

A State Law and Education Policy Perspective on National Identity in Border Regions

Syaiful Amin¹, Tsabit Azinar Ahmad¹, Basuki Wibowo²,
Ridwan Arifin^{1,3}, Jefri Rieski Triyanto⁴

¹ Universitas Negeri Semarang, Semarang, Indonesia

² PGRI Pontianak, Pontianak, Indonesia

³ Universitat de Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain

⁴ Universitas Jember, Jember, Indonesia

✉ Corresponding email: syaifulamin@mail.unnes.ac.id

Abstract

This paper examines the role of national education in strengthening Indonesian identity in border regions, where nationalism, state sovereignty, and local identities often intersect. Areas such as Papua, North Kalimantan, and Aceh face distinct challenges due to historical tensions, geographic isolation, and political dynamics. The study analyzes how the national education system can promote a cohesive Indonesian identity while accommodating diverse local contexts. Using a qualitative legal and policy approach, the paper reviews key regulations, including the National Education System Law (No. 20/2003), to assess their effectiveness in fostering national unity. The findings indicate that although existing policies emphasize nationalism, they frequently overlook the specific needs and historical experiences of border communities, contributing to identity tensions. This research highlights gaps in the current legal framework and proposes integrating region-specific content into the national curriculum to create a more inclusive approach to identity-building. It argues that a balanced

model—combining national values with local relevance—can strengthen both unity and legitimacy in border areas. The paper concludes by recommending legal reforms to enhance regional flexibility in educational content while maintaining national principles of sovereignty and cohesion. Suggested measures include revising the National Education System Law and expanding the Local Government Law (No. 23/2014) to support context-sensitive curriculum development aligned with both local histories and national identity.

Keywords

National Education, Indonesian Identity, Legal Reforms, Border Regions, Nationalism

A. Introduction

Indonesia, as an archipelagic nation, stretches across Southeast Asia and the Pacific, comprising over 17,000 islands and bordering Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, and Timor-Leste. The country's vast territorial expanse and its proximity to other nations make its border regions particularly significant not only from a geopolitical perspective but also from a socio-cultural one.¹ These areas often serve as entry points for external influences and are home to diverse populations with unique histories and cultural practices. The strategic importance of these regions, coupled with their socio-political complexities, presents ongoing challenges for the Indonesian state in maintaining territorial integrity, unity, and a cohesive national identity.² While the core of the nation shares a relatively unified sense of identity, border regions remain more fragmented, given their proximity to external cultures, competing nationalist movements, and historical legacies that often diverge from the national narrative.

¹ Harry Purwanto, and D. G. Mangku. "Legal Instrument of the Republic of Indonesia on Border Management Using the Perspective of Archipelagic State." *International Journal of Business, Economics and Law* 11, no. 4 (2016): 51-59.

² See also Sandy Nur Ikfal Raharjo, "Managing conflict through: Cross-border cooperation: A study at the Indonesia-Timor Leste border." *Journal of Indonesian Social Sciences and Humanities* 6, no. 1 (2016): 71-79; La Usman, "The Economic Functions of Cross-Border Activities of Skouw Sae Community, Jayapuraeconomic Functions of Cross-Border Activities of Skouw Sae Community, Jayapura." *Komunitas* 9, no. 1 (2017): 150-160; Ridwan Arifin, et al. "The Direction of Indonesia's Legal Policy on the ASEAN Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty in Criminal Matters: A Path to Law Reform in Cross-Border Crime Enforcement in Southeast Asia." *Journal of Law and Legal Reform* 5, no. 2 (2024): 749-782; Dewa Gede Sudika Mangku, and Ni Putu Rai Yuliartini. "Indonesia's Role in Combating Terrorism in Southeast Asia." *Unnes Law Journal* 7, no. 1 (2021): 89-114.

The challenge of fostering a unified national identity in Indonesia becomes more pronounced in these border areas, where local ethnic identities, languages, and cultural practices can differ significantly from those in the national heartland.³ The principle of “*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*” (Unity in Diversity) underpins the notion of a cohesive national identity, yet this ideal faces practical difficulties in areas where local communities maintain strong transnational affiliations.⁴ For example, many of Indonesia's border regions are home to indigenous groups with historical ties to neighboring countries, making it challenging to reconcile local identities with the overarching narrative of a unified Indonesian state. This dissonance can foster a sense of exclusion, where individuals in these areas may feel less connected to the national project and more aligned with neighboring national identities. The cultural diversity of these regions, while an asset to the nation, can also be a source of tension in efforts to cultivate a singular sense of Indonesian nationhood.⁵

National education plays a crucial role in addressing this challenge, serving as the primary tool through which the state instills a collective identity, history, and values in its citizens. The curriculum, textbooks, and classroom instruction are all designed to transmit the ideals of nationalism, citizenship, and state sovereignty. However, the national education system faces significant hurdles in border regions, where issues of accessibility, cultural relevance, and historical divergence complicate the effective delivery of these lessons. While the national curriculum aims to create a shared understanding of the nation's history, it often overlooks the unique local histories and experiences that shape the identities of border populations. This gap in historical representation may lead to feelings of alienation among

³ Budi Annisa Sidi, *Unity and diversity: National identity and multiculturalism in Indonesia*. Diss. University of Otago, 2020; Martono Martono, et al. "The national identity on the border: Indonesian language awareness and attitudes through multi-ethnic community involvement." *Journal of Community Psychology* 50, no. 1 (2022): 111-125.

⁴ Bambang Yuniarto, et al. "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika: Real Proof of the Power of Pancasila." *Enrichment: Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development* 2, no. 7 (2024); Meira Zahra, "Membangun Identitas Nasional di Tengah Keragaman: Peran Multikulturalisme dalam Persatuan Indonesia." *Journal of Islamic Education Studies* 3, no. 2 (2025): 120-128; Suwito Eko Pramono, et al. "Local Wisdom: Pillar Development of Multicultural Nations and National Education Values." *Cypriot Journal of Educational Sciences* 15, no. 6 (2020): 1587-1598.

⁵ Michael Eilenberg, *At the edges of states: Dynamics of state formation in the Indonesian borderlands*. Brill, 2012; Tania Murray Li, "Articulating indigenous identity in Indonesia: Resource politics and the tribal slot." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42, no. 1 (2000): 149-179.

students, further deepening the divide between the central government and border communities.⁶

Moreover, the legal and policy frameworks governing education in Indonesia's border regions are often insufficiently tailored to the unique needs of these areas. The existing policies are typically designed with a one-size-fits-all approach, which fails to account for the distinct cultural, linguistic, and historical contexts of border populations. This lack of legal adaptation can result in a disconnect between the state's educational objectives and the realities of border communities, where local languages and customs may be overlooked or even suppressed in favor of a standardized national curriculum. The imposition of a singular national narrative, without recognizing the nuances of local histories and cultures, can contribute to a sense of disenfranchisement and undermine efforts to create a cohesive national identity.⁷

A significant social gap in the national education system is the unequal distribution of resources and access to quality education between urban and remote border areas. Many of Indonesia's border regions are geographically isolated and face significant infrastructure challenges, which affect the delivery of education. Limited access to schools, qualified teachers, and educational materials makes it difficult to implement a cohesive national curriculum effectively. In some areas, local education systems are underfunded or lack the necessary resources to integrate national identity education in ways that resonate with students. Furthermore, the physical remoteness of these regions exacerbates the difficulties in reaching marginalized communities, often leaving them disconnected from the nation's broader educational and social programs.⁸ This resource disparity reinforces social inequalities and hampers the development of a shared national consciousness,

⁶ Joseph Zajda, "Nation-building, identity and citizenship education: Introduction." *Nation-building, identity and citizenship education*. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2009. 1-11; Bruce VanSledright, "Narratives of nation-state, historical knowledge, and school history education." *Review of research in education* 32, no. 1 (2008): 109-146.

⁷ Zohaib Hassan Sain, Aulia Luqman Aziz, and Moses Adeolu Agoi. "Navigating Educational Challenges in Indonesia: Policy Recommendations for Future Success." *Journal of Digital Learning and Distance Education* 3, no. 4 (2024): 1038-1046; Ika Widiastuti, "Assessing the Impact of Education Policies in Indonesia: Challenges, Achievement, and Future Direction." *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan* 17, no. 2 (2025): 1955-1964.

⁸ Tatang Muttaqin, "Determinants of unequal access to and quality of education in Indonesia." *Jurnal Perencanaan Pembangunan: The Indonesian Journal of Development Planning* 2, no. 1 (2018): 1-23; Ar Rohman T. Hidayat, et al. "Distance-dependent migration intention of villagers: Comparative study of peri-urban and remote villages in Indonesia." *Administrative Sciences* 12, no. 2 (2022): 48.

leaving border communities vulnerable to external ideologies that may undermine state sovereignty.

In terms of legal gaps, Indonesia's educational policies often fail to adequately address the linguistic diversity in border regions. Many of these areas are home to indigenous communities who speak languages not represented in the national curriculum. The centralization of education policies has historically marginalized these local languages, resulting in students' struggle to fully engage with the standardized national curriculum. The lack of legal provisions for the inclusion of indigenous languages in the formal education system creates a linguistic divide, further alienating border populations from the national identity that education seeks to promote. Moreover, without legal recognition of these languages in educational settings, students may experience a diminished sense of cultural pride and connection to their heritage, which weakens their attachment to the Indonesian state.⁹

In the further context, language barriers and the marginalization of indigenous languages become one of the challenges. The Legal Gap around language policy is one of the most significant barriers to effective education in Indonesia's border regions. While the National Education System Law (*UU Sisdiknas*) emphasizes the importance of inclusive education, the curriculum largely promotes Bahasa Indonesia as the sole medium of instruction, sidelining indigenous languages spoken in many border regions.¹⁰ This is particularly evident in areas such as Papua, Kalimantan, and parts of Nusa Tenggara, where local languages and dialects are deeply tied to the identity of the people. Despite Article 32 of the *UU Sisdiknas*, which encourages respect for local cultures and languages, there is a clear absence of legal provisions that mandate the use of indigenous languages in the formal curriculum or educational materials.¹¹

⁹ Wawan Gunawan, Eri Kurniawan, and Mohammad Andi Hakim. "Navigating inconsistencies: The challenges of implementing multilingual education policy in rural Indonesia." *Social Sciences & Humanities Open* 11 (2025): 101601; Dwi Mariyono, "Indonesian mosaic: the essential need for multicultural education." *Quality Education for All* 1, no. 1 (2024): 301-325; Yuni Azzizah, "Socio-Economic Factors on Indonesia Education Disparity." *International Education Studies* 8, no. 12 (2015): 218-229.

¹⁰ Maya Indrasti, and Faridah Jalil. "The rule of law for the right to inclusive education in Indonesia." *Padjadjaran Jurnal Ilmu Hukum (Journal of Law)* 6, no. 3 (2019): 3.

¹¹ Nesa Novrizal, and Sofwan Manaf. "The Policy of Inclusive Education in Indonesia." *Multicultural Islamic Education Review* 2, no. 1 (2024): 37-44; Endang Pudjiastuti Sartinah, "The Management of Inclusive Schools' Curriculum in Indonesia." *International Joint Conference on Arts and Humanities 2021 (IJCAH 2021)*. Atlantis Press, 2021.

In the context of the border regions, this legal gap exacerbates alienation from the national identity. Indigenous students in these regions may struggle to fully engage with the national curriculum if the materials are not translated into their mother tongues or reflect their cultural realities. This linguistic exclusion deepens the disconnect between local communities and the broader Indonesian identity, as education in a language foreign to the students hinders the development of national cohesion.¹²

Another legal gap arises from the National Curriculum's failure to account for the historical experiences of border regions. While Article 4 of UU Sisdiknas outlines the broad goal of education to promote national unity, the curriculum often overlooks local histories, which are crucial in fostering a deep understanding of national sovereignty and the legitimacy of the nation-state. Many border communities, particularly in Papua and the Southeast Sulawesi, have their own unique historical narratives, such as their resistance to colonial rule or interactions with neighboring states. However, the national education system tends to centralize history around the mainstream narrative of Indonesian independence and territorial unity.¹³

For students in these areas, this historical erasure can be disorienting. Their local histories, which may include relationships with neighboring countries or resistance movements, are often omitted from the curriculum. This not only alienates students but also diminishes their sense of belonging to the nation. The historical gap in the curriculum leads to a national education system that lacks inclusivity, leaving border communities with a reduced sense of ownership over the national story.¹⁴

A critical policy gap that exacerbates the challenges of national education in border regions is the unequal distribution of educational resources. Indonesia's decentralization policies, which theoretically give local governments greater autonomy in managing education, have had mixed results. On paper, Article 4 of UU Sisdiknas states that education

¹² Moses Adeleke Adeoye, Entika Fani Prastikawati, and Lulut Widyaningrum. "Discourse Analysis: Language Issues in Indigenous Language Learning in Indonesia." *Educalingua* 2, no. 2 (2024): 81-92.

¹³ Christine Drake, *National integration in Indonesia: Patterns and policies*. University of Hawaii Press, 2019; Johan Meuleman, "Between unity and diversity: The construction of the Indonesian nation." *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 5, no. 1 (2006): 45-69.

¹⁴ See also Sirkka Ahonen, "Politics of identity through history curriculum: Narratives of the past for social exclusion-or inclusion?." *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 33, no. 2 (2001): 179-194.

should be accessible to all, regardless of geographic location.¹⁵ However, in practice, border regions often suffer from severe resource disparities compared to urban centers. These regions typically experience significant infrastructure challenges, including a lack of schools, qualified teachers, and teaching materials.¹⁶

In addition, the budget allocation for education in remote border areas often falls short, which impacts the ability to implement the national curriculum effectively. In many areas, schools may lack basic infrastructure like classrooms, clean water, or electricity, let alone the resources necessary for fostering a deep understanding of national identity and sovereignty. The policy gap here lies in the inadequate resource allocation to border regions, making it impossible to implement a high-quality national education system that can instill unity and nationalism.

Another policy gap revolves around the professional development of teachers in border regions. The Teacher and Lecturer Law (UU No. 14/2005) outlines qualifications and standards for teachers, yet there are no specific provisions for teachers who work in linguistically and culturally diverse environments, such as those found in Indonesia's border regions. In these areas, teachers often lack specialized training in teaching students who speak different languages, belong to distinct cultural groups, or have historical ties to neighboring countries.

The lack of teacher training programs that focus on cultural sensitivity and the complexities of borderland identity weakens the ability of educators to effectively impart national identity and unity. As a result, teachers may struggle to bridge the gap between the national curriculum and the local realities of their students. Additionally, there is a lack of policy support for teachers in border areas, which hinders their ability to address the challenges posed by students' diverse identities and experiences.

The absence of policy frameworks that emphasize nationalism and sovereignty in the context of border education is another critical

¹⁵ Alex Chandra, "Undang-undang Sisdiknas sebagai payung hukum pendidikan di Indonesia." *JlIP-Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan* 6, no. 4 (2023): 2715-2720; Syafira Masnuah, Nyayu Khodijah, and Ermis Suryana. "Analisis Kebijakan Pendidikan Islam dalam Undang-Undang No. 20 Tahun 2003 (Sisdiknas)." *MODELING: Jurnal Program Studi PGMI* 9, no. 1 (2022): 115-130.

¹⁶ Arif Rohman Hakim, and Jajat Darajat. "Pendidikan multikultural dalam membentuk karakter dan Identitas Nasional." *Jurnal Ilmiah Profesi Pendidikan* 8, no. 3 (2023): 1337-1346; Irawati Irawati. "Urgensi pendidikan multikultural, pendidikan segregasi dan pendidikan inklusi di Indonesia." *Instructional Development Journal* 3, no. 3 (2020): 177-187.

gap. While the national education system is designed to promote a sense of belonging to the Indonesian state, there is little focus on territorial integrity and sovereignty in the educational materials provided to students in border regions. These regions, where issues of national security and territorial disputes are particularly sensitive, require specialized education programs that emphasize the importance of national sovereignty and the country's territorial claims.

However, the current educational policies do not adequately address these needs. National education policy tends to treat the issue of sovereignty as a generalized concept, without delving into its practical relevance for students living in border areas. This policy gap undermines the state's ability to effectively engage students in critical discussions about the importance of national unity, sovereignty, and the complexities of territorial disputes.

The challenge of historical memory in border regions is also shaped by legal and social gaps in the way history is taught and remembered. In many border areas, local populations have their own historical narratives that may conflict with the state's official account.¹⁷ These divergent memories of past territorial disputes, colonial experiences, and interactions with neighboring countries are often ignored or simplified in national textbooks. While the state's official historical narrative seeks to promote unity and a collective understanding of Indonesia's path to independence, it often overlooks or marginalizes the histories of border communities. This discrepancy not only distorts the historical record but also deepens local resentment and distrust toward the central government. To address this gap, national education must incorporate more inclusive historical frameworks that acknowledge the diverse experiences of all Indonesian citizens, particularly those in border regions who feel their histories are overlooked or misrepresented.

The issue of nationalism in Indonesia's border regions is further complicated by external pressures, such as cross-border ethnic solidarity and transnational political movements. The presence of ethnic groups that share cultural ties with neighboring countries, coupled with the proximity to foreign media and ideologies, can make border communities more susceptible to alternative nationalisms that challenge the legitimacy of the Indonesian state. In these contexts, national education must not only promote pride in Indonesia's heritage but also

¹⁷ Hastings Donnan, and Thomas M. Wilson. *Borders: Frontiers of identity, nation and state*. Routledge, 2021.

engage with the complexities of borderland identities.¹⁸ The legal framework for education, however, does not always account for the dynamic nature of nationalism in border areas, where the forces of regionalism and transnationalism often compete with state efforts to foster a unified sense of national identity. To bridge this gap, education policies must be more flexible and responsive to local concerns while still reinforcing the fundamental principles of Indonesian sovereignty and unity.

The sovereignty of the nation is yet another area where legal and policy gaps affect the education system's ability to promote national unity in border regions. Territorial disputes and cross-border issues are particularly sensitive in areas like Papua, Kalimantan, and Nusa Tenggara, where the legitimacy of Indonesia's borders may be questioned by neighboring states or external actors. National education, in this regard, must emphasize the importance of territorial integrity and national security, yet current educational frameworks often fail to address the practical realities of border disputes. Additionally, legal protections for the sovereignty of Indonesia's borders are sometimes weak in these regions, leaving local communities more vulnerable to external influences. Strengthening the legal foundations of national education in these regions requires a more comprehensive approach that ties the teaching of sovereignty directly to the lived realities of border communities, reinforcing the legitimacy of the nation's territorial claims and sovereignty.¹⁹

Furthermore, Indonesia's national education system faces significant challenges in addressing the needs of its border regions. The social and legal gaps that exist in terms of resources, historical representation, language inclusion, and the promotion of nationalism undermine the effectiveness of education in fostering a cohesive national identity. To bridge these gaps, it is essential to reevaluate the current educational policies and legal frameworks, ensuring they are better adapted to the unique socio-political and cultural realities of Indonesia's border communities. Only by addressing these gaps can national education serve as a meaningful tool in strengthening Indonesia's unity, sovereignty, and sense of national belonging.

¹⁸ Moch Faisal Karim, "State transformation and cross-border regionalism in Indonesia's periphery: contesting the centre." *Rising Powers and State Transformation*. Routledge, 2020. 158-174; Adityo Darmawan Sudagung, "Indonesia's Strategies in Dealing with Nationalism Problems of Border Societies at Indonesia-Malaysia Border Area (2009-2014)." *International Journal of Environment, Architecture, and Societies* 1, no. 1 (2021): 1-11.

¹⁹ Simon Butt, "Regional autonomy and legal disorder: The proliferation of local laws in Indonesia." *Singapore Journal of Legal Studies* (2010): 1-21.

B. Methods

The research employs a qualitative approach to analyze the legal and policy gaps in Indonesia's national education system, specifically focusing on border regions. This approach involves a documentary analysis of relevant legal texts, including the National Education System Law (*UU Sisdiknas*), the Teacher and Lecturer Law (*UU No. 14/2005*), and the National Curriculum guidelines, alongside policy reports from the Ministry of Education and local government publications. The study will examine how these legal frameworks address (or fail to address) the educational needs of border communities, with particular attention to issues of language, historical inclusivity, resource distribution, and teacher training. Additionally, a comparative analysis will be conducted to identify best practices from other countries facing similar challenges in border education, providing insights into potential reforms applicable to Indonesia.

To gain deeper insight into the lived experiences of students, teachers, and educational administrators in border regions, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions will be conducted in selected border areas such as Papua, Kalimantan, and Nusa Tenggara. These interviews will allow for a better understanding of the practical challenges in implementing national educational policies in these areas, as well as the perceptions of local stakeholders about the role of education in shaping national identity and sovereignty. The data collected will be analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns and issues related to the legal and policy gaps, providing a comprehensive overview of the challenges and opportunities for reforming the national education system in Indonesia's border regions.

C. Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Definitions

1. National Identity

National identity, a construct deeply embedded in the sociocultural and political fabric of a nation, plays a critical role in the cohesion and stability of a state, particularly in a vast and culturally diverse country like Indonesia. National identity can be defined as the sense of belonging and collective identity shared by citizens of a state, rooted in common cultural, historical, and political experiences. Anderson (1983), in his seminal work *Imagined Communities*, asserts that national identity is a product of the imagined bonds that connect individuals who will likely never meet but are united by a shared sense

of nationhood.²⁰ In the context of Indonesia, a nation composed of over 17,000 islands and more than 300 ethnic groups, the concept of national identity is both complex and fragile. The nation's identity must encompass the plurality of cultures, languages, and religious practices, yet maintain a cohesive sense of belonging and solidarity among its people. As Smith (1991) notes, national identity is crucial in shaping a collective memory and a shared understanding of the past, which is essential for fostering social unity in multi-ethnic societies.²¹

In Indonesia, national education plays an instrumental role in cultivating a sense of national identity by promoting a unified understanding of the state's history, cultural values, and political ideologies. The education system is tasked with nurturing students' loyalty to the nation while respecting the country's diversity. However, as highlighted by Nugroho et.al. (2018), the integration of national identity in the educational framework often faces challenges due to the marginalization of indigenous cultures and local languages, especially in the border regions. These areas, where people may share closer cultural, ethnic, or historical ties with neighboring countries, may have a weaker attachment to the national narrative promoted by the state. Thus, national education must bridge these divides by fostering inclusivity and encouraging a sense of pride in the diverse, yet unified, Indonesian identity.²²

2. Nationalism

Nationalism, often considered the ideological counterpart of national identity, is the belief in the primacy of one's nation and the loyalty owed to it above other allegiances. Theories of nationalism, such as those proposed by Gellner (1983) and Hobsbawm (1990), argue that nationalism is a modern construct, arising in the wake of industrialization and the formation of the modern state.²³ Nationalism is both a political and cultural force, aimed at creating solidarity among

²⁰ Benedict Anderson, "Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism." *The new social theory reader*. Routledge, 2020. 282-288; Manu Goswami, "Benedict Anderson, imagined communities (1983)." *Public Culture* 32, no. 2 (2020): 441-448.

²¹ Montserrat Guibernau, "Anthony D. Smith on nations and national identity: a critical assessment." *Nations and Nationalism* 10, no. 1-2 (2004): 125-141; Anthony D. Smith, "National identity and the idea of European unity." *International Affairs* 68, no. 1 (1992): 55-76.

²² Kharisma Nugroho, Fred Carden, and Hans Antlov. *Local knowledge matters*. Policy Press, 2018.

²³ See Gellner Ernest, "Nations and nationalism." *Paris, Payot* (1983); Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and nationalism since 1780: Programme, myth, reality*. Cambridge University Press, 1992.

diverse groups within a nation by emphasizing shared values, symbols, and narratives of national pride and historical continuity. In the context of Indonesia, nationalism must transcend the nation's vast ethnic and religious diversity, which includes a mosaic of distinct cultural and religious practices that might otherwise challenge a unified national ethos. Indonesia's Pancasila—the five principles of national ideology—serves as a framework for fostering national unity, as it emphasizes unity in diversity (*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*), an idea that is central to Indonesian nationalism.²⁴

The role of education in this context cannot be overstated, as it is the primary institution through which young citizens are exposed to national ideologies and taught the values of nationalism. As Billig (1995) suggests in his concept of "*banal nationalism*," the daily rituals of nation-building are embedded in routine practices, such as the recitation of the national pledge or the celebration of national holidays, which are reinforced through the educational system.²⁵ Nationalism in Indonesian education, as outlined by Suryadinata (2003), is a means of instilling a collective consciousness that binds together people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds into a shared vision of the Indonesian nation-state.²⁶ However, the challenge remains in incorporating the multifaceted identities of border communities into the national narrative. These regions, where identities often overlap with those of neighboring states, present a unique challenge to the state's efforts to instill national pride without undermining local identities.

3. State Sovereignty

State sovereignty, defined as the supreme authority of a state over its territory and the people within it, is a cornerstone of international law. The Westphalian model of sovereignty, established in 1648, asserts that sovereign states have the right to control their internal affairs without external interference. For Indonesia, a nation with complex geopolitical dynamics—especially in its border regions—sovereignty remains a key issue, particularly as its borders often demarcate regions with overlapping ethnic, cultural, and political ties to neighboring countries. The concept of territorial integrity, as enshrined in the

²⁴ I. Nyoman Pursika, "Kajian Analitik Terhadap Semboyan" *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*." *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pengajaran* 42, no. 1 (2009): 15-20.

²⁵ Michael Billig, "Banal nationalism." *Thousands Oaks & New Delhi: SAGE Publications* (1995).

²⁶ Leo Suryadinata, Evi Nurvidya Arifin, and Aris Ananta. *Indonesia's Population: Ethnicity and Religion in a Changing Political Landscape*. No. 1. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2003.

Charter of the United Nations (Article 2.4)²⁷, holds significant relevance for Indonesia, as disputes in regions like Papua and parts of Kalimantan are directly tied to issues of sovereignty and national borders. The ongoing challenges at Indonesia's borders underscore the importance of national education in reinforcing the legitimacy of the state's territorial claims.²⁸

In this regard, education serves as a critical tool in shaping public understanding of sovereignty and territorial integrity. As Keohane (2002) notes, sovereignty is not just a legal construct but also a political and social one, deeply embedded in the consciousness of citizens.²⁹ By integrating territorial studies and legal frameworks into the curriculum, the state can bolster public understanding of Indonesia's territorial boundaries and sovereignty, thereby reinforcing the legitimacy of the nation-state. Additionally, as Bermeo (2009) suggests, education can play a key role in shaping national consciousness by fostering awareness about the political and historical significance of borders.³⁰ In Indonesia's border regions, where there may be a stronger affinity with neighboring countries, educating students about the importance of national borders, sovereignty, and the history of territorial integration is critical for fostering a sense of commitment to the nation-state. Such educational practices could help mitigate regional nationalist sentiments that might challenge the unity of the Indonesian state, particularly in areas where external national influences are pronounced.

D. Results and Discussion

1. Legal and Policy Perspectives on National Education in Border Regions

1) *Current Legal Frameworks*

Indonesia's education system is primarily governed by several key legal documents, including the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (UUD 1945), the National Education System Law (UU No. 20/2003), and various related regulations. The 1945 Constitution

²⁷ James Summers, "The principle of territorial integrity." *Research Handbook on Secession*. Edward Elgar Publishing, 2022. 42-58.

²⁸ Heribertus Jaka Triyana, "Relevance of the Remedial Secession Theory for Indonesia's Territorial Integrity." *Indonesian Journal of International Law* 21, no. 1 (2023): 2.

²⁹ Robert Owen Keohane, *Power and governance in a partially globalized world*. Psychology Press, 2002.

³⁰ Nancy Bermeo, "Poverty, inequality, and democracy (ii): does electoral democracy Boost economic equality?." *Journal of Democracy* 20, no. 4 (2009): 21-35. See Elizabeth Bermeo, "South Korea's successful education system: lessons and policy implications for Peru." *Korean Social Science Journal* 41, no. 2 (2014): 135-151.

enshrines the right to education for all citizens, emphasizing that the state is responsible for providing equitable education across the nation. Article 31 of the Constitution stipulates that every citizen shall have the right to receive education, and the state must ensure its accessibility and quality. This constitutional guarantee forms the foundation of Indonesia's national education policy, setting the broad legal parameters for education in the country.³¹

The National Education System Law (*UU Sisdiknas*), which was enacted in 2003, is a central piece of legislation that operationalizes the constitutional right to education. The law outlines the goals of the national education system, defines the roles of the government and educational institutions, and establishes the framework for curriculum development, teacher qualifications, and student assessments. It emphasizes the principles of national unity, diversity, and democracy within the educational process. The law stresses that the education system should reflect the diversity of Indonesia's population, providing a curriculum that is inclusive of the country's varied cultures, languages, and regional identities.³² However, despite these provisions, there are clear challenges when applying these legal frameworks in Indonesia's border regions, where unique socio-political, historical, and cultural factors complicate the uniform application of education policies.

In border regions, the application of national education laws faces practical constraints due to geographic isolation, differing local needs, and cultural diversity.³³ For example, the law encourages a national curriculum that promotes unity through shared knowledge and values, yet this curriculum often neglects local cultures and languages, which are integral to the identity of border communities. The National Curriculum (*Kurikulum 2013*) is designed with a uniform approach, yet it fails to fully accommodate the specific linguistic, cultural, and

³¹ SuAgnes kasni, and Hady Efendy. "The problematic of education system in Indonesia and reform agenda." *International Journal of Education* 9, no. 3 (2017): 183; Andrew Rosser, "Law and the realisation of human rights: Insights from Indonesia's education sector." *Asian Studies Review* 39, no. 2 (2015): 194-212.

³² See Nurul Yuni Azzizah, *Influences of Regional Inequality in Education in Indonesia*. Diss. Tohoku University, 2017; Tajuddin Noor, "Rumusan Tujuan Pendidikan Nasional Pasal 3 Undang-Undang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional No 20 Tahun 2003." *Wabana Karya Ilmiah Pendidikan* 2, no. 1 (2018); Muhammad Bahrul Ulum, and Dina Tsalist Wildana. "Promoting the Right to Education through A Card: A Paradox of Indonesia's Educational Policy?." *Journal of Indonesian Legal Studies* 4, no. 1 (2019): 143. See also Harum Isnin, and Novia Wahyu Wardhani. "Pancasila as a Margin of Appreciation in the Implementation of Human Rights in Indonesia Citizenship Education Perspective." *Jurnal Scientia Indonesia* 7, no. 1 (2021): 45-60.

³³ Allan Luke, "Generalizing across borders: Policy and the limits of educational science." *Educational Researcher* 40, no. 8 (2011): 367-377.

historical contexts of Indonesia's border areas. These areas often experience tension between the national educational mandates and the lived realities of local populations, leading to a disconnect between national policies and local practices.³⁴

2) *Challenges in the Legal and Policy Landscape*

One of the most glaring challenges in the legal and policy landscape of education in Indonesia's border regions is the gap in resource allocation. Despite the constitutional and legal guarantees, the allocation of resources to remote or border areas often falls short, creating disparities in access to quality education. Border regions, particularly in Papua, Kalimantan, and Sumatra, struggle with insufficient infrastructure, lack of qualified teachers, and limited educational facilities. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture (2018), these regions face challenges such as poor school facilities, limited access to learning materials, and understaffed schools, which hinder the effective implementation of national education policies. The national law, while expansive in scope, lacks a clear mechanism for equalizing resources across Indonesia's diverse regions, particularly in border areas, where resource allocation is often skewed in favor of more urbanized or developed regions.³⁵

Furthermore, there is a significant issue with access to quality education. Border communities often find themselves geographically isolated, with schools located far from residential areas, making it difficult for students to attend regularly. This is compounded by economic barriers, as many families in border regions are impoverished, and the cost of transportation or school supplies can be prohibitive.³⁶ While the government has implemented various initiatives to address these issues, such as the School Operational Assistance Program (BOS), the uniform application of such policies across Indonesia's diverse regions remains a significant challenge. The laws governing education

³⁴ I. Nengah Suastika, "Implementasi Kurikulum 2013 (Idealisme dan Tantangan Membangun Kualitas Pendidikan)." *Jurnal Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan Undiksha* 10, no. 2 (2022): 291-300.

³⁵ Vidi Sukmayadi, and Azizul Yahya. "Indonesian education landscape and the 21st century challenges." *Journal of Social Studies Education Research* 11, no. 4 (2020): 219-234; Sabungan Sibarani, and Nomensen Sinamo. "Implementation of educational policy in Indonesia." *KnE Social Sciences* (2020): 433-440.

³⁶ Tatang Muttaqin, "Determinants of unequal access to and quality of education in Indonesia." *Jurnal Perencanaan Pembangunan: The Indonesian Journal of Development Planning* 2, no. 1 (2018): 1-23; Chiara Logli, "Higher education in Indonesia: Contemporary challenges in governance, access, and quality." *The Palgrave Handbook of Asia Pacific Higher Education*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2016. 561-581.

do not sufficiently address the logistical and financial barriers that disproportionately affect the border regions, which suffer from both geographic isolation and economic disadvantage.³⁷

Another challenge lies in the uniformity of educational policies. While Indonesia's legal framework aims for a standardized national curriculum, this approach does not always account for the distinct socio-cultural realities of border communities. In many border areas, local languages, cultural practices, and historical experiences play a pivotal role in shaping community identity. However, the national education system tends to centralize the curriculum, often sidelining local languages and histories in favor of a singular national narrative. The Sisdiknas Law, which mandates the use of Bahasa Indonesia as the primary medium of instruction, inadvertently marginalizes local languages, leading to cultural alienation in border regions. The absence of explicit legal provisions supporting the use of local languages in schools means that students in border regions may struggle to connect with the material, as they are taught in a language that is not their first. This gap in the legal framework reinforces educational inequality and hinders the development of a truly inclusive education system.

3) Policy Recommendations

Addressing these legal and policy challenges requires comprehensive reforms aimed at bridging the gap between national education laws and the realities of Indonesia's border regions. One of the most important legal reforms would be to introduce specific provisions in the National Education System Law that allocate resources based on regional needs, rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach. Such provisions could ensure that border regions receive targeted financial support to address infrastructure deficits, improve teacher quality, and increase access to educational materials. In particular, the decentralization of educational funding could empower local governments to allocate resources more effectively, based on the unique needs of their communities.³⁸

³⁷ Eny Sulistyanningrum, "Impact evaluation of the school operational assistance program (BOS) using the matching method." *Journal of Indonesian Economy and Business* 31, no. 1 (2016): 33-62; Fathonah Nasrullah, "Educational policy in the school operational assistance program to improve the quality of education." *Amandemen: Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Studies* 1, no. 2 (2023): 72-84.

³⁸ See I Gde Putu Artha, "Balinese Spirituality and Education: Fostering Harmony, Sustainability, and Community through Indigenous Learning". *Journal of Indigenous Knowledge and Education in Indonesia* 1, no. 1 (2025); Riska Alkadri, Souad Ezzerouali, and Ridwan Arifin. "Breaking the Constitutional Poverty Trap: Socio-Economic

Moreover, the Indonesian education system would benefit from a legal mandate to integrate local cultures and languages into the national curriculum. This could be achieved through curricular adaptations that incorporate regional languages and local history into the mainstream educational framework. The Sisdiknas Law could be amended to include provisions that recognize and preserve local languages as vital components of the national curriculum, thus fostering a more inclusive and culturally sensitive educational system. As Hermawan (2016) notes, the inclusion of local cultures in national education is not only a matter of preserving heritage but also of promoting national pride by acknowledging the diversity that contributes to Indonesia's rich cultural tapestry.³⁹

Furthermore, teacher training programs need to be revised to ensure that educators in border regions are adequately prepared to teach in culturally diverse environments. Training should include linguistic competency in local languages, cultural sensitivity, and an understanding of the socio-political issues affecting border communities. By fostering a cadre of teachers who are both culturally and linguistically equipped, the education system can better address the unique challenges faced by students in these regions. Additionally, teachers should be trained to integrate nationalism and sovereignty into their teaching, helping students understand the importance of Indonesia's territorial integrity, while also respecting the local identities that shape their experiences.⁴⁰

Another essential policy recommendation is to strengthen infrastructure in border areas through targeted investments in educational facilities. Schools in remote regions must be equipped with basic amenities such as electricity, clean water, and internet access, alongside adequate classroom spaces and learning materials. The School

Rights and Inequality in Indonesia's Constitutional Framework". *Indonesian Constitutional Studies* 1, no. 1 (2025): 27-52.

³⁹ Hary Hermawan, "Dampak Pengembangan Desa Wisata yang Berdampak Terhadap Sosial Budaya Masyarakat Lokal." *Seminar Nasional Ilmu Pengetahuan dan Komputer (SNIPTEK) Nusa Mandiri*. 2016. See also Cahya Miranti, Kamal Nordin, and Elita Puspita Sari. 2025. "Sasak Education in Lombok: Bridging Tradition and Modernity in a Changing World". *Journal of Indigenous Knowledge and Education in Indonesia* 1, no. 1 (2025); Muhammad Ilham, Diana Marzuki, and Aditya Kumar. "Reviving Dayak Pedagogies: Indigenous Knowledge and Education in the Heart of Borneo". *Journal of Indigenous Knowledge and Education in Indonesia* 1, no. 1 (2025).

⁴⁰ Farah Khan, and Muhammad Haseeb. "Analysis of teacher training education program: A comparative study of Indonesia, Malaysia and Pakistan." *Paradigms* 11, no. 1 (2017): 13-17; Aria Djalil, and Lorin W. Anderson. "The impact of a research-based teacher training program on Indonesian teachers, classrooms, and students." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 5, no. 3 (1989): 165-178.

Operational Assistance Program (BOS) should be expanded and tailored to meet the specific needs of border schools, ensuring that funding is used effectively to improve educational standards. Additionally, transportation assistance should be provided for students in isolated areas to facilitate access to schools, helping them to overcome the logistical challenges that prevent regular school attendance.

Lastly, the government should consider public-private partnerships to address the challenges faced by border education. Engaging local businesses, non-governmental organizations, and community groups in educational initiatives can provide valuable resources, expertise, and support to schools in remote regions. These collaborations could help to bridge gaps in infrastructure, resource allocation, and teacher training, while also ensuring that educational policies are tailored to local needs.⁴¹

2. Strengthening State Sovereignty through National Education

1) *State Sovereignty in Border Regions*

Indonesia's border regions present unique challenges to the country's state sovereignty, both from a legal and political perspective. The country's borders, particularly in areas such as Papua, Kalimantan, and Riau, are the site of territorial disputes, which often involve competing claims from neighboring countries or local movements that question the legitimacy of the Indonesian state. These disputes range from land to maritime boundaries and often involve complex geopolitical factors. For instance, the ongoing territorial dispute between Indonesia and Malaysia over areas in Borneo and the waters surrounding the Ambalat region highlights the tension over Indonesia's sovereignty in its border areas. Local autonomy, which was granted through the Special Autonomy Law for Papua (No. 21/2001), has also created tensions between central government policies and the regional demands for greater control, and further complicating issues of sovereignty.⁴²

⁴¹ Sri Untari, "Public-private partnerships in improving the quality of education for the poor in Indonesia." *Public Policy and Administration Research* 6, no. 6 (2016): 65-72; Wayne Palmer, "Public-private partnerships in the administration and control of Indonesian temporary migrant labour in Hong Kong." *Political Geography* 34 (2013): 1-9.

⁴² Riris Katharina, "Deliberative formulation of Papua special autonomy policy." *BISNIS & BIROKRASI: Jurnal Ilmu Administrasi dan Organisasi* 24, no. 2 (2018): 2; Lily Bauw, "Special Autonomy of Papua: A Review from the Perspective of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia." *Papua Law Journal* 1, no. 1

These challenges are amplified by the geographical and cultural separation between the central government in Jakarta and the border regions, where populations may have ethnic, linguistic, or historical ties to neighboring countries. In Papua, for instance, some segments of the population have expressed support for independence or greater autonomy, influenced by historical grievances and the presence of separatist movements. Similarly, in Kalimantan, the overlapping ethnic groups and shared cultural ties with Malaysia contribute to a weakened national identity in border regions, making them more susceptible to external influences. Legal frameworks, such as the Law on National Defense and national education policies, provide a foundation for asserting territorial claims, but there is still a need for comprehensive efforts to reaffirm the state's sovereignty in these areas.⁴³

In this context, national education plays a crucial role in addressing the awareness of Indonesia's territorial integrity. Education can raise consciousness about the legal, political, and historical dimensions of state sovereignty, especially in areas where the national narrative may be perceived as detached from local realities. Through curricula that incorporate the history of territorial integration and the political significance of borders, education can instill a sense of national belonging among citizens in border regions. National education, thus, not only serves to convey knowledge of Indonesia's geopolitical boundaries but also reinforces the legitimacy of Indonesia's territorial claims in the eyes of its citizens, fostering patriotism and national unity.

2) *Civic Education and Sovereignty*

Civic education, as an essential component of the national education system, plays a pivotal role in shaping citizens' understanding of their rights, responsibilities, and the importance of sovereignty.⁴⁴ This is particularly relevant in border regions, where there may be a weaker attachment to the central state, and where the complexities of sovereignty and national unity may not always be fully appreciated. Civic

(2018): 1-26; I. Gede Wira Adhi Darmawan, "Special Autonomy Implementation and Its Impact on the Welfare of the Society: A Short Review." *Bestuurskunde: Journal of Governmental Studies* 2, no. 1 (2022): 17-29.

⁴³ See Harri Dolli Hutabarat, et al. "Model of national defense education policy process in supporting national defense." *Multidisciplinary Science Journal* 7, no. 7 (2025): 2025383-2025383; Yudhi Murfi, et al. "Formulation of National Defense Education Strategy in Order to Strengthen a Strong National Defense." *Journal of Ecobumanism* 3, no. 8 (2024): 1353-1362.

⁴⁴ Lynn A. Staeheli, and Daniel Hammett. "Educating the new national citizen: Education, political subjectivity and divided societies." *Governing through pedagogy*. Routledge, 2013. 51-64.

education aims to teach individuals about the foundations of the state, the legal system, and the rights and duties of citizenship.⁴⁵ In Indonesia's border regions, this subject should place particular emphasis on the principles of state sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the political structures that maintain the unity of the nation.

One of the key goals of civic education in border regions is to ensure that students understand the significance of state sovereignty in maintaining territorial and political unity. The curriculum should emphasize that the nation's borders are not merely lines on a map but rather a reflection of the historical struggles and the legal framework that define Indonesia's independence.⁴⁶ Additionally, students should be taught the importance of defending the state's sovereignty, especially in regions where external influences might challenge the unity of the nation. For example, Papua has long been the site of separatist movements, and education can serve as a critical tool in fostering a sense of belonging to Indonesia, thereby reinforcing the commitment to the integrity of the state.⁴⁷ Educating young Indonesians, particularly in border areas, about the importance of unity and national defense can contribute to a more robust national identity that transcends local affiliations and cultural differences.⁴⁸

Through interactive learning and real-life case studies, students can explore the history of Indonesia's independence, the struggles for sovereignty, and the role of international law in preserving national borders. This can be further supported by discussions of current events related to border security, territorial disputes, and the broader geopolitical challenges facing the country. When students are educated on these issues, they are more likely to develop a strong sense of loyalty to the state and a deeper understanding of the value of sovereignty in maintaining peace, security, and prosperity. Furthermore, civic education can help individuals understand that sovereignty is not just

⁴⁵ Kerry J. Kennedy, "Global trends in civic and citizenship education: What are the lessons for nation states?," *Education Sciences* 2, no. 3 (2012): 121-135.

⁴⁶ Encep Syarief Nurdin, "The Policies on Civic Education in Developing National Character in Indonesia," *International Education Studies* 8, no. 8 (2015): 199-209; Gunawan Santoso, "The Philosophical Power of Civic Education 21st Century in Indonesia," *IJEBD (International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Business Development)* 4, no. 1 (2021): 72-79.

⁴⁷ Julius Cesar I. Trajano, "Ethnic nationalism and separatism in West Papua, Indonesia," *Journal of Peace, Conflict and Development* 16 (2010): 12-35.

⁴⁸ Fara Amalia Lutfi Pratama, et al. *Implementasi Nilai Pancasila dalam Bhinneka Tunggal Ika Sebagai Alat Pemersatu Bangsa di Era Generasi Milenial*. Unisri Press, 2023; Mali Benyamin Mikhael, et al. *Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan: Mendidik Generasi Milenial Yang Bervawasan Kebangsaan*. Penerbit Universitas Katolik Indonesia Atma Jaya, 2022.

about borders but also about the rights of citizens to live in a stable, secure, and unified state.

3) Case Studies

In examining the role of national education in strengthening state sovereignty in Indonesia's border regions, several case studies provide valuable insights into the impact of educational initiatives. One such example is the Papua province, where the government has implemented educational reforms aimed at fostering national unity and strengthening the understanding of sovereignty among young people. Programs such as "*Cinta Tanah Air*" (Love for the Homeland) and local adaptations of the national curriculum have sought to integrate regional histories with the larger national narrative, ensuring that students in Papua feel connected to the broader state while maintaining respect for their local identities. By including local history and indigenous perspectives in educational materials, these initiatives help build a shared understanding of sovereignty that transcends ethnic and cultural divides.⁴⁹

Similarly, in Kalimantan, the Kalimantan Nationalism Education Program (*Program Pendidikan Nasionalisme Kalimantan*) was launched to address the regional identity crisis that arises from the proximity of Kalimantan to Malaysia. This program incorporates lessons on the territorial boundaries of Indonesia, as well as the political and economic implications of sovereignty. Through a combination of classroom instruction, field trips, and interactive community workshops, students gain a deeper appreciation of the history behind Indonesia's territorial claims and the importance of sovereignty for national security. These initiatives not only promote a sense of shared history and national identity but also challenge the perception that Kalimantan's border regions are simply extensions of neighboring states.⁵⁰

In the Riau archipelago, where proximity to Singapore and Malaysia poses unique challenges, the National Integrity Education Program (*Program Pendidikan Integritas Nasional*) focuses on building

⁴⁹ Imas Kurniawaty, Purwati Purwati, and Aiman Faiz. "Penguatan pendidikan karakter cinta tanah air." *Jurnal Education and Development* 10, no. 3 (2022): 496-498; Nur Tri Atika, Husni Wakhuyudin, and Khusnul Fajriyah. "Pelaksanaan penguatan pendidikan karakter membentuk karakter cinta tanah air." *Mimbar Ilmu* 24, no. 1 (2019): 105-113.

⁵⁰ See Thomy Sastra Atmaja, Jagad Aditya Dewantara, and Bambang Budi Utomo. "Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter Berbasis Sekolah Menengah Atas Perbatasan Entikong Kalimantan Barat." *Jurnal Basicedu* 4, no. 4 (2020): 1257-1266; Yustiani Yustiani. "Nasionalisme Melalui Pendidikan di Sekolah pada Siswa SMA di Wilayah Perbatasan Kalimantan Barat." *Jurnal SMART (Studi Masyarakat, Religi, dan Tradisi)* 4, no. 1 (2018): 111-123.

cross-border understanding while reinforcing the national sovereignty narrative.⁵¹ By collaborating with neighboring countries in cultural exchange programs and joint educational projects, the program seeks to build diplomatic understanding while also teaching students about the importance of territorial integrity in the context of international relations. In these regions, education can serve as a platform for not only promoting sovereignty but also fostering regional cooperation in areas like environmental sustainability and border security.⁵²

These case studies demonstrate the potential for national education to play a critical role in both promoting sovereignty and addressing local identity issues in Indonesia's border regions. By adapting educational curricula to the specific needs and circumstances of border communities, Indonesia can ensure that its citizens are not only well-informed about the state's territorial integrity but also feel a strong sense of belonging and pride in the nation.

4) *Lessons from Other Countries*

Looking at international examples can offer valuable lessons for Indonesia in strengthening state sovereignty through education. Canada's education system in the border regions with the United States, for example, places a strong emphasis on civic education that highlights the importance of national unity and the protection of sovereign borders. Through mandatory curricula on Canadian history, geopolitics, and territorial security, students gain a clear understanding of the legal and cultural significance of borders, fostering a strong national identity even in regions with ethnic or linguistic ties to neighboring countries.⁵³

⁵¹ See Yunita Yasmin Istiqomah, and Dinie Anggraeni Dewi. "Memperkuat Integrasi Nasional Melalui Generasi Bangsa Dan Teknologi Pada Pembelajaran Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan." *Journal of Education, Humaniora and Social Sciences (JEHSS)* 4, no. 1 (2021): 272-277.

⁵² See also Mikael Saerang, Beni Rumaropen, Mia Wilkins, and Felipe Rodrigues. "Papuan Traditional Ecological Knowledge: Integrating Indigenous Approaches into Environmental Education for Sustainable Futures". *Journal of Indigenous Knowledge and Education in Indonesia* 1, no. 1 (2025); Fathan Mubina, and Muhammad Iqbal Achmad Rahim. "Climate Justice in Education: Are Indonesian Curricula Climate-Responsive?". *Indonesian Climate Justice Review* 1, no. 3 (2024); Chen Jie, Syaiful Amin, Rizki Priyanto, and Tajudeen Sanni. "Crisis in the Classroom: The Role of Climate Education in Shaping Indonesia's Future Environmental Justice Movements", *Indonesian Climate Justice Review* 2, no. 3 (2025).

⁵³ Victor Konrad, and Heather Nicol. *Beyond Walls: Re-Inventing the Canada-United States Borderlands*. Routledge, 2016; Adrienne Anderson, "Education Reform Policies: How the Canadian Government's Role in Education Can Influence the United States' Education System." *Michigan State International Law Review* 24, no. 2 (2015).

Similarly, in Russia, educational programs in its Far Eastern border regions emphasize the importance of sovereignty in protecting the nation's territorial interests, teaching students about Russia's historical territorial disputes and the role of international law in defending national borders.⁵⁴

Indonesia can also learn from Mexico's education policies in its border regions with the United States. In response to the significant flow of cross-border migration and competing territorial claims, Mexico's education system has placed a high premium on national pride and sovereignty in its curricula, integrating discussions about territorial rights, the Mexican Constitution, and border security. These programs have helped promote national unity and pride among students in border areas, ensuring that their understanding of sovereignty remains strong despite external pressures.⁵⁵

By adapting these international experiences, Indonesia can refine its own educational policies, ensuring that its national education system both strengthens sovereignty and adapts to the unique needs of its border regions. Through contextualized education that resonates with local communities while reinforcing the importance of state sovereignty, Indonesia can build a more cohesive and unified nation, despite its geographical and cultural diversity.

3. Legal and Policy Recommendations for Strengthening Indonesian Identity through Education

1) Legal Reforms for Education in Border Regions

To effectively address the challenges in education in Indonesia's border regions, significant legal reforms are required. These reforms should not only improve access to education but also explicitly include components that promote national identity and sovereignty. Indonesia's National Education System Law (*Undang-Undang No. 20 Tahun 2003*)

⁵⁴ J. C. Bazen, *Nation Building in Russia: a study into secondary school geography education as tool for nation building of the youth in Russia*. MS Thesis. 2018; Dmitrii Trenin, *The end of Eurasia: Russia on the border between geopolitics and globalization*. Carnegie Endowment, 2002; Francine Hirsch, "Toward an empire of nations: Border-making and the formation of Soviet national identities." *The Russian Review* 59, no. 2 (2000): 201-226.

⁵⁵ Joan McRobbie, and Malia Villegas. "La Fronteras: Challenges and Opportunities for Improving Education Along the US-Mexico Border." *WestEd* (2004); Marleen C. Pugach, *On the border of opportunity: Education, community, and language at the US-Mexico line*. Routledge, 1998; Anderson, Joan B., and James Gerber. *Fifty years of change on the US-Mexico border: Growth, development, and quality of life*. University of Texas Press, 2007.

provides the broad framework for education in Indonesia, but it lacks specific provisions for the border regions, where educational infrastructure is often underdeveloped, and access to quality education is limited.

One potential reform could involve the revision of Article 31 of the 1945 Constitution that guarantees the right to education for all Indonesian citizens, emphasizing the need for equal access, especially in border regions. The original text of Article 31 states: "*Every citizen shall have the right to education*" (Art. 31 (1), UUD 1945).⁵⁶

However, the application of this provision has faced challenges in border regions due to logistical constraints, limited resources, and geographic isolation. A legal amendment could explicitly mandate the provision of additional resources and targeted interventions for border areas, ensuring that education is not only accessible but also of high quality. Specifically, these reforms could ensure that educational access and quality teaching are equalized across the archipelago, regardless of the remoteness of a region.⁵⁷

Furthermore, curriculum reforms are needed to integrate national identity, history, and sovereignty more directly into the education system. Article 31 of the National Education System Law (UU No. 20/2003) provides a general mandate for the curriculum, stating: "*The national education curriculum shall be developed with regard to the demands of development, the national culture, and the characteristics of the learners*" (Art. 37, UU No. 20/2003).

However, while the law emphasizes cultural relevance, it does not explicitly ensure that national identity and sovereignty are consistently integrated into curricula across regions, particularly in border areas. Revisions could require curriculum guidelines that mandate the inclusion of Indonesia's territorial history and sovereignty as core subjects. This would strengthen the understanding of the significance of state borders, national unity, and territorial integrity, helping students in border regions understand the importance of these issues within the national context.

The legal provisions in Article 31 of the 1945 Constitution and Article 37 of the National Education System Law lay a foundation for a more inclusive and comprehensive approach to national education. However, the lack of explicit attention to border regions in these laws

⁵⁶ Imma Rahmani, "Pelaksanaan Hak Dan Kewajiban Warga Negara Indonesia Di Dalam Bidang Pendidikan Tinjauan Dari Pasal 31 Undang-Undang Dasar Tahun 1945." *Pamulang Law Review* 5, no. 1 (2022): 77-84.

⁵⁷ Maya Selviana, et al. "Tanggung Jawab Negara Dalam Pemenuhan Hak Atas Pendidikan Menurut Undang-Undang 1945." *Mediation: Journal of Law* (2024): 44-51.

means that these areas often fall behind in terms of educational development. This gap in legal application reflects a broader issue in Indonesia's national education policy, where legal and political structures sometimes fail to address the distinct needs of geographically isolated or culturally diverse populations, particularly in border regions.

Scholars like Anderson (1983) in his theory of "*imagined communities*" argue that national identity is cultivated through symbols, narratives, and shared education. Education systems that fail to incorporate a comprehensive national narrative—especially in border regions where local identities may be more pronounced—undermine the development of a cohesive national identity. By reforming the education law to explicitly include border regions in national identity education, Indonesia could better align its legal and educational policies with the goal of nation-building.⁵⁸

2) *Policy Recommendations for National Education*

While decentralization in Indonesia's educational decision-making process is crucial for adapting education to local needs, a balance must be struck to ensure uniformity in teaching about national identity and sovereignty. The Education Law (UU No. 20/2003) already includes a framework for decentralizing education policies, but it does not provide sufficient emphasis on ensuring that the core values of national unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity are integrated uniformly across the country, especially in regions that may be culturally distinct or have geopolitical significance.

The law itself specifies: "*The administration of education shall respect the diversity of the learners' backgrounds, interests, and needs, while maintaining the nation's unity and integrity*" (Art.1(1), UU No. 20 Tahun 2003). This legal framework offers a starting point, but it requires greater specificity in enforcing a unified approach to teaching national identity and sovereignty. For example, one policy recommendation could be the introduction of national curriculum standards that ensure certain core themes—such as the history of Indonesia's territorial integrity and the importance of sovereignty—are taught in every school, regardless of region. Article 31 of the Constitution, which stresses the state's duty to ensure the right to education in every region, could be enhanced by provisions that specifically address border region education, ensuring

⁵⁸ See Anderson, "Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism."

that these areas receive priority attention in terms of both funding and curriculum development.⁵⁹

Another critical aspect is the collaboration between national and local governments, civil society, and international organizations to address resource allocation and educational infrastructure challenges in the border areas. Indonesia's Ministry of Education and Culture should strengthen its partnerships with local governments to ensure that educational resources—such as textbooks, trained teachers, and digital learning platforms—are effectively distributed to border schools. Collaboration with NGOs and international development organizations can bring additional expertise and resources, supporting both teacher training and infrastructure development.

3) Empowering Educators in Border Regions

In Indonesia's border regions, educators must be adequately trained to teach about national identity and sovereignty, but also be sensitive to the local cultural contexts in which they operate. Article 40 of the National Education System Law specifies: "*The government shall ensure the quality of education through the improvement of teachers' qualifications, professionalism, and welfare*" (Art. 40, UU No. 20 Tahun 2003).

However, current teacher training programs do not sufficiently emphasize national identity education or the unique challenges faced by border communities. Teacher professional development should focus on integrating civic education, national history, and sovereignty into lessons while respecting the local context of each border region. As argued by Smith (1991) in his theory of ethno-symbolism, understanding and maintaining national identity is crucial for reinforcing state sovereignty. Educators need to be trained to impart not only knowledge about the national identity but also to explain how local ethnic and cultural identities intersect with the broader Indonesian identity.⁶⁰

Additionally, teacher retention programs in border regions should be a priority. Incentives such as housing allowances, career development opportunities, and cultural sensitivity training could help retain teachers in remote and challenging areas. Teachers must be equipped with skills to teach national history in a way that connects

⁵⁹ Rizky Rinaldy Inkiriwang, "Kewajiban Negara Dalam Penyediaan Fasilitas Pendidikan Kepada Masyarakat Menurut Undang-Undang Nomor 20 Tahun 2003 tentang sistem pendidikan nasional." *Lex Privatum* 8, no. 2 (2020); Lukman Hakim, "Pemerataan akses pendidikan bagi rakyat sesuai dengan amanat Undang-Undang Nomor 20 Tahun 2003 tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional." *EduTech: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan dan Ilmu Sosial* 2, no. 1 (2016).

⁶⁰ See Smith, "National identity and the idea of European unity."

students' local experiences with the broader Indonesian narrative of unity and sovereignty.

The legal provisions in Article 40 of the National Education System Law concerning the quality and qualifications of teachers are important, yet insufficient for ensuring that teachers in border regions are equipped to teach about national identity, sovereignty, and history.⁶¹ Scholars such as Benedict Anderson (1983) emphasize the role of education systems in constructing national identity, suggesting that effective curriculum development and teacher training can create a strong sense of unity among citizens, even in areas with strong local identities. Empowering educators with the tools to teach about national sovereignty and territorial integrity, while also respecting local cultures, is a necessary step for achieving long-term national cohesion.⁶²

By reforming the National Education System Law to more directly address the needs of border regions, expanding teacher training programs, and ensuring that the curriculum consistently promotes national unity and sovereignty, Indonesia can strengthen the resilience of its borders and enhance its national identity. These efforts will help bridge the gap between local identities and the broader Indonesian state, ensuring a cohesive and united nation moving forward.

E. Conclusion

In summary, national education plays a crucial role in strengthening Indonesian identity and sovereignty, particularly in the border regions where diverse ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds often challenge national cohesion. Through effective educational policies and curriculum reform, the state can foster a sense of shared identity, emphasizing the importance of national unity and territorial integrity. The legal and policy frameworks outlined in Indonesia's National Education System Law and the 1945 Constitution are essential tools in addressing the specific educational needs of border regions, but they require significant updates to better reflect the unique challenges these areas face.

Future research should explore how nationalism and historical consciousness can be more effectively integrated into the educational curricula, particularly in border regions, where local narratives sometimes overshadow national ones. Additionally, evaluating the impact of legal and policy reforms on education outcomes in different

⁶¹ Yuliatin Yuliatin. "Legal problems of law No 20 of 2003 concerning the national education system, Indonesia." *Traktoria Nauki* 9, no. 8 (2023): 4016-4022.

⁶² Anderson, "Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism."

border regions will be crucial to understanding their effectiveness and refining strategies for broader application. Research could also investigate how local variations in the curriculum can be balanced with the need for a unified national identity, ensuring both regional autonomy and national cohesion.

Ultimately, a cohesive national education policy is essential for Indonesia, one that promotes national unity while respecting the cultural and ethnic diversity that defines its border regions. Strengthening state sovereignty through education in these areas not only enhances national stability but also reinforces the territorial integrity of the nation, which remains a cornerstone of Indonesia's future security and prosperity.

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All authors declared that this work is original and has never been published in any form and in any media, nor is it under consideration for publication in any journal, and all sources cited in this work refer to the basic standards of scientific citation.

Generative AI Statement

Generative AI tools were utilized in this research to enhance the language and sentence structure of the manuscript. These tools assisted in improving the clarity, coherence, and overall quality of the written content, ensuring that the final text was professionally polished while maintaining the accuracy of the research findings and ideas presented. The use of AI was strictly limited to language refinement and did not influence the originality or intellectual contribution of the research.