

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT IS THE KEY TO IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN NORTH SUMATRA

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Abstract: *This study aims to examine a holistic strategic management approach as a key to improving the quality of higher education. This research utilizes qualitative methodology specifically by using phenomenological research and descriptive methods. Data were collected through interview techniques, observation, and examination of relevant documents. The instrument in this study was the researcher himself who became the key instrument by collecting data based on criteria that were understood. The research findings reveal that Alwashliyah University as a private university consistently and consequently makes efforts to improve the quality of education through strategic management contained in the Renip and Renstra as the direction of higher education development to realize it requires a strong commitment and determination of the entire academic community to carry out academic activities and the implementation of caturdharma at Alwashliyah University North Sumatra must be oriented towards achieving excellence nationally and internationally, then in the aspect of the quality of education, research, and service, as well as the implementation of Islamic and kealwashliyahan must be able to compete and even excel nationally and internationally. In achieving the quality of higher education, all components of higher education resources must move to plan, implement, and evaluate educational caturdharma activities effectively and efficiently through the collaboration of managers, lecturers, students, and stakeholders.*

INTRODUCTION

The educational process from time to time has undergone a restructuring process starting from Input, Process, Output, and outcome and impact that focuses on improving the quality of education. Quality is the overall characteristics of products and services related to their emphasis on meeting certain needs (Feigenbaum, 1991). Quoting from Edward Deming (1982) that quality must be addressed to customer needs, current and future. This quality is very influential in improving the development performance of each

educational institution because of the quality of mandatory attributes that must be presented in every element of the service.

According to Patel (1994), the components of the quality system include (1) customer quality, namely whether the quality of service can give customers what they want, as measured by the use of services, such as customer satisfaction or customer complaints; (2) professional quality, namely whether the service can meet professionally defined customer needs, and whether professional procedures and standards can be trusted to produce the desired product or service; (3) process quality, design, and operation of the service process using resources in the most efficient way to meet customer need.

In the scope of education management, quality is an effort to maximize the competitive advantage of an organization through continuous improvement of the quality of people, processes, products, services, and so on (Goetsch and Davis, 1997). From a pedagogical perspective, quality is subjective. For this reason, quality measurement must be comprehensive and fundamentally based on inputs, customers, and products or services. Higher education graduates are required to have the knowledge, intellectual abilities, ability to work in modern organizations, skills to deal with others, and communication (Harvey and Green, 1993). According to Feigenbaum (1991), the quality of education is a key factor that is not visible but occurs in various fields determined by the actors in making decisions about quality (Owlia and Aspinwall, 1996). Thus, stakeholders in higher education must innovate to improve quality and competitiveness both in terms of the quality of inputs, processes and outputs, and outcomes.

The complexity of competition causes every educational institution to make more efforts to improve its quality so that customer satisfaction can be realized. The quality to be met must be seen from the point of view of the community or customers because such a point of view is important in designing a new education management system. The educational approach in quality management is to manage all educational resources through cooperation to provide continuous improvement of work to exceed expectations (Winarsih, 2019).

In the context of private higher education, quality improvement cannot be separated from the efforts of higher education leaders to make a strategic plan for higher education towards improving quality and competitiveness. In addition, universities must innovate

through partner involvement to prepare graduates to become members of society who are ready to enter the industrial world. However, in reality, Indonesian educational institutions have not been able to show quality improvement evenly and sustainably. This is indicated by the inability of educational institutions, especially private ones, to produce an equal distribution of human resources that can compete in the international world.

With the weak ability of private universities to adjust, it is necessary to restructure the education management model starting from the implementation of strategic management. Continually improving quality is an essential element for the sustainability of higher educational institutions.

The issues that arise at the higher education level is the difficulty of local university graduates to get a job has been seen from the number of educated unemployed in Indonesia that increases every year. Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in August 2014, in Indonesia, there were 9.5 percent (688,660 people) of the total unemployed who were college alumni. They have a diploma three or an undergraduate diploma (S-1). Of that number, the highest number of unemployed people were university graduates with a bachelor's degree, totaling 495,143 people. The number of educated unemployed in 2014 increased compared to the number of unemployed university graduates in 2013, which was only 8.36 percent (619,288 people), and in 2012, which was 8.79 percent (645,866 people). They are also threatened with unemployment if they are not ready to compete with graduates of ASEAN universities, some of whom have entered the world caliber.

These universities include the National University of Singapore, Nanyang Technological University, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Chulalongkorn University Thailand, and the University of the Philippines.

Based on the results of Willis Towers Watson's study on Talent Management and Rewards since 2014 revealed that eight out of ten companies in Indonesia have difficulty getting ready-to-use college graduates. Still, according to the results of the study, companies should not have difficulty finding workers, because the growth rate of college graduates in Indonesia is always increasing every year. Meanwhile, the number of companies' demand for labor is always lower than the number of graduates.

According to previous researchers, strategic management can be said to drive innovative programs in education with an emphasis on human resources. Baltabayeva in

his research proved that strategic management can reduce risks in educational organizations and then turn them into new areas of opportunity (Baltabayeva et al., 2020).

Latorre in his research that the current education model in many countries is undergoing a long restructuring process from an education management model that is firmly rooted in the past to a strategic management model that is focused on the future, and strategic planning all drives the innovation agenda in education (Latorre-Medina & Blanco-Encomienda, 2013). While Pozner's research that successful educational transformation comes from integrated strategic management (Pozner, 2000).

Strategic management presents many diverse avenues allowing for tremendous variation in its implementation in educational institutions. There is a growing consensus, both in Spain and internationally, on one of the key factors in achieving continuous improvement in education (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006), namely strategic learning management, along with effective educational leadership (Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006).

Based on the findings obtained, strategic management in educational institutions has shown the success of the quality of education graduates who are superior and competitive in the industrial world. However, in its implementation, there are still many private universities that deny strategic management as the key to achieving the quality of higher education, especially this year when public interest in studying at private universities has decreased, this is based on the view of the institution manager that the decline in the number of students is caused by state universities opening classes on a large scale. For this reason, the main objective of this study is to discuss the implementation of strategic management as a key to achieving the quality of private higher education.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research study uses a descriptive qualitative approach that aims to understand the conditions or phenomena that exist at the research site by describing in detail using language or words, utilizing various scientific methods. The rationale for this qualitative research follows the views of Max Weber, who emphasizes that the main subject of sociological research is not the social phenomenon itself, but the meaning contained in the actions of individuals who contribute to the emergence of the social phenomenon.

Creswell (2016) defines a qualitative approach as a research and understanding

process based on a methodology that investigates a social phenomenon and human problems. In this approach, researchers create a complex picture, examine words, detailed reports from respondents' views, and conduct studies in natural situations.

This research was conducted at Alwashliyah University North Sumatra. The instrument in this study is the researcher, who is the key instrument for collecting data based on understood criteria. Supporting instruments in this study were observation guidelines, interview guidelines, and other tools prepared to obtain information.

Data collection techniques used in this study include; observation, interviews, and documentation. Then qualitative researchers can also use a variety of vital data, namely interviews, observations, documentation studies, and audio-visual information (Creswell, 2016). The data analysis technique in this study uses Miles & Huberman which emphasizes three streams of activities that occur simultaneously during the research process, namely: (1) data reduction; (2) data presentation; and (3) conclusion drawing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

In facing environmental changes such as the Industrial Revolution 4.0, private universities can no longer use the old paradigm and old strategies in managing the institution. It is necessary to change the paradigm of strategy and management so that universities can adapt to environmental changes as a result of the Industrial Revolution 4.0. When quality becomes the main focus in education, all educational standards must be reviewed for sustainability evaluation by the Main Performance Indicators and Additional Performance Indicators.

The quality of private higher education in general is influenced by many factors, including: leadership, organizational culture, and teaching competencies, the ratio between lecturers and students, curriculum, library collections, learning facilities. One important factor in improving the quality of private higher education is strategic management. Strategic management involves careful planning and implementation of policies and strategies to achieve institutional goals while adjusting to environmental changes and the needs of the business and industrial world. A clear vision and mission provide direction and purpose for the institution, assisting in strategic decision-making.

Higher Education Strategy requires good learning management. Higher education

institutions, also known as colleges, must have the ability to become more competitive at the national level. To achieve this goal, educational leadership plays an important role in improving the quality of learning. Colleges are expected to have the ability to set policies, strategies, and organizational vision for transformation. To achieve national education goals, the policy is made.

The results of an interview with Mr. MRH as Vice Rector for Academic at University Medan.

"Strategic management carried out by Alwashliyah University Medan as an effort to improve the quality of education is contained in the Renip and Renstra as a determinant of policy direction and development of the institution for the long and medium term. In realizing the vision, Al Washliyah University Medan can continue to grow and make a significant contribution to nation-building. In addition, it also explained the strong commitment of Al Washliyah University (UNIVA) Medan in improving learning standards, improving existing facilities and infrastructure, and developing a curriculum that is relevant to the demands of the times."

This was conveyed by Mrs. SIL the head of the Quality Assurance Agency of Alwashliyah University North Sumatra.

"In achieving the quality of higher education, all components of higher education resources must move to plan, implement, and evaluate educational activities effectively and efficiently through the collaboration of managers, lecturers, students, and stakeholders. In this process, it is very important to continuously apply the latest innovations and technologies in education. In addition, the curriculum must be updated to meet industry needs and the latest developments, quality improvement also depends on active research and scientific publications, as well as the establishment of cooperation networks with other educational institutions and agencies. Then, sustainability evaluation is essential to ensure that higher education standards are consistently met."

Reviewing and revitalizing an adaptive curriculum is one of the indicators in improving the quality of education. The curriculum used is aligned with the needs of DUDI (link and macth) then the material taught must be integrated with technology so that graduates have hard and soft skills. In the aspect of academic field, Alwashliyah University North Sumatra adopts Brophy's (2007) opinion, contributing to making continuous improvement in other words, which increases the effectiveness of classroom teaching.

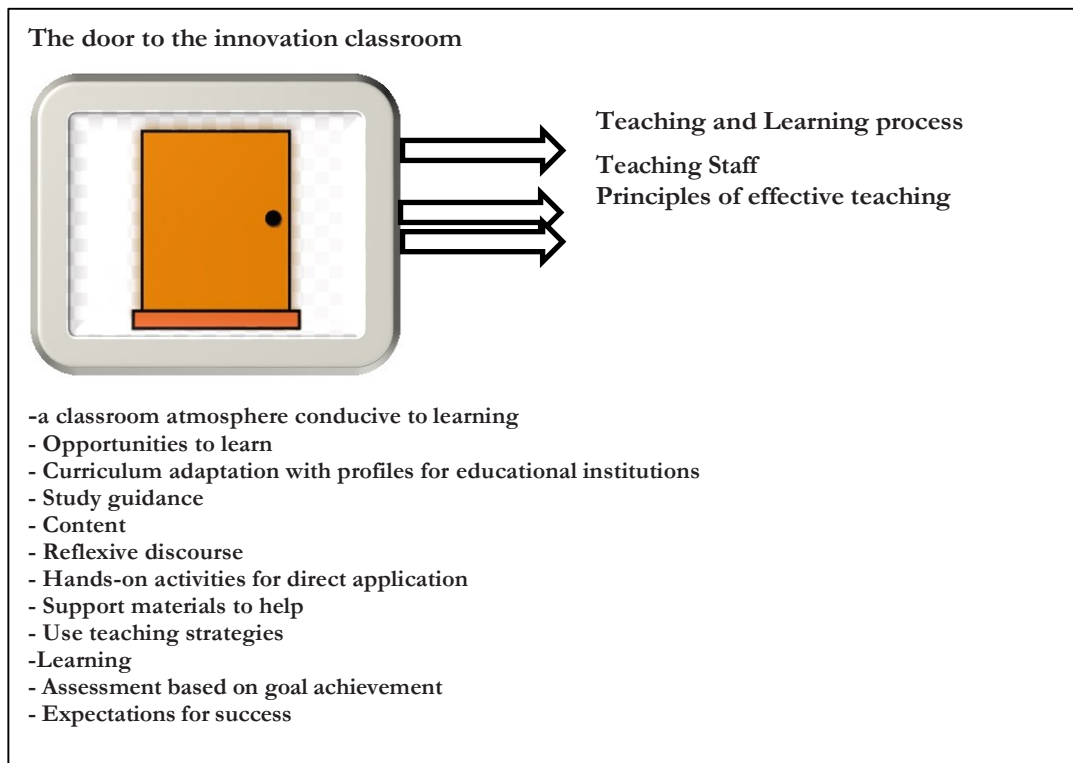


Figure 1.3 Effective Teaching Principles

Strategic planning in achieving the quality of education has been contained in the University's Renip which is a frame of reference in practicing the caturdharma of higher education, to realize the vision and mission of the University, problems that must be overcome, various current and future trends. By considering the current strengths and weaknesses, Alwashliyah University North Sumatra will always be committed to capturing all opportunities that arise as well as changes in the globalization era and anticipating the challenges faced. Many factors can affect the quality of madrasahs. One of the most influential factors it is also believed that a good understanding of finance is crucial for management. education seeks to keep its own value while also ensuring that the product quality is maintained in alignment with what has been expected.

Information from Mrs. YS Vice Rector for Finance and Resources said that one of the indicators of achieving quality education is inseparable from healthy financial management.

"Effective and efficient financial management has a positive impact on the quality of education. Therefore, we are here to make a centralized financial policy in allocating financing according to the budget, so that financial management practices can create a good educational environment, encourage innovation, and prepare human resources to face real-world challenges. Through a good financial management system, the

success of education is also determined by adequate facilities and infrastructure. The facilities and infrastructure management system is also regulated starting from planning, procurement, maintenance, evaluation, and repair of all facilities.

Educational institutions are expected to be connected to levels of satisfaction in the students, families, and society at large. This is why educational institutions that are of a high caliber are seen as meeting the bare minimum requirements of an organization. Basic financial management calls for a strategy in achieving common goals. This is an objective which serves to identify the progress of goals, and all the other information that is required. Organizational theory claims that as an organization's goal is implemented, it must be shared by everyone who works there. When everyone is focused on achieving the expected goals, an organization can predict how quickly it will grow.

Thus, improving the quality of higher education requires collaboration between managers, lecturers, students, and stakeholders to respond to the needs of the business world and the industrial world by revising the curriculum, learning innovation, human resource development, financial management, improving facilities or infrastructure, empowering students, increasing research and service and increasing the output of caturdharma activities. Conducting strategic formulation begins with identifying strategic issues, formulating a vision, mission, values, and the process of preparing them and being able to implement strategies and operational implementation.

Universities in general need to implement strategic management, goal-based management, and quality management to create a sustainable future for the institution. Higher education management should be organized using management principles that are flexible, dynamic, and quality-oriented to enable each university to grow and develop according to its potential. Higher education as a non-profit organization or institution requires the application of management.

To achieve high-quality education, strategic management is an important approach. In the context of education, strategic management refers to the process of planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating the strategies and actions needed to achieve established goals and quality standards. Colleges can maximize their efforts to improve the quality of education by using a good strategic management approach. This will have a positive impact on student achievement and overall teaching quality.

Alwashliyah University in the strategic management process of the organization in

the management of University of Medan management adopts the concept of the Management Strategy Process developed by David F.R, namely;



Figure 1.1 Management Strategy Model

The three processes above can be illustrated in the form of a picture as follows:

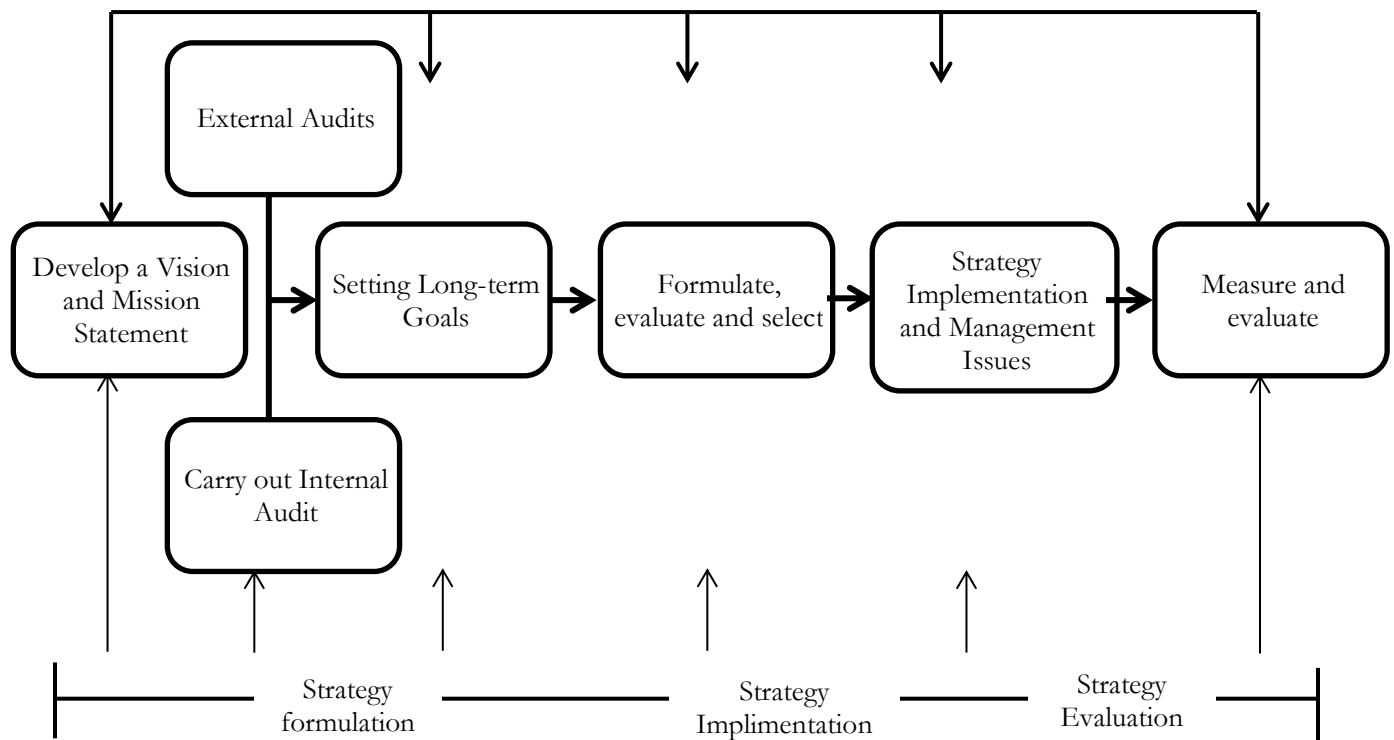


Figure 1.2 Management strategy process

The results of an interview with Mr MJ, stated that:

"innovations made by Alwashliyah University North Sumatra in achieving the quality of education build a governance system that is by the competencies and knowledge needed, with the hope that the management system and administrative services can run well and efficiently, in the financial sector it is responsible for managing aspects of higher education funding effectively and efficiently in meeting all needs and operational activities. The development of the education sector through improving and refining the curriculum and learning process based on Islam and Alwashliyah with national and international quality assurance.

In developing the research field, University of Medan has guidelines and policy directions in planning and

implementing comprehensive and integrated research at the institutional level to realize the vision and carry out the mission to achieve the objectives of research activities at University of Medan. At this stage, the implementation of PkM, the direction of PkM is focused on the international collaboration model from various overseas universities with funding sources obtained from the government and stakeholders with international cooperation".

The same thing was conveyed by AMZ the head of the academic field of Alwashliyah University North Sumatra.

"Infrastructure development in the field of education is also carried out by revitalizing the curriculum to realize the quality of outputs and outputs that can compete in the business world and the industrial world, then improving and completing learning infrastructure, as well as increasing the competence of human resources through training related to education and teaching to transform knowledge optimally and competitively at the regional and national levels. In addition, the participation of the academic community is directed towards learning activities that are integrated with Information Technology by promoting the values of modernity, morality, intellect, and the soul of keahwasliyahan."

From these findings, it can be implied that the development of quality learning in terms of complete facilities and increased human resources is an indicator that Private Universities in Medan can develop well. The scope of strategic management for quality improvement includes the following aspects: (1) curriculum design, improved teaching and assessment practices, and learning support including the place of information technology in learning and teaching; (2) professional development of human resources; (3) strong leadership; (4) effective and efficient financial management; (5) enhancement of caturdharma oriented towards multi-disciplinary knowledge.

Analysis

Higher Education is a formal education unit that carries out the mission of seeking, discovering, and disseminating scientific truth through education and learning, research, and community service (Tridharma Perguruan Tinggi). One of the most important indicators of university progress can be seen in its research (as a provider of human resources for research activities and useful research results). The quality of higher education is the responsibility of everyone who works in higher education, and therefore must also participate in its implementation.

Strategic management is an important approach to achieving high-quality education. In the context of education, strategic management refers to the process of planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating the strategies and actions needed to achieve established educational goals and quality standards. In addition, strategic

management requires strong leadership and commitment from educational leaders, including foundations, rectors, and boards of education. These leaders must drive change, provide support, and motivate staff to achieve the strategic goals that have been set.

In this regard, Alwashliyah University as a private university consistently and consequently makes efforts to improve the quality of education through strategic management contained in Renip and Renstra as the direction of higher education development to realise it requires a strong commitment and determination of the entire academic community to carry out academic activities and the implementation of catur dharma at University of Medan must be oriented towards achieving excellence nationally and internationally, then in the aspect of the quality of education, research, and service, as well as the implementation of Islamic and kealwashliyahan must be able to compete and even excel nationally and internationally.

Human resource development is the most fundamental and strategic sector. Therefore, quality education is not immediately available in a nation and state but must be designed, built, implemented consistently, and continuously improved through the synergy of the totality of all interested parties commanded by the Rector as the leader of a private university. Strong leadership plays an important role in shaping institutional culture at the philosophical level. In addition, universities should update and adapt the curriculum to the needs of the industry and the latest developments in various fields of study to ensure that students get relevant and up-to-date knowledge and innovative learning.

This is to Hargreaves & Goodson's (2006) statement that in Spanish and international education, one of the keys to achieving quality education is strategic learning management along with effective educational leadership. In this case, it is by the statement of Hargreaves & Goodson, (2006) that in Spanish and international education one of the keys to achieving quality education is strategic learning management along with effective educational leadership. Similarly, Kulski & Groombridge, (2004) stated that teaching quality emerged as an important issue in higher education in the 90s. This led to the implementation of various quality achievement, assurance, and improvement schemes as an effort by institutions to keep up with the demands of various stakeholders in a rapidly changing educational environment.

Meanwhile Pannen, P, et al (2003), learning facilities also mean infrastructure that

contributes to the quality of learning and helps lecturers and students to achieve learning objectives. One of the learning tools that contribute to the competence and ability of lecturers and students is learning media and technology. Heinich, et al (1996) state that technological advances in the world of work not only require college graduates to have extensive knowledge but also have ready-to-use professional skills. This has the consequence that the role of learning facilities is important for improving the quality of graduates so that they have the expected competence.

Alwashliyah University in its strategic management indicators of quality achievement are carried out through improving learning facilities and infrastructure transformation, infrastructure facilities, strengthening integrated information systems (SATUVA), digitalization of management, and quality of human resources oriented to national and international standards so that they can implement superior chess dharma activities. The availability and use of learning technology will improve the competence of graduates. Graduates with good quality will contribute positively to the quality of the university so that they can play a significant role both in the workplace and in the academic environment.

CONCLUSION

Human resource development is the most fundamental and strategic sector. Therefore, quality education is not immediately available in a nation and state but must be designed, built, implemented consistently, and continuously improved through the synergy of the totality of all interested parties commanded by the Rector as the leader of a private university. Strong leadership plays an important role in shaping institutional culture at the philosophical level. In addition, universities should update and adapt the curriculum to the needs of the industry and the latest developments in various fields of study to ensure that students gain relevant and up-to-date knowledge and innovative learning.

Strategic management is an important approach to achieving high-quality education. In the context of education, strategic management refers to the process of planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating the strategies and actions needed to achieve set educational goals and quality standards. In addition, strategic management requires strong leadership and commitment from educational leaders, including school

leaders, rectors, and education boards. These leaders must drive change, provide support, and motivate staff to achieve strategic goals.

The quality management system of private higher education requires a totality of commitment that is manifested into a consistent and consequent attitude in implementing the quality management system and study program quality plan to produce quality graduates. However, it must be realized by all interested parties that a truly qualified graduate is not measured by the value of the academic achievement index (GPA), but is attached to the graduate's personality, in the sense that graduates can compete competitively in the business world and the industrial world and can contribute to life. Therefore, the quality of education is a shared responsibility that everyone must adhere to.

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