

Utilising AQAS 2021 Suggestions to Improve Postgraduate Primary Education Doctoral Programme Curriculum: Reflections from the Field

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Abstract

This study seeks to analyse the doctoral programme curriculum in basic education, Jakarta State University, and follow up on the recommendations of the AQAS international accreditation agency as a standard curriculum requirement. The programme was evaluated by collecting, analysing and following up on information regarding the challenges and confidence on the ability to meet the curriculum requirements. Responses to indicators are presented with comparisons based on the characteristics of the components of the AQAS/EQF accreditation review. The findings focused on the documentation and assessment process. The most frequently reported challenges were lack of enthusiasm or support from staff and students; need for common understanding regarding the curriculum; and time constraints faced by teaching staff. Overall, the programme evoked a moderate level of confidence from the alumni and graduate community. However, the characterisation of the basic education curriculum could not be determined. The findings show that the basic education doctoral study programme requires support from teaching staff to reduce the burden of curriculum, especially courses that are adapted to Outcome-Based Education OBE. Likewise, students' perceptions of the lecture process using a student-active learning approach may influence some programmes, as well as the implementation of the 6Cs, especially foreign language communication competence, which is a challenge for faculty and teaching staff. Further research is imperative to determine how the programme addresses this issue, and explore whether study programmes may report differently on EQF indicators after completing an accreditation review. The findings may help the postgraduate education association evaluate the joint curriculum.

Keywords: curriculum, EQF, AQAS, basic education, assessment, accreditation,

A. Introduction

The Indonesian government has been encouraging universities to achieve international accreditation by improving the quality of lecturers and education. International accreditation is considered important for a university to uphold its image from the global perspective. One of the benefits of international accreditation is recognition by foreign universities.

Accreditation is the determination of quality standards and the assessment of an educational institution (higher education) by parties outside an independent institution. Accreditation is also defined as an effort by the government to standardise and ensure the quality of college alumni so that the quality of graduates between universities is not too varied and is in accordance with job requirements (Martino A et al., 2019).

Accreditation is a comprehensive evaluation and assessment process of higher education commitments to the quality and capacity of higher education institutions, to determine the feasibility of educational programmes and units. Evaluation and assessment in the context of institutional accreditation is conducted by a team of assessors consisting of experts who understand the nature of higher education management.

Accreditation is conducted by institutions that have the authority to evaluate and assess, as well as determine the status and quality ratings of higher education institutions based on predetermined quality standards. The objectives of accreditation for higher education programmes are as follows:

Provide assurance that accredited tertiary education programmes have met the quality standards set by an institution, so as to be able to provide protection for the community from higher education providers who do not meet the standards, encourage universities to continuously make improvements and maintain high quality. The results of the accreditation can be used as a basis for consideration in the transfer of higher education credit, the provision of assistance and allocation of funds, as well as recognition from other agencies.

Bendixen C and J.C. Jacobsen (2020) explained that accreditation can also provide benefits to all parties, be it the government, prospective students or parents, the national and international job market, funding organisations, and concerned university or study programmes.

Accreditation is imperative for the standard measure of the quality of education at a higher education institution, where every tertiary institution must be capable of improving the quality and competitiveness of its graduates and guarantee the teaching and learning process at the university. It also serves as a reference to provide information to universities to carry out teaching and learning process activities according to the standards provided by the government in the process of globalisation of education for global competitiveness in the future (Jaime L. Maerten-Rivera et al., 2021).

International accreditation is useful to 1) expand access and ensure the development of higher education on an international scale; 2) promote system and institutional reforms to enhance international quality, relevance and efficiency; 3) improve the capacity of resources in developing the quality of domestic higher education on an international level; 4) support the development of international partnerships and cooperation.

Accreditation is conducted through 1) validation of the verification process using the right method to ensure each material, process, procedure, activity, system, equipment or mechanism are carried out at the institution so that the results and supervision will always achieve the planned results, 2) assessment of the collection and analysis process systematic information as the basis for planning and developing the quality of the institution on an ongoing basis, 3) surveillance as an indication of periodic monitoring activities in the form of periodic and systematic collection and analysis of information to ensure standards are continuously met (Hasan Al-Nashash et al., 2014).

International accreditation emphasises the standardisation of graduates' abilities through evaluation of study programme outcomes. Outcomes are determined by accrediting agencies which are generally supported by various professional, technical/scientific and industry associations, among others. International accreditation can bridge the criteria for the ability of graduates produced and the abilities of graduates required by the job market.

Therefore, some international accrediting institutions only accredit study programmes whose graduates' abilities can be universally standardised. Accordingly, our study programme, namely the Doctoral Study Program in Basic Education, State University of Jakarta, Indonesia, has been internationally accredited by the AQAS Accreditation Institute. The purpose of this study is to provide information on how to improve the performance of study programmes on an ongoing basis after obtaining recommendations from AQAS. Furthermore, it is hoped that it can inspire other similar higher education programme institutions.

The Agency for Quality Assurance by Accreditation of Study Programs (AQAS) is an independent agency for quality assurance of a study programme. AQAS is a non-profit organisation registered under German law and recognised by all relevant international networks/associations. It plays an integral role in the development of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). AQAS is a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), which represents various European bodies that validate or develop quality assurance in HEIs. Therefore, AQAS is committed to acting in accordance with the 'European Standards and Guidelines'.

With its international commitment, AQAS contributes to the development of new methodologies in EHEA and can therefore offer extensive experience and support for smoother procedures. AQAS offers external quality assurance procedures for overseas universities by leveraging extensive experience in related projects in various regions and countries.

Jakarta State University uses the recommendations by the AQAS International Accreditation Institute based on the 2015 Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

B. Method

This study employs the Eisner (2001) programme evaluation approach, which consists of three dimensions or stages, namely:

The descriptive dimension is critical education related to describing the current state of programmes, classes and schools. The Interpretative Dimension, namely educational criticism, relates to efforts to understand the meaning and significance of various activities in the social environment. This dimension expresses expert knowledge about the use of multiple theories, viewpoints and models when interpreting activities in environmental education. Evaluative Dimension: The final dimension of interpreted educational criticism is evaluation. During this process, there should be some educational criteria against which to judge the experience.

The research subjects that are the data sources consist of leaders, teaching staff and postgraduate doctoral students for the 2021/2022 academic year as well as relevant documents related to the doctoral programme curriculum for Postgraduate Basic Education at the State University of Jakarta.

Data were collected through survey studies, interviews and documentation.

Qualitative data analysis was carried out in the following steps; 1) Data collection, 2) Data reduction 3) Data display and 4) Data interpretation. Quantitative data were analysed descriptively with the excel programme.

The evaluation criteria or standards used are the European Higher Education Area (ESG) (2015) showing the standards for internal quality assurance, consisting of nine standards, namely 1) Policy for quality assurance, 2) Design and approval of programmes, 3) Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment, 4) Student admission, progression, recognition and certification, 5) Teaching staff, 6) Learning resources and student support, 7) Information management, 8) Public information and 9) Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes.

The validity of the data is carried out by using a triangulation method, namely the survey results are confirmed by interviews and documentation studies.

C. Results and Discussion

To evaluate the curriculum for the postgraduate basic education doctoral programme, the researchers used the European Higher Education Area (ESG) (2015) standards.

The nine standards were compiled following surveys with student respondents and teaching staff and based on data collection using questionnaires as follows:

Based on the descriptive data above, almost all of the accreditation components show a sufficient level of satisfaction after being converted to the following standard categories:

Table 1: Respondent satisfaction category

category	index	percentage
good	$\geq 3,00$	$\geq 76\%$
adequate	2,4 - 3,00	60% - 75%
deficient	$\leq 2,40$	$\leq 60\%$

Furthermore, the results of the analysis of each indicator show the following information:

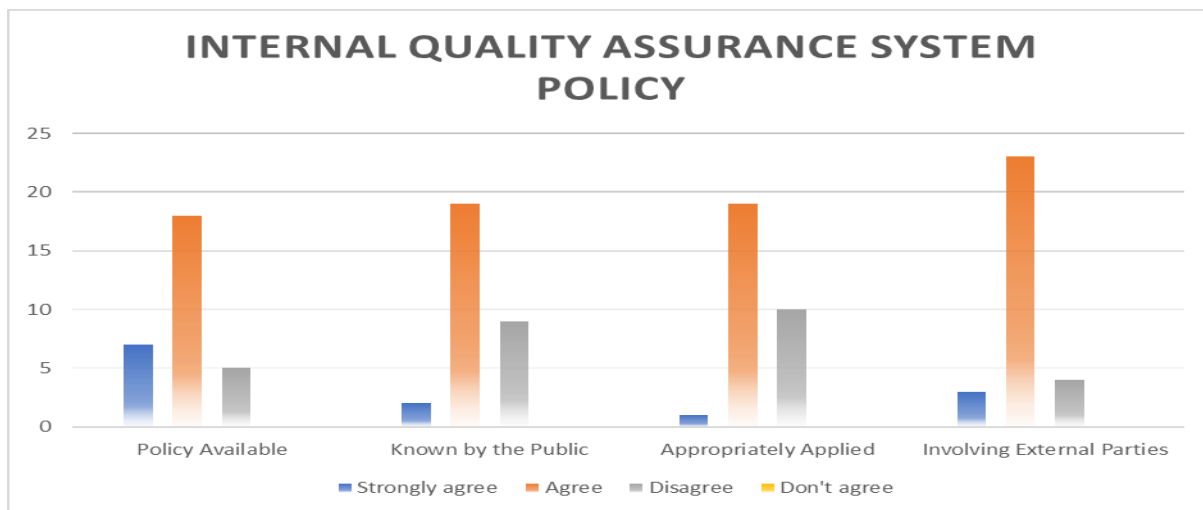


Figure 1: Internal quality assurance system policy

Based on data obtained from 30 respondents for the dimensions of the internal quality assurance system policy, the indicators for the availability of policies showed that 23.3% strongly agreed, 60% agreed and 16.7% disagreed. Furthermore, for indicators that are known to the public, 6.7% strongly agreed, 63.3% agreed and 30% disagreed. Regarding indicator applied correctly, 3.3% strongly agreed, 76.3% agreed, and 33.3% disagreed. With regard to the last indicator Involving External Parties, 10% strongly agreed, 76.7% agreed and 13.3% disagreed.

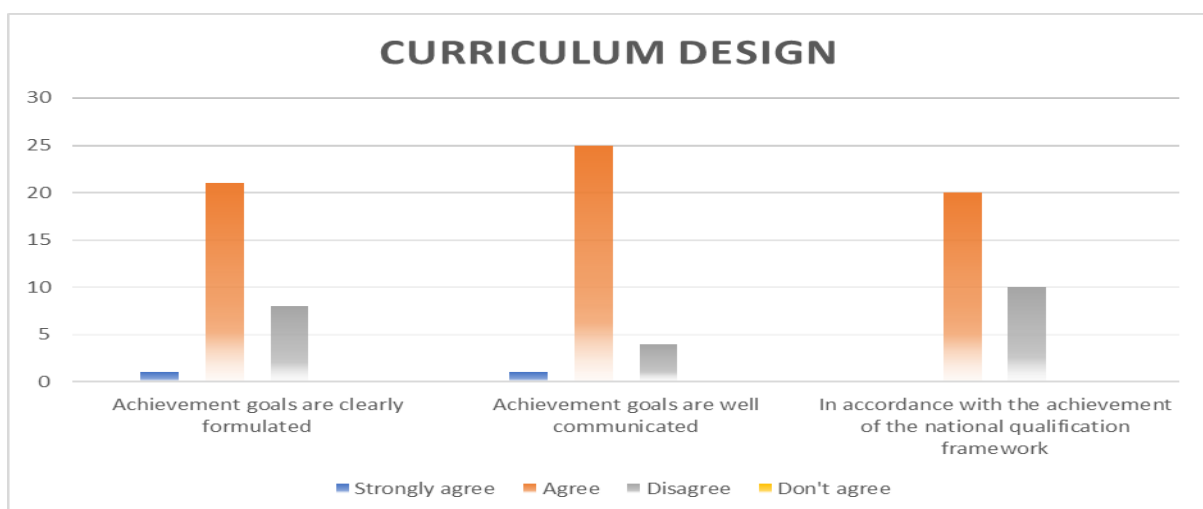


Figure 2: Dimensions of Curriculum Programme Design

Furthermore, regarding the Dimensions of Curriculum Programme Design, Indicators of Achievement Goals are clearly formulated, with 3.3% strongly agreeing, 63.3% agreeing and 33.3% disagreeing. Indicators of achievement goals are well communicated, as 3.3% strongly agree, 83.3% agree and 13.3% disagree. The last indicator on this dimension is in accordance with the achievement of the national qualification framework, with 66.7% agreeing and the 33.3% disagreeing.

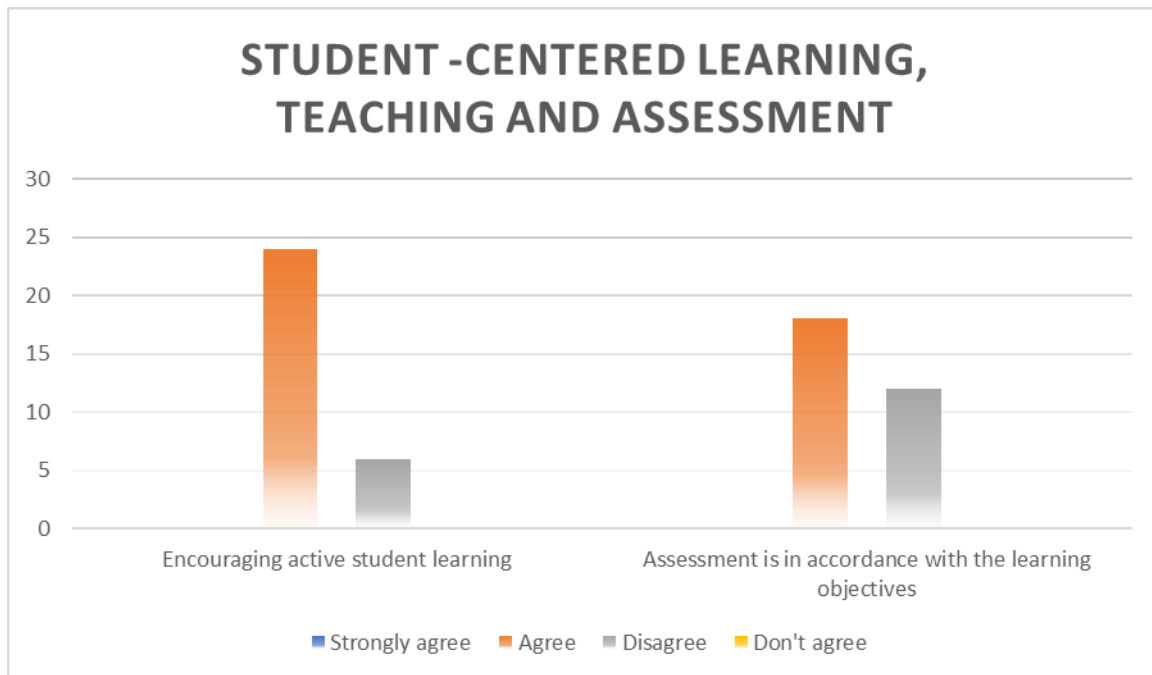


Figure 3: Dimensions of learning, teaching and assessment

Furthermore, the dimensions of learning, teaching and assessment are student-centred, in this dimension there are two indicators that form the basis, namely encouraging active student learning, with as many as 80% agreeing and 20% disagreeing, then the assessment indicators are in accordance with the learning objectives of the survey results, where 60% agree and 40% disagree.

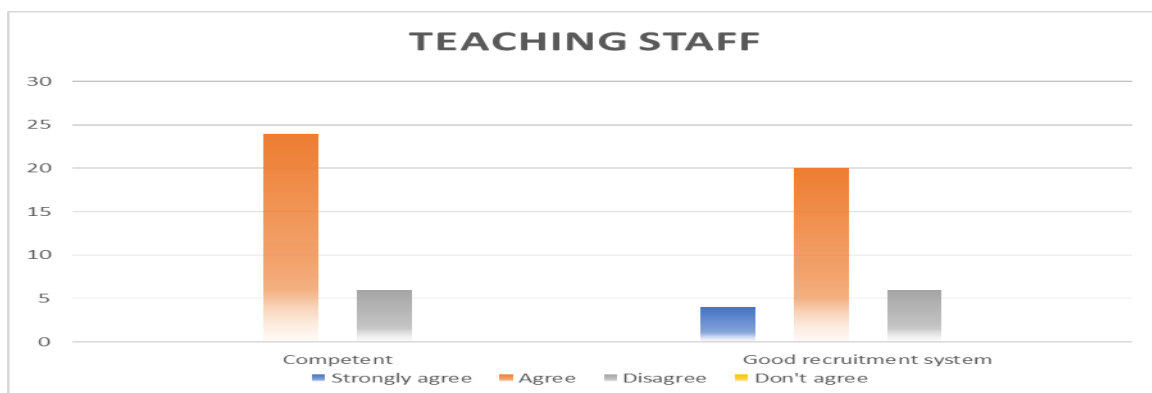


Figure 4: Dimension is the teaching staff

The next dimension is the teaching staff, in this dimension there are also two indicators that form the basis including the competent indicator showing 80% agree and 20% disagree; the last indicator is a good recruitment system, where 13.3% strongly agree, 66.7% agree and 20% disagree.

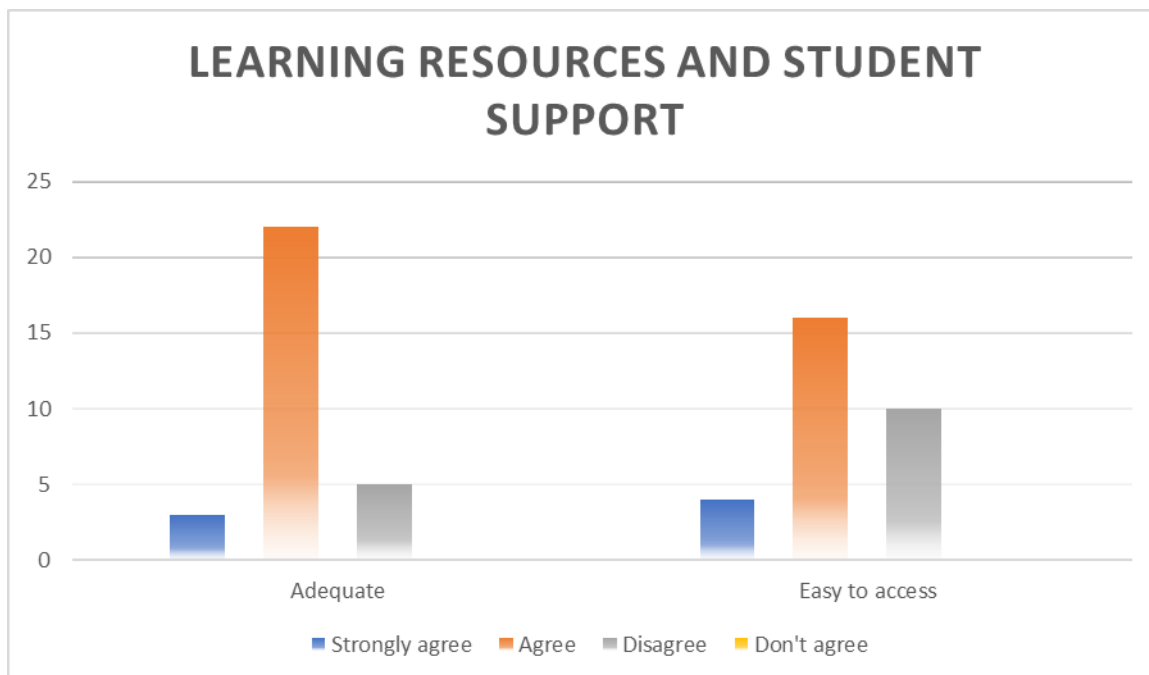


Figure 5: Dimensions of learning resources and student support

In the dimensions of learning resources and student support, there are two indicators, namely adequate and easily accessible. For adequate indicators, 10% strongly agree, 73.3% agree and 16.7% disagree. The last indicator is easily accessible, where 13.3% strongly agree, 53.3 agree and 33.3 disagree.

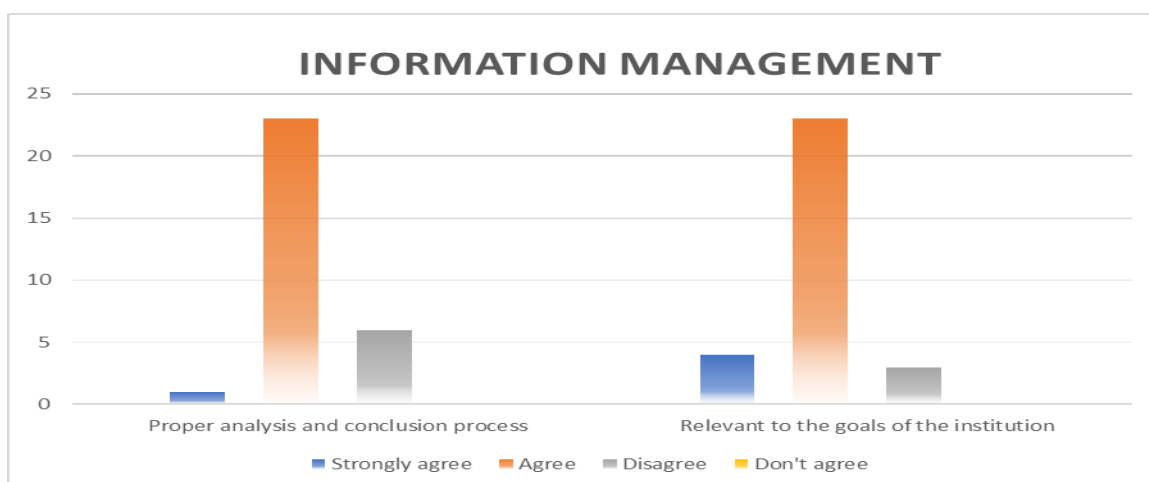


Figure 6: Dimensions of Information Management

For Dimensions of Information Management, there are two indicators, namely the analysis process and conclusions that are appropriate and relevant to the goals of the institution. The first indicator is the analysis process and the right conclusion, where 3.3% strongly agree, 76.7% agree and 20% disagree. Regarding the last indicator, which is relevant to the institution's objectives, 13.3% strongly agree, 76.7% agree and 10% disagree.

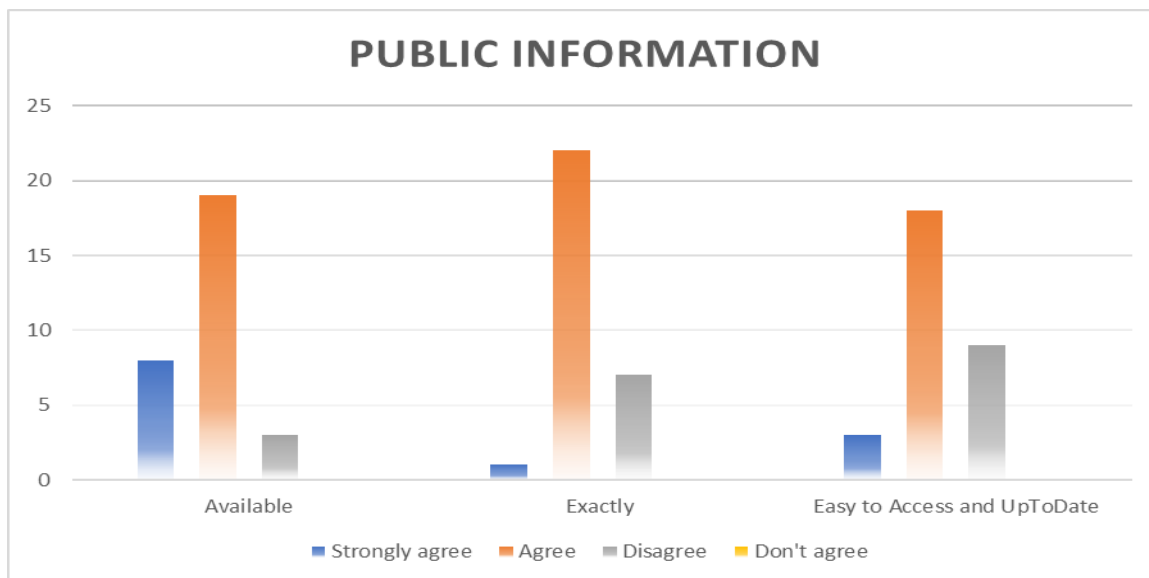


Figure 8: Dimensions of public information

In dimensions of public information, there are three indicators that form the basis of which 26.7% of available indicators strongly agree, 63.3% agree and 10% disagree. For accurate indicators, 3.3% strongly agree, 73.3% agree and 23.3 disagree. The last indicator is easy to access and up to date, where 10% strongly agree, 60% agree and 30% disagree.

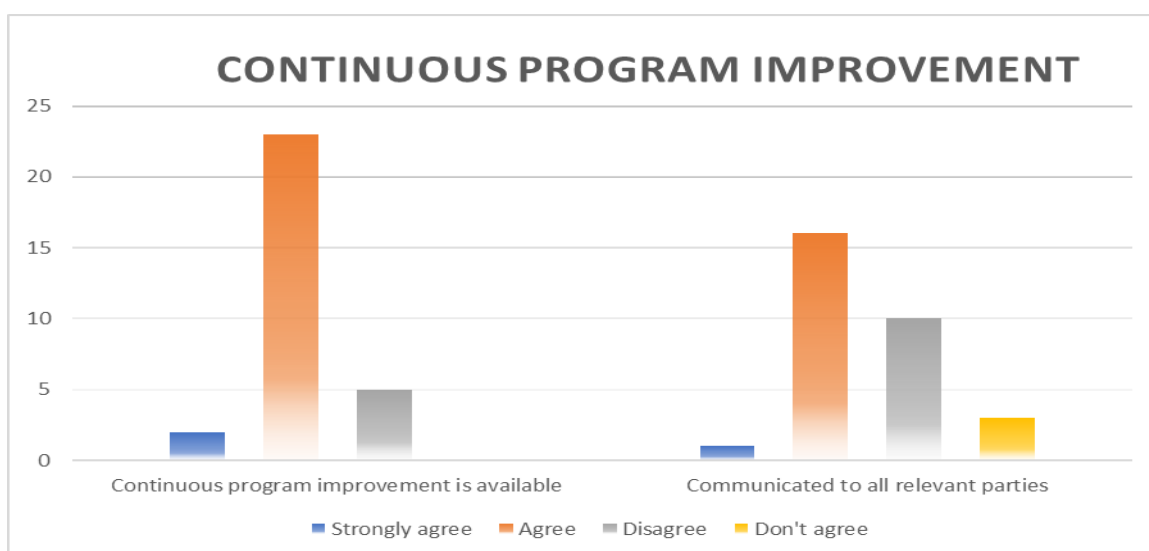


Figure 9: Dimension is the improvement of the sustainability programme,

The last dimension is the improvement of the sustainability programme, where there are two indicators, namely the availability of continuous programme improvements and communication to all related parties. For the first indicator, 6.7% strongly agree, 76.7% agree and 16.7 disagree, while for the second indicator, 3.3% strongly agree, 53.3% agree, 33.3% disagree and 10% don't agree.

Several teaching staff were asked, among others: ‘What do you think about the teaching and learning process in the study programme so far?’

‘...The teaching and learning process is important especially in achieving OBE but frankly we are not ready to implement it, how to consistently use case study or problem-based learning approaches because we have problems in conducting assessments with an unbalanced student ratio...’.

The questions addressed to three students included: ‘How satisfied are you with the learning process, has it shown innovative learning?’ Almost all students answered the same, namely that teaching staff should often use the 4C approach (creativity, collaboration, communication and critical thinking) which we hope can produce good innovative work.

While six alumni suggested that the courses be fewer or reduced but essential as a supporter of the field of work for basic education graduates, some students also stated that the course structure should be reviewed because there are overlapping topics.

Another question for the students is was: ‘What are the suggestions for dealing with international classes and what is important to be prepared?’ Almost all noted that ‘international classes certainly require clear and good communication skills, especially foreign students, so we feel less confident in using international language communication.....’ ‘What do you think is the solution?’ ‘.....The university should conduct a policy programme in the recruitment of teaching staff from abroad and encourage the teaching staff to interact in international forums such as seminars, international conferences on a regular basis.

Interviews conducted with seven lecturers highlighted the importance of increasing collaboration with a number of universities in Europe, especially in collaborative research.

Furthermore, the researchers analysed qualitative data using the gap analysis method to obtain an overview of the difference between factual and ideal conditions. For ideal conditions, the researchers used criteria/standards from the 2015 AQAS.

Table 2: Gap analysis between expected conditions (ESG 2015) and factual conditions

No	Standard	Expected conditions	Factual conditions
1	Policy for quality assurance	Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.	The university's Postgraduate Institute already has a quality assurance system policy. However, the implementation process is still not optimal.
2	Design and approval of programmes	Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet their desired objectives, including intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently,	The curriculum developed has been harmonised with the standards set by the government, namely The Indonesian Qualification Framework for Higher Education. This IQF in its implementation is still not the best to be done consistently and firmly.

		to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.	
3	Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment	Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to play an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.	The learning process has shown that the activity is just not in accordance with the designed programme, meaning that the design and implementation are not synchronised or consistent. The assessment system has not been clearly written in the module including the achievement standards and the assessment rubric has not been designed in detail and can be practically done.
4	Student admission, progression, recognition and certification	Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student 'life cycle' (e.g. student admission, progression, recognition, and certification).	Postgraduate institutions in recruiting prospective students have not consistently used competency standards for prospective students who will be accepted, sometimes lowering their standards on the grounds that they meet the quota of the number of students to be accepted. Certification and progress monitoring has gone quite well.
5	Teaching staff	Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.	The recruitment process is quite good using the admissions system carried out by the Indonesian government and institutions that have provided enough opportunities for teaching staff to develop themselves only because international language skills are the biggest obstacle for further study abroad and institutions have not been able to make regulations for further study abroad due to limitations in university budget. Teaching staff have not fully utilised the learning management system provided by the university, possibly due to weak ICT literacy.
6	Learning resources and student support	Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.	Institutions are sufficient in providing access to online learning resources such as e-books, e-journals, e-magazines, e-resources, repositories. The institution provides the opportunity for teaching staff to propose the procurement of

			<p>relevant and up-to-date reference books</p> <p>The biggest obstacle is that students' interest in reading and writing or literacy in accessing learning resources is not optimal.</p>
7	Information management	Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.	The institution already has an information management system through postgraduate websites and universities, but they have not regularly updated their news or information data so that the public always gets the latest information. The institution has not yet fully prepared ICT officers who specifically handle effectively and efficiently in publishing various information.
8	Public information	Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.	The Institute has tried to publish relevant academic information through the Postgraduate University website but it has not yet achieved the best accuracy, clarity and accessibility.
9	Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes.	Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.	The institution has encouraged study programmes to carry out student satisfaction studies on the implementation of the learning process and conduct studies on tracking stakeholder satisfaction with their graduates. A major drawback is that it is weak and the implementation of follow-up is often not considered in developing educational curricula. The Postgraduate Institute of the State University of Jakarta is committed to continuing to carry out self-evaluation either through periodic evaluations of National accreditation, which is expected to have an impact on ESG accreditation.

D. Discussion

Accreditation, undoubtedly, cannot be isolated from the quality and quality assessment of an institution. This accreditation is important for the sustainability of the institution itself. One of them is to ensure the quality of graduates from these universities.

Study programmes are also required to carry out this accreditation process (Wang C., 2019). Since it is considered critical, campus accreditation also has an influence on students. Here are five reasons highlighting the importance of study programme accreditation.

Reflecting the quality of education, accreditation is directly related to the process and assessment of education quality. In a university that has clear and good accreditation, it can certainly be determined that the college has an unquestionable quality of education. The quality of education that has been implemented in these universities must have been guaranteed by the government or credible international institutions.

If graduates from universities want to work in government institutions, campus accreditation is one of the requirements. By acquiring accreditation, the verifier will certainly be able to assess the quality of education at the university. This requirement is absolute and is always attached to fulfil the administrative process.

Not only the requirements to work in government institutions, it turns out that accreditation is also very much needed by private companies, or multinationals. Most of these companies also want to maintain the quality of their employees.

Students will be familiar with quality education standards. Every student who has studied in a college that has been accredited is already considered to have a background in quality educational standards. Since they are always required to be competent and learn in an exceptional and relevant environment, when they graduate, they are equipped to compete in the job market.

Students will be capable of competing with other college students. Universities that are qualified and accredited by credible institutions have no doubt about the quality of their education. Usually, before graduating, students are prepared and receive training in such a way that they are able to compete in the work environment. Therefore, even after graduating, graduates must be able and ready to survive well in their work environment.

Accreditation assessment includes: curriculum of each education programme, number of teaching staff, student condition, coordination of education implementation, including preparation of facilities and infrastructure, readiness of academic administration, staffing, finance and household of higher education.

Many international accrediting agencies operate today with various accreditation models, systems and mechanisms. Good institutions generally use an outcomes-based accreditation model set by the accreditation agency. The accreditation process is carried out by evaluating the level of achievement of study programme outcomes and evaluating various quality criteria that can support the achievement of outcomes.

Therefore, the results of the evaluation of international accreditation generally fall into two categories: accredited or unaccredited. Accredited status is given to study programmes that meet quality criteria that allow outcomes to be achieved. Conversely, unaccredited status applies to study programmes where several quality criteria have not been achieved so that the impact on outcomes is not accomplished. Consequently, if there are two study programmes that are similar and accredited by the same accreditation agency, the outcomes of both the programmes are equivalent (Bruce S. and Bruce W., 2012).

In principle, international accreditation and AQAS assessment use outcomes as a reference for evaluation, but the standard for formulating outcomes is determined by each study programme. AQAS sets standards for formulating outcomes for each study programme providing criteria for how outcomes should be formulated. In international accreditation, the formulation of outcomes is determined by the accreditation agency.

AQAS is more focused on the implementation of quality assurance for study programmes. During the assessment, it will be evaluated whether the implementation of the study programme quality assurance allows the established criteria to be achieved and the study programme will be certified.

There are three dimensions related to international accreditation: standardisation of outcomes related to excellence in the learning process; system and mechanism for quality assurance of study programmes and international recognition that can be used for branding study programmes. In the era of globalisation,

standardisation of outcomes is important so that graduates can compete with counterparts of similar study programmes from other countries, both for work at home and abroad (Jan K., et al., 2017).

Quality assurance systems and mechanisms used as references in international accreditation are also important because if these systems and mechanisms can be adopted and implemented properly, the quality of study programmes can be continuously improved. Branding is also important, especially to attract prospective new students.

Outcomes-based education (OBE) is a necessity so that study programmes can produce graduates who can compete globally and study programmes can build a structured and measurable quality assurance system. The existence of a study programme must be beneficial for the community, nation and state, especially in the context of providing superior and quality human resources.

Based on the findings, the curriculum developed by the basic education doctoral study programme has not fully demonstrated good OBE and has not been properly aligned with the Indonesian qualifications framework.

The quality of teaching at the doctoral level needs to show activities and outputs in the form of innovative research, this is not in accordance with the findings in our doctoral programme learning process, as stated by Petra Maresova, Jan Hruska and Kamil Kuca (2013), Khaled Alzafari and Jani Ursin (2019). To achieve international accreditation, universities must be able to meet various criteria that have been set according to international standards. Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), a research institute engaged in higher education, in a release in 2010 stated that there are several core criteria that universities must meet, including:

1. **Research Quality:** The research quality indicator to achieve international accreditation also contains an assessment of quality from within the country, the productivity of higher education research based on the number of national and international journals, citations used by other academics in research, as well as awards that are often received by higher education institutions.
2. **Graduates of work:** This graduate employment indicator focuses more on academic strength, the ability of graduates to work effectively in multicultural teams, the ability of graduates to present, and to manage employees and projects. This indicator is seen from a survey of employers, the employment rate of graduates and the level of support for career services.
3. **Teaching Quality:** The main role of universities is to provide the best thinking for the future, to inspire future generations about the potential of academic research. This indicator focuses more on local teaching quality assessments, collation of student feedback, and national student surveys at universities and their ratios in each faculty.
4. **Infrastructure:** Higher education infrastructure is an indicator that makes students aware of what they will do when studying at the university.

Based on the findings, the curriculum developed by the basic education doctoral study programme has not fully demonstrated good OBE and has not been appropriately aligned with the Indonesian qualifications framework. This is in accordance with the opinion of Ankiewicz, Piet. (2021), Ilaria Sturaa, et al., (2019), Koehn, Enno Ed. (1997) that international accreditation of study programmes generally uses OBE as the main reference criteria. OBE is an education system that focuses on what students can do at the end of their learning experience. OBE basically includes four main factors:

- Student-centred teaching and learning strategies
- Outcome-based learning assessment (assessment)
- A curriculum structure designed in such a way that the defined student abilities can be achieved. OBE requires students to demonstrate that they have acquired the required knowledge and skills
- In its implementation, OBE focuses on what students can or are capable of doing, how we can help students achieve those abilities, and how we know whether students have

achieved/have these abilities. If not, how do we make continuous improvements so that these abilities can be achieved or Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)

E. Conclusion

Based on an analysis of factual and ideal conditions in accordance with the 2015 ESG criteria used by AQAS consisting of nine criteria (quality assurance system, programme design, teaching and learning activities, Student admission, progression, recognition and certification teaching staff, learning resources, information management, public information, and sustainability programmes), it can be concluded as follows:

Among the eight criteria, it shows that self-evaluation is in the 'adequate' category and the criteria that need fundamental improvement are teaching and learning activities, teaching staff and sustainability programmes. This improvement will have an impact on the basic education doctoral study programme achieving conditional results. In order to achieve an international standard OBE, among others:

With regard to the learning process in the classroom that involves lecturers and students, it is imperative that learning outcomes are clearly formulated.

Students need to be fully encouraged to be deeply involved in the learning process (Student Centred Learning), ensure that teaching/learning methods/activities are used more actively and innovatively such as PBJ, PJBL and case studies and their assessments need to be aligned with predetermined learning outcomes. The learning process needs to focus on students with learning disabilities. Based on the findings, it shows that the study programme has not optimally followed up on the results of its self-evaluation assessment. Therefore, the function of the internal quality assurance system needs to be carried out properly and continuously.

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