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Strategy to Improve Quality of Higher Education Institution Based on AUN-QA Standard

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Abstract

Purpose – The objectives of this research are (1) to describe and analyze the gap between Universitas Negeri Semarang (UNNES) academic and management resource and ASEAN University Network Quality Assurance (AUN-QA) standard; (2) to describe and analyze the strategy of quality improvement of Universitas Negeri Semarang based on AUN-QA Criteria.

Methodology – This research is conducted with qualitative approach combine with statistical analysis. The respondent in this paper is management positions at UNNES. Data were collected by interview, observation, documents study and questionnaire. Data analysis was performed with interactive analysis model and descriptive statistical analysis.

Findings – The results revealed that the academic and management resources at Semarang State University are good and potential to become a world class university. Quality culture in the implementation of tridharma (education, research and community service) that developed at Semarang State University has been oriented to higher education continuous quality improvement. Therefore, several strategies for improving the quality of higher education that must be implemented in order to achieve AUN-QA certification are: (1) changing mindset and work culture towards international standard, (2) re-structuring of human resource management through education and training, (3) re-structuring of university governance system, (4) strengthening regional and international networking, and (5) strengthening internal controls mechanism.

Significance – These findings can contribute to universities that are preparing to become a world class university to develop a holistic quality assurance system by using the AUN-QA framework reference.

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Strategy to Improve Quality of Higher Education Institution Based on AUN-QA Standard

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ABSTRACT

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INTRODUCTION

Current and trends of higher educations are changing drastically. The Core functions of higher educations as the community scholars, the places of attractions and pool wisdom, enhancing for quality and excellence in teaching, research, community service, promotion and preservation of cultural dimensions. Higher education is the institution of education which always be insisted to be able to improve education's quality

globally with an international reputation. Globalization is a challenge for UNNES to prepare its students to compete with another university from the international region. Some challenges will be faced to get this international reputation, such as getting quality human resources, international network and cooperation, and international publication.

Law number 12 year 2012 regarding higher education article 51 states that quality higher education should produce graduates which are able to actively develop their potentials and spreading useful knowledge and/or technology for the society, nation, and the whole country. For the sake of maintaining the quality of higher education, Indonesia's government holds quality control system of higher education to obtain the quality higher education, whether as internal quality assurance system and external quality assurance system. As with the rest of the world, education is seen as a key vehicle to increase the wealth of individuals and the economic wellbeing of society.

In the past decade, the term "world-class university" has become popular all over the world. International University is not simply for increasing the quality of learning activity and research. More importantly, a world-class university need a multi-dimensional strategy for developing the capacity to compete in the global higher education marketplace. University should integrate all its functions and activities in higher education; teaching and academic programs, research and publication, community service, staffing, students, facilities, infrastructure, and the academic environment. The paradox of a world-class university is a concept that very popular but the indicator is not very clear. Altbach (2003) has investigated this construct and said that a world-class university: "everyone wants one, no one knows what it is, and no one knows how to get one". The institutional repercussion and contextual significance of a world-class university are possibly mainly governed by a drive (some peoples would state as a pragmatic requirement) to compete in a global education marketplace through the acquisition, adaptation, and creation of advanced knowledge (Salmi, 2009). If we agree about that, the need to compete worldwide is now a prerequisite of global higher education institutions. Even Tierny and Sirat's research in 2015 concludes that as with the world-wide view, education is seen as the primary vehicle for increasing individual wealth and economic well-being

Levin, Jeong and Ou (2006) argue that the world-class university is most commonly conceptualized around 'widespread agreement of a world class reputation', whilst Salmi (2009) believes a world-class predicate is imply 'on the basis of international recognition'. Furthermore, Levin, Jeong and Ou (2006) state that a worlwide university conception only serves to raise the questions as to what constitutes world class reputation. That argument means that global reputation university and therefore world-class position come to be measured through dimensions that are 'visible' (Levin, Jeong & Ou, 2006). The last, according to the view of Levin, Jeong and Ou (2006), research activity, publications, citations, and major faculty awards become the most significant measures of a world-class university. The measurements to achieve a world-class universities recognition are more based on performance achievement (output). However, the learning process does not seem to be a visible indicator and difficult to be measured. Even that Levin, Jeong and Ou (2006) worrying there will be a potential danger of conceptualizing world-class on a purely 'visible' basis emerges; in short, that the educational processes and virtues of higher education institutions are not considered.

The World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty First Century: Vision and Action (October 1998), in Article 11, Qualitative evaluation defined quality in higher education as “a multi-dimensional concept, which should cover all of its functions and activities which include academic and teaching programs, research and scholarships, staffing, students, buildings, facilities, equipment, community services and the academic environment. Furthermore, The Regional Report of Asia-Pacific (UNESCO, 2003b) argue that quality assurance in higher education as “systematic management and assessment procedures to monitor performance of higher education institutions”. Internal evaluations and external reviews, conducted openly by independent specialists, if possible with international expertise, are important to improve quality. "To develop, implement, maintain and improve the quality of higher education, an institution requires installing a quality assurance system.

As higher education institution which is visioned for becoming university of conservation with international reputation, Universitas Negeri Semarang (UNNES) has strong commitment to provide services and facilities for students to improve its quality in terms of academic or non-academic. One of the performance indicators of good quality management is the achievement of excellent accreditation for each program. In the arranged Strategic plans, UNNES plans target of improving the number of study programs with A accreditation from 30% programs in 10% annually. Beside improving the number of A-accredited program, another challenge is related to improve the performance of the program to achieve international accreditation. One of the initiation was in 2015, where it was planned to prepare international certification of ASEAN University Network Quality Assurance (AUN-QA).

ASEAN University Network (AUN) is a network of universities at ASEAN level with the aim of strengthening networks of cooperation among several major universities in ASEAN by promoting cooperation and solidarity among students and academics in ASEAN, developing academic and professional resources, and disseminating information to fellow academic community. AUN-QA (AUN-Quality Assurance) established in 1998 aims to develop a quality assurance network as a way to achieve and maintain a high quality in higher education.

AUN-QA model will be adopted by UNNES as the path to reach regional-accredited programs. The steps are 1) Strategic (QA at institutional level): the development of university's vision and mission to its quality control, 2) Systemic (internal QA system): the development of its quality from policy to document, and 3) Tactical (QA at Programme level): the development of quality from its curriculum to graduates. Thus, this research will review the strategy and quality of higher education's quality based on the standard of AUN-QA by following the study programs development based on AUN-QA.

Overview of World Class University

Simmons (2003) provides a widely discussion of the principles that should be fullfill to if a university is to be consider as a world class institution. The first principle recommends to the universities to align their mission and vision to local and international society goals. The second, universities should pay attention on education quality supported academic accuracy mainly regards to peer observation and knowledge generation. The final principle prompt the institution should be looking forward, future facing and educate educational democracy, mostly through academic freedom and the fostering of free ideas.

Salmi (2009) expand opinion that the main results of world-class universities can be attributed to ‘three complementary aspects at play in top universities in the world ranking’, they are a high concentration of talent, abundant resources and good university governance. The model of a world-class university drawn from the Salmi idea (2009) includes more than three comprehensive factors, but is further divided into a small part of this meta-construction. To achieve a world-class university recognition, universities members should be aligned the dimensions proposed by Salmi through a dynamic collaboration.

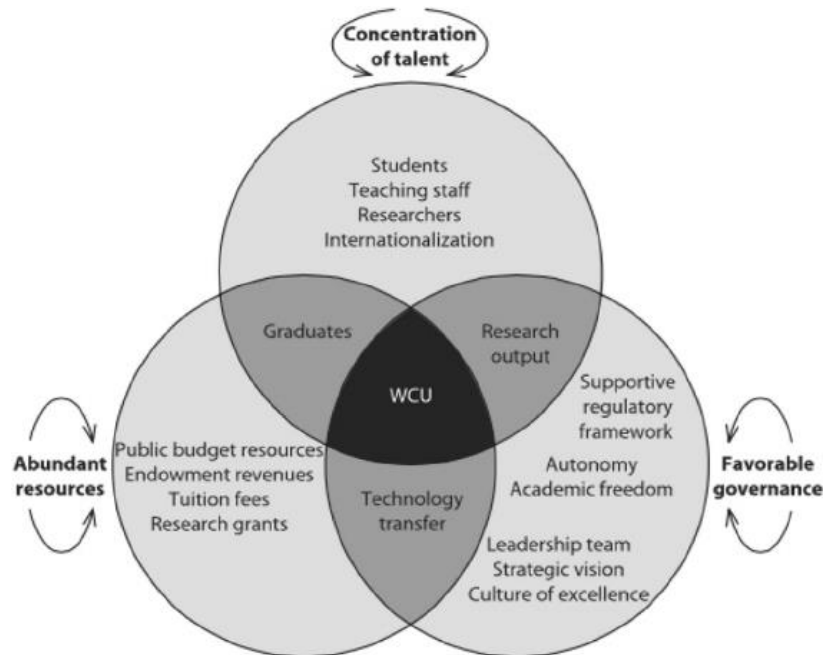


Figure 1: Characteristics of a World-Class University (Salmi, 2009)

Talent concentration can be measured as 'the best determinant of excellence' because the support needs of every world-class university has a critical mass of the best students and the best faculty members, as recommended by Salmi (2009). The third area of Salmi's model of the world-class university concerns about good university governance. Salmi (2009) trusts that the government has a responsibility to foster a higher education system. The government as the authority to set policy should ensure that world-class universities have a space to operate by allowing 'relative independence from the state' without being bound by externally imposed bureaucracies and standards. In addition to the degree of autonomy needed to enable the functioning of a world-class university effectively, Salmi (2009) also points out the need for further governance features to build and maintain world-class institutions. The more detailed explanation about this features, it is include inspiring and persistent leaders, strong strategic vision, 'philosophy of success and excellence' and 'culture of constant reflection, organizational learning, and change. Salmi, (2009) comprehensively illustrate the world-class university model and the relationship between the component in Figure 1.

Altbach (2003) seeks to provide a number of characteristics necessary for an institution to be recognized a world-class rank. Basically, Altbach (2003) suggests 'excellence in research' underlying world-class meaning in the context of higher education. Among other characteristics expressed by Altbach (2003), 'favorable working conditions' is one that is not clearly replicated by academics and other commentators.

Altbach (2003) argues that working conditions at world-class universities must be defined beyond remuneration but lead to a culture of academic understanding where academic freedom and 'atmosphere of intellectual excitement' are nurtured.

Furthermore, Altbach (2003) said that 'not many world-class universities'. However, this should not prevent universities from all mission groups who want world-class excellence. Indeed, it can be argued that fundamentally the idea of a world-class university should be conceptualized as an aspirational vision that underlies strategic decision making and ambitious and progressive strategic planning in higher education institutions.

Marginson (2013) explains the term world-class universities should be regarded as the 'concept of aspiration'. A major component of a world-class university is global research that is able to 'gives substance to the notion of the world class university' as Marginson (2013) argues. The idea was further developed as a Global Research University concept includes 'being nested locally and nationally, combined with position and recognition at global level'.

METHODOLOGY

This research used action research approach and fullfill the following principles:

- 1) Identifying the subject of the research as unit of identity.
- 2) Building strength and resources from study and targeted unit.
- 3) Facilitating collaborative cooperation in every research methodologies by involving programs and targeted unit.
- 4) Integrating the understanding and action for the sake of the unit and targeted study programs.
- 5) Promoting co-learning and empowerment process.
- 6) Involving cyclical and recurring activities.
- 7) Disseminating the results of the research to all involved parties.

The steps of society empowerment can with participative action research approach can be seen in Figure 2.



Figure 2. The scheme of participative action research approach

The object of this research was the involving parties in quality assurance section of UNNES from the level of institution, faculty, and the programs level. Meanwhile, the informant of this research were the head of the study program, the head of the faculty/institution and supporting unit, lecturer, program administrative staffs, and students.

The primary data from the respondents were collected from open questions given in written scripts which is read in direct interview. The secondary data was obtained from library research by reading, understanding, and quoting several information.

The technique of analyzing the data used to answer the questions of the research followed these steps: 1) Descriptive Method: systematic, factual, and addresses of qualitative elaboration method, and 2) Interpretation Method: understanding relevant resources of data to the theme of the research. Before the interpretation, there would be a reduction to the data and review of the data to get the conclusion.

RESULTS

Introduction to AUN-QA Models

The AUN-QA Network is a non-profit and non-governmental organizations that established as an ASEAN quality assurance network in higher education with responsibility for promoting quality assurance in higher education institutions, enhancing the quality of higher education, and collaborating with regional and international bodies for the benefit of the ASEAN community. The objective of the framework of AUN-QA Strategic Action Plan is to set the outline of strategic plan including the key activities, in order to further develop the AUN-QA system through the enhancement of QA assessment and capacity building among the AUN Member Universities and also extend to non-Member in ASEAN region; which could lead to the acquisition of regional and international recognitions.

ASEAN University Network recognizes the significance of quality in higher education, and the need to improve a holistic quality assurance system to increase academic standards and raise the education, research and community service among its member universities in ASEAN. In 1998, it proposed the AUN-QA Network which led to the development of AUN-QA models. From the time then the AUN has been promoting, developing, and implementing quality assurance practices based on the empirical approach where quality assurance applies are verified, evaluated, improved and shared.

AUN-QA pursues to create feasible internal quality assurance (IQA) systems within all members and also universities in ASEAN. The AUN-QA assessment firstly at the program study level and now have developed for the institutional level evaluations using more complex assessment criteria. The main focus of AUN-QA assessment is for the purpose of improving the effectiveness of the quality assurance system. AUN-QA has adopted the Plan - Do – Check - Action (PDCA) approach for improving QA practices, AUN-QA accreditation is more system and process-oriented. Student attainment of outcomes related to what students “know and can do” is not a main focus.

The AUN-QA model for an Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) system involves of the following areas:

1. internal quality assurance framework;
2. monitoring instruments;
3. evaluation instruments;
4. special QA-processes to safeguard specific activities;
5. specific QA-instruments; and
6. follow-up activities for making improvements

An IQA system is the totality of systems that integrate all elements of program/university elements, resources and information assigned to setting up, maintaining and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning, research, publication and community service. It is a system where the QA mechanisms are working to maintain and increase the grade of quality in higher education institutions. Currently, the criteria in the AUN-QA assessment at the program level are the third version. The 3rd version of the AUN-QA model for study program level cover the following 11 criterias (see figure 3).

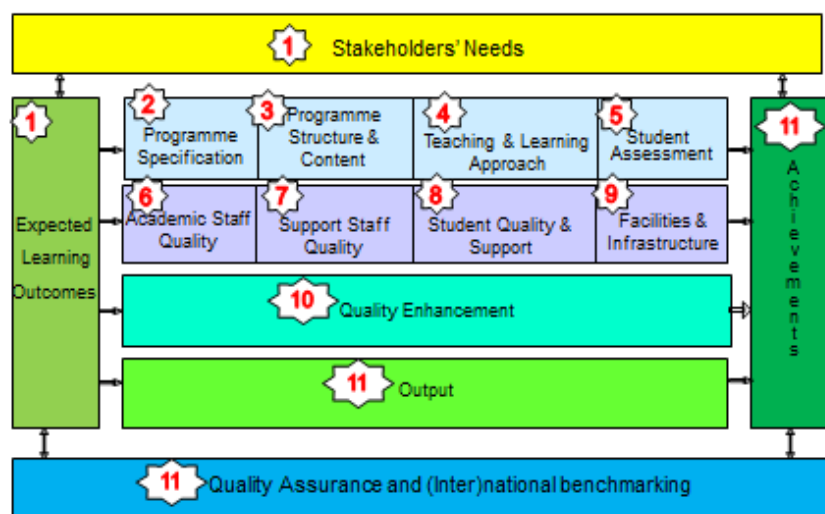


Figure 3. AUN-QA Model for Programme Level (3rd Version)

Outcomes–Based Education (OBE) Model

Outcomes are often discussed and acrimoniously debated when a new educational program or a new curriculum is being developed. Generally early planning discussion will at some point focus on what students are expected to be able to do after they graduate from the program of study: “What should our students be able to do?”. Another question that usually arises is that students should possess when they graduate from the school or program: “What sort of people do we expect our graduates to be?” In both of these discussions the focus is on outcomes. Therefore it is very important for school/ universities to set their educational goals. Nearly all education institutions have goals that supposedly guide their work. The objective of their education will drive them to develop a curriculum.

Outcome-based education (OBE) is an educational approach that bases each element of an educational system to reach goals (outcomes). After finished the educational experience, each student should have achieved the goal. It is an integrated system in the teaching learning process, there is no single specified style of teaching or assessment in OBE; instead, classes, opportunities, and assessments should all help students reach the specified outcomes (Spady, 1994). OBE model differs from traditional education methods where students are given grades and rankings and then compared to each other. The goal of traditional education style was to present the knowledge and skills to students and to provide students with an environment in which to learn.

Outcomes-based IQA has the potential to connect QA with student learning. Spady (1994) was developed a model of OBE that has four organizing principles identified by OBE:

1. Clarity of focus: all teaching and learning activities should be systematically linked to the broad and specific outcomes identified for the education program and this should be clearly identified by the students and faculty members. These results can be achieved in different ways.
2. Designing back: The curriculum content should flow clearly from the most general outcome to more specific outcomes and to each course. Assessment should be integrated with these outcomes coherently. In this way, the courses for students within and at the year level will have a clear relationship with the curriculum goals.
3. Teachers should give high expectations for all students: This principle requires that successful and challenging classes and achievement of high standards be part of learning for all students. The focus of the assessment in the OBE model is the identification of the achievement of high standards of performance in relation to criteria established for achievement of outcomes.
4. Teachers should provide a broader options to allow students achieve the outcomes in various ways: Related to the principle number 3 is the view that different learners may take different ways, and different amounts of time or amount of effort to achieve the same outcome.

Academic and Management Resources in Universitas Negeri Semarang

Higher education in Indonesia has important roles in contributing to the development of the community and the supplier of quality human resources needed to maintain the economy, politics, and culture. The management of human resources is the part of academics civitas management. One of the challenges of human resources management is presenting professional lecturer which can produce expert graduates in their specific fields. The existence of professional lecturer will become the needs to realize the vision and mission of the university.

The result of the research showed that the academic and management resources in Universitas Negeri Semarang were in good and potential category to become world class university. It is shown by the strength and opportunity factors which were higher than the weaknesses and threats. The strengths of academic and management resources in Universitas Negeri Semarang were shown by these following stuffs:

- 1) The process of planning lecturers' need in short-term or long-term by changing, promoting, recalls, layoffs, and pension plans). These plans were done to guarantee the quality and quantity of lecturer which fills the criteria of good education, research, and services.
- 2) UNNES counts the ratio of staff:students as well as measure and monitor the burden of improving the quality of education, research, and services.
- 3) The recruitment and distribution of academic resources were based on academic freedom
- 4) The competence of academic staff was always identified and evaluated as well as improved by training and development programs.

Academic human resources become the challenge which should be developed by university in order to achieve higher reputation. It is in line to Arwildayanto (2010), stating that the existence of human resources in university becomes the challenges and necessity for this institution and stakeholders. The management of human resources in university should focus their job on handling the potentials of the lecturers and minimize their weaknesses. The human resources should be able to show professional lecturer profile under the principle of *Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi* (Three Fundamental Values of Higher Education) through education, research, and community services.

Quality of Culture in the Execution of *Tridharma* (Education, Research, and Community Services)

The attempts of improving the execution of education in Universitas Negeri Semarang were following these strategies.

- 1) Scoring the students constructively by the wished outcome
- 2) Scoring the students by considering the time, methods, regulation, distribution of weight, rubrics, and ranking in explicit and communicative way
- 3) The method of scoring included rubric and assigning scheme used to ensure the validity, reliability, and normality of the test to students
- 4) The scoring feedback should be done on time and helps the execution of the learning process
- 5) Students have the access to complain the applied scoring procedures
- 6) The method and criteria to choose students was determined and evaluated

- 7) There was a monitoring system to zoom out students' development, academic performance, and working loads
- 8) Physical, social, and psychological environment were conducive enough to develop students personally
- 9) UNNES gave awards and appreciation to motivate academic human resources based on the criteria in education, research, and services.

In doing research and community services, Universitas Negeri Semarang has done research collaboration to foreign university as the attempt of increasing international publication. It is in line to UNNES' vision as "University of Conservation with International Reputation". In the system of research management and community services, the performance and research activities were done by academic staffs were always be monitored and evaluated. It is due to control the quality of the stuffs along with its significance in spreading knowledge and fostering national development.

The facts above are the attempts of UNNES to do the *tridharma*, especially in improving the quality of its graduates. Like in Arcaro (1995), quality is a process, meaning that it is arranged to improve the output. The output is a product. In this case, the product of university is the service. Meanwhile, Lupiyoadi (2001) says that there are three orientation of quality which should be consistent; consumers' perception, products or services, and process. For the services, products, and process, it cannot be differentiated clearly since the product is the process. Kotler & Fox (1995) explains that there are six main dimension of quality services in higher education; they are: quality of instruction, academic advising, library resources, extracurricular activity, opportunities to talk with faculty members, job placement services.

Quality is a dynamic thing which constantly moves. If it moves forward, it is called improvement. If it moves backwards, it is called as decrease. Avianti (2005:10) says that quality can be seen as superiority or excellence as it exceeds the common standards. Something can be called as high quality if it fulfills the specific requirement needed by people. In other words, Sviokla (2002: 20) says that quality service is how the service of company is in line to consumers' wishes.

Quality or internal quality in Higher Education is arranged in Sistem Penjaminan Mutu Internal (SPMI-PT) perguruan tinggi or Internal Quality Control System of Higeehr Education as the independent body from the university. Thus, the process of the control is planned, executed, and managed by the university itself.

The Strategy of Quality Improvement from Higher Education to Achieve AUN-QA Certification

The strategies of Universitas Negeri Semarang to achieve AUN-QA certification were: (1) changing the mindset and working culture based on international standards, (2) rearranging the management and human resources capacity by internationally standardized education and training, (3) rearranging the management of university, (4) strengthening the relation to regional and international based organization, and (5) strengthening the internal control.

Meanwhile, in the level of the programs, the improvement of education's quality was done by executing program's quality control in some strategies, including: (1) Understanding and analyzing the performance of the programs based on the strategic plan of UNNES or Higher Education Officials, (2) Obtaining models

of high quality management integration based on the criteria of AUN-QA, and (3) Arranging the guides of quality management based on the criteria of AUN-QA.

Individuals and international and regional level organizations have defined "world-class university". They have also created indicators to achieve world-level recognition. For a higher education, achieving a global reputation is very meaningful. But that is no more important than how to improve the higher education quality (input, process, output and outcome) continuously by setting international standards, fulfill that standards and improving them sustainably. By continuing to maintain the quality of internal business processes of higher education will be drive to achieve international reputation.

CONCLUSION

The academic and management resources in Universitas Negeri Semarang were in good and potential category to become world-class university. It is shown by the strengths and opportunities factors of UNNES which were higher than the weaknesses and threats.

The strategies of Universitas Negeri Semarang to achieve AUN-QA certification were: (1) changing the mindset and working culture based on international standards, (2) rearranging the management and human resources capacity by internationally standardized education and training, (3) rearranging the management of university, (4) strengthening the relation to regional and international based organization, and (5) strengthening the internal control.

In conclusion, Universitas Negeri Semarang will be the world class university with the success factors of truly internationalization of the core mission of teaching & learning, research, academic services tolerance of cultural diversity, and managing quality continuously.

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