



Model Of A Quality Assurance System Based On ISO 21001:2018 And Its Application In Education

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Abstract: This article explores the development of a quality assurance system model grounded in ISO 21001:2018 and its practical implementation within educational institutions. ISO 21001:2018 is an internationally recognized standard specifically tailored for Education Organization Management Systems (EOMS), aiming to enhance the effectiveness of educational processes while meeting the needs and expectations of learners and other stakeholders. This study employs a literature review methodology using a descriptive-analytical approach to examine the core principles and operational requirements of the standard. The findings highlight ISO 21001:2018's emphasis on a process-based management approach, continuous quality improvement, and learner-centered outcomes. Successful implementation of the standard necessitates strong leadership commitment, adequate training of human resources, and the establishment of a sustainable internal evaluation and audit mechanism. By adopting ISO 21001:2018, educational institutions can foster a structured culture of quality that systematically supports improved learning performance and institutional accountability.

Keywords: Quality Assurance System, Educational, Management, Institutions.

INTRODUCTION

Education quality has become one of the most crucial indicators of success for educational institutions. In an era of globalization and increasingly intense competition, educational institutions are required to provide services that not only meet learners' expectations but also align with internationally recognized quality standards (Sallis, 2012). Therefore, the implementation of a quality assurance system is essential to ensure the sustainability and continuous improvement of educational standards.

One widely adopted approach to enhancing quality systems in educational institutions is through ISO 21001:2018. ISO 21001 is a management system standard specifically designed for educational organizations, differing from ISO 9001, which is commonly applied to various types of organizations (International Organization for Standardization, 2018). This standard aims to help



educational institutions systematically and effectively meet the needs of learners and other stakeholders.

Research and implementation of ISO 21001:2018 have demonstrated its effectiveness in improving institutional management efficiency, stakeholder involvement, and accountability in the learning process (Putra & Wahyuni, 2021). Furthermore, ISO 21001 emphasizes a process-based approach, risk management, and a continuous improvement cycle (Plan-Do-Check-Act) in the delivery of education (Setiawan, 2020).

The foundation for developing competitive and high-quality human resources lies in the successful implementation of quality education. Within the context of global trends and the demands of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, educational institutions must respond to contemporary challenges through systematic and internationally standardized quality management (Kusumawati, 2020). One strategic initiative is adopting a Quality Management System based on ISO 21001:2018.

ISO 21001:2018 is an international standard designed specifically for educational organizations, aimed at enhancing learner and stakeholder satisfaction through the effective implementation of educational management systems (International Organization for Standardization, 2018). The standard highlights principles such as a process-based approach, strong leadership, stakeholder engagement, evidence-based decision-making, and continuous improvement (Syukron, 2022).

According to Fitri (2020), the application of an educational quality assurance system is not merely administrative but also reflects philosophical values in shaping a solid quality culture within education. This perspective is supported by Rahmawati et al. (2021), who asserted that the implementation of ISO 21001:2018 provides an adaptive framework for technological developments and educational digitalization, while also strengthening institutional governance.

The process-based approach of ISO 21001:2018 prioritizes structured quality management principles, including leadership commitment, stakeholder participation, and continuous improvement. The standard also stresses the importance of curriculum development aligned with learning objectives and appropriate methods to ensure educational goals are achieved (BSN, n.d.).



Therefore, the implementation of ISO 21001:2018 is vital for creating responsive educational systems that meet established quality standards.

Law Number 20 of 2014 on Standardization and Conformity Assessment provides a legal foundation for implementing quality systems in education. This law aims to protect national interests and improve national competitiveness by promoting principles of consensus, transparency, relevance, and benefit (UU No. 20 Tahun 2014). It also encourages educational institutions to carry out standardization processes covering institutional frameworks, conformity assessment, and information systems that support better quality standard implementation.

The implementation of ISO 21001:2018 is also expected to support efforts in strengthening quality culture management within educational environments. According to Syukron (2022), this standard goes beyond administrative tasks; it involves building a culture of quality that includes integrated educational process management, data-driven strategies, and learner-centered outcomes. In the digital era, where changes occur rapidly, effective education management must address evolving labor market needs and ensure graduates are equipped with the required competencies.

Previous studies have examined the effectiveness of quality management systems in education. For instance, Hakim and Ramdani (2019) highlighted the importance of integrating internal and external quality standards to ensure sustainable learning outcomes. Kusuma and Hidayat (2022) found that ISO implementation positively impacts institutional governance and learner satisfaction. However, most studies have focused on ISO 9001 rather than ISO 21001:2018, which is more tailored to the education sector. Moreover, research on practical and adaptable ISO 21001:2018 models for Indonesian educational institutions remains limited.

This knowledge gap underscores the need for further research to design a quality assurance system model based on ISO 21001:2018 that aligns with the characteristics of Indonesian educational institutions. Thus, this study aims to conceptually examine the ISO 21001:2018-based quality assurance system model and its application in education. The study is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to the development of international-standard quality management systems contextualized to local needs.



Implementing ISO 21001:2018 is not without challenges. It requires commitment from all educational institution members, from leadership to educators, to foster a quality culture and implement standardized management processes (Fitri, 2022). Therefore, this study seeks to comprehensively examine the ISO 21001:2018-based quality assurance system model and its application in improving educational service quality in today's digital and competitive era.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using the library research method. Library research is a method of collecting data and information through reviewing existing literature, including books, journal articles, official documents, research reports, and international standards. This method is particularly suitable for exploring theoretical and conceptual frameworks, such as the ISO 21001:2018 standard in the context of educational quality assurance systems (Zed, 2004).

The data sources used in this research include both primary and secondary sources, such as official ISO publications, academic journals on education management, and books by experts in the field. The literature review was conducted systematically to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the principles, requirements, and implementation strategies of ISO 21001:2018 in educational institutions. Sources were selected based on their relevance, credibility, and recency.

The analytical process followed the qualitative descriptive technique. Data were analyzed through content analysis and comparative interpretation, focusing on identifying key themes and patterns across multiple sources. The analytical steps included data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, in accordance with the model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994). This approach allows the researcher to construct a conceptual model of a quality assurance system based on ISO 21001:2018 that is relevant, practical, and adaptable to the Indonesian educational context.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

ISO 21001:2018 is an international standard developed by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), specifically designed for Educational Organizations Management Systems (EOMS). This standard aims to assist educational institutions in delivering improved services to



learners and other stakeholders through a systematic framework that emphasizes quality improvement, effectiveness, and customer satisfaction in the educational context (ISO, 2018).

ISO 21001:2018 adopts the quality management principles outlined in ISO 9001 but tailors them to the unique needs and characteristics of the education sector. The standard emphasizes the importance of strategic planning, visionary leadership, stakeholder engagement, and a culture of continuous improvement within educational institutions (Susanto, 2020). The implementation of ISO 21001:2018 is expected to enhance transparency, accountability, and public trust in the respective educational institution. With this standard, educational institutions have a structured guide to design, implement, monitor, and evaluate their learning and organizational management processes comprehensively, aiming for quality and sustainable educational goals.

Characteristics of ISO 21001:2018 in Educational Context

ISO 21001:2018 is an international standard specifically developed for educational organizations. It provides a structured framework to help institutions improve their management systems and, ultimately, enhance the quality of education they offer. Unlike ISO 9001, which is a general standard for quality management systems across various sectors, ISO 21001 focuses on the unique operational needs of educational settings. It is designed to ensure that educational institutions fulfill the requirements of learners and other stakeholders, such as parents, teachers, administrators, and policymakers (International Organization for Standardization, 2018).

One of the core elements of ISO 21001:2018 is its eleven guiding principles that emphasize the holistic development of quality education. These principles include learner focus, visionary leadership, engagement of interested parties, a process approach, improvement, evidence-based decisions, relationship management, social responsibility, accessibility and equity, ethical conduct in education, and data security and protection. These values are integrated into the system to ensure that educational practices are not only efficient but also equitable and inclusive.

The learner focus principle directs institutions to prioritize student needs, adapt learning approaches, and assess satisfaction continuously. Visionary leadership ensures that school administrators act as change agents, driving the institution toward innovation and excellence. The involvement of stakeholders, such as teachers, learners, parents, and the surrounding community, enhances inclusivity and accountability in educational decisions. A process-based approach



encourages the use of standardized operating procedures (SOPs) and consistent evaluation tools to improve instructional quality.

Continuous improvement is another significant feature of ISO 21001:2018. Institutions are expected to regularly evaluate and enhance their educational processes, which aligns with the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle for quality management. Data-driven decision-making allows institutions to identify gaps and rectify issues through evidence-based interventions. Ethical conduct and social responsibility also play crucial roles in developing an educational environment that respects diversity, promotes equality, and safeguards learners' rights (Syukron, 2022).

ISO 21001 Principle	Implications in Education
Learner Focus	Responsive teaching tailored to student needs
Visionary Leadership	Leadership that fosters innovation and change
Process-based Approach	Development of clear SOPs and structured teaching methods
Continuous Evaluation	Periodic internal audits and performance reviews
Stakeholder Involvement	Collaboration among teachers, students, parents, and community
Evidence-based Decisions	Use of data to guide policy and instructional practices
Social Responsibility	Emphasis on inclusive, equitable, and ethical education
Accessibility and Equity	Equal learning opportunities for all learners
Relationship Management	Strong connections with stakeholders and educational networks
Ethical Conduct	Integrity in assessment and institutional governance
Data Protection	Safeguarding student and institutional information

Table 1. Key ISO 21001 Principles and Their Implications in Education

Through the application of these principles, ISO 21001:2018 enables educational institutions to become more responsive, accountable, and transparent in managing educational services. Moreover, this standard provides a mechanism for educational organizations to demonstrate their commitment to quality learning experiences and continuous improvement (Fitri, 2020).

The alignment of ISO 21001:2018 with the broader goals of education, such as preparing students for life and work in the 21st century, supports the development of high-quality human capital. The system encourages institutions to adapt to technological advancements, foster critical thinking, and ensure alignment with national and international education quality benchmarks (Setiawan, 2020). This ensures that learners not only receive content knowledge but also develop character, communication skills, and global awareness. ISO 21001:2018 is more than just a quality



management framework; it is a transformative model that guides institutions toward achieving excellence in education. It aligns operational practices with ethical values and global standards, ensuring that learners benefit from structured, inclusive, and high-impact educational environments. Its principles provide a foundation for strategic planning, instructional innovation, and stakeholder collaboration, which are critical in today's competitive and rapidly evolving educational landscape.

Comparison with Other Quality Management Standards.

ISO 21001:2018 stands out among quality management systems due to its sector-specific orientation. While ISO 9001:2015 is widely recognized and used across industries including manufacturing, healthcare, and services it lacks direct alignment with the educational context. ISO 21001:2018, on the other hand, was designed explicitly for educational organizations, offering a framework tailored to the unique characteristics of the education sector. This includes learner-focused objectives, curriculum design, assessment strategies, and stakeholder engagement.

A primary distinction between the two standards lies in their focus and scope. ISO 9001:2015 primarily aims at ensuring customer satisfaction through efficient quality management systems, applicable universally across organizational types. Conversely, ISO 21001:2018 seeks to improve learner satisfaction, educational outcomes, and the effectiveness of teaching and learning processes. According to Hartono (2021), while ISO 9001 can enhance general efficiency in educational institutions, it often overlooks pedagogical dimensions critical to education, such as learning objectives, instructional design, and performance evaluation based on student outcomes.

ISO 21001 integrates eleven guiding principles that directly correspond to educational practices, including learner-centeredness, inclusiveness, equitable learning opportunities, and ethical conduct. These principles extend beyond the operational concerns of ISO 9001 and engage with the moral and developmental responsibilities of educational institutions. Fitri (2020) emphasizes that such principles are foundational to forming a sustainable quality culture in education an area ISO 9001 does not explicitly address.

The stakeholder focus also differentiates the two standards. ISO 9001 typically considers customers, suppliers, and regulators as primary stakeholders, while ISO 21001 identifies learners, parents, teachers, administrative staff, and community members as essential educational



stakeholders. This broader perspective ensures that ISO 21001 aligns more closely with the values and expectations in education. According to Kusumawati (2020), by emphasizing comprehensive stakeholder engagement, ISO 21001 fosters a sense of shared responsibility, transparency, and trust among the educational community.

From a structural standpoint, ISO 21001 integrates mechanisms that address curriculum development, competency assessment, and academic performance monitoring. These components are rarely featured in ISO 9001 documentation, which tends to focus on product or service quality without delving into domain-specific requirements. Hakim and Ramdani (2019) argue that this alignment with educational content makes ISO 21001 a more pedagogically effective tool.

Dimension	ISO 21001:2018	ISO 9001:2015
Organizational Context	Tailored for schools, universities, and training centers	Universal, for all types of organizations
Objectives and Focus	Emphasizes educational quality, learner outcomes, and stakeholder engagement	Focuses on service/product quality and customer satisfaction
Stakeholders	Targets students, parents, educators, and community	Customers, suppliers, business partners
Curriculum & Pedagogy	Includes teaching-learning processes and measurable outcomes	Generally excludes specific educational components
Evaluation Approach	Based on learning results and stakeholder satisfaction	Based on efficiency and general quality outcomes
Policy and Governance	Promotes educational leadership and strategic planning	Supports general leadership responsibilities

Table 2. Summarizes Key Differences Between ISO 21001:2018 and ISO 9001:2015:

ISO 21001:2018 offers a more comprehensive, education-sensitive quality management system that aligns closely with the pedagogical, social, and ethical aspects of learning environments. While ISO 9001:2015 continues to serve as a reliable general framework, its limitations in addressing the specific needs of educational institutions make ISO 21001 a superior alternative for schools and universities aiming for high-quality, learner-centered outcomes. This comparison underlines the importance of selecting a management standard that fits not only the operational but also the educational philosophy of an institution.



Application of ISO 21001 in Various Countries

The global application of ISO 21001:2018 reflects the growing emphasis on international quality assurance standards within educational systems. Countries across Europe, the Middle East, and Asia have begun integrating ISO 21001 as a framework to enhance the quality and governance of their educational institutions. The standard's learner-centric approach and compatibility with educational objectives make it especially relevant for nations seeking to modernize and globalize their educational systems.

In Finland one of the world's leaders in educational innovation, ISO 21001 has been incorporated into institutional quality development frameworks. Finnish higher education institutions have adopted this standard to align internal quality systems with international expectations, focusing on continuous improvement, stakeholder involvement, and transparent curriculum design (Yusron, 2020). Finland's implementation of ISO 21001 has supported its mission to remain at the forefront of educational excellence by ensuring that its institutions maintain high standards while adapting to global demands.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has also demonstrated strong commitment to quality management in education through ISO 21001 adoption. In the UAE, the Ministry of Education has encouraged both public and private institutions to pursue ISO 21001 certification as part of national strategic goals for educational innovation and excellence. As a result, many higher education institutions in the UAE utilize ISO 21001 as a tool to improve institutional accountability, learner satisfaction, and teaching effectiveness (Syukron, 2022). Moreover, UAE's embrace of ISO standards contributes to its broader goal of becoming a knowledge-based economy.

In Asia countries such as China and Malaysia have begun introducing ISO 21001 to foster global compatibility and improve internal governance. Malaysia, for instance, has integrated ISO 21001 into its Malaysian Education Quality Standards, particularly for technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions. By aligning with ISO 21001, Malaysian educational institutions are working to increase the employability of graduates and the relevance of curricula to industry needs (Kusumawati, 2020).



Contrastingly in Indonesia, the implementation of ISO 21001 remains at an early stage. While the government has established various national standards for education through regulations such as Law No. 20/2014 on Standardization and Conformity Assessment (UU No. 20 Tahun 2014), the adoption of international standards like ISO 21001:2018 has been largely voluntary. As such, ISO 21001 has been applied primarily by internationally oriented private universities and elite schools, particularly in metropolitan areas such as Jakarta, Surabaya, and Bali (Putra & Wahyuni, 2021). Public institutions, on the other hand, often rely on internal quality assurance mechanisms mandated by national accreditation bodies.

One of the key reasons for the limited implementation in Indonesia is the lack of widespread awareness about the distinct advantages of ISO 21001 compared to other standards like ISO 9001. While ISO 9001 has long been used in various Indonesian educational institutions, it lacks the pedagogical focus and curriculum-specific guidelines that ISO 21001 offers. Moreover, ISO 21001 provides a structured approach for involving educational stakeholders students, parents, and educators in the planning and evaluation processes, a feature that resonates well with modern educational governance (Sallis, 2012).

Challenges such as financial constraints, limited human resource capacity, and a lack of professional development opportunities related to international standards have also hindered broader adoption. Many institutions, especially in rural areas, lack the infrastructure and funding necessary to implement and maintain ISO-based management systems (Setiawan, 2020). These gaps underscore the need for government-led initiatives, subsidies, or partnerships with certifying bodies to encourage more widespread use of ISO 21001.

Despite these challenges, the potential for growth remains strong. With the increasing push for international collaboration and academic benchmarking, more Indonesian institutions are showing interest in global certification standards. ISO 21001:2018 could serve as a strategic foundation for improving institutional quality, boosting international credibility, and fostering learner-centered education in the country. While ISO 21001 has been embraced by many countries to advance educational quality, Indonesia's journey is still in progress. However, with proper policy support, increased awareness, and strategic investment, the broader application of ISO 21001 can contribute significantly to the transformation and globalization of Indonesian education.



Challenges and Opportunities in Implementing ISO 21001 in Indonesia

The implementation of ISO 21001:2018 in Indonesia presents both challenges and opportunities for educational institutions seeking to improve their quality management systems. While the standard offers a comprehensive framework tailored for the education sector, its adoption remains limited due to structural, financial, and cultural barriers. However, increasing awareness of quality assurance practices and the need for global competitiveness has opened new avenues for broader adoption in the future.

One of the most significant challenges lies in the limited awareness and understanding of ISO 21001 among education stakeholders. Many educational institutions in Indonesia are still more familiar with ISO 9001, a general standard for quality management systems, and often assume it is sufficient for addressing educational quality. ISO 21001, however, differs by emphasizing learner-centeredness, stakeholder involvement, and educational outcomes (International Organization for Standardization [ISO], 2018). According to Fitri (2022), this lack of familiarity results in resistance or indifference toward adopting a more education-specific standard, especially in public institutions where innovation in governance is often slow.

Another pressing obstacle is the lack of resources, both financial and human. Implementing ISO 21001 requires a substantial investment in training, internal auditing, documentation, and quality monitoring mechanisms. Smaller institutions or those in rural areas often lack the funding or skilled personnel to undertake such systemic reforms (Rahmawati et al., 2021). Moreover, without technical assistance or government incentives, many institutions are discouraged from even beginning the certification process.

Organizational culture in many Indonesian schools and universities poses a challenge. A hierarchical and compliance-based mindset often dominates, where quality assurance is viewed as a bureaucratic necessity rather than a strategic tool for institutional growth (Maunah, 2016). ISO 21001 demands a shift toward participatory governance, continuous improvement, and learner-centered management principles that may conflict with traditional practices. As noted by Sallis (2012), creating a culture of quality requires not only structural changes but also a deep transformation in values, leadership styles, and stakeholder attitudes.



Another constraint is the lack of comprehensive training and socialization. Many educators and administrators are unaware of how to translate ISO 21001 principles into practical strategies. The absence of national-level campaigns or training initiatives also contributes to a fragmented understanding and inconsistent implementation of the standard (Syukron, 2022). While some private institutions have invested in external consultants or certification bodies, public institutions often lack access to such resources.

Despite these challenges, there are promising opportunities for expanding the implementation of ISO 21001 in Indonesia. A key driver is the increasing national and global emphasis on education quality and institutional performance. Accreditation bodies in Indonesia, such as BAN-PT and LAMDIK, are beginning to incorporate international benchmarks in their assessment criteria. This creates a conducive environment for institutions to align with global standards like ISO 21001 to gain credibility and improve competitiveness (Setiawan, 2020).

There is a growing recognition among educational leaders that quality assurance is no longer optional but essential. Leadership commitment is one of the most critical success factors in implementing ISO 21001. When supported by policies, adequate training, and stakeholder engagement, the system can lead to meaningful improvements in teaching effectiveness, learner satisfaction, and institutional accountability (Putra & Wahyuni, 2021).

The current push toward digital transformation in education also presents an enabling context. Digital tools can support the implementation of ISO 21001 by automating data collection, monitoring performance indicators, and streamlining communication among stakeholders. As Indonesia invests in EdTech and online learning platforms, there is a parallel opportunity to embed quality management principles in the design and operation of these systems. While the challenges to ISO 21001 implementation in Indonesia are significant, ranging from limited awareness to structural resistance, they are not insurmountable. By leveraging policy reforms, capacity-building efforts, and institutional leadership, Indonesia can move toward a more standardized and globally recognized education quality management framework. This will not only enhance national educational outcomes but also position Indonesia more favorably in the global education landscape.



CONCLUSION

This study concludes that ISO 21001:2018 represents a relevant, comprehensive, and applicable quality assurance system model for educational institutions striving to enhance service quality and learner satisfaction. The standard underscores the importance of quality-oriented leadership, fulfillment of stakeholder needs, systematic management of the teaching and learning process, and a culture of continuous improvement. Findings from the literature review indicate that, although the implementation of ISO 21001:2018 in Indonesian educational institutions remains limited, the standard holds significant potential for broader adoption. Its success, however, is highly dependent on adequate human resource training, strong managerial commitment, and the establishment of supportive regulations that promote holistic quality transformation. Compared to other quality models such as ISO 9001 and Total Quality Management (TQM), ISO 21001:2018 demonstrates a more targeted approach in addressing the specific characteristics and demands of the education sector. The development and implementation of a quality assurance model based on ISO 21001:2018 should be regarded as a strategic priority to realize high-quality, relevant, and globally competitive education systems.

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