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Exploratory Study on the Accreditation Framework of Dayah Institutions in Aceh: An Examination of Policy, Execution, and Organizational Efficacy

Mukhlisuddin Ilyas[✉1*], Marwan[1], Munawar[1], Najmudin[1], Muammar Khadafi[2]

[1] Universitas Almuslim, Bireuen, Aceh
[2] International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC) Malaysia

✉ ***Corresponding author:***
Mukhlisuddin Ilyas
mukhlisuddin@umuslim.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

This exploratory study examines the certification system of dayah (Islamic boarding schools) within Aceh Province as a strategic initiative aimed at improving the quality of Islamic education and reinforcing institutional governance. The study integrates data from contemporary empirical research, pertinent government regulations (Qanun Aceh No. 9/2018 and Pergub No. 64/2019), and the operational procedures of the Badan Akreditasi Dayah Aceh (BADA). Utilizing a comprehensive approach that encompasses literature review, organizational analysis, and policy evaluation, the findings indicate that accreditation serves as a pivotal mechanism for standardizing administrative processes, enhancing accountability, and advancing the professional development of educators. Nevertheless, the implementation of accreditation encounters challenges including limited resource availability, opposition to modernization initiatives, and conflicts between national benchmarks and local cultural traditions. Employing an exploratory qualitative methodology, the study highlights the imperative for a contextualized accreditation framework that harmonizes national quality standards with the cultural identity and autonomy intrinsic to dayahs. The study concludes with a proposed model to optimize accreditation efficacy through participatory governance, incorporation of digital innovations such as the E-SADA system, and adaptive leadership practices in dayah management.

Keywords: *Dayah Accreditation, Islamic Education, Quality Assurance, Policy Evaluation, Institutional Governance.*

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INTRODUCTION

The dayah system in Aceh exemplifies one of the oldest and most resilient forms of traditional Islamic education in Southeast Asia (Azra et al., 2010). Originating in the 17th century at the zenith of the Aceh Sultanate, dayah institutions served as crucial sites for religious education and as significant social and intellectual hubs that influenced the spiritual and cultural character of Acehnese society (Basri et al., 2023). Grounded in the dissemination of ancient Islamic knowledge (turāth), these institutions prioritized the study of Qur'anic exegesis, *fiqh* (Islamic law), Arabic communal existence (Mårtensson & Vongraven Eriksen, 2018). Their autonomy and perseverance enabled dayah to flourish despite colonial pressures, contemporary reforms, and political transitions over the centuries (Nasir et al., 2024).

Beyond their instructional function, dayahs have traditionally played a vital role in maintaining Aceh's socio-religious structure, acting as bastions of moral authority and sites of resistance during times of external subjugation, notably during the Dutch colonial period (Syafieh et al., 2022). The teungku (religious scholars and leaders) of dayah played a crucial role in galvanizing the community through religious instruction that underscored justice, piety, and collective unity (Usman et al., 2021). As contemporary educational institutions proliferated in Indonesia, dayah adjusted to evolving environments, harmonizing traditional religious courses with aspects of modern teaching (Nasir et al., 2024). Comprehending the historical significance of dayah offers essential insight into the development of Islamic education in Indonesia and the persistent connection between faith, knowledge, and cultural identity in Aceh (Ilyas et al., 2023; Prasetyo & Zulkhairi, 2022).

The accreditation of dayah institutions in Aceh is marked by numerous outstanding issues that warrant additional examination (Lathifah et al., 2022). The correspondence between accrediting criteria and the epistemological grounds of traditional Islamic education is inadequately scrutinized. Secondly, empirical information regarding the efficacy of accreditation in enhancing institutional governance and educational quality remains scarce. Third, discrepancies in policy execution among regions reveal structural inequalities, especially in distant and border territories. The responses of traditional religious institutions to modern governance systems are still inadequately examined (Basri et al., 2023). These deficiencies underscore the necessity for a comprehensive examination of policy, implementation, and organizational effectiveness within the dayah accreditation framework (Putra, 2021).

In the contemporary context, the growing urgency of accreditation in education introduces new dimensions of governance and accountability for traditional institutions such as dayah (Albar & Suhayria, 2021) (Rasyidin et al., 2025). As Indonesia advances toward standardized systems of quality assurance in education, dayah faces the challenge of aligning their deeply rooted pedagogical traditions with

national and international accreditation frameworks (Ayubi & Masruri, 2025). Accreditation serves not only as a mechanism to evaluate institutional performance and learning outcomes but also as a tool to ensure transparency, institutional integrity, and public trust (Kayyali, 2024). For dayah, this process necessitates a delicate balance—preserving their spiritual and moral essence while meeting modern administrative, curricular, and quality standards. Thus, integrating accreditation into the dayah system represents a critical effort to sustain their historical legitimacy and educational relevance in an era of increased accountability and global competitiveness (Jumira & Prasetyo, 2025).

In Aceh, the dayah accreditation is regulated by distinct regional policies, notably the Qanun Dayah, which harmonizes national standards with local Islamic traditions (Nurainiah et al., 2025). This framework seeks to delineate the parameters of educational quality, advance equity, and foster an environment of ongoing enhancement. Nonetheless, the convergence of policy, implementation, and effectiveness is still inadequately examined, particularly in border areas where dayah functions as cultural bastions against outside influences. The formulation and implementation of accreditation policies within Aceh's dayah, as well as their influence on organizational effectiveness.

Given the growing focus on educational quality and certification in Indonesia, a substantial gap persists in exploratory investigations that integrates regulatory frameworks, institutional practices, and socio-organizational variables within the dayah environment. Current research frequently emphasizes either the theological and cultural importance of dayah or the administrative processes of accreditation, but few endeavors to integrate these viewpoints. This fragmentation constrains a comprehensive understanding of the interpretation, negotiation, and implementation of accreditation policies within the unique socio-religious context of dayah.

Dayah, as traditional institutions reliant on community trust and moral authority rather than bureaucratic protocols, demonstrate distinctive organizational dynamics that affect the adoption or resistance to governance innovations (Siregar & Prasetyo, 2023) (Ilyas & Sibuea, 2019). Investigating this nexus is essential for revealing how policy aims are realized—or not—within institutional frameworks. This integrative approach enhances educational policy scholarship and provides practical insights for developing accreditation models that honor the cultural autonomy of dayah while fostering accountability and institutional advancement in accordance with national educational goals.

Therefore, this study is of considerable importance as it may provide policymakers with valuable insights for strengthening the role of accreditation within Islamic education. Through a thorough analysis of policy frameworks, execution

strategies, and efficacy metrics, this work enriches the ongoing discourse surrounding educational decentralization in Indonesia.

METHOD

This exploratory study employs a qualitative library research methodology, employing content analysis to examine secondary data from pertinent documents. The data collection process entailed methodical document acquisition from scholarly journals and official archives. The inclusion criteria emphasized relevance to dayah accreditation in Aceh, policy frameworks, implementation methods, and effectiveness outcomes. Content analysis according to Shannon directed methodology: initial coding was conducted using specified categories (policy, execution, efficacy), succeeded by theme refinement through iterative aspect review (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The analysis was inductive, recognizing emergent themes and assuring trustworthiness through the triangulation of sources.

This study employed a qualitative library research design with directed content analysis to investigate policy frameworks, implementation mechanisms, and organizational ramifications of dayah accreditation. Secondary data were obtained from peer-reviewed journal articles, governmental regulations (Qanun Aceh No. 9/2018; Pergub No. 64/2019), accreditation reports from the Aceh Dayah Accreditation Board (BADA), and institutional records (Putra, 2021).

Document selection adhered to three criteria: (1) relevance to dayah accreditation policy or governance, (2) discourse on Islamic education management in Aceh, and (3) methodological rigor. Documents devoid of empirical or analytical significance were omitted. The data analysis employed the directed content analysis method proposed by Hsieh and Shannon (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The preliminary coding categories comprised policy framework, implementation methods, and organizational effectiveness. Coding was performed iteratively, facilitating the emergence of new topics through frequent document comparison. Analytical reliability was established via source triangulation and methodical documenting of coding protocols.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Policy Implications of Dayah Accreditation

The examination of the dayah accrediting mechanism in Aceh highlights numerous significant policy implications for improving educational quality while preserving cultural and religious integrity. There is a distinct necessity to reestablish accrediting criteria that align with the epistemological basis of dayah education. Traditional metrics—such as infrastructure, curriculum design, or assessment results—should be augmented with evaluations of spiritual development, community

involvement, and proficiency in traditional Islamic scriptures *(Kitab Kuning)* (Bashori et al., 2022).

Contextualized indicators would ensure that certification authentically reflects the comprehensive objectives of dayah institutions rather than externally imposed norms. Secondly, enhancing capabilities of the Aceh Dayah Accreditation Board (BAD-A) is crucial for reinforcing uniform implementation. This encompasses the training of assessors possessing interdisciplinary competence in Islamic education and contemporary quality assurance techniques. Improved collaboration among BAD-A, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and local education offices would foster policy coherence and diminish redundancy within certification frameworks.

The incorporation of digital monitoring and evaluation methods offers a chance to update dayah accreditation while preserving traditional values. Implementing digital documentation, performance dashboards, and community feedback mechanisms could enhance openness, data integrity, and responsiveness for BADA. Technological integration must be harmonized with cultural sensitivity, ensuring that innovation enhances rather than undermines the communal and spiritual ethos of dayah learning.

This study primarily uses secondary evidence from documents and excludes primary interviews with stakeholders. Although documentary analysis offers extensive policy-level insights, further study should incorporate interviews with dayah leaders and certification assessors to verify institutional perspectives.

Ultimately, comprehensive policy alignment between national and regional authorities is essential to maintain dayah autonomy within the national education framework. This entails establishing regulatory flexibility that enables dayah to innovate in pedagogy while ensuring compliance with the Eight National Education Standards (SNP). In the long term, a pluralistic approach to certification might establish Aceh as a paradigm for context-responsive quality assurance, illustrating how local Islamic education can live with and enhance national standards of educational excellence.

The data from the Badan Akreditasi Dayah Aceh report summarizes the re-accreditation status of 374 dayah (Islamic boarding schools) across 23 regency/municipalities in Aceh Province for 2023. The institutions are categorized into accreditation types: A+ (highest quality), A, B, C (lowest accredited), and non-type (unaccredited or not meeting minimum standards). Below is the summary table provided in the tabulation.

Table 1. Summary Table of Dayah Re-Accreditation in Aceh (2023)

Regency/ Municipality	Total	Type A+	Type A	Type B	Type C	Non-Type
Sabang	2	0	0	1	1	0
Banda Aceh	8	0	1	5	2	0

Regency/ Municipality	Total	Type A+	Type A	Type B	Type C	Non-Type
Aceh Besar	36	0	6	14	11	5
Pidie	28	0	4	9	7	8
Pidie Jaya	21	0	4	7	8	2
Bireuen	41	2	9	17	10	3
Lhokseumawe	11	0	2	4	4	1
Aceh Utara	64	3	9	32	19	1
Aceh Timur	25	0	3	14	7	1
Kota Langsa	7	0	1	4	2	0
Aceh Tamiang	9	0	1	3	4	1
Bener Meriah	3	0	1	1	1	0
Aceh Tengah	11	1	1	3	5	1
Gayo Lues	4	0	2	2	0	0
Aceh Tenggara	14	0	4	8	2	0
Aceh Jaya	5	0	2	1	2	0
Aceh Barat	16	1	3	4	3	5
Nagan Raya	4	0	0	1	1	2
Aceh barat Daya	16	0	0	3	7	6
Aceh Selatan	27	1	3	6	17	0
Kota Subulussalam	9	0	6	2	0	1
Aceh Singkil	7	0	2	2	1	2
Simeulue	6	0	1	2	1	2
Total	**374**	**8**	**65**	**145**	**116**	**40**

Source : Bada 2023

Table 1 shows the distribution of Dayah institutions throughout Aceh, categorized by region and accreditation type, thereby providing a quantitative perspective on the quality assurance outcomes as delineated by the Qanun Dayah framework. The data elucidate the structural breadth of Dayah education as well as the regional variances that impact accreditation outcomes.

The policy implications extend to the operationalization of accreditation systems, highlighting the role of oversight bodies like the BADA in translating policy mandates into actionable accreditation processes. This translation involves addressing tensions between tradition and modernization, ensuring resource allocation, and fostering capacity building within dayah institutions.

The policy environment affects stakeholder engagement by mandating participatory governance structures and encouraging digital innovation, such as the E-SADA system, to enhance transparency and efficiency. However, these policies also present challenges, including reconciling national education standards with local cultural practices and overcoming resistance to change.

Comprehensive Analysis of Distribution and Accreditation Standards

A total of 374 dayahs have been documented, highlighting the significance of traditional Islamic education within the socio-religious framework of Aceh. The accreditation analysis reveals significant disparities in the institutional quality:

a. A+ (8 dayahs, 2.14%) — indicative of a distinguished cohort that exemplifies outstanding adherence to the Eight National Education Standards (SNP), especially in the realms of management, infrastructure, and pedagogical excellence.
b. A (65 dayahs, 17.38%) — establishments demonstrating a robust commitment to accreditation standards and exhibiting consistent excellence in documentation, governance, and educator professionalism.
c. B (145 dayahs, 38.77%) — the dominant category, suggesting moderate quality and partial compliance with national standards. Many institutions in this group show progress but face limitations in digital integration and resource allocation.
d. C (116 dayahs, 31.02%) — indicates widespread challenges in sustaining quality, particularly related to administrative burdens, human resource constraints, and hesitance toward modernization.
e. Non-Type (40 dayahs, 10.70%) — unaccredited institutions, often located in remote or underserved areas, reflect inequities in access to accreditation processes and institutional readiness.

Overall, only 19.52% (A+ and A) of dayah meet high-quality benchmarks, highlighting persistent systemic barriers such as bureaucratic complexity and overemphasis on procedural compliance rather than pedagogical depth.

Regional Variations in Accreditation Outcomes

The study used source triangulation to enhance analytical rigor and reduce potential bias by drawing on multiple forms of evidence, such as peer-reviewed academic literature, regulatory frameworks, and official accrediting reports. This method facilitated the cross-verification of information and ensured the consistency and credibility of the results.

Accreditation results differ significantly across regions. Regions with significant concentrations, including Aceh Utara (64), Bireuen (41), and Aceh Besar (36), exhibit more robust accreditation outcomes, as evidenced by the highest numbers of A+ and A classifications. The advantages of these regions stem from their proximity to urban hubs such as Banda Aceh, enhanced infrastructure, and targeted government

support—especially through programs aimed at reinforcing border dayah as bastions of culture and religion (Prasetyo et al., 2025; Riddel & Zulfikar, 2024).

In contrast, areas characterized by low population density or geographical remoteness—such as Sabang (2), Bener Meriah (3), and Gayo Lues (4)—demonstrate a paucity of accredited institutions, with no institutions attaining an A+ rating. The islands and border regions, such as Simeulue and Aceh Singkil, exhibit a greater prevalence of Non-Type or C-level dayah, indicative of logistical challenges and limited oversight capabilities. For instance, Aceh Selatan has documented 27 dayahs, of which 17 (62.96%) categorized as C, highlighting discrepancies in implementation and resource distribution. The northern and eastern corridors of Aceh, such as Aceh Utara and Bireuen, consistently outperform the southwestern and inland regions, highlighting disparities in policy implementation and infrastructure development. This geographical disparity highlights the impact of local governance capabilities and the need for tailored policy approaches.

The examination reveals that although Aceh's accreditation framework effectively aligns quality with the eight dimensions of the SNP, the overall prevalence of high-performing dayah remains constrained. This pattern indicates a pressing necessity to align national accreditation standards with the local epistemological framework of the Qanun Dayah, thereby safeguarding traditional educational values from being overshadowed by procedural uniformity (Mirsal et al., 2025). A strategic focus on equity-driven support, tailored assessment criteria, and digital oversight has the potential to significantly enhance the inclusivity and authenticity of dayah accreditation, thereby promoting sustainable quality assurance across Aceh's diverse educational landscape.

The findings highlight multiple dimensions, such as socioeconomic status, cultural traditions, resource availability, and institutional capacities, that interact to shape variations in accreditation results. This phrasing also implies an analysis of structural challenges and region-specific adaptive strategies, which aligns well with the study's examination of policy implementation and organizational effectiveness.

Implementation Dynamics

The evaluation of dayah accreditation implementation in Aceh was conducted by content analysis as outlined by Hsieh and Shannon (2005). The analytical process included initial coding grounded in predetermined categories—policy, execution, and organizational efficacy—subsequently followed by iterative theme refinements to identify patterns related to accreditation processes and institutional behaviors.

The implementation of dayah accreditation in Aceh encompasses a comprehensive assessment framework orchestrated by the National Accreditation Board for Schools/Madrasahs (BAN-S/M) in partnership with the Aceh Dayah Accreditation Board (BAD-A). This process involves a thorough assessment of

institutional documentation, direct site observations, and structured interviews with key stakeholders, such as administrators, educators, and community representative. The integrated mechanism aims to ensure that each dayah adheres to national standards and meets the specific requirements outlined in the Qanun Dayah (Basri et al., 2023).

Empirical findings reveal advancements in administrative governance, particularly through the implementation of digital accreditation tools, refined documentation management, and increased transparency in institutional reporting systems (Nurainiah et al., 2025). These advancements indicate enhancements in institutional capabilities for accountability and performance evaluation.

Despite its stated purpose as a transformative governance instrument, the implementation of certification exposes fundamental structural conflicts that constrain its effectiveness in enhancing educational quality within dayah institutions (Buto et al., 2022) (Erawadi & Setiadi, 2024). Accreditation establishes standardized evaluation processes, digital reporting systems, and formal accountability measures that enhance administrative governance and institutional openness; nonetheless, its revolutionary potential is limited by substantial operational challenges. Ongoing constraints in financial resources and skilled personnel create significant administrative challenges, frequently redirecting institutional focus from meaningful educational advancement to adherence to accrediting protocols (Hisan et al., 2021).

The evaluative procedure prioritizes the thoroughness of documentation and adherence to administrative standards over the evaluation of instructional quality and learning outcomes. This procedural emphasis embodies a broader bureaucratic rationale inherent in certification systems, in which compliance indicators serve as substitutes for educational efficacy. This approach may lead to symbolic or performative compliance instead of authentic institutional enhancement, thus solidifying formal standardization without necessarily improving teaching practices or student learning experiences.

Thus, accreditation functions both as a catalyst for institutional modernization and as a source of organizational limitation. Instead of completely revolutionizing educational methods, its implementation may unintentionally replicate managerial control frameworks that emphasize compliance over instructional creativity. This tension underscores the necessity to rigorously re-evaluate accrediting frameworks to ensure that quality assurance methods facilitate substantive educational advancement rather than merely mandating administrative consistency.

In the border region of dayah, the implementation of accreditation illustrates a nuanced integration of *salafiyah* and contemporary educational methodologies, fostering participatory leadership and localized innovation (Daniel et al., 2024). This hybridization embodies the endeavor to harmonize classical Islamic scholarship with

the exigencies of modern quality assurance standards (Raya, 2021). Nevertheless, the persistent opposition from traditional dayah leaders constitutes a significant obstacle to the thorough execution of reforms. Maulana highlights the importance of ongoing professional development and assessor training to reduce evaluative bias, enhance the pedagogical aspects of accreditation, and ensure that implementation processes are in harmony with the overarching goals of educational transformation in Aceh (Adnan et al., 2023).

Institutional Performance and Governance

The accreditation procedure is essential for improving the operational efficiency of dayah institutions, as it strengthens institutional credibility, increases administrative productivity, and cultivates public confidence (Reddy et al., 2024). Empirical evidence indicates that accredited dayah demonstrate enhanced performance in key areas—human resource quality, infrastructural adequacy, and educational outcomes—compared to non-accredited institutions. Accreditation serves both as a means of verifying adherence to defined standards and a catalyst for institutional advancement, fostering accountability and enabling purposeful organizational growth (Afriliandhi & Hasanah, 2022). Moreover, accreditation has enhanced community attitudes by bolstering institutional repute and promoting a culture of ongoing evaluation and self-assessment (Mirsal, As, et al., 2025). This improved reputation bolsters stakeholder trust and promotes wider engagement in institutional governance.

The efficacy of accreditation varies significantly across regions and institutional settings, highlighting ongoing structural and organizational obstacles (Susetyo et al., 2022). While dayahs in border regions often exhibit quantifiable advancements—such as heightened enrollment and program expansion—the qualitative aspects of institutional development, especially the maintenance of cultural and theological purity, are inconsistent. These variances underscore the necessity for adaptive leadership as a strategic approach to overcome implementation obstacles and promote institutional transformation (Utomo & Farra Nadia, 2024).

Adaptive leadership facilitates overcoming accreditation challenges through multiple interrelated elements. Participatory governance effectively counters institutional resistance to bureaucratic procedures by engaging religious leaders, educators, and community stakeholders in decision-making processes, thereby enhancing legitimacy and diminishing opposition to reform (Fuadi, 2024). Secondly, capacity-building programs, encompassing professional development and administrative training, address deficiencies in human resources by enhancing institutional competencies in quality assurance, documentation management, and instructional innovation (Lathifah et al., 2025). Third, context-sensitive policy adaptation alleviates conflicts between uniform accrediting standards and

conventional epistemological beliefs by facilitating flexible implementation that honors local cultural and theological traditions. Finally, strategic resource mobilization and collaborative networks help address financial and infrastructural constraints by promoting partnerships with government agencies and external stakeholders.

Adaptive leadership enables the incorporation of accreditation principles while maintaining institutional autonomy and cultural identity through these processes. In this setting, sustained organizational efficiency necessitates a transition from mere formal compliance to genuine quality assurance, highlighting educational innovation, ethical leadership, and cultural sustainability. This strategy ensures that certification serves not only as a regulatory standard but also as a catalyst for significant and contextually relevant educational excellence within the dayah ecosystem.

Table 1. Cross-Case Analysis of Environmental Scanning Strategies with Interview Evidence

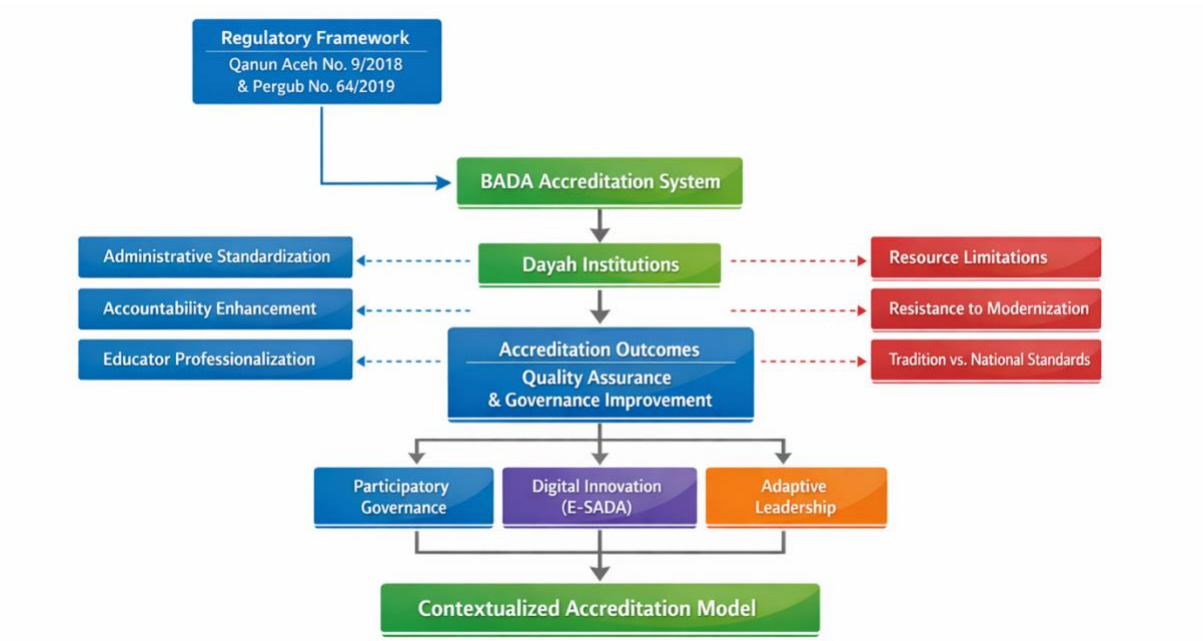


Figure 1: Dayah Accreditation System in Aceh

The conceptual model positions the dayah accreditation system as a regulatory-driven transformation mechanism in which formal policies—particularly Qanun Aceh No. 9/2018 and Pergub No. 64/2019—serve as the structural foundation for institutional reform. Through the operational role of the accreditation body (BADA), these regulatory instruments are translated into measurable standards that directly shape the governance and educational practices of dayah institutions. The model demonstrates that accreditation generates three primary outcomes: administrative standardization, enhanced accountability, and educator professionalization. Collectively, these dimensions function as core pillars of quality assurance, enabling

dayah institutions to align with broader national education standards while improving internal management systems and pedagogical competence.

However, the model also critically integrates contextual constraints that mediate the effectiveness of accreditation, including resource limitations, resistance to modernization, and the tension between national standardization and local cultural traditions (Zarkasyi, 2020). These challenges highlight that accreditation is not merely a technical process but a socio-cultural transformation requiring adaptive strategies. Consequently, the model proposes a synthesis phase in which accreditation outcomes are reinforced through participatory governance, digital innovation (E-SADA), and adaptive leadership. This integrative approach culminates in a contextualized accreditation model that balances compliance with national quality frameworks and the preservation of dayah identity, thereby offering a sustainable pathway for institutional development within culturally embedded educational systems.

CONCLUSION

The accreditation of dayah in Aceh signifies a strategic initiative to incorporate traditional Islamic education within Indonesia's national quality assurance system while maintaining its cultural and theological character. This policy framework, anchored in the Qanun Dayah and harmonized with the Eight National Education Standards (SNP), enhances institutional responsibility and legitimizes dayah as essential elements of the formal education system. Empirical evidence indicates that accreditation improves organizational effectiveness by enhancing management, transparency, and public trust; nevertheless, its implementation is inconsistent across areas due to resource limitations and differing levels of institutional preparedness. Notwithstanding progress in digitalization and administrative efficacy, difficulties endure, such as excessive focus on documentation, evaluator bias, and conflict between standardization and local knowledge systems. Accreditation must evolve from mere procedural compliance to substantive quality assurance that prioritizes pedagogical innovation, cultural sustainability, and community engagement to ensure long-term efficacy. The dayah accreditation approach exemplifies the capacity of localized educational governance to align national standards with Islamic educational tradition, fostering a more inclusive and contextually responsive framework of educational excellence in Indonesia.

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Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this article. No author holds a position within the Badan Akreditasi Dayah Aceh or any institution evaluated in this study.

Data Availability Statement: This study analysed publicly available secondary data only; no new primary data were generated. The materials comprise Qanun Aceh No. 9/2018, Pergub Aceh No. 64/2019, the 2023 re-accreditation report of the Badan Akreditasi Dayah Aceh, and the published literature cited in the bibliography. The coding documentation is available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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