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INTEGRATING UMA LULIK'S LOCAL CULTURAL VALUES INTO HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY MANAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY AT ICFP TIMOR-LESTE

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the application of higher education quality management through the integration of local cultural values embodied in Uma Lulik at the Instituto Católico para a Formação de Professores (ICFP) in Timor-Leste. In the era of globalization, quality management in higher education is not only required to meet academic standards and accreditation demands, but also to incorporate indigenous cultural values that strengthen institutional identity, relevance, and sustainability. Uma Lulik, a sacred traditional house symbolizing ancestral wisdom, harmony, justice, and communal balance, represents an important cultural foundation for Timor-Leste society, particularly in Baucau Municipality. This research aims to explore how Uma Lulik values are conceptualized and implemented within ICFP's vision, mission, governance, policies, and quality management practices. Employing a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis involving institutional leaders, lecturers, students, and community leaders. The findings reveal that integrating Uma Lulik values enhances stakeholder engagement, institutional legitimacy, and cultural identity while supporting sustainable quality assurance mechanisms aligned with national and international standards. This study contributes empirical evidence to the discourse on culturally responsive quality management and demonstrates that indigenous knowledge systems can serve as a legitimate and effective framework for institutional quality development in postcolonial higher education contexts.

KEYWORDS: Quality Management, Higher Education, Traditional Knowledge, Cultural Integration of Uma Lulik, Timor-Leste.

1. INTRODUCTION

Timor-Leste is a nation that proclaimed its independence in 2002 following colonial rule by Portugal, Japan, and Indonesia. The nation has a population of roughly 1.3 million individuals, with most identifying as Catholic. Timor-Leste hosts various ethnic communities that utilize different regional languages. The country's official languages are Portuguese and Tetum, whereas Indonesian and English function as working languages. (Pannell, 2006); (Resistência & Colonialismo, 2025); (Durant et al., 2024). As stated in the law article 59 that the important sector that needs to be improved in Timor-Leste is education. The Timor-Leste government views education as important to improve the quality of human resources and advance a cultured, prosperous and democratic society. Education is also a human right that must be guaranteed by the state in Timor-Leste. However, education in Timor-Leste still faces various challenges and problems, such as lack of infrastructure, human resources, budget, curriculum, teaching materials, infrastructure, and quality assurance systems. (Pereira, 2004); (RDTL, 2011); (Asembleia Jeral Konstituyente, 2002). Tertiary education, as a stage of learning aimed at producing qualified alumni and supporting the progress of science, technology, and art, also encounters similar difficulties. Information from the Directorate General of Higher Education of Timor-Leste indicates that there are 19 universities in the country, among which is 1 public university and 18 private institutions. (Democr & Timor, 2020). The number of students registered in the 2019/2020 academic year is around 40 thousand people, with a lecturer-student ratio of around 1:25. The majority of universities in Timor-Leste are located in the capital city of Dili, while in other areas they are still very limited. (Minist et al., 2019); (Especiál et al., 2021).

ICFP (Instituto Católico para a Formação de Professores), located in the city of Baucau, Baucau Municipal. ICFP is a higher education institution established by the Catholic Church in 2000, with the aim of forming professional, competent, and dedicated teacher candidates. ICFP offers undergraduate (S1) study programs in the fields of basic education, mathematics education, Portuguese language education, and English language education. ICFP also organizes diploma programs (D3) in the field of pre-school education and inclusive education. The number of students registered at ICFP in the 2019/2020 academic year is around 900 people, with a lecturer-student ratio of around 1:20 (Amaral, 2017); (Especiál et al., 2021).

ICFP has a vision to become a superior higher education institution in the field of teacher education, by developing relevant curriculum, effective learning methods, quality research, and useful community service. To realize this vision, ICFP strives to improve the quality of education and research in an ongoing manner, with reference to national and international standards. However, ICFP also does not forget the local cultural values that are part of the identity and wealth of the people of Timor-Leste. (Amaral, 2017). The culture highlighted is "Uma Lulik," a revered residence symbolizing the bond among the past and the present, as well as the living and the dead. Uma Lulik representa a herança cultural ancestral da população do município de Baucau, que é um dos setores da área oriental do Estado de Timor-Leste. Uma Lulik atual como uma site for ceremonies, such as harvest festivities, and also serves as a place for retaining family treasures. (Boldoni, 2020b)

Uma Lulik has a distinctive architectural form, namely a stilt house with a towering roof. Uma Lulik was built using natural materials, such as stone, wood, bamboo, straw, and thread. (Hicks, 2008); (Boldoni, 2020b); (Belo & Winandari, 2021). Uma Lulik has a deep philosophical meaning for the people of Timor-Leste. Uma Lulik represents the concept of space and time that is cyclical and dynamic. Uma Lulik also reflects on the concept of life and death which is continuous and harmonious. Uma Lulik also expressed the concept of family and society that is inclusive and solidarity. Uma Lulik also shows the concept of values and norms that are flexible and adaptive. (Tanu, 2016); (Fidalgo-Castro, 2012a).

Uma Lulik has undergone various changes along with the development of the times. Uma Lulik Timor-Leste was damaged by war and political and military conflicts that occurred in Timor-Leste for 24 years. Uma Lulik has also been modified due to the influence of foreign cultures that entered Timor-Leste. Uma Lulik has also been reinterpreted due to social and economic changes that occurred in Timor-Leste. Uma Lulik remains part of the identity and pride of the Timor-Leste people, although not everyone understands and practices the values contained therein (Fidalgo-Castro, 2012b); (Hicks, 2008).

To find out how universities in Timor-Leste, especially ICFP, can develop quality management based on the local culture "Uma Lulik". The researcher assumes that quality management based on local culture can provide added value for universities, namely: (1) increasing the relationship between universities and the

surrounding community; (2) enriching the curriculum with materials relevant to the local context; (3) sharpening the characteristics and uniqueness of higher education; (4) strengthening the sense of ownership and involvement of all stakeholders in the quality assurance process; (5) fostering an organizational culture that is in line with local values, then in formulating how to formulate the concept of integrating uma lulik cultural values into the implementation of quality management in Timor-Leste universities, especially in ICFP?

1.1. Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explain the concept and implementation of local culture-based quality management "Uma Lulik" in Timor-Leste universities, especially in ICFP by exploring the conceptualization and implementation of a culture-based quality management system in higher education based on traditional uma lulik values in Timor-Leste. Particularly at the Instituto Católico para a Formação de Professores (ICFP) and explores how indigenous cultural values such as kinship, harmony, justice, and respect for balance are integrated into institutional governance, policy formulation, and operational practices.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. The Concept of Quality Management in Higher Education

Quality management in higher education is a systematic approach used to ensure and improve the quality of educational services in an ongoing manner. Education quality management is a series of processes that involve planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation aimed at meeting the needs and expectations of stakeholders.

Total Quality Management (TQM) and ISO 9001 are two widely utilized quality management frameworks in educational organizations (J. S. Oakland, 2014, 2014); (Imron, 2012); (Purnomo et al., 2024). In higher education, quality management addresses not just academic factors like curriculum and learning processes, but also non-academic elements such as organizational culture, student satisfaction, and community relationships (Hayward et al., 2024). The quality of higher education must be measurable through valid and reliable indicators, which are adjusted to national and international standards (Espesial et al., 2021); (Report, 2021); (Corbion, 2023).

2.2. Local Culture of "Uma Lulik" and Its Values

"Uma Lulik" is the concept of a holy house and a center of spirituality in the culture of the people of Timor-Leste that contains traditional values such as family, togetherness, justice, and balance (da Costa et al., 2022);(Soares et al., 2007). These values are not only the guidelines of social life but also the foundation in decision-making and community governance.(Smith & Smith, 2010).

According to Silva (2022), the integration of local cultural values in educational institutions can strengthen cultural identity, increase a sense of belonging (sense of belonging), and strengthen social cohesion among members of the organization. In the context of quality management, the application of the "Uma Lulik" value provides an authentic local dimension and can increase the relevance and sustainability of quality policies and practices (Miranda da Silva et al., 2024).

2.3. Integration of Local Culture in Higher Education Quality Management

Various studies show that the integration of local culture in higher education quality management can strengthen stakeholder commitment and improve the quality of education (Silva-Jean & Kneippb, 2024); (Fidalgo-Castro, 2012b). The integration can be done through: (a) Preparation of visions, missions, and policies that reflect local cultural values. (b) Development of a curriculum that accommodates local cultural materials; (c) Broad stakeholder involvement in the quality planning and evaluation process; (d) Development of an organizational culture that supports participation, innovation, and continuous learning.

2.4. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Implementation of Local Culture-Based Quality Management

Supporting factors include leadership commitment, cultural awareness, resource support, and active participation of all stakeholders (Dewi & Hartono, 2020). On the other hand, inhibiting factors can be resistance to change, limited human resource capacity, and mismatches between international standards and local contexts (Nanda et al., 2024);(Islam & Mataram, 2024).

In addition, as for the previous studies that are the basis of this research, there are several relevant studies that are references, including: (Setiyonugroho et al., 2022) that Studying About Integration of Multicultural Education Values in

History Teaching Multicultural education is one of the important concepts that must be mastered by history teachers in applying multicultural values to more in-depth history materials, which will ultimately make students have a high spirit of tolerance in society and the environment; (Silva-Jean & Kneippb, 2024) Studying About Social learning, innovation, and sustainability: The search for directions beyond a systematic literature review; (Fidalgo-Castro & Alonso-Población, 2023) Studying About Of sacred things, taboos and orthopraxis.

The concept of the priest in Timor-Leste; (Hicks, 2008) study on Afterword: glimpses of alternatives the Sacred House of East Timor; (Hinostrroza et al., 2024) Examining the Roles of digital technologies in the implementation of inquiry based learning (IBL): A systematic literature review; (Hogan & Coote, 2014) An examination of Organizational culture, innovation, and performance: A test of Schein's model; (Islam & Mataram, 2024) Examining Strategic Management as a New Paradigm in the Development of Educational Institutions: A Review of the Literature; (Lucas et al., 2015) study on Pathways to Change : Improving The Quality of Education in Timor-Leste; (Farram et al., 2019) Understanding Understanding; (Palmer & McWilliam, 2019) Study on Spirit ecologies and customary governance in post-conflict Timor-Lest; (Greenland et al., 2022) study on Sustainable management education and an empirical five-pillar model of sustainability; (Burns, 2017) Study on Education in Timor-Leste: Envisioning the Future; (Antonio Freitas & Budi Wiyono, 2023) Study on the Implementation of Character Education Management in Producing Quality Graduates: Study at the Instituto Superior Cristal Dili Timor-Leste; (Ferreira et al., 2017) about The Motorization of the Restructuring of General Secondary Education Curricula in Timor from the Perspective of Portuguese Trainers; (Tilman et al., 2023) study on the Implementation of TQM Education in Increasing Interest in Learning Tetum as the National Language of Timor-Leste; (Shah, 2009) study about Timor-Leste ten years on: Reconstructing curriculum for the future; (Bank, 2004) study on Timor-Leste Education Since Independence From Reconstruction to Sustainable Improvement Human Development Sector Unit East Asia and Pacific Region; (Heston, n.d.) Timorese (Timor-Leste, Island Southeast Asia)-Language Contexts; (Bovensiepen, 2014) A study of Lulik: Taboo, animism, or transgressive sacred? An exploration of identity, morality, and power in Timor-Leste; (Albino, 2020) study on (Re)Building the Educational System of Timor-Leste: Evolution

and current challenges1; (Brackhane et al., 2019) Addressing the (Re)Building of the Educational System of Timor-Leste: Evolution and Current Challenges1; (Batterbury et al., 2015) Examining Land access and livelihoods in post-conflict Timor-Leste: No magic bullets; (Ketut & Dwijendra, 2020) study on Collaboration and Acculturation to Manage and Create Architectural Design of Giri Natha Temple, Timor-Leste: The Architectural Harmony between Bali and Timor-Leste THE INFLUENCE OF GLOBALIZATION ON THE EXISTENCE OF LOCAL CULTURE IN INDONESIA; (Demetrio et al., 2011) study on LOCAL KNOWLEDGE OF TIMOR Based on the workshop on " Traditional Knowledge; (Kigozi & Yuen On, 2019) about Total Quality Management (TQM) Practices Applied in Education Institutions: A Systematic Review of Literature; (Zabadi, 2013) on Implementing Total Quality Management (TQM) on the Higher Education Institutions-A Conceptual Model; (Santos-vijande & Alvarez-gonzalez, 2007) about TQM and firms performance: An EFQM excellence model research based survey; (Iqbal et al., 2024) about The effect of accreditation on higher education performance through quality culture mediation: the perceptions of administrative and quality managers; (Ahinful et al., 2024) about A conceptual framework of total quality management on innovation performance in the banking sector; (VAN KEMENADE, 2020) about Alignment of TQM in the Higher Education context.

Thus, a framework of thought was found that became the flow in this research based on previous theories and studies, The framework of this research is that quality management that integrates local cultural values "Uma Lulik" will increase stakeholder involvement, quality of education, and institutional sustainability. The implementation model of local culture-based quality management must take into account the supporting and inhibiting factors to be effective in the context of ICFP Timor-Leste.

3. METHODS

This study adopts a case study method with a qualitative approach. This method is worth using to examine this phenomenon in depth and holistically in a real context.

The method used to interpret each experience of each informant or person towards an event. (Dodgson, 2017; Roulston & Halpin, 2022). Tresearch subjects at ICFP, which functions as a higher education institution dedicated to teacher preparation located in Baucau, Baucau municipality, Timor-Leste. The reasons for choosing ICFP as the research location are: (1) ICFP is one of the accredited

institutions in Timor-Leste that focuses on improving the quality of teacher education rooted in local culture; (2) ICFP has strong family ties with the Timorese community, especially the Baucau municipality, which is known as the second largest city in Timor-Leste which represents the local culture "Uma Lulik"; (3) ICFP has a history of participating in research and community service related to the local culture "Uma Lulik". Field data sources obtained from documents, observations, and interviews. Documents are written data related to quality management at ICFP, such as vision, mission, objectives, strategies, policies, programs, reports, and evaluations. Observation is visual data related to quality management in ICFP, such as physical conditions, facilities, activities, interactions, and symbols. Interviews are verbal data related to quality management at ICFP, such as perceptions, opinions, attitudes, values, and expectations. The data collection techniques in this study are document studies, participatory observations, and in-depth interviews. Document study is a data collection technique by collecting, analyzing, and interpreting documents relevant to the research problem. Participatory observation is a data collection technique by directly observing the phenomenon being studied while interacting with participants. In-depth interviews are data collection techniques by conducting intensive conversations with participants to obtain detailed and in-depth information about the phenomenon being studied. (Ceswell, 1991); (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Levitt et al., 2018). The sample in this study is a number of informants who were selected using the purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is a technique for selecting samples based on specific criteria that align with the research objectives. The criteria applied in this research are: (1) informants should hold roles and responsibilities in quality management at ICFP; (2) the informant must possess knowledge and experience regarding the local culture of "Uma Lulik"; (3) the informant should be willing and cooperative to partake in the study. Based on these criteria, the informants selected in this study were: (1) ICFP Chancellor; (2) ICFP Deputy; (3) ICFP Study Program and Director; (4) ICFP Lecturer; (5) ICFP Student; (6) Chairperson or community leader.

The use of data analysis methods applied in this study is thematic analysis, where thematic analysis is a data analysis technique by identifying, coding, grouping, interpreting themes that emerge from the data. The steps taken in thematic analysis are: (1) data transcription; (2) data reduction; (3) data coding; (4) data categorization; (5) data matization; (6) data

interpretation. (Miles, n.d.); (Miles & Huberman, 2014a).

In the data validation process, researchers use several basic approaches, namely: (1) triangulating data sources, namely comparing data and information from various sources, consisting of documents, observation results, and interview results; (2) triangulating by using methods by comparing and confirming data from various methods, such as document analysis, participant observation, and in-depth interviews; (3) member checking, namely seeking input from participants on the findings of data analysis to obtain approval or make corrections; (4) peer debriefing, namely asking for input from colleagues or experts who have relevant knowledge related to the research process and results to obtain suggestions or criticisms. (Miles & Huberman, 2014b).

4. RESULTS

Based on data analysis, researchers found several themes related to the concept and implementation of local culture-based quality management "Uma Lulik" at ICFP. The themes are as follows:

1. Recognition and respect for traditional values contained in "Uma Lulik" or Recognition and Respect for Traditional Values of Uma Lulik as the Philosophical Foundation of Quality Management
2. Integration of traditional values in the vision, mission, goals, strategies, policies, and programs of the college.
3. Involvement of all stakeholders in the process of planning, implementing, evaluating, and improving quality
4. Building an organizational culture that is conducive to encouraging participation, communication, collaboration, innovation, and continuous learning
5. The use of quality indicators in accordance with national and international standards, as well as considering the local context of periodic and transparent quality monitoring and assessment, using valid and reliable methods by providing fair and proportionate rewards and sanctions to individual and group performance. So that they can take further action and corrective actions based on the results of supervision and quality assessment.

In this study, it was found that the traditional values of "Uma Lulik" which include: family, togetherness, justice, and balance are important foundations in quality management at ICFP. The values referred to here, not only represent the cultural

Based on the exposure of the data, ICFP implements an education system that incorporates uma lulik's local cultural values as part of the learning process and institutional policies. The curriculum and academic activities are designed to reflect the cultural identity of Timor-Leste while also incorporating local knowledge into the curriculum and teaching methods. This reflects an educational indigenization approach that strengthens students' connection to local contexts and cultural heritage.

From the above things can be described in the following narrative.

4.1. Recognition and Respect for the Traditional Values Contained in "Uma Lulik"

The traditional values being discussed are those associated with family, unity, fairness, and equilibrium. In these principles are actually the essential values that are the foundation of the lives of the Timorese people in everyday life, where these values are very sacred to become universal principles that are embraced by all individuals who have Timorese descent, regardless of background, beliefs, culture, or ethnicity. Recognition and appreciation of these cultural values of customs and traditions aims to: (a) increase knowledge and understanding of the local culture of "Uma Lulik" itself and the community; (b) preserve and protect the local culture of "Uma Lulik" as part of life and cultural heritage; (c) appreciate and respect the cultural diversity that exists in Timor-Leste; (d) increase pride and affection for the homeland of Timor Leste; (e) foster harmonious relations between universities and the surrounding community.

4.2. Integration of Traditional Values in the College's Vision, Mission, Goals, Strategies, Policies, and Programs

Integration of traditional values in the implementation of higher education quality management is a management process that requires definite steps, thus in the implementation of the integration of these values by ICFP, namely: (a) formulating a vision that realizes the target and ambition to become a reliable higher education institution in teacher education based on the local culture of uma lulik; (b) determining a mission by involving and paying attention to four main functions: education, research, community service, and institutional progress; (c) creating specific and measurable goals and objectives, which can be achieved, and are relevant to the situation or needs, and are time-bound; (d) formulating strategies that are in line with the internal and external conditions

of the Institute; (e) determining and issuing policies that can regulate various aspects of higher education operations; (f) designing and compiling programs that can facilitate the fulfillment of the vision, mission, goals, strategies, and policies of higher education. The integration and integration of these traditional values are intended to: (i) offer guidance and direction for universities in carrying out their functions; (ii) ensure consistency and continuity between the planning and implementation of university operations; (iii) improving the relevance and quality of the curriculum by integrating content related to the local culture of "Uma Lulik" and the Timorese Community; (iv) improving the effectiveness and efficiency of resource management in higher education; (v) improving the accountability and transparency of higher education to stakeholders. ICFP integrates the values of "Uma Lulik" in all elements of strategic planning, including vision, mission, goals, strategies, policies, and programs. This approach includes: Formulating a vision that is oriented towards the excellence of teacher education based on local culture. Thus, in formulating a mission that emphasizes education, research, community involvement, and institutional growth, it can be implemented well, measured and achieved based on SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound) objectives. Creating strategies and policies that address the internal and external contexts and formulating complementary programs to facilitate the realization of the vision and mission.

The main objective of this integration is to ensure the continuity and relevance of culture in quality management oriented towards quality improvement and accountability. ICFP quality management includes all parties involved, both internal (lecturers, students, staff, administration) and external (community, government, NGOs, businesses, alumni, partners). This participation is achieved via: (i) the establishment of a multi-stakeholder quality assurance group; (ii) ongoing meetings and discussion platforms for quality assessment and strategizing; (iii) surveys on stakeholder satisfaction and expectations; (iv) dissemination of results and quality strategies; (v) collaborative partnerships with external organizations, thereby improving communication, active engagement, and joint dedication to maintaining educational quality. Integrating quality management rooted in uma lulik culture involves merging quality assurance elements, specifically: (a) curriculum and education; (b) lecturer and staff competencies; (c) research grounded in culture; (d) community engagement; (e)

infrastructure and facilities; (f) management of information and documentation.

4.3. The Participation of all Parties in the Planning, Execution, Assessment, and Enhancement of Quality

As is known that the parties who are stakeholders involved are all parties who have a relationship or relation with one goal and interest with the university, where the stakeholders referred to here are parties who are working relations, this is divided into two categories, namely: (1) internal parties, including lecturers, students, staff, and leaders of ICFP universities; (2) external parties, including ordinary people, government, religious organizations, Community Empowerment Institutions, the business world, industry, alumni, and work industries or institutions that are places of employment. With the involvement of all parties who are working partners for the program implemented by ICFP through several main steps, namely: (1) planning and forming a quality assurance team (internal Quality Assurance/IQA) consisting of members and as representatives of various stakeholders; (2) holding regular meetings to discuss various issues related to quality management related to teaching and learning activities; (3) conducting surveys by collecting data information through surveys or insights regarding the satisfaction and expectations of these parties; (4) facilitating dialogue and discussion to obtain feedback or input and recommendations from stakeholders; (5) organizing socialization activities by presenting findings and making plans related to local culture-based quality management; (6) coordination and partnership cooperation with various external institutions or organizations that can provide support or assistance to ICFP. These involvements aim to: (1) increase the participation and involvement of all parties in quality assurance activities; (2) form better coaching and communication and collaboration between ICFP universities and stakeholders; (3) increase understanding and consensus on the expected quality standards and criteria in implementing local culture integration in university quality management; (4) strengthen the accountability and commitment of each party in this case stakeholders in ensuring the quality of higher education based on local culture uma lulik Timor Leste; (5) improve the quality and quantity of resources that can be accessed by ICFP. (Bambang et al., 2020);(McWilliam et al., 2014);(Palmer, 2020).

The culture at ICFP is founded on "Uma Lulik" values that highlight family, unity, fairness, and

equilibrium. CFP's initiative to advance and promote the local culture of uma lulik is implemented by: (a) seriously instilling fundamental values in all program implementation efforts within the organization; (b) building a framework that can support every routine activity such as recruitment practices, professional growth, rewards, and employee welfare; (c) enabling cultural enhancement initiatives such as workshops, training, field trips, and retreats; (d) enabling supporters of cultural change such as leaders and alumni; (e) a supportive organizational culture encourages motivation, teamwork, creativity towards greater change.

4.4. Establishing an Organizational Culture that Fosters Participation, Communication, Collaboration, Innovation, and Ongoing Learning

The intended organizational culture is the uma lulik culture contained in the ICFP, where the culture is used as an organization that refers to the behavior, values, norms, and beliefs of society in maintaining togetherness between fellow or members of the organization that can influence interactions between each other and between the external environments. An organizational culture that can support and foster a comfortable, harmonious, productive work environment will encourage creativity with the patterns and goals of the organization. In the formation of the adopted organizational culture, it can support universities such as ICFP by: (1) integrating traditional values that are the basis and inherent in "Uma Lulik" which are considered as the basic principles of the organization, including kinship, unity, justice, and balance; (2) creating a system that facilitates a supportive organizational culture, such as a recruitment system, career development system, compensation system, incentive program, discipline system, and welfare framework; (3) organizing events that enhance organizational culture, including orientation sessions, training, meetings, supportive discussions, seminars, workshops, excursions, retreats, and celebrations; (4) empower individuals who can act as agents of cultural change in the organization, such as leaders, instructors, students, staff members, and alumni.(Maisyaroh et al., 2024); (Susar et al., 2023).

The establishment of a supportive organizational culture seeks to: (1) enhance the motivation and commitment of university members; (2) boost collaboration and synergy among organization members in reaching shared objectives; (3) promote creativity and innovation among members to create quality outcomes; (4) improve the learning capacity

and adaptability of members to environmental changes; (5) elevate the university's public image and reputation.

ICFP implements quality indicators that are adjusted to national (ANAAA), international (APQN, ACUCA), and local cultural context "Uma Lulik". The actions undertaken encompass: (a) Recognizing pertinent indicators for teacher education and regional culture; (b) Modifying indicators from local and global accreditation bodies; (c) Creating internal performance metrics aligned with ICFP requirements; (d) Establishing attainable and quantifiable quality objectives; (e) Conducting performance assessments grounded in regularly defined indicators, ensuring that the use of these indicators guarantees the validity, reliability, and relevance of education quality evaluation at ICFP.

4.5. Utilization of Quality Measures aligned with National and International Standards while taking into Account the Local Context

The quality indicators in question are measures used to measure the level of achievement of the quality of higher education. The national and international standards in question are criteria set by official institutions that are authorized to assess the quality of higher education. The local context in question is the specific situation and conditions that exist in Timor-Leste in general and in the ICFP in particular.

The ICFP implements quality indicators aligned with national and international standards while considering the local context by: (1) identifying quality indicators pertinent to teacher education and the local culture "Uma Lulik"; (2) adapting quality indicators from other resources, such as Timor-Leste's national accreditation agency, the Agência Nacional de Avaliação e Acreditação Acadêmica (ANAAA), or the Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN), Association of Catholic Colleges (ACUCA), and partner colleges; (3) creating its own quality indicators based on the needs and capabilities of universities; (4) establishing achievable and sensible quality targets; (5) evaluating university performance according to the predefined quality indicators (Triwiyanto, 2013).

The purpose of these quality indicators is to: (1) offer objective and quantitative assessments of higher education achievement levels; (2) supply valuable information for universities to assess and enhance quality; (3) furnish accountable proof to stakeholders regarding higher education quality; (4) establish a foundation for comparison and benchmarking with other institutions; (5) create

incentives and challenges for universities to persist in improving their quality. Things done by universities to overcome problems or weaknesses found in the quality supervision and assessment process.

4.6. Corrective Actions

The follow up and corrective measures are implemented by ICFP through: (1) creating follow up plans and corrective actions that outline issues, resolutions, resources, timelines, execution, and assessment; (2) executing follow-up and corrective actions in alignment with the established plans, employing diverse strategies like revision, development, training, guidance, consultation, collaboration, or advocacy; (3) assessing the outcomes of follow-up and corrective actions using various techniques, including observation, interviews, surveys, tests, portfolios, audits, accreditations, or rankings; (4) presenting the outcomes of follow up evaluations and corrective actions in the form of clear, comprehensive, and informative reports; (5) distributing the results of follow up evaluations and corrective actions to stakeholders through various channels, including websites, newsletters, journals, seminars, or conferences (Dami et al., 2022) & (Susar et al., 2023).

This action for follow up and enhancement seeks to: (1) systematically address issues or deficiencies in higher education; (2) sustainably enhance the quality and quantity of university outputs; (3) prepare for and adjust to environmental changes; (4) foster an organizational culture focused on quality and improvement; (5) boost stakeholder satisfaction and expectations regarding higher education.

5. DISCUSSION

Integration of local cultural values "Uma Lulik" in the quality management of higher education in ICFP, Timor-Leste. Related to the main themes you mentioned, with an in depth analysis and relevant to quality management theory, namely:

5.1. Recognition and Respect for Uma Lulik's Traditional Values as the Philosophical Foundation of Quality Management

The findings of this study confirm that recognition and respect for the traditional values of Uma Lulik is the main foundation in building a sustainable quality management system at ICFP. The values of family, togetherness, justice, and balance are not only symbols of Timorese culture, but also a relevant universal principle to encourage harmonization of relations between stakeholders in the academic environment. This is in line with the theory of

organizational culture which states that shared values form strong social bonds and influence collective behavior (Schein, E. H. (2010). *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (4th Ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass., n.d.); (Makumbe & Washaya, 2022). By acknowledging these values, ICFP is able to maintain local cultural identity while creating a deep sense of pride and loyalty, which is an important social capital in improving the quality of institutions. (P. N. Materu, 2007).

The results of the data analysis show that ICFP consistently recognizes and respects the traditional values contained in "Uma Lulik," such as kinship, togetherness, justice, and balance. These values are not only part of the institution's narrative, but are also reflected in the work culture and daily interactions between members of the academic community. This is in accordance with the theory of quality management which emphasizes the importance of cultural values as the foundation of organizational development (Makumbe & Washaya, 2022). Respect for the value of "Uma Lulik" also strengthens social ties and increases a sense of belonging, thereby supporting the creation of an environment conducive to learning and innovation.

5.2. Traditional Values in Institutional Vision, Mission, and Strategy

The integration of Uma Lulik's values into ICFP's vision, mission, goals, strategies, policies, and programs shows the institution's commitment to internalize local wisdom in every aspect of management. This approach refers to the concept of Total Quality Management (TQM) which emphasizes the alignment of organizational values with institutional strategies and operations. (J. S. Oakland, 2014). The preparation of a vision and mission that contains local values supports continuity and consistency in the implementation of activities, thus facilitating continuous evaluation and improvement (CQI). In addition, it increases the relevance of the curriculum to the local socio-cultural context, which also strengthens the competence of graduates in local and global contexts (Ali Imron & Nugrahani, 2019); (Hill, 2005); (Shah, 2009); (Wigglesworth, 2010).

ICFP has successfully integrated the cultural values of "Uma Lulik" into the vision, mission, goals, strategies, and policies of the institution. ICFP's vision of excellence in local culture-based teacher education reflects its commitment to cultural preservation institutions and improving the quality of education. The mission and objectives formulated prioritize aspects of education, research, community

service, and institutional development with local wisdom as the foundation. This supports the relevance and sustainability of educational programs and increases institutional accountability. This finding is in line with the concept of cultural integration in quality management conveyed by Deming (1986), that quality management must be aligned with the cultural context in order for results to be effective and sustainable (Raposo, 2011); (Palumbo & Douglas, 2024).

5.3. Involvement of All Stakeholders in the Quality Management Process

Comprehensive engagement of a wide range of stakeholders, both internal and external, is an important practice that strengthens participatory mechanisms in quality management. This reflects the principles of good governance that encourage transparency, accountability, and active participation of all interested parties (Stieb, 2009); (Kivits & Sawang, 2021). This participatory approach not only increases the legitimacy of policies and decision-making processes, but also enriches perspectives so that the quality assurance system becomes more responsive to the needs and expectations of the wider community. This study is in line with the findings of Semali and Kincheloe (1999) which emphasized the importance of local voice recognition in the management of educational institutions (Imron, 2012); (Gunara, 2017); (Shomotova et al., 2024); (Wazni et al., 2025); (Januardi et al., 2024).

Interview and documentation data show that ICFP actively involves all stakeholders, both internal and external, in the process of planning, implementing, evaluating, and improving quality. The establishment of a quality assurance team that includes different stakeholders, frequent meetings, satisfaction surveys, and open dialogues are the primary methods employed. This involvement enhances transparency and accountability while also reinforcing the shared dedication to educational quality. This is in accordance with the theory of stakeholder participation in quality management put forward by Freeman which emphasizes that stakeholder involvement is the key to organizational success. (Kivits & Sawang, 2021; Stieb, 2009); (Setiyonugroho et al., 2022).

5.4. Development of a Conducive Organizational Culture as a Supporter of Innovation and Continuous Learning

A healthy and conducive organizational culture is one of the main pillars in ensuring the successful implementation of quality management. The

application of Uma Lulik's values as the core values of the organization strengthens solidarity and increases the motivation of institutional members to contribute actively. This is in line with the concept of organizational culture theory that links a positive culture to improved performance and innovation. (Asif, 2011; Nazir & Lone, 2008; Van Den Berg & Wilderom, 2004). The development of support systems such as recruitment, training, and incentives that are aligned with local values facilitates the formation of a productive and creative work climate, which in turn accelerates the organizational learning process and adaptation to external changes. (Acar, 2012); (Putro et al., 2016; Zeitz et al., 1997).

ICFP systematically builds a conducive organizational culture through the cultivation of the core values of "Uma Lulik," the development of support systems, and the implementation of cultural strengthening activities such as training, meetings, and social activities. The organizational culture that is formed encourages participation, open communication, collaboration between members, and continuous innovation. These findings reinforce the view (Januardi et al., 2024) about the importance of organizational culture in supporting the effectiveness of quality management.

5.5. Use of Quality Indicators that are Relevant to National and International Standards and Local Contexts

The adjustment of quality indicators that accommodates national and international standards while taking into account the local context demonstrates ICFP's strategic efforts to bridge the gap between global expectations and local realities. This is important to ensure credible academic recognition and accreditation without ignoring the cultural peculiarities that exist. This approach supports the principles of accountability and transparency in quality management (P. N. Materu, 2007; P. Materu & Righetti, 2010). By setting realistic targets and using valid and reliable evaluation methods, ICFP is able to conduct effective monitoring and evaluation and encourage continuous improvement in accordance with the needs of institutions and communities.

ICFP adapts and develops quality indicators that refer to national and international standards, such as ANAAA and APQN, while paying attention to the local characteristics of "Uma Lulik." These indicators include aspects of education, research, community service, and institutional governance. The use of these contextual indicators allows for a more accurate

and relevant evaluation of the achievement of higher education quality. This approach is in line with the principle of Total Quality Management (TQM) which emphasizes the adjustment of the quality system to local needs and conditions (Kigozi & Yuen On, 2019; Santos-vijande & Alvarez-gonzalez, 2007, 2007; Zabadi, 2013); (J. Oakland, 2005, 2011a, 2011b).

5.6. Follow-up, Awards, and Sanctions as a Mechanism to Strengthen Quality Management

Providing fair awards and sanctions is an integral part of maintaining and improving institutional performance. This mechanism encourages the commitment of individuals and groups to continue to improve the quality of work and learning outcomes. This is in accordance with performance management theory which states that positive feedback and negative consequences are the main drivers in organizational behavior. With systematic corrective actions based on the results of supervision, the institution is able to guarantee that quality is not only maintained, but also continuously improved (J. G. Armstrong & Armstrong, 2012; K. Armstrong, 2009); (Hinostroza et al., 2024).

ICFP conducts regular and transparent supervision and quality assessment using valid and reliable methods. The results of supervision are the basis for giving fair awards and sanctions, as well as systematic corrective actions. This reflects the continuous improvement cycle which is a fundamental principle in modern quality management (Deming, 1986). This approach also demonstrates ICFP's commitment to ensuring optimal quality of education services and oriented towards stakeholder satisfaction (Dem et al., 2013; Juran et al., 2014; Petersen B., 1999).

From the discussion points in this study, it is shown that local culture-based quality management "Uma Lulik" in ICFP is a holistic approach that integrates traditional values with modern management practices. This approach results in the management of universities that are not only of high quality and national standards of Timor-Leste, but also value and preserve local cultural heritage in a sustainable manner.

6. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis, it can be concluded that the quality management at ICFP has succeeded in effectively integrating the local cultural values of "Uma Lulik" into all aspects of the organization. Recognition and respect for traditional values become a strong foundation that forms a positive organizational culture and supports broader

stakeholder engagement. The vision, mission, and policies of higher education reflect alignment with local wisdom that contributes to improving the quality of education. The development of contextual quality indicators and systematic monitoring mechanisms help ensure continuous improvement and relevance of the quality of education according to local needs and national and international standards. Thus, it is also concluded that the quality management based on local culture "Uma Lulik" in Timor-Leste universities, especially in ICFP, has several characteristics, namely: (1) recognizing and respecting the traditional values contained in "Uma Lulik", such as family, togetherness, justice, and balance; (2) integrating these values in the vision, mission, goals, strategies, policies, and programs of higher education; (3) involving all stakeholders in the process of planning, implementing, evaluating, and improving quality; (4) build an organizational culture that is conducive to encouraging participation, communication, collaboration, innovation, and continuous learning; (5) using quality indicators in accordance with national and international standards, and considering the local context; (6) conducting regular and transparent quality supervision and assessment, using valid and reliable methods; (7) provide fair and proportionate awards and sanctions for the performance of individuals and groups; (8) Carry out follow-up and corrective actions based on the results of supervision and quality assessment.

In terms of policy implications, it can be stated that (1) Strengthening the integration of local culture in the policies of other higher education institutions

can adopt a model of integration of local cultural values such as "Uma Lulik" to increase the relevance and accountability of higher education in Timor-Leste (2) The development of participatory systems in quality management involving stakeholders actively in quality planning and evaluation needs to be used as a formal policy to support transparency and collective ownership and (3) Adjustment of quality indicators to the local context, quality indicator development policies must be flexible and responsive to local cultural and social characteristics in order for quality evaluation to be more valid and applicable.

Therefore, practical recommendations are conveyed for (1) the continuous training and socialization of local cultural values with the implementation of intensive training and socialization of the values of "Uma Lulik" needs to be carried out regularly to ensure the internalization of values in all organizational lines. (2) Increasing the capacity of the quality assurance unit, where by increasing the capacity of the quality assurance unit, technical and managerial training should be given on an ongoing basis to improve the quality of quality supervision and evaluation. (3) Development of a digital-based quality information system, in order to improve the efficiency of data collection and quality monitoring, institutions need to adopt an integrated digital based quality management information system. and (4) Increase community and alumni involvement, where by involving the local community and alumni as part of stakeholders can be strengthened through regular communication and collaboration forums.

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