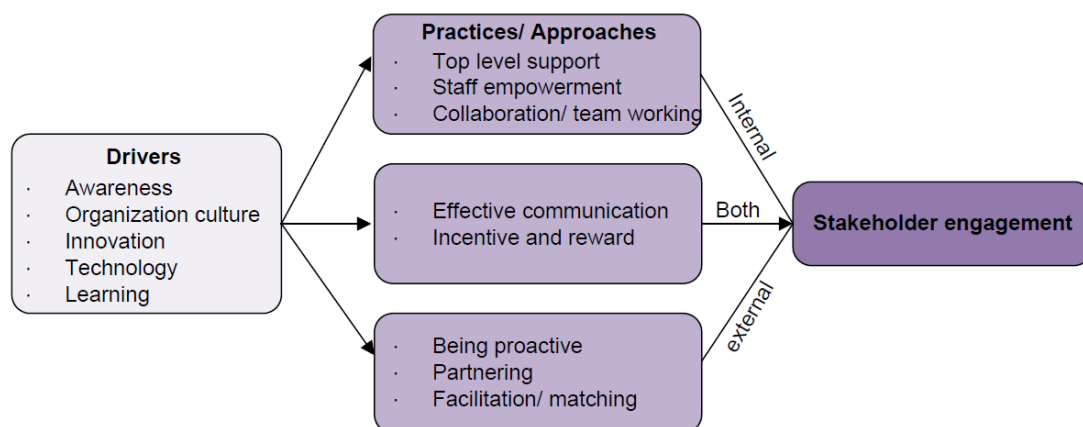


Figure 3: Stakeholder Engagement Model (Amal, 2014)

Abuzeinab and Arif (2014) explained that the drivers of stakeholder engagement consisted of awareness, organization culture, innovation, technology and learning. These drivers were supported by the top-level support, staff empowerment, collaboration, effective communication, being proactive, partnering, and facilitation to produce stakeholder engagement. They could be used to interpret quality assurance issues in the higher education institutions which are in accordance with our research findings.

Further, the quality assurance in the higher education institutions could be done by seeking leadership commitment in each institution. The commitment to implement was the basic thing that drove the implementation of quality assurance (Arif et al, 2018). A committed institutional leader would mobilize all staff to collaborate in implementing a sustainable quality assurance. Quality assurance practices carried out internally and externally would ultimately result in the stakeholder engagement as a commitment to building a quality culture.

Based on research results on the quality assurance issues in the higher education institutions and stakeholder engagement framework, this study proposes a better-quality

assurance implementation framework. This study adjusts and adapts from Abuzeinab and Arif (2014) by giving other meanings to the drivers to produce the stakeholder engagement for the creation of a quality culture in the higher education institutions. The drivers are the challenges faced by the higher education institutions in building a quality culture.

Figure 4. shows that the higher education environment can produce a quality assurance by obtaining the stakeholder engagement. The drivers are problems that arise in the implementation of quality assurance, including individual obstacles, lack of funds, lack of leaders' involvement, lack of documentation guideline, lack of implementation procedure and lack of knowledge.

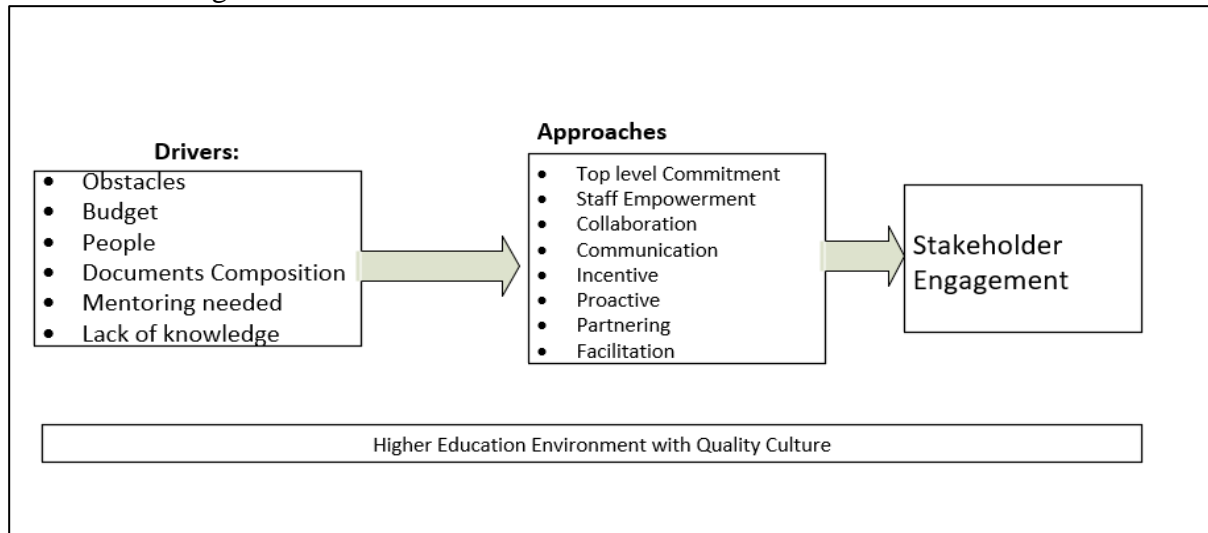


Figure 4: Stakeholder Engagement with Quality Assurance Culture in Higher Education Institutions

The quality assurance in the higher education institutions in Indonesia was a top-down program from the government. The goal of top-down policy for quality assurance could not be achieved without the support of stakeholder engagement. The results of this research support previous findings regarding the quality assurance in higher education institutions and the need for stakeholder engagement to create sustainability (Arif et al., 2018; Mathur et al., 2008; O'Mahony & Garavan, 2012; Primayana, 2016; Slameto, 2019). A standardized governance of higher education institutions was a national priority and essential for increasing the competitiveness of a country (Sulisworo, 2016). Therefore, a sustainable quality assurance was highly needed. The quality assurance required the support from all parties. Thus, the stakeholder engagement was needed to become the glue of quality assurance in the higher education institutions.

### Conclusion

The implementation of internal quality assurance management as a result of the top-down policy in Indonesia is still on its way to completeness. The quality management in higher education institutions has been perceived as a something that requires extra hard work. Inadequate experience in conducting the quality management has become part of the root of problems. On average, the internal quality assurance documents owned by each higher education institution reaches 50%, including the documents regarding the organization's vision and mission. Without the completeness of documents stating the organization's vision and

mission, other quality documents required in the quality-based management will certainly be considered weak.

This study produces data on the implementation of internal quality assurance in the higher education institutions after a new top-down policy is issued as the new national regulations. The data shows that there are differences in understanding among the higher education institutions regarding a sustainable quality assurance. Based on the data showing unbalanced implementation of quality management, the researchers propose a framework for implementing an internal quality assurance in the higher education institutions that uses the stakeholder engagement as the glue.

These findings are a wake-up call for all parties who aim to increase the competitiveness in Indonesia. The top-down policy alone will not be able to change the governance of higher education institutions to be turned into a quality-based one in an instance. Workshops and seminars are not enough to solve the problems. The leaders in the higher education institutions need to be assisted by an experienced mentor that support them with simulation in every quality phase. Another policy that demands a high-quality higher education institution to assist the higher education institutions with poor quality needs to be well implemented. A higher education with quality management implementation is at the heart of competitiveness effort. Further researches are suggested to investigate the commitment of the higher education institutions' leaders that might affect the level of quality management readiness.

### **Limitation**

This study manages to obtain the data on quality assurance in private higher education institutions in Central Java Province. Given the densely populated condition of Central Java, the results of the research may represent the overall condition in Indonesia. However, the implementation of focus group discussions and questionnaire distribution were carried out with the scope of the quality assurance system only. The stakeholder engagement is a variable that researchers add to interpret the acquisition of research data. Future researches are suggested to use the quantitative method to examine the effect of stakeholder engagement on the implementation of quality management.

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