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International Journal of Theory and Practice in Education
Vol. 1, No. 2 (2026): 118-127
E-ISSN 3163-8058
Available Online at
https://journal.tirtapustaka.com/index.php/ijtpe/index

The Implementation of Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Regulation Number 53 of 2023 concerning Higher Education Quality Assurance on Higher Education Governance in Indonesia

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.60153/2svq7212

Received: October 8, 2026; Approved: October 18, 2026; Published: October 30, 2026

ABSTRACT

The enactment of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Regulation Number 53 of 2023 concerning Higher Education Quality Assurance represents a significant regulatory transformation in the governance framework of higher education institutions in Indonesia. This study examines how Regulation No. 53 of 2023 reshapes higher education governance in Indonesia, with particular attention to institutional adaptation, quality assurance implementation, and the challenges of translating regulatory requirements into institutional practice. Employing a normative juridical approach, this study analyzes Regulation No. 53 of 2023 and relevant higher education regulations and scholarly literature through statutory and conceptual approaches. The analysis argues that the new regulatory framework introduces a more flexible yet accountability-oriented quality assurance system. The analysis identifies four interconnected implementation challenges: uneven institutional readiness, disparities in administrative capacity, limited digital governance adaptation, and difficulties in aligning internal quality assurance systems with national accreditation requirements. The regulatory objectives are more likely to be achieved when implementation is supported by coherent governance arrangements, inter-institutional coordination, and stakeholder commitment. The study therefore conceptualizes Regulation No. 53 of 2023 as a strategic policy framework with the potential to move Indonesian higher education governance beyond procedural compliance toward greater adaptability, transparency, and accountability.

Keywords: Higher Education Governance; Quality Assurance; Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Regulation No. 53 of 2023; Higher Education Policy.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education governance in Indonesia continues to face challenges in balancing institutional autonomy, accountability, quality assurance, and organizational capacity. These challenges have increased the importance of regulatory reforms that can strengthen substantive quality improvement while maintaining national accountability. The regulation represents a shift in the national quality assurance framework by placing greater emphasis on institutional autonomy, substantive quality improvement, accountability, and continuous evaluation rather than relying primarily on administrative compliance (Fatmawati et al., 2024). These broader pressures have increased the need for higher education institutions to develop governance systems that combine regulatory compliance with adaptability, digital capacity, institutional accountability, and continuous quality improvement, concerns that are also reflected in Regulation No. 53 of 2023. Consequently, the reformulation of quality assurance standards has become an essential instrument for strengthening institutional competitiveness and sustainability (Meisuri et al., 2024).

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E-ISSN 3163-8058
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The urgency of strengthening higher education governance is also linked to persistent disparities in institutional capacity, resources, quality assurance implementation, and governance effectiveness across Indonesian universities. Despite the rapid expansion of higher education institutions, governance effectiveness and quality assurance implementation remain inconsistent across regions and institutional categories. Rosser argued that "the poor quality of higher education institutions (HEIs) in Indonesia is due in part to failures of governance at the institution level" (Rosser, 2022). This statement demonstrates that institutional governance problems continue to constitute a structural challenge within Indonesian higher education. In many cases, universities still face difficulties in integrating transparency, accountability, and strategic management into their institutional frameworks.

Regulation No. 53 of 2023 can be interpreted as an attempt to move quality assurance beyond procedural compliance by emphasizing institutional autonomy, continuous improvement, substantive outcomes, and greater adaptability in governance. This regulatory orientation reflects broader debates on balancing institutional autonomy with public accountability and continuous quality improvement, providing an international context for examining Indonesia's regulatory transformation. Nugraha et al. (2023), "quality assurance has become one of the most important determinants of institutional performance and stakeholder trust in higher education." The statement indicates that quality assurance is no longer merely a technical requirement for accreditation but has evolved into a strategic governance mechanism influencing institutional legitimacy and public confidence.

Table 1. Governance Transformation under Regulation No. 53 of 2023

Dimension	Earlier emphasis	Direction of reform
Primary focus	Administrative compliance	Substantive quality and outcomes
Institutional role	Compliance with external requirements	Autonomy and adaptation
Quality assurance	Procedural fulfillment	Continuous improvement and quality culture
Accountability	Regulatory compliance	Transparency and measurable outcomes

Furthermore, the implementation of internal quality assurance systems in Indonesian universities aries across institutions because of differences in institutional readiness, organizational culture, and managerial capacity, organizational culture, and managerial capacity. Sampe and Arifin (2024) emphasized that "the implementation of the SPMI in multiple Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) has been effectively executed, with the involvement of quality assurance bodies at the university, faculty, and study programme levels." However, despite these improvements, many universities still experience procedural formalism in quality assurance practices, where administrative fulfillment often takes precedence over substantive academic development. Such conditions illustrate the gap between regulatory expectations and institutional realities (Rukmana et al., 2024).

The emergence of Regulation Number 53 of 2023 also corresponds with broader demands for accountability and transparency within public institutions. Universities are increasingly expected to demonstrate measurable outcomes in teaching quality, research productivity, community engagement, and graduate competitiveness. In this regard, higher education governance must be interpreted not only as an administrative structure but also as a strategic process that integrates academic integrity, institutional leadership, and stakeholder participation. Rini et al. (2025) asserted that "many QA frameworks remain compliance-oriented and struggle to deliver meaningful quality improvement." This argument suggests that regulatory reform alone is insufficient without a corresponding transformation in institutional culture and governance practices.

In addition, despite the regulatory shift, questions remain regarding how universities can translate its principles into institutional practice, particularly amid differences in digital capacity, human resource readiness, and administrative systems. These implementation conditions constitute an important area requiring further analysis. The acceleration of

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technological transformation in higher education requires universities to integrate digital governance mechanisms into quality assurance systems. Sofyani (2023) explained that "the government recommended the development of IT advancement to support management practices at the HEIs, including internal quality assurance." This perspective demonstrates that information technology has become a crucial element in strengthening institutional governance and monitoring quality standards effectively. Nevertheless, technological disparities among universities continue to hinder equal implementation of digital quality assurance mechanisms across Indonesia.

Another critical issue concerns the institutional capacity of universities in interpreting and operationalizing the principles embedded within the new regulation. Many higher education institutions still encounter difficulties in synchronizing internal governance policies with national accreditation standards and performance indicators. Fauzi and Faslah (2025) noted that "the implementation of quality control in higher education in Indonesia remains challenged by regional disparities and institutional capacity limitations." Such conditions indicate that policy implementation cannot be separated from broader structural inequalities within the Indonesian higher education system.

From a normative perspective, Regulation Number 53 of 2023 should be understood not merely as a legal-administrative instrument, but as a transformative policy framework designed to strengthen institutional governance and global competitiveness. The regulation seeks to encourage universities to adopt more flexible, innovative, and accountable governance practices capable of adapting to contemporary educational challenges. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of the policy depends heavily on institutional commitment, stakeholder collaboration, and the consistency of implementation mechanisms at both national and institutional levels.

Based on these considerations, this article examines the regulatory changes introduced by Regulation No. 53 of 2023, their implications for institutional governance and quality assurance, and the institutional, managerial, technological, and organizational challenges associated with implementation (Fauzi et al., 2024). The study focuses on examining the regulatory transformation, institutional adaptation, governance challenges, and strategic opportunities arising from the enactment of the regulation. Through a normative and conceptual analysis, this study contributes by interpreting Regulation No. 53 of 2023 not only as a legal instrument but also as a governance reform framework, highlighting the conditions that may facilitate or constrain its institutional implementation.

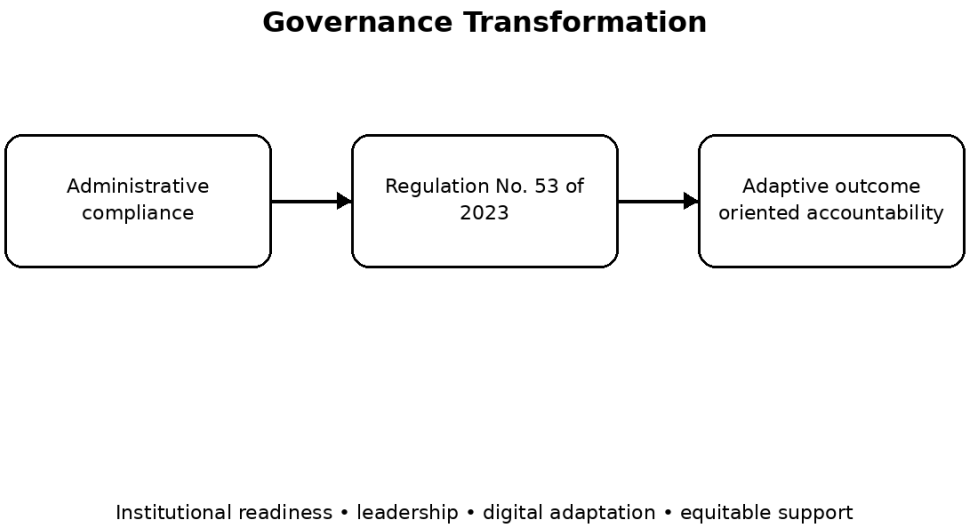


Figure 1. Conceptualized shift toward adaptive, outcome-oriented, and accountable governance.

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METHODS

This study employed a normative juridical approach to analyze Regulation Number 53 of 2023 and its implications for higher education governance and quality assurance in Indonesia. In the era of global academic competition, universities are increasingly required to demonstrate institutional adaptability, innovation, and measurable academic outcomes. Consequently, quality assurance mechanisms are no longer viewed solely as domestic regulatory instruments, but also as strategic indicators influencing international recognition, institutional ranking, and cross-border academic collaboration. This development places Indonesian universities under substantial pressure to reform governance structures that have traditionally been bureaucratic and compliance-oriented.

The research materials consisted of Regulation Number 53 of 2023, relevant higher education regulations, and selected scholarly literature concerning quality assurance, governance, institutional autonomy, and state supervision. According to Hénard and Mitterle, (2021) argued that "higher education institutions are expected to become more autonomous while remaining publicly accountable for their performance and quality outcomes." This argument demonstrates that contemporary governance models emphasize flexibility without eliminating public accountability. In the Indonesian context, the implementation of Regulation Number 53 of 2023 embodies this dual principle by encouraging universities to strengthen internal quality assurance while maintaining alignment with national standards and accreditation systems.

The analysis examined the relationship between quality assurance implementation and institutional leadership and organizational culture based on the selected regulatory and scholarly sources (Akbar & Ahmad, 2024). Effective governance cannot merely rely on regulatory compliance, but must also involve participatory leadership, strategic planning, and sustainable quality culture. (Fitriani et al., 2022) emphasized that "quality culture is a fundamental prerequisite for sustainable quality assurance practices in higher education institutions." This perspective suggests that the success of regulatory implementation largely depends on the internalization of quality-oriented values within academic institutions. Without a strong institutional culture, regulatory reform risks becoming merely administrative formalism without substantive academic improvement.

In addition, digital transformation has become an inseparable component of contemporary higher education governance. The integration of information technology into quality assurance systems enables universities to improve transparency, data management, and institutional monitoring processes. (Tlili et al., 2023) argued that "digital governance has become an essential element in enhancing institutional resilience and educational quality in higher education." The study followed three analytical stages: identification of relevant regulatory and scholarly sources, thematic organization according to the predefined dimensions, and normative-conceptual interpretation of the evidence concerning Regulation Number 53 of 2023. The analysis considered digital governance as one analytical dimension by examining how regulatory and scholarly sources address the role of digital systems in supporting quality assurance efficiently.

Nevertheless, institutional disparities remain a major obstacle in implementing higher education quality standards uniformly across Indonesia. Previous literature identifies disparities in administrative capacity, technological infrastructure, and human resources across Indonesian higher education institutions, particularly between institutions with different regional and resource conditions. Marginson (2021) stated that "inequalities between institutions continue to shape unequal capacities for adaptation and competitiveness in global higher education systems." This statement is highly relevant to the Indonesian higher education landscape, where structural inequalities significantly influence institutional readiness in implementing governance reform policies.

The analysis assessed Regulation Number 53 of 2023 through four analytical dimensions: institutional capacity, governance sustainability, digital adaptation, and educational equity, which were used to organize the interpretation of the selected sources. The regulation represents both an opportunity and a challenge for Indonesian universities in constructing a more adaptive, transparent, and internationally competitive higher education system.

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Table 2. Key Implementation Dimensions and Governance Implications

Dimension	Issue identified	Implication
Institutional capacity	Unequal administrative and managerial capacity	Readiness and capacity-building
Digital adaptation	Uneven infrastructure and digital governance capability	Digital systems for QA and monitoring
Leadership & culture	Leadership and quality culture affect implementation	Internalization beyond compliance
Regulatory alignment	Internal policies must align with national standards	Coherent quality systems
Equity	Regional and institutional disparities	Equitable support mechanisms

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The discourse concerning higher education governance in Indonesia cannot be separated from the broader transformation of global educational paradigms emphasizing accountability, institutional autonomy, innovation, and sustainable quality assurance (Ruhimat et al., 2024). The analysis indicates that Regulation No. 53 of 2023 introduces several changes to the quality assurance framework, particularly in relation to institutional autonomy, substantive quality improvement, and accountability. The analysis identifies both potential opportunities and substantial implementation challenges associated with the regulation, particularly in institutional capacity, technological infrastructure, leadership, quality culture, and administrative readiness Sampe and Arifin (2024) in practice, however, the implementation of the regulation presents complex institutional, managerial, and structural challenges that require critical academic examination.

Contemporary higher education institutions are increasingly expected to function not merely as centers of teaching and learning, but also as strategic actors contributing to economic development, technological innovation, and social transformation (Rumiyati & Nusa, 2024). Consequently, governance effectiveness has become one of the primary indicators of institutional quality. (Rosser, 2022) argued that "the poor quality of higher education institutions (HEIs) in Indonesia is due in part to failures of governance at the institution level." This statement demonstrates that governance problems remain a fundamental issue affecting the quality and competitiveness of Indonesian universities. Weak institutional management, bureaucratic inefficiency, and political intervention often hinder universities from implementing sustainable quality assurance systems capable of producing internationally competitive outcomes.

The transformation of governance paradigms in higher education has encouraged many countries to adopt integrated quality assurance systems emphasizing institutional accountability and continuous improvement. In Indonesia, the implementation of the Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI) and External Quality Assurance System (SPME) has become the cornerstone of higher education governance reform. (Sampe & Arifin, 2024) stated that "the implementation of the SPMI in multiple Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) has been effectively executed, with the involvement of quality assurance bodies at the university, faculty, and study programme levels." Although the cited evidence indicates progress in SPMI implementation, the literature also identifies variation across institutions, particularly in relation to institutional capacity, resources, and organizational conditions.

The enactment of Regulation No. 53 of 2023 reflects the government's effort to simplify and modernize quality assurance mechanisms in higher education. The policy emphasizes flexibility, substantive academic outcomes, and institutional autonomy while maintaining accountability principles. Nugraha et al. (2023) emphasized that "quality assurance has become one of the most important determinants of institutional performance and stakeholder trust in higher education." This perspective suggests that quality assurance is increasingly positioned as a governance instrument that extends beyond accreditation compliance toward broader institutional accountability and continuous quality improvement.

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The implementation of quality assurance systems also requires universities to construct a strong institutional quality culture. Regulatory compliance alone is insufficient to ensure sustainable academic improvement if institutional stakeholders do not internalize quality-oriented values. Fitriani et al. (2022) explained that "quality culture is a fundamental prerequisite for sustainable quality assurance practices in higher education institutions." This argument illustrates that the success of governance reform depends not only on legal frameworks but also on institutional commitment to academic integrity, transparency, and continuous evaluation. In many Indonesian universities, however, quality assurance mechanisms still tend to emphasize administrative compliance rather than substantive educational transformation.

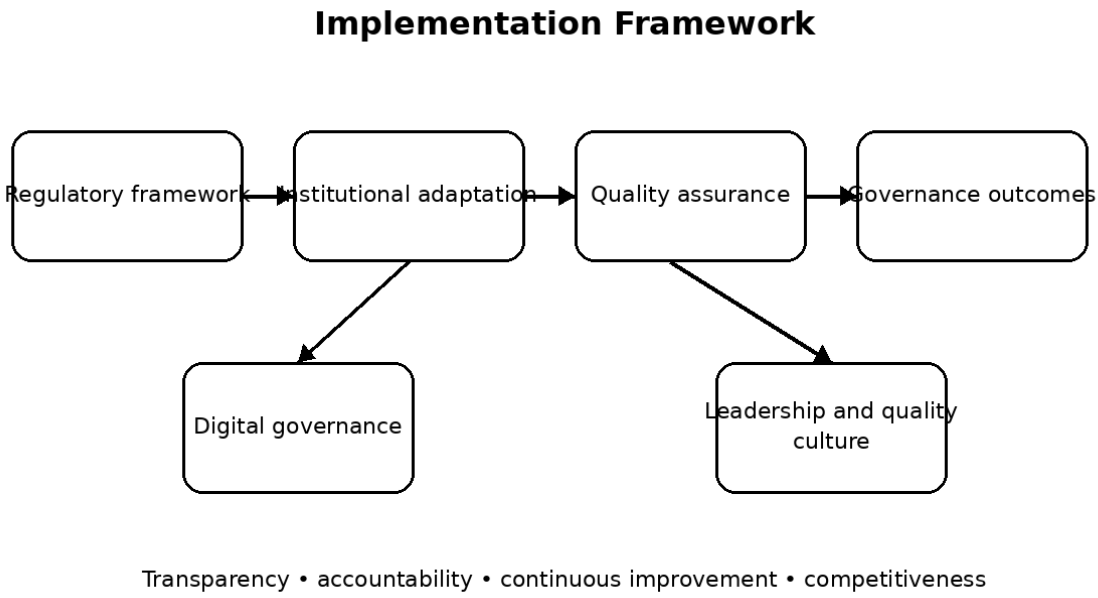


Figure 2. Conceptual implementation framework derived from the article's discussion.

Another crucial dimension of higher education governance reform concerns digital transformation and technological adaptation. The acceleration of technological development, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic, has reshaped governance systems in universities worldwide. Digital governance has become an essential instrument for enhancing transparency, monitoring institutional performance, and supporting quality assurance implementation. Sofyani (2023) noted that "the government recommended the development of IT advancement to support management practices at the HEIs, including internal quality assurance." This statement demonstrates that technological integration is now inseparable from governance modernization in higher education institutions. Universities that fail to adapt to digital governance systems risk experiencing inefficiency, reduced competitiveness, and limited institutional responsiveness.

Furthermore, digital transformation has also altered the nature of academic administration, institutional communication, and educational delivery systems. Tlili et al. (2023) argued that "digital governance has become an essential element in enhancing institutional resilience and educational quality in higher education." The integration of digital technology has the potential to strengthen data-based decision-making, institutional accountability, and quality assurance monitoring, although the extent of these benefits depends on institutional digital capacity. Nevertheless, digital disparities among Indonesian universities remain a significant obstacle, particularly for institutions located in remote regions with limited technological infrastructure and financial support.

The implementation of Regulation Number 53 of 2023 also intersects with broader global discussions concerning university autonomy and public accountability. Hénard and Mitterle (2021) explained

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https://journal.tirtapustaka.com/index.php/ijtpe/index

that "higher education institutions are expected to become more autonomous while remaining publicly accountable for their performance and quality outcomes." This dual principle has become one of the defining characteristics of contemporary higher education governance. Indonesian universities are increasingly encouraged to develop independent governance strategies while simultaneously fulfilling national accreditation standards and public service obligations. Such conditions create institutional tensions between flexibility and regulatory compliance.

Table 3. Opportunities and Challenges in Implementation

Area	Opportunity	Implementation challenge
Institutional autonomy	Flexible governance aligned with institutional characteristics	Maintaining accountability and national alignment
Quality culture	Continuous improvement and academic integrity	Risk of administrative formalism
Digital governance	Transparency, data management and monitoring	Technological disparities
Leadership	Innovation and implementation consistency	Unequal leadership capacity
Competitiveness	Alignment with global standards	Institutional disparities

In addition, the governance transformation of higher education institutions must also consider the issue of educational inequality. (Marginson, 2021) stated that "inequalities between institutions continue to shape unequal capacities for adaptation and competitiveness in global higher education systems." This statement is highly relevant within the Indonesian context, where significant disparities exist between public and private universities, urban and rural institutions, as well as well-funded and underfunded campuses. Universities with greater financial resources and stronger managerial capacity are generally better positioned to implement governance reforms than institutions facing structural limitations.

The persistence of institutional disparities indicates that the implementation of quality assurance policies cannot be separated from broader socioeconomic realities. (Fauzi & Faslah, 2025) emphasized that the implementation of quality control in higher education in Indonesia remains constrained by "regional disparities and institutional capacity limitations." These disparities affect not only infrastructure availability but also human resource readiness, administrative capability, and institutional innovation. Consequently, governance reform policies must be accompanied by equitable support mechanisms to ensure balanced implementation across regions.

Moreover, governance effectiveness in higher education also depends heavily on institutional leadership. Effective leaders play a strategic role in shaping organizational culture, encouraging innovation, and ensuring policy implementation consistency. Rusdi et al. (2023) explained that good university governance emphasizes "transparency, accountability, participation, and ethics as its core components." This perspective demonstrates that governance reform requires collaborative institutional leadership capable of integrating managerial efficiency with academic values. Universities that fail to cultivate participatory and accountable leadership structures may experience resistance to institutional transformation.

The regulation also emphasizes institutional responsiveness and quality improvement, which may have implications for graduate relevance and competitiveness; however, these implications should be interpreted as policy objectives rather than as demonstrated outcomes in graduate employability or competitiveness. Nugraha et al. (2023) found that educational processes, practicum activities, and research activities significantly influence graduate employability and competency development. This finding reinforces the idea that governance systems should not merely focus on procedural compliance but must also prioritize academic relevance and graduate competitiveness. Universities are therefore expected to align governance mechanisms with industry needs, technological developments, and global educational trends.

A key tension emerging from the analysis is the possibility that a regulatory framework intended to promote flexibility and substantive quality improvement may still be implemented through

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bureaucratic and compliance-oriented practices. (Rosyidah & Faslah, 2025) observed that "their implementation in many higher education institutions remains largely administrative and compliance-oriented, with limited internalization of quality culture." Such conditions reveal the risk of regulatory formalism, where universities prioritize document preparation and accreditation procedures rather than substantive academic development. This phenomenon may undermine the transformative objectives of Regulation Number 53 of 2023 if governance reform is interpreted merely as an administrative obligation.

Financial accountability is relevant to governance reform insofar as transparent resource management supports institutional accountability and quality assurance; its relevance to Regulation No. 53 of 2023 should, however, be explicitly linked to the regulatory provisions analyzed. Suhendro and Halim (2024) emphasized the importance of "financial accountability and an internal control system in enhancing the performance of higher education institutions." Transparent financial governance contributes significantly to institutional credibility, stakeholder trust, and effective resource allocation. In many Indonesian universities, however, financial management systems still face challenges related to transparency, administrative efficiency, and institutional oversight mechanisms.

In the broader international context, governance reform in higher education increasingly emphasizes institutional resilience, innovation, and ethical accountability. The rapid expansion of artificial intelligence, digital education platforms, and transnational academic collaboration has transformed the operational landscape of universities. Consequently, Indonesian higher education institutions must develop governance systems capable of balancing technological innovation with ethical and academic standards. The regulation can also be interpreted within Indonesia's broader effort to strengthen the international orientation and competitiveness of its higher education system, although this interpretation should be limited to the policy objectives identified in the analyzed documents.

Based on these considerations, the implementation of Regulation Number 53 of 2023 should be understood as a multidimensional governance transformation involving legal, institutional, managerial, technological, and sociocultural dimensions. The regulation creates opportunities for Indonesian universities to strengthen governance quality, improve institutional accountability, and enhance global competitiveness. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of the policy depends largely on institutional readiness, leadership commitment, technological adaptation, and equitable support systems capable of addressing structural disparities within the national higher education landscape (Nugraha et al., 2023). Therefore, a comprehensive analysis of the regulation is essential to understand both its transformative potential and the challenges accompanying its implementation within Indonesian higher education governance.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis indicates that Regulation No. 53 of 2023 represents a shift in higher education governance toward greater institutional autonomy, substantive quality improvement, accountability, and continuous quality assurance, while its implementation remains conditioned by institutional capacity. The study interprets the regulatory shift as a movement from predominantly procedural quality assurance toward a framework that emphasizes institutional adaptation, substantive outcomes, accountability, and continuous improvement. Through this policy, universities are encouraged to strengthen institutional autonomy, improve governance transparency, and enhance educational competitiveness at both national and international levels.

This analysis identifies several potential opportunities and implementation challenges associated with Regulation No. 53 of 2023, particularly concerning institutional flexibility, quality culture, digital governance, leadership, and institutional disparities. On the one hand, the regulation provides a more flexible framework for universities to develop internal quality assurance systems aligned with institutional characteristics and global educational demands. The policy also encourages digital governance transformation, institutional innovation, and the strengthening of quality culture within academic environments. On the other hand, significant obstacles remain evident, particularly regarding disparities in institutional capacity, technological infrastructure, leadership quality, and administrative

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readiness among universities across different regions in Indonesia.

Ultimately, the study conceptualizes Regulation No. 53 of 2023 as a strategic policy framework with the potential to support more resilient, innovative, and accountable higher education governance in Indonesia, subject to institutional capacity and implementation conditions. Governance reform cannot be achieved merely through procedural adaptation, but requires substantive transformation in organizational culture and institutional management practices.

Therefore, the successful implementation of the regulation requires stronger collaboration between government authorities, university leadership, accreditation agencies, and academic communities to ensure equitable and sustainable governance reform.

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