

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Nationalism remains a dynamic and evolving concept, especially within the context of globalization and international education. In Indonesia, the emergence of joint cooperation schools (Satuan Pendidikan Kerjasama/SPK) has raised important questions about how national identity is formed and perceived among students from diverse cultural and national backgrounds. This chapter introduces the background of the study, outlines the research problem, objectives, scope, and significance, and presents the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Background of the Study

International curriculum schools in Indonesia, known as Satuan Pendidikan Kerja Sama (SPK), are governed by Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 31 of 2014 concerning "Cooperation in the Implementation and Management of Education by Foreign Education Institutions and Indonesian Education Institutions." This regulation stipulates provisions on the establishment and licensing process, curriculum implementation, learning and evaluation systems, cooperation mechanisms, teacher employment status, and monitoring and evaluation within SPK institutions.

The establishment of schools with foreign elements began in the 1990s, marked by the emergence of schools branding themselves as international schools in response to the demands of parents seeking education with foreign curricula equivalent to those found abroad. This development was addressed by the government through Article 50, Paragraph 3 of Law Number 20 of 2003 on the

National Education System, which states: "The government and/or regional governments shall organize at least one education unit at every level of education to be developed into an international standard education unit."

This provision became the foundation for the establishment of International Standard School Pilot Projects (RSBI). The number of RSBI schools was recorded at 419 in 2007, 323 in 2009, and increased significantly to 1,305 schools in 2011 (Abduh et al. 2024, 147).

Nevertheless, public concern arose regarding the existence of RSBI, leading to a petition to the Constitutional Court in 2011 requesting the revocation of Article 50, Paragraph 3 of the Education Law. The petition claimed that RSBI contradicted the mandate of the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution, as following:

"Then, to form a Government of the State of Indonesia that shall protect the entire Indonesian nation and the whole of Indonesia's homeland, and in order to advance the general welfare, to educate the life of the nation, and to participate in the establishment of a world order based on freedom, eternal peace, and social justice, the independence of Indonesia is formulated into a Constitution of the State of Indonesia, which is established as the structure of a unitary state in the form of a Republic of Indonesia, sovereign by the people and based upon belief in the One and Only God, just and civilized humanity, the unity of Indonesia, democracy guided by the inner wisdom in the unanimity arising out of deliberations among representatives, and by realizing social justice for all the people of Indonesia."

The petitioners argued that Article 50 Paragraph (3) of the National Education Law was inconsistent with the national objective to foster an educated society and did not fulfil the constitutional responsibility of the state to provide equitable education for all Indonesian citizens. Moreover, they claimed that this article resulted in a dualistic education system, introduced a new model of educational liberalization, caused social stratification and discriminatory practices in educational access, and weakened national identity by reducing the role of Bahasa Indonesia as the primary language of instruction.

The Constitutional Court accepted the petition and concluded that the operation of schools with foreign curricula indicated commercialization of education, potentially limiting or obstructing equitable access. The Court stated:

“...(RSBI) not only resulted in discriminatory treatment in access to education, but also led to the commercialization of the education sector. Quality education became a luxury item that could only be enjoyed by those who were economically capable. Such a situation contradicts the constitutional principle that the provision of education is a responsibility of the state. This is especially true for basic education, which must be fully funded by the state as mandated in Article 31 paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution. According to the Court, the obligation of the government and/or regional governments to establish at least one educational institution at each level of education to be developed into an international-standard school will erode and diminish pride in the Indonesian language and national culture, potentially reduce the national identity that should be inherent in every student, ignore the state's responsibility for education, and create unequal access to quality education. Therefore, it is contrary to the mandate of the Constitution.” Constitutional Court Decision No. 5/PUU-X/2012 dated January 2, 2013, pages 198–202.

Interestingly, the ruling included a dissenting opinion from Constitutional Justice Achmad Sodiki, who argued that there was no language in Article 50 Paragraph 3 indicating liberalization, discrimination, or any element that threatens the Indonesian national identity. He viewed the concern over losing national identity due to the use of foreign languages in schools as exaggerated. He emphasized that the use of a foreign language is based on necessity for better life opportunities. He further noted that abolishing RSBI may encourage students to seek quality education abroad while hindering domestic education reform.

Before the issuance of the Ministerial Regulation on April 29, 2014, schools with foreign elements were beyond the monitoring scope of the government, leading to uncertainties in resolving arising issues (Research and Development Agency, Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017, 1). With the enactment of Regulation Number 31 of 2014, the role of the Ministry became more clearly defined, including authority to grant school establishment permits, conduct

accreditation, and ensure the implementation of national curriculum in designated subjects.

Public perceptions of SPK schools were divided into two views. The first view welcomed the presence of SPK schools as opportunities to gain access to international education, particularly for students intending to pursue higher education overseas. The second view questioned the equity principle whether SPK schools provide equal opportunities for students from underprivileged backgrounds to benefit from such access.

This concern led to further questions regarding whether foreign curricula might erode students' sense of nationalism, particularly for Indonesian citizens who may not be sufficiently exposed to Indonesian culture. According to a 2015 Merdeka.com report, foreign curricula potentially reduced students' sense of nationalism.

To address this issue, the National Accreditation Board introduced SPK accreditation instruments that require schools to implement curricula emphasizing national culture. These requirements include the integration of subjects such as Indonesian Culture Studies (Indonesian Studies), Bahasa Indonesia, Civics Education (PPKn), and Religion, as well as school activities that foster national pride (Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Decree No. 247/O/2024 concerning SPK Accreditation Instruments).

Family background is another factor to consider. Students at SMP and SMA XYZ come from various family backgrounds, including Indonesian families, mixed-nationality families, and families with foreign parents. It is therefore important to examine whether these family dynamics influence students

perspectives and sense of national identity.

This study aims to investigate how students at SMP and SMA XYZ who experience both national and international curricula, namely the Cambridge International Curriculum and the International Baccalaureate understand and interpret the concept of nationalism, both as citizens of Indonesia and as global citizens simultaneously.

1.2 Problem Identification

Based on the background, the identified research problems are as follows:

- 1) There is ambiguity in the concept of nationalism among students enrolled in SPK institutions.
- 2) The understanding of nationalism is not readily observable and requires in-depth explorations.

1.3 Scope of the Study

This study is limited to exploring the concept of nationalism among students of SMP and SMA XYZ. These students are exposed to the Cambridge International and International Baccalaureate curricula, which broaden their awareness of global issues. Their proficiency in English also allows them to access information from diverse perspectives. The research targets students born between 2006 (Grade 12) and 2011 (Grade 7).

1.4 Research Questions

The research seeks to answer the following questions:

- 1) How do the Indonesian and non-Indonesian students at SMP and SMA XYZ perceive nationalism?

- 2) How does the curriculum at SMP and SMA XYZ influence students' views on nationalism?
- 3) How do family backgrounds influence the concept of nationalism among the students at SMP and SMA XYZ?

1.5 Research Objectives

This study aims to:

- 1) Identify students perceptions of nationalism at SMP and SMA XYZ.
- 2) Examine the influence of the school curriculum on students views regarding nationalism.
- 3) Analyze the extent to which family background affects students concept of nationalism.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is categorized into theoretical and practical contributions:

- 1) Theoretical significance: a) To serve as a reference for future researchers in examining nationalism among students in schools implementing international curricula. b) To provide academic insight into the perspectives of junior and senior high school students regarding nationalism in the Indonesian context.
- 2) Practical significance: a) To inspire educators in developing effective strategies for teaching the concept of nationalism. b) To provide practical recommendations for schools in creating environments that support nationalism. c) To serve as a reference for policymakers and education stakeholders in evaluating nationalism among students in SPK

institutions.

1.7 Organization of the Thesis

Chapter I presents the background of the study, problem identification, scope, research questions, objectives, and significance of the study.

Chapter II discusses theoretical frameworks related to nationalism, characteristics of international curriculum schools in Indonesia, the influence of globalization on nationalism, and the emerging concept of global citizenship.

Chapter III describes the research methodology, including the use of a sequential explanatory mixed methods design, research site and subjects, data collection procedures, data analysis techniques, and data validation processes.

Chapter IV presents the data presentations and research findings, organized in the quantitative data at the first phase and qualitative data at the second phase.

Chapter V presents the discussion of the findings and relate them with the theory and also previous study about the examined topics.

Chapter VI concludes the research and provides relevant recommendations based on the study's findings.