

## Reconstructing a Sustainable Quality Management System in Higher Education through an Integrative Approach between Academic Audits and Organizational Reflection

Pierre Marcello Lopulalan<sup>1\*</sup>, Robertus Heru Setyo Suhartono<sup>2</sup>, Bakri<sup>3</sup>, Abdul Karim<sup>4</sup>, Uya Asy Syuura Anandri<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Poltekpel Banten

<sup>2</sup>Universitas Semarang

<sup>3</sup>STKIP Darul Qalam Tangerang

<sup>4</sup>Universitas Cenderawasih

<sup>5</sup>Universitas Islam Indragiri

**Corresponding Author:** Pierre Marcello Lopulalan [pmarcello66@yahoo.com](mailto:pmarcello66@yahoo.com)

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### ABSTRACT

This mixed-methods study aimed to reconstruct a sustainable quality management system in higher education by integrating academic audit and organizational reflection to link formal evaluation with institutional learning. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with 25 informants, and a survey of 150 respondents, analyzed thematically and using paired t-tests. Findings showed that the integration model improved policy coherence, stakeholder participation, and consistency of continuous improvement, with significant gains in stakeholder satisfaction and alignment of practices with institutional vision. The study concludes that this integrative model contributes theoretically to holistic quality management frameworks and provides practical guidance for building adaptive and sustainable quality cultures in universities.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The quality of higher education is a major concern at the global and local levels, especially amid the pressure of accreditation and the need for sustainable development. For example, in Saudi Arabia, quality improvement through academic accreditation has shown improved performance, but it is often temporary and not maintained after the process is completed, demonstrating the need for systems that support continuous improvement (Sustainability Journal, 2021). In Indonesia, although accreditation improves the quality of higher education institutions, many stagnate afterward due to the lack of a system for continuous improvement (Sofyani et al., 2023). In Indonesia, the importance of internal quality assurance (IQA) and the implementation of internal controls has been proven to boost the quality of higher education institutions (Sofyani, Saleh, & Abu Hasan, 2023). At the global level, organizational structural changes and reforms of the quality management system in Germany have exposed internal and external isomorphic pressures, which are often legitimate-oriented rather than contextual adaptation (Röbken & Schütz, 2023). These phenomena underscore the urgency of developing a sustainable quality management system that is not only reactive to audits and accreditations, but also rooted in deep institutional reflection and adaptive internally. In addition to institutional reflection and adaptation, fostering a growth mindset within the academic community is crucial (Dweck, C. S. (2006). A growth mindset encourages all stakeholders—leaders, faculty, staff, and students—to view challenges as opportunities for learning and continuous improvement. This mindset helps institutions move beyond the immediate outcomes of accreditation, fostering a culture where quality is viewed as an ongoing process, not just a one-time achievement.

Although studies show the importance of academic audits in improving accreditation outcomes (Kumar et al., 2025) and the impact of internal controls on the quality of higher education (Sofyani et al., 2023), there is still limited research that combines both aspects with organizational reflection practices to build a sustainable culture of quality. On the other hand, a systematic review of QMS in higher education shows the growth of implementation globally, but there is little discussion of synergy between audit and organizational reflection (Andrade-Girón et al., 2023). Similarly, the analysis of internal quality culture in Indonesian universities, although showing a positive relationship between IQAS and quality culture (Herminingsih & Saputra, apparent), has not explored the integration of institutional reflection (Herminingsih & Saputra, 2023).

In theoretical contexts, many studies use TQM approaches, internal control, or legitimacy theory, but few present an integrative conceptual model between academic audits and organizational reflection in higher education QMS that is adaptive and sustainable. Awareness of the risks of reforms that are only ceremonial or ineffective is also raised by Röbken and Schütz (2023). Thus, there is a significant research gap: there is no model of a quality management system that integrates academic audits and institutional reflection to achieve authentic sustainability.

This research aims explicitly to reconstruct a Sustainable Quality Management System (SQMS) model in higher education through an integrative approach between academic audit and organizational reflection. The research focus is directed at the dynamic relationship between formal evaluation mechanisms and internal reflection practices, as well as their impact on strengthening a sustainable quality culture. More specifically, this study aims to identify the factors that drive the effectiveness of the integration of academic audits and organizational reflection, as well as to evaluate institutional outcomes before and after the application of integrative models,—with the hope of producing a theoretical and applicable framework.

Theoretically, this research is expected to contribute to enriching the higher education quality management literature by presenting an integrative model that combines academic auditing and organizational reflection as the foundation of SQMS. This contribution complements TQM's approach, institutional legitimacy, and internal control theory, and offers a new, more holistic perspective within the framework of QMS. In practical terms, this model will provide concrete guidance for universities in implementing a quality management system that is not only procedural, but also adaptive to the institutional context. Universities in Indonesia and developing countries can use this model to strengthen internal quality cultures, increase stakeholder participation, and ensure long-term quality improvement and responsiveness to educational dynamics.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Integrated Quality Management Approach in Higher Education*

Total Quality Management (TQM) has become one of the most widely adopted frameworks for managing quality in higher education. Its principles—such as customer (student) focus, continuous improvement, and the involvement of all members of the organization—offer a comprehensive approach to ensuring both academic and non-academic quality (Nasim et al., 2020). However, the implementation of TQM in many universities tends to be partial, often focusing on one aspect (e.g., teaching or administrative processes) and neglecting the interconnectedness between teaching, research, and community service, which are the three pillars of higher education. This partial implementation leads to a fragmented approach to quality management, where policies and procedures may fail to support synergy across institutional functions. Additionally, while TQM emphasizes continuous improvement, many universities struggle to build robust feedback systems to measure and evaluate the long-term impact of quality policies on institutional sustainability.

While organizational reflection and adaptation are critical for sustainable quality management systems, fostering a growth mindset within the academic community is equally essential for encouraging continuous improvement. A growth mindset encourages all stakeholders—leaders, faculty, staff, and students—to view challenges not as obstacles but as opportunities for learning and growth, aligning with the principles of continuous quality enhancement. This mindset promotes resilience and adaptability, allowing institutions to move beyond short-term compliance with operational standards and to embrace a

dynamic process of continuous improvement. It complements TQM by reinforcing the idea that quality is not merely about meeting established standards but about cultivating an adaptive, reflective, and future-oriented organizational culture.

Thus, to overcome the limitations of traditional TQM implementations, universities must integrate a growth mindset that fosters continuous learning, resilience, and adaptability across all areas of university functions. This integration would enable a more holistic and sustainable quality management approach, empowering universities to consistently evolve and meet both internal and external educational demands.

### ***Sustainable Quality Model: EFQM and ISO***

The EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management) model offers a robust conceptual framework for evaluating the performance of higher education institutions based on the integration between strategy, organizational culture, and results (Jankalová & Jankal, 2020). EFQM emphasizes the importance of striking a balance between short-term achievement and long-term sustainability, and encourages organizations to see quality not simply as compliance with standards, but as a dynamic process connected to innovation. On the other hand, ISO 21001 as a specific management standard for educational organizations offers a Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle-based framework that can improve stakeholder satisfaction and ensure compliance with global education requirements (ISO, 2025). However, these two models are often implemented as stand-alone systems, so they are less able to internalize the values of deep organizational reflection. The effect is that quality sustainability becomes dependent on formal audits and administrative compliance, without developing an organizational learning process that can drive internal innovation.

### ***Academic Audit: Focus and Limitations***

Academic audits play an important role in evaluating the suitability of the educational process with national and international standards. This process typically includes a review of curriculum, faculty qualifications, facilities, and academic policies to ensure transparent and accountable governance (Kooli & Abadli, 2022). However, recent research shows that academic audits are often technical and procedural, placing more emphasis on the fulfillment of formal indicators than on building a sustainable culture of quality. In addition, audit results are often submitted in the form of short-term recommendations that do not take into account the dynamics of institutional change. When audits are not integrated with strong internal reflection mechanisms, institutions risk stagnation of innovation, as the focus of improvement is directed at meeting external requirements, rather than on true internal learning and adaptation.

### ***Organizational Reflection and Institutional Transformation***

Organizational reflection is an introspective process in which institutions assess applicable practices, policies, and values to identify areas of improvement and opportunities for innovation. In the context of higher education, organizational reflection has the strategic potential to strengthen institutional

transformation, including the integration of sustainability principles into curriculum, research, and community service (Shoimah et al., 2024). Structured reflection allows universities to identify cultural, bureaucratic, and structural barriers that hinder the implementation of quality management systems. More than just self-evaluation, organizational reflection can be a catalyst for change, by encouraging the active participation of all stakeholders and internalizing quality values into daily behavior. However, previous studies have shown that organizational reflections are often ignored or carried out sporadically, so they are not integrated into the formal quality management cycle.

### ***Technology and Automation in Quality Management System***

The development of digital technology has opened up great opportunities for universities to adopt a more efficient and responsive data-based quality management system. The use of data warehouses, predictive analytics, and automation in academic performance monitoring allows institutions to detect problems faster and design more targeted interventions (Bonaccorsi et al., 2022). Technology can strengthen integration between academic audit processes and organizational reflections by providing real-time feedback and a centralized database that supports evidence-based decision-making. However, research shows that the adoption rate of technology to support quality systems in many colleges is still low, mainly due to resource limitations, cultural resistance, and lack of technical capacity. In fact, a quality management system that makes optimal use of technology can be a driver of managerial innovation and organizational sustainability.

### ***Research Gaps: Integration of Audit and Organizational Reflection***

Literature analysis shows significant gaps in research related to the integration of academic audits with organizational reflection within the framework of sustainable quality management. Most studies examine academic audits, TQM, ISO, or EFQM models as separate entities, thus failing to capture the potential synergies between these approaches to build a holistic culture of quality (Nasim et al., 2020; Kooli & Abadli, 2022; Shoimah et al., 2024). In fact, the integration of these two processes can create a continuous learning cycle where audit results not only generate technical recommendations, but also trigger an internal reflection process that drives cultural change, innovation, and strategic adaptation. The absence of such an integrative model presents significant research opportunities to formulate a framework capable of combining compliance with standards with organizational capacity building in the long term.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### ***Types and Approaches to Research***

This study uses a mixed methods approach with an explanatory sequential design that combines qualitative and quantitative methods in an integrated manner. This approach was chosen to gain a comprehensive understanding of the reconstruction of sustainable quality management systems through the integration of academic audits and organizational reflection.

Qualitative methods are used to explore perceptions, experiences, and institutional dynamics, while quantitative methods are used to test the effectiveness of the resulting models on university quality indicators. The mixed methods approach is considered relevant in higher education quality management research because it is able to bridge contextual narrative data with generalist numerical data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2022).

### ***Population and Sampling Techniques***

The population of this study includes all stakeholders in universities, including leaders, lecturers, quality assurance unit staff, and students. For qualitative data collection, purposive sampling techniques are used with consideration of the direct involvement of participants in the quality management process and strategic decision-making. A total of 25 informants were selected consisting of 5 leaders, 10 lecturers, 5 quality assurance staff, and 5 students. Meanwhile, for quantitative surveys, stratified random sampling techniques are used to ensure proportional representation of various faculties and work units. The survey was conducted on 150 respondents, consisting of 30% students, 40% lecturers, and 30% education staff. The selection of the number of respondents refers to the recommendation (Hair et al., 2021) regarding the minimum sample size in quantitative research for differential tests.

### ***Data Collection Techniques***

Qualitative data were obtained through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions using semi-structured interview guidelines developed based on higher education quality management models and previous literature findings (Sallis, 2020). Interviews were conducted face-to-face and online with an average duration of 60–90 minutes, recorded, and transcribed for analysis. Quantitative data was collected using a closed questionnaire with a Likert scale of 1–5 which contained indicators of the effectiveness of the quality management model, stakeholder satisfaction, and alignment of quality practices with the vision of the institution. The quantitative instrument was adapted from a previous study on academic audits and sustainability of education quality (Harvey & Williams, 2021), then a content validity test was carried out by three education management experts and a reliability test using the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient with a minimum limit of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 2020).

### ***Research Procedure***

The research was carried out in four main stages. The first stage is a literature review to build a conceptual framework for integrating academic audits and organizational reflection. The second stage is the collection of qualitative data through interviews and group discussions to identify challenges, opportunities, and best practices. The third stage is the development of a sustainable quality management model based on qualitative data synthesis. The fourth stage is model testing through quantitative surveys before and after the implementation of the model within a semester. All stages are carried out by paying attention to the principles of research ethics, including informed consent, data confidentiality, and the right of participants to resign (Resnik, 2020).

### ***Data Analysis Techniques***

Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis which included the level of data familiarization, initial coding, theme search, theme review, and result writing (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The analysis process is carried out manually with the support of NVivo 12 Plus software to facilitate data management. Meanwhile, quantitative data was analyzed using a paired t-test to compare the differences in quality indicator scores before and after the application of the model. Statistical analysis was carried out using SPSS software version 26 with a significance level of 0.05. The selection of paired t-tests was based on the nature of the paired data and aimed to measure changes after model intervention (Field, 2021).

## **RESEARCH RESULT**

### ***Qualitative Findings from In-Depth Interviews and Targeted Group Discussions Coherence of Quality Policy***

Thematic analysis shows that the integration of academic audits with organizational reflection encourages increased coherence of quality policies at the university level. Most of the informants stated that the audit process, which was previously only administrative in nature, is now starting to be combined with reflective discussions involving various work units. This strengthens the relationship between quality policy and institutional vision. A leader said:

*"In the past, the audit only checked documents, now there is a room for discussion across units so that the resulting policies are more connected to the direction of the campus." (PA, Interview, March 12, 2025)*

A senior lecturer added:

*"This new approach makes us feel involved, not just an object of examination. As a result, the policies made are more relevant to the reality on the ground." (DB, Interview, March 14, 2025)*

From the perspective of the quality assurance staff, this integration also makes it easier to synchronize between procedures:

*"Previously, quality policies often overlapped between units. Now, the results of the audit and reflection are discussed together, so that the SOP between units can be more uniform." (SPMC, Interview, March 16, 2025)*

The students' views also show a positive change:

*"We see that the policies that have come out recently are more in favor of the learning needs of students, not just fulfilling accreditation documents." (MD, Interview, March 18, 2025)*

These findings indicate that the integration between academic audits and organizational reflections not only improves the quality of policy documents, but also expands stakeholder participation in quality policy formulation. By involving the perspectives of leaders, lecturers, staff, and students, universities are able to produce policies that are more consistent, adaptive, and in line with the strategic vision of the institution.

#### *Increased Stakeholder Participation*

Targeted group interviews and discussions revealed that this integrative approach increased the active participation of various stakeholders, including students and education staff. Participation is no longer a formality, but in the form of substantive involvement in the evaluation and quality planning process. This change is characterized by an increase in the number of documented inputs, a more contextual quality of advice, and cross-level involvement in the formulation of improvement policies. A quality assurance staff said:

*"Students now participate in delivering input that directly enters the improvement plan. It used to be very rare." (SPMB, Interview, March 13, 2025)*

A student representative of the student organization confirmed the benefits of the involvement:

*"We were not only asked to sign the attendance list, but actually asked to propose a solution. It feels like our opinions are valued and heard." (ME, Interview, March 15, 2025)*

A lecturer involved in the curriculum development team added his perspective:

*"The participation that was wide open allowed us to understand each other's needs between units. For example, student input can be directly linked to the improvement of teaching materials." (DF, Interview, March 17, 2025)*

These findings show that substantive involvement has the potential to increase a sense of ownership of quality policy. In addition, this process also enriches a variety of perspectives in the formulation of improvement strategies, so that the results are more relevant and sustainable.

#### *Consistency of Continuous Improvement*

Another prominent theme is increasing consistency in continuous improvement. The integration of audits and organizational reflections gives rise to a faster and more responsive feedback cycle to the issues found. This change also makes the improvement program not stop at the annual audit report, but is implemented gradually and measurably throughout the year. A study program coordinator explains the benefits of this system:

*"If in the past the audit results piled up at the end of the year, now the repair can start immediately that month. So the problem doesn't drag on." (KPG, Interview, March 18, 2025)*

A member of the quality assurance team added that this change to the mechanism improves the effectiveness of implementation:

*"We make a follow-up list that is monitored every two months. It makes all parties feel that they must consistently carry out their commitment to improvement."* (TPMH, Interview, March 20, 2025)

This increase in consistency also strengthens the culture of continuous evaluation in the university environment. Some informants believe that a more regular pattern of improvement helps maintain the momentum of positive change, while reducing the risk of the accumulation of problems that are difficult to solve. Thus, consistency of improvement is not only a slogan, but a real and measurable operational practice.

#### *Obstacles to the Implementation of the Integrative Model*

Although it generally has a positive impact, the informant also mentioned a number of obstacles in the implementation of this integrative approach. Challenges that often arise include initial resistance from some lecturers who feel that their workload is increasing, limited time to hold reflection sessions, and differences in understanding of quality standards between units. These factors require technical adjustments, both in the schedule and the format of the audit, so that the process can take place more effectively. A senior lecturer revealed that the change in approach initially raised concerns:

*"Some colleagues feel this is just adding to the work without any immediate benefits. It takes time to convince that this approach is actually easy."* (DSI, Interview, March 21, 2025)

Meanwhile, a head of the administrative unit conveyed the technical obstacles they faced:

*"We have difficulty arranging time for cross-unit reflection because the academic schedule is already busy. Finally, some sessions were forced to be done online."* (KUAJ, Interview, March 23, 2025)

These findings suggest that the success of integrative models is determined not only by system design, but also by the readiness of human resources, organizational culture adjustments, and technical flexibility. With the right mitigation, these obstacles can be overcome so that the integration of academic audits and organizational reflection runs optimally.

#### ***Quantitative Findings from Pre-Test and Post-Test Surveys***

##### *Respondent Profile*

This research includes all stakeholders in higher education, consisting of leaders, lecturers, quality assurance unit staff, education staff, and students. For quantitative data collection, stratified random sampling techniques are used to

ensure proportional representation of various faculties and work units. The survey involved 150 respondents, with a composition of 45 students (30%), 60 lecturers (40%), and 45 education staff (30%). In terms of experience, 68% of respondents have been involved in academic activities and quality management for at least three years, 22% have a service period of more than ten years, while the rest, namely 10%, have less than three years of experience. This distribution shows that the majority of respondents have adequate knowledge and experience about the quality management system in universities, so the views and assessments they provide are believed to reflect factual conditions relevant to the research objectives.

*Comparison of Quality Indicators Before and After Intervention*

The results of the paired t-test analysis showed a significant increase in almost all quality indicators after the application of the integrative model of academic audit and organizational reflection. A summary of the test results is presented in the following table:

Table 1. Paired t-test Results of Quality Indicator Change Before and After the Implementation of the Integrative Model

Quality Indicators	Average Before (SD)	Average After (SD)	t-value	p-value	Information
Quality policy coherence	3.45 (0.62)	4.12 (0.55)	9.84	<0.001	Signifikan
Stakeholder participation	3.28 (0.70)	4.05 (0.60)	10.21	<0.001	Signifikan
Consistency of continuous improvement	3.30 (0.68)	4.15 (0.58)	11.09	<0.001	Signifikan
Alignment of quality practices with institutional vision	3.52 (0.65)	4.20 (0.53)	9.56	<0.001	Signifikan
Stakeholder satisfaction	3.40 (0.72)	4.18 (0.61)	10.87	<0.001	Signifikan

Information:

- a) The average score before showing the respondent's assessment score on the quality indicator before the implementation of the integrative model, while the average after showing the post-implementation score.
- b) The relatively small standard deviation (SD) in both periods showed a fairly consistent distribution of respondents' answers.
- c) All indicators have a high t-value and a p-value < 0.001, indicating a statistically significant difference in average.
- d) The largest improvement occurred in the continuous improvement consistency indicator (t = 11.09), which means that the application of the

integrative model has the most impact on the sustainability of the quality improvement program on a continuous basis.

- e) The stakeholder participation indicator also showed a significant spike ( $t = 10.21$ ), indicating a more active involvement of various parties in the quality improvement cycle.
- f) The improvement in the alignment of quality practices with the vision of the institution indicates that post-implementation quality policies and practices are becoming more directed and in accordance with the strategic direction of higher education.
- g) The increase in stakeholder satisfaction scores reflects positive perceptions from internal and external parties on the quality of services and institutional performance after the implementation of this model.

Overall, these findings confirm that the application of the integrative model is able to have a significant impact on all aspects of quality measured, not only in policy aspects, but also on implementation and stakeholder perception.

#### *Overview of Quality Performance Improvement*

Data analysis showed that the highest score increase occurred in the indicator of continuous improvement consistency, from an average of 3.30 to 4.15, with a  $t$ -value of 11.09 and a  $p$ -value of  $< 0.001$ . This indicates that the application of the integrative model of academic auditing and organizational reflection not only results in momentary improvements, but also strengthens sustainable work patterns in efforts to improve quality. These findings are in line with the results of qualitative interviews that show that the existence of a structured reflection space after the audit encourages a faster process of problem identification and determination of solutions. Thus, the cycle of quality improvement does not stop at the evaluation stage, but continues to the consistent and measurable implementation stage.

In addition, this increase also reflects a change in work culture in the university environment. Lecturers, faculty leaders, quality assurance staff, and education staff are becoming more accustomed to reviewing their achievements, making corrections, and setting next improvement targets. This process helps minimize the time lag between problem detection and implementation of corrective actions. In other words, the indicator of consistency of continuous improvement is the most tangible evidence that the integrative model succeeds in building an adaptive quality system, where improvement is not just a response to audit findings, but has become part of the daily work routine.

## **DISCUSSION**

The results of this study show that the integration between academic audit and organizational reflection has a significant impact on improving the quality of higher education. This improvement is reflected in five key quality indicators: policy coherence, stakeholder participation, consistency of continuous improvement, alignment of quality practices with the institution's vision, and stakeholder satisfaction.

In addition, integrating a growth mindset into the sustainable quality management system model encourages stakeholders to perceive challenges not as obstacles but as opportunities for growth and learning. A growth mindset empowers all stakeholders—leaders, faculty, staff, and students—to view challenges as opportunities for learning and continuous improvement, which is crucial for maintaining long-term quality improvements. When adopted institution-wide, this mindset fosters the ongoing development of a resilient and adaptive quality culture that reinforces continuous improvement and long-term sustainability—core principles of both academic audits and organizational reflection.

Theoretically, these findings align with the Total Quality Management (TQM) framework, which emphasizes continuous improvement and the active involvement of all organizational members (Nasim et al., 2020). However, this study extends TQM by demonstrating that reinforcing a post-audit culture of internal reflection can accelerate the improvement cycle and prevent quality stagnation—an aspect often overlooked in TQM implementations in higher education (Shoimah et al., 2024). This finding underscores the importance of integrating internal reflection mechanisms to ensure that continuous improvement does not stagnate after audits and that quality management remains dynamic and adaptive over time.

In practice, the integration of academic audit with organizational reflection has been proven to increase the integration of quality policies with the strategic vision of the institution. The process of cross-unit discussions after the audit creates an opportunity for all stakeholders to clarify priorities, align procedures, and avoid policy overlap. These findings are in line with the concept of policy coherence in quality management which states that policy and vision alignment will strengthen the effectiveness of implementation (Jankalová & Jankal, 2020). As a practical consequence, universities can avoid the compliance trap, where policies are only made to meet accreditation demands without considering the institutional context (Röbken & Schütz, 2023).

Increasing stakeholder participation, especially students and education staff, is one of the important achievements. No longer just present in the evaluation forum, stakeholders are now actively involved in providing input that goes into the improvement plan. This supports the theory of stakeholder engagement which asserts that substantive involvement will increase a sense of ownership of quality policies and programs (Freeman et al., 2021). This kind of participation also has the potential to drive innovation, as decisions are made based on richer, multi-level perspectives.

The largest increase occurred in the continuous improvement consistency indicator. From the perspective of continuous improvement cycle, this success is influenced by the existence of a faster and measurable feedback loop mechanism. These results reinforce findings (Bonaccorsi et al., 2022) that emphasize the importance of short-term evaluation cycles to strengthen organizational adaptability. In the context of this study, quality sustainability is not only supported by policy documents, but also by the routine behavior of educators and education staff who are responsive to audit findings.

The improvement in this indicator shows that the quality policy after the implementation of the integrative model is more directed and in line with the strategic direction of higher education. This is relevant to the EFQM principle which places vision and strategy as the center of quality driving (Jankalová & Jankal, 2020). This alignment also means that quality improvement does not run sporadically, but rather becomes part of a long-term, sustainability-oriented strategy.

Stakeholder satisfaction increased significantly after the implementation of the integrative model. This can be explained through the perspective of service quality in higher education, where service quality that is more consistent and relevant to user needs will increase satisfaction (Harvey & Williams, 2021). High satisfaction also has the potential to be an indicator of the institution's positive reputation, which in turn can strengthen the competitiveness of universities at the national and international levels.

The main supporting factors for the success of this model include leadership commitment, human resource readiness, and the existence of a structured reflection mechanism. On the contrary, the obstacles faced were the initial resistance of some lecturers, limited time for reflection sessions, and differences in perceptions regarding quality standards. These barriers are consistent with the findings (Kooli & Abadli, 2022) which note that organizational culture change often requires a fairly long period of adaptation.

Theoretically, this study enriches the higher education quality management literature by presenting an integrative model that combines academic audits and organizational reflection in a single improvement cycle. Practically, this model can be a guide for the implementation of the Sustainable Quality Management System (SQMS) in universities, especially in developing countries, to build an adaptive, inclusive, and sustainable quality culture. For follow-up research, it is recommended to test this model in a variety of institutional contexts, including small private universities and large research universities, to assess the generalization of the findings. In addition, the use of real-time analytics technology can be integrated to speed up the feedback process and minimize time constraints.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study proves that the reconstruction of the Sustainable Quality Management System through the integration of academic audits and organizational reflection is able to significantly increase the effectiveness of quality management in higher education. This approach results in significant improvements in quality policy coherence, substantive stakeholder participation, consistency of continuous improvement, alignment of quality practices with institutional vision, and stakeholder satisfaction. The integration of these two mechanisms not only meets the demands of accreditation, but also builds an adaptive and sustainability-oriented quality culture.

Theoretically, this model expands the quality management framework of higher education by combining audit-based formal evaluation and reflection-based institutional learning, thereby contributing to the development of the concept of holistic quality assurance. Practically, this model can be adopted by

universities as a strategic guide to develop a quality system that is responsive to internal and external dynamics, while strengthening the competitiveness of institutions at the national and global levels.

### **ADVANCED RESEARCH**

Future research can be directed toward testing the scalability and adaptability of the integrative sustainable quality management model across diverse higher education contexts, including private and public universities with varying accreditation levels, resources, and governance structures. Longitudinal studies could evaluate the long-term impact of integrating academic audits and organizational reflection on institutional performance, culture of continuous improvement, and global competitiveness. Additionally, comparative studies across countries or regions may provide insights into how cultural, regulatory, and socio-political factors influence the effectiveness of such models. Employing mixed-methods and advanced statistical approaches, such as structural equation modeling, may further validate causal relationships between quality practices, stakeholder engagement, and institutional outcomes, thus strengthening the theoretical and practical foundation of holistic quality assurance in higher education.

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