

PROBLEMATICS OF INTERNATIONAL PIONEER CLASS: REALIZING HIGHER EDUCATION AUTONOMY IN INDONESIA

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Abstract. *This study aims to determine the impact of the problem of the international pilot class on autonomy in higher education. The approach used in this study is a qualitative phenomenological approach. The data collection method used is interviews with representatives of students and lecturers in the international class to obtain relevant results. The results of the study show that higher education autonomy is continuous with the improvement of the quality of higher education both nationally and internationally. However, there are several factors that influence the objectives of higher education autonomy such as inconsistency in student classification and limited resource capabilities.*

Keywords: *Autonomy, Higher Education, Implementation, International Class.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Higher Education in Indonesia is currently facing demands to continue adapting to global dynamics. These demands are based on the objectives of Higher Education as stated in Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 12 of 2012 concerning Higher Education. The existence of Higher Education functions to increase the nation's competitiveness in facing globalization in all fields that are able to develop science and technology and produce intellectuals with noble culture. Efforts to achieve these educational goals certainly require cooperation from the government through the implementation of several policies. One appropriate policy is the granting of autonomy to Higher Education.

Autonomy is a right obtained from the central government in the freedom to regulate and govern its regions independently (Rahmat & Baharuddin, 2019). While the autonomy of Higher Education can be interpreted as the ability of an institution to achieve its mission in accordance with the steps chosen by itself. Based on this understanding, misunderstandings have begun to emerge regarding the application of autonomy in Higher Education.

The word "autonomy" is often misinterpreted as "commercialization" of education. The layman's understanding defines it as a field to seek funding as widely as possible by accepting as many new students as possible, and easily giving degrees to graduates who are not necessarily competent. This certainly results in low access and quality in Higher Education. If viewed from the public's concerns, the State must remain obliged to provide funds for Higher Education in the form of block grants. So it can be said that the State does not relinquish its responsibility for financing education even though it no longer interferes in Higher Education affairs. (Irianto, 2012).

One of the educational autonomy policies that should no longer be interfered with by the government is in terms of academic autonomy. The government gives full authority to determine and guarantee academic quality such as curriculum, study programs, learning methods and so on. However, this also has its weaknesses. The policies and implementation of education carried out by universities focus more on achieving certain targets, such as curriculum targets. As a result, the effective learning process is neglected. (Rahmat, 2019).

Although university autonomy is important for a university to have, it does not mean that autonomy is the goal of a university. However, autonomy is a way to achieve the highest goal of a university. (Irianto, 2012). By adhering to the essence of autonomy, institutions have a high chance of keeping up with global competition while still reaching all areas of learning. One of the steps that can be taken in facing global competition is to create an international class in universities.

International class is a program that is formed in the framework of internationalization of education. Internationalization is defined as the process of integration in the international, intercultural and global scope in the higher education forum. Internationalization of higher education is an inseparable part of higher education in Indonesia along with the globalization of education today and the existence of the World University Ranking as a benchmark for the success of internationalization of higher education. By holding an international class program, it becomes an encouragement for achieving internationalization of higher education (Junining & Prawoto, 2020). This program is very well-known and intensively held in various study programs at the University of Indonesia, one of which is Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University Yogyakarta which is currently included in the top 20 Best Islamic Universities in the world according to (4ICU) UniRank(Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University, 2022).

The International pilot class at Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University was formed in order to become a World Class University. The purpose of this international pilot class is to encourage students to be able to compete in the international arena. However, this international pilot class is still very young and does not have a clear concept, it just flows like ordinary learning activities. (Nawangsari, 2022). This is different from the International class programs in several universities in Indonesia, such as UGM, which is very selective in choosing students for the IUP (International Undergraduate Program) program and IAIN Salatiga, which has several special programs to improve its international class. Based on the factors of the international pilot class, the researcher wants to focus more on the impact of the problems of the international pilot class as part of the autonomy of Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University Yogyakarta.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a phenomenological research type, where researchers identify the meaning of human experience about a particular phenomenon (Rianto, 2020). The consideration of using this type of research is because researchers want to focus on reducing the experiences of individuals in the international class at Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University, especially in the 2024 class in the even semester. Researchers use qualitative research methods to provide an overview of the natural conditions of objects.

The subjects in this study were lecturers and students in the international pilot class of the Islamic Religious Education Study Program in semester 1. The presence of the researcher here is as an instrument and the main data collector. The researcher also became an observer as a participant (observer as participant), where the researcher was also included in the group being studied and openly declared himself as an observer.

To find out how the implementation of the international pilot class and how the impact of the implementation on students in the PAI Study Program Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University, the researcher conducted a triangulation technique in obtaining data. While the data analysis techniques used consisted of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions (Rianto, 2020).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Higher Education Autonomy

Autonomy for higher education initially emerged in 1999, which was stated in Government Regulation Number 61 of 1999. This regulation became a bridge to facilitate the plan to change Higher Education Institutions (PT) into autonomous institutions or

State-Owned Legal Entity Higher Education Institutions (PT-BHMN). Some of the objectives of the birth of autonomy for Higher Education Institutions are: (1) acceleration of institutional development, (2) accountability, (3) transparency, and (4) efficiency of higher education. This is because there are differences in capabilities in each institution, so it is intended to make it easier according to their respective paths. (Lasambouw, 2013).

The autonomy policy offered by the government was initially considered as a solution offered to manage education well. Autonomy is a breath of fresh air for the management of independent higher education. However, after the autonomy policy was implemented, resistance began to emerge. The Constitutional Court considered that the Government Regulation on BHP was not in line with the meaning of the 1945 Constitution which resulted in legal uncertainty. Several reasons for the Constitutional Court to consider revoking the Law on BHP are: (1) The BHP Law does not have clarity in terms of juridical, objective, and harmony with other existing laws, (2) The BHP Law estimates that Educational Institutions have the same management and financing capacity, but in reality this does not happen in Indonesia, (3) granting autonomy to Educational Institutions will cause a shortage of funds in many institutions, (4) The BHP Law does not guarantee the achievement of national education goals so that it is contrary to the mission of the 1945 Constitution, (5) the non-for-profit principle for Educational Institutions can be applied in other legal forms besides BHP (Akbar Nursasmita, 2021)

The Constitutional Court then annulled the Law on Legal Entities of Education because it was considered to violate the country's constitution. After the annulment, the government issued Government Regulation Number 61 of 2009, the contents of which were not much different from the BHP Law to cover the legal vacuum that legitimized the management of higher education institutions (Lanontji & Adam, 2021). Government Regulation Number 61 of 2009 concerning the Determination of State Universities as Legal Entities was followed by the issuance of Government Regulation Number 17 of 2010 concerning the Management and Implementation of Education. Simultaneously with the issuance of these regulations, the government prepared a new, more perfect Law. So that on August 10, 2012 the House of Representatives (DPR) ratified Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 12 of 2012 concerning Higher Education which regulates State Universities as Legal Entities of Education (Lasambouw, 2013).

Law of the Republic of Indonesia Article 65 and 66 Number 12 of 2012 which replaced Law Number 9 of 2009 Article 53 paragraph 3 states that the implementation of Higher Education autonomy can be given selectively based on performance evaluation by the Minister to PTN that has met the requirements. Some of the requirements for PTN to become PTN-BH are as follows: (a) Organizing the Tridharma of Higher Education with quality, (b) Managing PTN organizations based on good governance principles, (c) Meeting minimum standards of financial feasibility, (d) Carrying out social responsibility, (e) Playing a role in economic development (Permendikbud 88)

In addition to PTN-BH, based on Law Number 12 of 2012 concerning Higher Education, the implementation of higher education by the government is divided into three, namely: PTN in the form of a Legal Entity (PTN-BH), PTN in the form of a Legal Service Agency (PTN-BLU), and PTN in the form of a Work Unit (PTN-Satker) (UU Nomor 12 Tahun 2012). The difference between the three implementations of higher education is in the autonomy given to the related institutions. The lowest autonomy is found in Higher Education with the status of PTN-Satker. PTN-Satker is an institution that operates under the auspices of the Ministry. The income earned by PTN-Satker must first be entered into the state account before being used by the institution. Meanwhile, PTN-BH has the highest level in terms of autonomy. This means that the institution has full control over its own assets and finances. And the last is PTN-BLU which has a lower level than PTN-BH. This institution has autonomy, although not full, because the status of the institution is still part of the government (Herlina, 2023).

PTN-BLU is an institution established to provide services to the community based on

the principles of economy and productivity as well as healthy business practices. (Alifa, 2023). This management pattern is a reference in academic autonomy in several universities, one of which is Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University. This is in accordance with the Regulation of the Minister of Religion Number 22 of 2014 concerning the Statute of the Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University of Yogyakarta, (Peraturan Menteri Agama Republik Indonesia No. 22, 2014). where Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University has the authority to implement healthy business practices as a form of effort to improve services to the community.

Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University's efforts in utilizing its autonomy include improving the quality of education and global competitiveness. These efforts can be represented in the form of submitting international accreditation and international certification. This is what later became the basis for the emergence of an international pilot class at Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University Yogyakarta.

3.2 International Pioneer Class

The International class program is a program that is very intensively implemented in several universities in Indonesia. Some of the approaches taken in the International class are internationalization of the curriculum, student exchange, acceptance of students from abroad, establishing international cooperation, conducting joint research, and building branch campuses. (Wattanavit & Kitcharoen, 2022). International classes can be interpreted as special classes that integrate international coverage in teaching, research and community service. For example, in a learning process, the language used in the international class is a foreign language such as English and Arabic (Izzi et al., 2022).

Learning activities using bilingualism can be started from curriculum design to teaching materials. Lecturers who use bilingualism as a medium of learning in international classes are also included in the concept. This aims to start the habit of using foreign languages as a form of improving the quality of graduates who are able to compete in the global era.

The presence of the international class is a program formed in the framework of a world class university or can be said to be a superior university with international standards that is able to compete in ASEAN. To create a good international class, it begins with the existence of an international pilot class. The International pilot class is a class that has just started and which is the beginning of the formation of a world class university. This class is said to be a pilot because it does not yet have a mature concept and is still in the pioneering stage to go to the global realm. (Nawang Sari, 2022). Several universities in Indonesia have begun holding international pilot classes as a form of academic enthusiasm in international collaboration. This is also applied in every study program at Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University Yogyakarta.

The International pilot class in the Islamic Religious Education Master's program at Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University is still considered a very young class and does not yet have a clear program. Even the vision, mission, goals and competencies of graduates have not been fully formulated comprehensively (Nawang Sari, 2022). The lack of maturity in policies in the international pilot class at Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University Yogyakarta, especially in the Islamic Religious Education Study Program, has resulted in several problems.

Among the problems that arise in the international class are very much felt by students. The lack of explanation about the classification of students selected in the international pilot class group by the university, causes confusion for students. Based on the results of interviews with researchers with several students in the international pilot class of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Study Program in the even semester of the 2024 academic year, they considered that there were still inconsistencies in the classification of students in the international pilot class. This is based on the method of selecting students which only relies on filling out a google form.

Student selection is done by filling out a google form containing TOEFL scores or

similar tests that have been taken and checking the column willing to be placed in the international pilot class. While the column not willing is for students who do not want to be placed in the class. Filling out the google form was initially stated as just a formality, but further information said that several students would be placed in the international pilot class based on the data collected. This certainly became a miscommunication between students and the faculty.

Although the classification of students in the international pilot class is not only taken from data from Google Form, if viewed based on the filling of various students such as filling in the unwilling column in the international pilot class and even some students who do not fill out the form. And when compared to the student selection process for the international class at Yogyakarta State University which uses a valid and reliable entrance selection test so that the selection obtains quality students (Sujarwo, n.d.), the selection carried out by Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University for prospective international pilot class students is still considered less selective. For students who are not willing to be placed in the class, of course they feel they have a heavy responsibility during the learning process.

The second problem is the lack of language interpretation in classroom learning. The language applied in the international class does use a foreign language, but in the pilot class there should be more flexibility in the application of language because it is still in the pioneering process. Based on the researcher's observations, it can be seen that the teaching lecturers differ in the delivery of the language used. Some lecturers conduct learning in Indonesian, in addition, some use a mixed language, namely Indonesian and English. However, it is not uncommon for lecturers to use Arabic or English in full without providing a translation into Indonesian. For some students, this behavior is considered very regrettable because the lectures that aim to gain an understanding of the material are just a passing wind. So that the material obtained cannot be understood perfectly.

The next problem comes from the low understanding of students in receiving learning materials delivered by lecturers in the international pilot class due to lack of language readiness. They have not received a language development program in the class. The Secretary of the Arabic Language Education Study Program at Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University said in an interview with Nawangsari that language development is still integrated with P2B (Language Development Center). (Nawangsari, 2022). This situation is certainly different from what happened at IAIN Salatiga. Where the institution offers a special program for international students in the form of off-campus tutoring activities taught by international lecturers. This can be a driving force for the existence of a language development program for the international pilot class at PAI Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University.

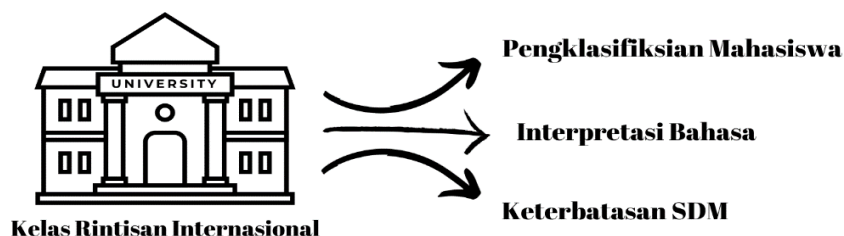


Figure 1.(Source: Authors, 2025)

Based on the phenomena that have been described above, it is known that the implementation of Higher Education autonomy in the form of the implementation of international pilot classes carried out by Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University Yogyakarta, still experiences problems. These problems should be overcome so that the international pilot class program at Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University can continue to develop and compete in the global arena.

3.3 Solutions to the International Pioneer Class Problem

After collecting all data and information related to the international pilot class and its problems. The researcher offers several programs as a form of overcoming the problems in the international pilot class at Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University referring to the data that has been obtained.

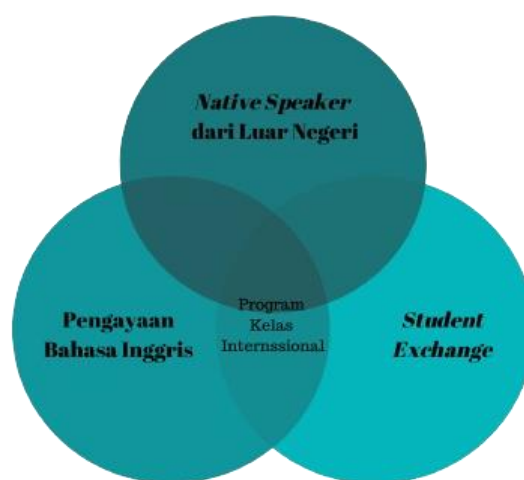


Figure 2. (Source: Authors, 2025)

3.3.1 English enrichment.

International pilot class students are offered the opportunity to take English courses outside of the compulsory courses. The additional courses offered not only study the concept of English at a basic level, but also discuss TOEFL material and how to get a scholarship abroad. This must of course be balanced with the presence of lecturers who are in accordance with the needs of students in the international pilot class. Lecturers who teach are prioritized to have experience in the global world, so that learning in the classroom is not only a transfer of knowledge, but also a transfer of experience. The courses given by lecturers in this additional class are expected to be an effort to prepare themselves while taking other courses that use a foreign language, as well as being provisions for students in facing competition in the international arena.

3.3.2 Native Speaker from Abroad

For students in the international pilot class, foreign language skills are important to have. This activity can help students' language skills, both in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Native Speakers can provide various interesting perspectives related to experiences that only native speakers know. Activities presenting native speakers can be done at certain times adjusted to the needs and objectives of the class. Student Exchange

3.3.3 Student Exchange

Program is a program that provides opportunities for students who want to study at a

Foreign University. This program usually lasts for a short time, which is around 1 to 2 semesters. During this time, students have the opportunity to explore learning at another campus. In addition to exploring learning, students can also learn about cultures that can improve critical thinking that come from a different learning approach to their home country.

The three points above are solutions offered by researchers in overcoming the problems that occur in the international pilot class of the Islamic Religious Education Study Program, Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University Yogyakarta. Researchers hope that the quality of the international class program will continue to improve so that it can create output that is able to compete in the international arena.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results discussed above, it can be concluded that the autonomy given to universities in Indonesia, including Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University Yogyakarta, has enabled innovation in higher education. This is evidenced by the existence of the international pilot class program. However, the implementation of this international pilot class still experiences several problems, such as the lack of selectivity in selecting students, minimal language interpretation in learning, and low student understanding of the learning material.

To overcome these problems, several solutions have been offered by researchers such as English enrichment, the presence of Native Speakers from Abroad, and Student Exchange programs. Thus, it is hoped that the international pilot class program at Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University Yogyakarta can continue to grow and produce graduates who are able to compete in the international arena.

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