

# **DISTANCE HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY IN BORDER AREA OF NUNUKAN REGENCY - INDONESIA**

## **(Cultural, Geographic, Economic, Political, and Information Technology Studies)**

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### **Abstract**

Every eligible Indonesian citizen is entitled to have access to continuing education to university level and guaranteed by law. The question is what and how is the reality? Many aspects become the problem as well as potential in the implementation of higher education policy in Nunukan Regency of the Republic of Indonesia whose territory is directly adjacent to the Malaysian Federation of Sabah and Serawak, for example the existence of potential cultural problems such as the influence of Dayak ethnic's and Bugis ethnic's cultures as dominant ethnics. The geographical conditions are hilly. The forest is quite dense. The river flow is wide and long, and the area is swampy. Economic conditions are less touching on economic empowerment of local communities (Dayak and Bugis). The entry of illegal goods between the two countries is still dominant with the lack of infrastructure support capacity. Political policies are still euphoria and less consistently implemented. The use of information technology has not been well targeted and the carrying capacity of the device is less consistent in its implementation. All of these problems are not only the obstacles in the enhancement of higher education qualification, but they could be potential if they are consistently well managed and supported by a consistent affirmative policy in their implementation. Information technology becomes one of the triggers and spurts of the border community to know about the importance of higher education to improve their dignity and degree. The role of the Universitas Terbuka (Open University of Indonesia) which contributes to problem solving related to the need for qualification improvement and to those issues as an effort to improve the qualifications, competence and welfare of the border community has been a strong driver to the border communities in Nunukan Regency in gaining access to higher education.

Keywords: policy, implementation, information technology, border areas

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Nunukan Regency with an area of 14,325.38 km<sup>2</sup> is one of the regencies in the North Kalimantan Province of Indonesia whose territory borders 1,000 km<sup>2</sup> directly with Malaysia, namely the Sarawak Federation and the Sabah Federation (Source: BPS Nunukan Regency 2016)[1]. The local government through Nunukan Regency Education and Culture Department is quite consistent and committed in improving the quality of government apparatus resources and the community to the level of public and private higher education. One of the state higher education that can accommodate the need to improve the qualifications and quality of education is the Universitas Terbuka (UT) with

open and distance education system which refers to the Higher Education Law, number 12 of 2012[2], article 31 on Distance Education and implementatively affirmed in the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation number 109 of 2013[3], article 2, "Distance education aims to provide higher education services to groups of people who cannot attend face-to-face education, and to expand access as well as to facilitate higher education services in learning."

Nunukan Regency with a population of 177,607 people, which is in 19 sub-districts with hilly, swampy, and riverly topography. It consists of several islands with abundant marine wealth. Most of the area is dense forest which is the lung of the world (Source: Central Bureau of Statistics of Nunukan Regency, 2015) [4]. Of 68.06% population concentration is in Nunukan and Sebatik islands. Besides having the potential diversity of biological natural resources, Nunukan has a cultural, social, economic and religious diversity with its main ethnicity, the "Dayak Tribe" in the land area and the "Bugis Tribe" in the islands and land.

UT has participated in improving educational qualifications since 1986 until now, with the number of alumni of around 1,500 and active students in undergraduate and master programs of around 1,225 students in Nunukan Regency out of a total of 3,720 UT students managed by UT of Tarakan (source: UT of Tarakan, 2018) [5]. Alumni of UT of Tarakan in general are civil servants who are dominated by elementary school teachers scattered in 19 sub-districts.

The implementation of distance education by UT in the Nunukan border area is inseparable from a number of problems and challenges that are related to: the strength of cultural problems in improving the quality of education, such as the influence of Dayak ethnic culture and Bugis ethnic as dominant ethnics; hilly geographical conditions, dense forests, wide and long river flows, and swampy areas; economic condition that is less touching on the economic empowerment of local communities (Dayak and Bugis), illegal goods are still free to get in and out between the two countries and the lack of carrying capacity of infrastructure; euphoria of political policies that are not consistently implemented; and the use of information technology that is not on target and lack of carrying capacity of information technology devices.

Cultural, geographical, economic, political policies and information technology issues are also constructive potentials for local governments and UT in implementing distance education policies in the border area of Nunukan Regency. The purpose of this study is to describe and analyze distance higher education policies in the border area of Nunukan Regency of the Republic of Indonesia with existing problems.

## **2. METHOD**

The qualitative method employed in this paper is a descriptive analysis approach. The data were collected from direct informants, such as: sub-district heads (Krayan Induk Subdistrict and Krayan Timur Subdistrict), Dayak traditional leaders and Christian religious leaders, education figures, school teachers, and communities in the Krayan border region and other supporting secondary sources. Data collection techniques were carried out through in-depth interviews individually and in group discussions.

### **3. CULTURE IN IMPROVING EDUCATION QUALITY**

There are 15 subdistricts in Nunukan Regency which are directly adjacent to the Sabah Federation and the Sarawak Federation of Malaysia, namely: Krayan Selatan, Krayan Barat, Krayan Induk, Krayan Timur, Lumbis Ogong (dominated by Dayak tribe), Tulin Onsoi (Dayak tribe and immigrant tribes), Sei Manggaris (dominated by immigrant tribes), Sebatik (Bugis tribe and immigrant tribes). Dayak have several tribes, such as: Dayak Lundayeh tribe which dominates all subdistricts in Krayan region, Dayak Agabab tribe dominates the Lumbis Ogong subdistrict and some in Tulin Onsoi subdistrict. For Sei Manggaris subdistrict is more dominated by migrants and newcomers with the emergence of several palm processing and coal mining factories. Whereas the subdistricts in Sebatik region are dominated by Bugis tribe and migrants as cross border for illegal migrants.

The culture of each tribe is quite diverse which becomes a unique character for each region. Both the Dayak indigenous culture and the Bugis culture and culture of the migrants are quite accommodating when it is associated with the willingness of parents to improve education from early childhood education to higher education level. Historically, the development and advancement of education in the border area is inseparable from the role of migrant communities that was begun in the independence of the Republic of Indonesia in 1945 and culminated in the confrontation period between Indonesia and Malaysia in 1960 and the entry of missionaries who changed and encouraged the Dayak and Bugis tribes to attend formal education.

### **4. GEOGRAPHICAL CONDITION IS NOT A PROBLEM**

Geographical conditions that are hilly, mostly covered by dense forests, separated by wide and long river flows and swampy areas do not lessen the community, especially elementary school teachers to improve their educational qualification to the Undergraduate Primary School Teacher Education program, even civil servants and private institutions employees start to use their time to improve their educational qualifications to universities with various study programs.

Geographical condition that is actually a potential and challenge for border communities does not become a hindrance to improve their educational qualification. Now, it depends on how the local government and universities to be able to implement existing policies so that they can be understood and provide clarity to the community in getting access to qualified and legal higher education.

UT as one of the implementers of the Law No. 12 of 2012[2] about Higher Education is given the mandate to provide access to the community and become one of the foundations for the community to improve their educational competencies and qualifications. UT students who are in hilly and river areas, such as Lumbis Ogong subdistrict, they use wooden boats with 20 cc to 60 cc boat engine to the tutorial place in Mancalong area. In the Krayan subdistrict with hilly geographical conditions, rivers and dirty roads, they ride motorbike, aircraft (Cassa), and some of them even have to walk between 6 to 7 hours to get to the tutorial site from Way Agung village to Long Bawan in Krayan Induk subdistrict.

The interest and willingness of UT students in improving their competencies and qualifications with existing geographical conditions that are quite challenging is not a big problem. The most important thing for them is that the government of Nunukan Regency, North Kalimantan Province and the central government can support them in facilitating prospective students and UT students to provide ease in studying at the higher education level through easy access to infrastructure and superstructure.

## **5. DEVELOPING AND STRENGTHENING THE ECONOMY**

Natural resources in the border area are potential enough, nationally and internationally, for the community. The wealth of natural resources is quite abundant, such as: the potential of protected forests as the lungs of the world; swamp and river potential for the management of shrimp, fish, crab and mangrove ponds; potential of industrial forests and plantations (oil palm and wood as raw material for paper); mining potential (coal, oil, and gold).

These natural resources clearly have an impact on the economy and well-being of local communities dominated by Dayaks, Bugis and immigrant tribes. This clearly affects and encourages the establishment of banks, the construction of road infrastructure, the establishment of communication towers, the development of oil palm plantations, industrial timber plantations, palm oil processing plants, the establishment of shops, permanent and seasonal markets.

Economic development has an impact on the economy of the border community, as happened in Tulin Onsoi subdistrict as a new subdistrict and becomes a central subdistrict for other subdistricts. In fact, it is a driving force for the central subdistrict, which is Sebuks subdistrict and its surroundings, Sebakung and Sebakung Atulai subdistricts in improving the economy of the community.

This indication of economic improvement also affects the community to improve their educational qualification to university level, such as UT students who not only enroll to the elementary school teacher education program, but young students who have just graduated from high school by taking the bachelor degree of accounting study program. In fact, there are some people from civil servants who take the Master of Public Administration program.

## **6. LOCAL POLITICS IN REFORMATION ERA**

The Indonesian government's national policy certainly has an impact on local government politics, as happened in the border areas. Issues that emerge not only want to establish regional governments, such as: 5 subdistricts on the island of Sebatik proposed to become Sebatik city, 5 subdistricts in the mainland proposed to become Kabudaya regency, and 5 subdistricts in the Krayan region proposed to become Krayan regency. Issues and phenomena of people in border area just expect easy access to services and availability of infrastructure to improve community welfare.

The policies of the central government, especially in the education sector, have several authorities that are nationalistic, deconcentrated and decentralized. The policy is inseparable from the mandate of the reforms implemented by the government to improve the welfare of the community, especially in the border area through the NAWACITA

program of the President of the Republic of Indonesia - Joko Widodo, namely by building from the periphery or border areas, as it has been and is being implemented at the present time.

This policy indication in the field of higher education has started to benefit the community in gaining access to improving educational competencies and qualifications at the level of undergraduate and master education through UT higher education services that have been accessed by border communities. The most important thing is the consistency of the central, provincial and city/regency governments in implementing the authorities in the border areas in a real and clear way through the capabilities of the subdistrict heads and village heads, the leaders of Dayak and Bugis tribes, community leaders, religious leaders, elements of government and government institutions in border areas as well as the role of local, national and international non-governmental organizations.

(Islamy, Irfan, 2015)<sup>[5]</sup>, Affirmative policies can accommodate the needs of border communities in the field of education rationally and proportionally, that is by considering the real needs of the community. The government can accommodate it rationally through coordination and communication with tribes' leaders, community leaders, religious leaders, elements of education in the regions, non-governmental organizations community and subdistricts government.

## **7. CONSTRUCTIVE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

Technology tools in the border area are not an obstacle to access information and updates to the present news. All areas on the border have been reached by cellular communication devices with 4G network in the Sebatik island region; 4G network in a half of the Tulin Onsoi subdistrict, Lumbis subdistrict, Sebakung subdistrict and Sei Manggaris subdistrict. Most of the Krayan region only gets 2G network. Meanwhile in Lumbis Ogong and Sebakung Atulai, they are partly still blank spots. Limited equipment related to the lack of provider devices, the amount of bandwidth and business has not been profitable for providers unless there is a pressure from the government. Telecommunication devices/gadgets owned by the community and students of UT are such as mobile phones (HP), Android smartphones and other communication devices.

The education needed is how the government through the roles of teachers, subdistrict heads, village heads, regional education supervisors, and community leaders can participate in educating the public to use communication media constructively to support the strengthening of education. In addition, the importance of the central government's concern in providing supporting infrastructure is not only the amount of bandwidth and type of network but the government should encourage providers to participate in supporting equitable access in border areas.

UT and UT students are greatly assisted in providing distance higher education with the availability of access to information technology, such as for the swift registration, online learning, digital library access, and provision of web-based exams. Central government policies are crucial, especially in border areas to encourage information network providers to participate in providing access to information technology to border communities.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

The distance higher education policy implemented by UT has reached border areas while maintaining academic quality and the carrying capacity of the distance learning process. Cultural issues, geographical, economic, political, and information technology conditions that are actually the potential and challenges for border communities and UT and the government as the implementor to explain and ensure the existence of higher education as one of the keys to change in a constructive direction through essential affirmative policies.

## **9. SUGGESTIONS**

- a. Consistency is a controller to maintaining public trust in improving competencies and qualifications to university level through UT.
- b. Information and communication need to be carried out for real through communication media, such as by visiting and meetings routinely with students and prospective students by involving elements of the subdistricts and traditional/community/religious leaders.
- c. Alumni should be strengthened and involved in socializing the importance of affordable distance education in terms of distance, time and cost.

## **10. REFERENCES**

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