

# CREATING WORLD CLASS UNIVERSITY FOR HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION IN INDONESIA: GOVERNANCE POLICIES AND CHALLENGES

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## Abstract

*The World Class University (WCU) agenda has become a strategic issue in the development of global higher education, including in Indonesia. The government has consistently encouraged universities, both State Universities (PTN) and State Islamic Universities (PTKIN), to increase their international competitiveness through regulatory policies, publication incentive programs, and institutional internationalization. This study uses a literature review approach with a qualitative meta-analysis method to identify WCU strategies, challenges, and opportunities in Indonesia. The results show that despite a significant increase in the number of international publications, academic collaboration, and global recognition of Indonesian universities, there is still a considerable gap between policy ambitions and implementation realities. The main inhibiting factors include weak governance transparency, political intervention, limited research budgets, low lecturer qualifications, and an internationalization orientation that is more instrumental than substantive. On the other hand, the successes of other countries, such as Malaysia with its publication incentive policy, Singapore through national policy integration, and India, which faces access inequalities, provide important lessons for Indonesia. These findings emphasize the need for a reflective internationalization strategy, rooted in local values and supported by collective leadership and the use of digital technology. Thus, achieving WCU status is not only about fulfilling global indicators, but also about building adaptive governance, strengthening a culture of research, and reinforcing Indonesia's academic identity on the global stage.*

**Keywords:** World Class University, Higher Education, Indonesian Governance, Challenges,

## INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization and the 4.0 industrial revolution, universities around the world are required to not only serve as educational institutions but also as drivers of innovation, diplomacy, and knowledge-based economic development. The concept of World Class University (WCU) has become a symbol of higher education transformation, where universities are expected to achieve international standards through quality research, globally reputable publications, and graduates who are competitive in the international job market. As emphasized by Altbach and Salmi (2011), WCU has become a strategic instrument for countries in improving global competitiveness and international reputation through higher education. The urgency of WCU cannot be separated from global dynamics that place universities as centers of knowledge production and innovation. In the United States, Europe, and East Asia, world-class universities not only produce scientific publications but also drive cutting-edge technology, industrial innovation, and public policy with broad impact. Stanford University and MIT, for example, have become epicenters of global technological innovation, while the National University of Singapore has become a symbol of Southeast Asia's success in entering the ranks of world-class universities. This phenomenon confirms that universities play a role as the locomotive of national development as well as an instrument of global diplomacy.

The agenda of higher education internationalization has swept across many countries in the Global South. Internationalization is often seen as a path to global recognition, but in practice it has ambivalent consequences. In Africa and South Asia, for example, internationalization is often perceived as a form of academic neo-colonialism that places Western standards as the main measure (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Higher education institutions in these regions face the dilemma of pursuing global visibility while maintaining their local knowledge roots. A clear example can be seen in India, where inequality in access and equity in higher education remains a fundamental problem. India's higher education system is dominated by the urban middle class, while students from rural areas or lower castes have limited access to leading universities. On the other hand, the push for internationalization has widened this inequality gap, as universities focus on globally reputable publications and international collaboration, while local needs are often marginalized (Tilak, 2021). A similar situation can also be found in Sub-Saharan Africa. Countries such as Nigeria and Kenya are trying to increase their research capacity through international collaboration, but often find themselves trapped in dependence on foreign donors and global research agendas that are not always relevant to local needs. Research projects funded by foreign partners are often directed towards addressing global interests rather than local issues such as village governance, food security, or community-based public health (Mohamedbhai, 2014). In Southeast Asia, Malaysia is an interesting example. The government encourages state universities to pursue global rankings with its World Class University (WCU) strategy, even going so far as to establish

branch campuses of foreign universities. Although this has succeeded in increasing international appeal, there has been criticism that this move emphasizes the commercialization of higher education rather than equal access and the strengthening of local-based research (Lee, 2014). In Eastern Europe, countries such as Poland and Hungary face a different dilemma. Internationalization efforts are carried out through student mobility and Erasmus cooperation, but domestic nationalistic political pressures often limit the global orientation of universities. Thus, internationalization faces not only epistemic issues, but also domestic political dynamics.

Indonesia also recognizes the importance of the WCU agenda as a strategy to improve national competitiveness. Since the early 2000s, the government has consistently encouraged universities to achieve global rankings. Jacob et al. (2012) note that higher education reform in Indonesia has been characterized by a push for quality improvement, autonomy, and internationalization, although its implementation still faces limitations. In the following period, Kusumawati, Nurhaeni, and Nugroho (2020) emphasized that the government demonstrated strong commitment through regulations such as Law No. 12 of 2012, Ministerial Regulation No. 14 of 2014, and the 2015–2019 Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education, which explicitly targets the inclusion of Indonesian universities in the world's top 500. The government's support is manifested through various concrete programs. The World Class Professor program, international scholarships, publication incentives, and the strengthening of the International Affairs Office (KUI) are the main instruments in expanding the global network of universities. Wahyudi (2023), through an analysis of public diplomacy networks, emphasizes that the internationalization of Indonesian universities is increasingly strengthened by government support, even though the position of Indonesian universities in the global network is still relatively weak. Meanwhile, Rosser (2019) observes that although the government has great ambitions in promoting WCU, the role of bureaucracy and politics often becomes a determining factor that limits university autonomy. Conceptually, internationalization is an important instrument towards WCU. Zulfa (2012) shows that internationalization in Indonesian higher education is not only in the form of academic mobility activities, but also the integration of international and intercultural dimensions in the three pillars of higher education. Sakhiyya (2022) adds that internationalization is often marked by tension between the cosmopolitan image of the university elite and the reality of instrumental internationalization aimed at enhancing global reputation and rankings. This shows that internationalization is not only a technocratic process but also part of identity negotiation and academic diplomacy at the global level. Thus, the role of the Indonesian government in the WCU agenda is not limited to being a regulator, but also a facilitator and catalyst. The government seeks to create a competitive higher education ecosystem through a combination of policies, incentives, and institutional support, so that Indonesian universities can be better prepared to

transform towards global standards and play an active role in shaping world civilization through education, research, and community service.

The urgency of WCU in Indonesia is also in line with the global trend in which universities are seen as instruments of diplomacy and strengthening national competitiveness. Lambey et al. (2023) emphasize that although Indonesia's higher education system is very large with thousands of institutions and study programs, its contribution to global reputation is still limited. Therefore, WCU is understood not only as a ranking target but also as a national strategy to improve the quality of human resources, strengthen research capacity, and expand international networks. Thus, the WCU agenda in Indonesia has three main objectives. First, to strengthen academic quality through global standard research and teaching. Second, to enhance the role of universities as strategic actors in public diplomacy and international cooperation. Third, to prepare a superior generation that is able to compete globally while contributing to national development. In this framework, the role of the Indonesian government is very central, both as a regulator, facilitator, and catalyst in encouraging the transformation of universities towards global standards. Therefore, the development of WCU in Indonesia can be understood as part of a national strategy to position universities as centers of innovation, diplomacy, and strengthening the nation's competitiveness in the global arena.

In this article, we aim to analyze and contribute to the discussion on WCU in Indonesia. First, how are universities in Indonesia (, PTN, and PTKIN) achieving WCU? Second, what are the strategies of PTN-BH and PTKIN universities in achieving WCU? The academic contribution of this research lies in its effort to fill the literature gap related to higher education governance in Indonesia within the WCU framework. So far, studies on WCU have mostly focused on public PTNs, while PTKINs are often marginalized. Thus, this research provides an original contribution in the form of contextual analysis, while also positioning PTKIN as an important actor in the internationalization of higher education. In addition, the cross-country comparative approach strengthens the validity of the analysis, as the successes and failures of other countries in promoting universities towards WCU can be used as material for reflection in Indonesia. Theoretically, this study proposes a governance framework that emphasizes the importance of collective leadership, transparency, and the use of digital technology. This framework affirms that the success of universities in becoming WCU is not only determined by quantitative indicators (publications, citations, rankings), but also by the quality of governance that is healthy and rooted in local values. Ultimately, this study encourages the emergence of a new discourse on reflective internationalization—that is, internationalization that does not merely pursue global recognition but also strengthens Indonesia's academic identity.

The structure of this article is systematically constructed to answer the research questions. Beginning with an introduction that explains the urgency of WCU at the global and national levels, the article then outlines a literature review related to governance, internationalization, and WCU. The research methodology is explained through a literature analysis and qualitative meta-analysis approach. The results and discussion section consists of four main focuses: government policy, comparison with other countries' experiences, challenges faced by Indonesian universities, and strategic opportunities towards WCU. The article concludes with a summary of the findings and provides policy recommendations and academic implications.

### RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted using a literature study approach, where the main basis for data collection came from reputable international publications indexed by Scopus. The study focused on academic literature discussing the issue of World Class Universities (WCU) in the context of higher education. The research approach chosen was descriptive qualitative, with secondary data obtained through exploration of literature, both print and digital, such as journal articles, scientific books, and reports or news from credible sources (Soeharsaputra, 2012). All reference materials were then organized thematically for systematic analysis.

The next stage is data analysis, which uses qualitative meta-analysis techniques. This approach is considered effective because it is able to compare, synthesize, and interpret findings across studies. The advantage of this method lies in its ability to highlight common patterns while explaining variations in different research results. Timulak (2009) emphasizes that qualitative meta-analysis aims to present a concise but comprehensive overview of various qualitative studies discussing similar topics. In this context, meta-analysis is used to compile quantitative and qualitative evidence related to strategies, policies, and challenges faced by Indonesian universities in their pursuit of WCU status. The literature search was conducted electronically using Publish or Perish version 8.16. The main database used was Google Scholar, with the keywords "World Class University" and "Internationalization of higher education in Indonesia." The search was limited to the period 2000–2024, resulting in 70 publications. From this number, the initial selection yielded 43 works that met the focus criteria, particularly on the aspects of "Fiscal Decentralization" and "World Class University in Indonesia." After further screening, 27 studies were selected as the main material for the meta-analysis.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### **The Indonesian Government's Efforts to Promote World Class Universities**

Since the early 2000s, the Indonesian government has placed the WCU agenda as one of its top priorities in higher education reform. This has been realized through

strategic regulations such as Law No. 12 of 2012 on Higher Education Ministerial Regulation No. 14 of 2014 on Higher Education Cooperation, and various strategic plans from the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education, which aim to have a number of Indonesian universities ranked among the top 500 in the world. These policies are accompanied by concrete programs, including State University Operational Assistance (PTN-BH) to support research, incentives for international publications, the World Class Professor (WCP) program that brings in global academics to collaborate, and international scholarships that enable Indonesian lecturers and students to study at the world's leading universities.

In addition to regulations and incentives, the government also encourages institutional internationalization by strengthening the International Affairs Office (KUI) in each university, expanding global collaboration networks, and integrating universities into various international higher education forums. This step is part of Indonesia's academic diplomacy strategy, in which universities play a role as soft power actors in strengthening the nation's position at the global level. These efforts have shown quantifiable results. For example, the productivity of international publications by Indonesian universities has increased significantly in the last decade. BRIN data (2024) shows that Gadjah Mada University (3,483 documents), University of Indonesia (3,341 documents), and Airlangga University (3,306 documents) are among the 10 institutions with the most international scientific publications in Indonesia. In fact, the University of Indonesia as a whole has produced more than 35,803 Scopus-indexed documents with 334,983 citations and 6,332 articles published in quartile 1 (Q1) journals since 2014. This confirms that government policy interventions through publication incentives and research encouragement have a significant impact on academic output. In terms of global rankings, the University of Indonesia is listed as the top university in Indonesia and is among the top 6% of the best universities in Asia in the QS Asia University Rankings 2024. The UI Faculty of Engineering has also succeeded in placing several fields of study—such as Chemical Engineering, Electrical & Electronic Engineering, and Mechanical Engineering—at the highest position in Indonesia according to QS by Subject 2024. This achievement shows that government policy support in the form of research funding, international collaboration incentives, and institutional strengthening can enhance the global reputation of Indonesian universities, at least at the regional level.

The government also pays attention to the internationalization of students, which is one of the important indicators of WCU. Currently, there are 5,628 foreign students actively pursuing education in Indonesian universities. Interestingly, President University is the campus with the highest number of foreign students (439 students, or 7.8% of the total), showing that private campuses are also beginning to play a role in the internationalization agenda. The presence of foreign students not only strengthens the global image of campuses but also supports cultural diplomacy

and expands Indonesia's academic network at the international level. Furthermore, indicators of scientific discipline diversification also show positive developments. UI, for example, has successfully included 20 fields of study in the QS WUR by Subject 2022. This achievement is proof that the government's efforts through regulations and support programs have encouraged universities to expand their competitiveness at the field of study level, not just at the institutional level. The combination of government policies, research and publication incentives, internationalization programs, and the strengthening of global networks has brought tangible results, although they are not yet fully optimal. In terms of quantitative data, there has been an increase in international publications, a rise in the position of Indonesian universities in Asian and world rankings, an increase in the number of foreign students, and wider international recognition of various fields of study. These findings confirm that the government's strategy in encouraging universities to become WCU is not just a slogan or policy target, but has produced measurable empirical achievements.

Thus, it can be concluded that the Indonesian government's efforts in encouraging the achievement of WCU are the result of a symbiosis of policy and academic performance: policy provides structural encouragement and incentives, while universities respond by increasing their capacity for research, publication, and internationalization. Going forward, Indonesia's success in strengthening the global position of its universities will largely depend on the continued synergy between government policy and the commitment of universities to maintain and expand on the achievements that have been made.

Another dimension undertaken by higher education institutions in Indonesia to accelerate WCU is to transform autonomy in management and financial governance. The management of state universities in Indonesia is divided into three systems (Inspectorate General of the Ministry of Education and Culture, 2023). First, state university work units: Universities under this system do not have financial and institutional authority. All funds must be deposited into a government account at the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia and then disbursed to work units based on their annual work programs. Second, state universities with public service agency status: Universities operating under this system have autonomy in managing non-tax state revenue (Rudhianto et al., 2022). However, they do not have full authority over institutional development. For example, establishing a new study program requires approval from the central government. Third, state universities with legal entity status (PTN-BH): Universities under this system have full autonomy in managing finances and resources, including teaching and administrative staff. This management model resembles that of a company, providing greater flexibility. State universities with legal entity status have the authority to open study programs based on labor market demands (Darlis et al., 2023; Nurhanifah & Kusdarini, 2022).

The transformation of state universities into PTN-BH began in the 2000s (Muttaqin, 2008; Santosa, 2014). The government changed the status of four state universities—the University of Indonesia, Bogor Agricultural University, Bandung Institute of Technology, and Gadjah Mada University—into state-owned legal entities, granting them autonomy to manage their finances (Utomo, 2008). In 2009, the Indonesian government enacted Law No. September 2009 on Educational Legal Entities as the legal basis for the privatization of state universities. However, this law was overturned by the Constitutional Court in 2010 (Thaher, 2023). New regulations on PTN-BH were then established through Law No. December 2012 on Higher Education (Nurhanifah & Kusdarini, 2022). The privatization of state universities aims to give universities the authority to manage their resources independently to improve services for stakeholders (Muslim et al., 2021, pp. 509–515). PTN-BH aims to improve the overall quality of education and welfare.

Financial autonomy is a defining characteristic of PTN-BH management (Sagara & Yustini, 2019). According to Government Regulation No. 26 of 2015, as amended by Government Regulation No. 8 of 2020 concerning the Structure and Mechanism of PTN-BH Funding, PTN-BH funding sources come from two main categories: the state budget (APBN) and non-state APBN. This regulation gives PTN-BH the freedom to explore non-state budget funding sources. One potential non-state revenue stream for PTN-BH is asset utilization. PTN-BH assets are divided into fixed assets (land) and non-land assets. Land acquired through the state budget is classified as State Property (BMN), while land acquired through PTN-BH business activities and non-land assets become the property of PTN-BH as its assets (Nurmillah, 2022). In addition to utilizing assets, community participation in higher education funding is encouraged. This can take the form of individual and/or corporate donations, as regulated by applicable laws (Gunawan et al., 2018). State universities with PTN-BH status can expand their networks and involve stakeholders. In business administration, stakeholders refer to shareholders or individuals who invest to receive dividends (Kettunen, 2015). Higher education stakeholders are divided into two categories: internal and external stakeholders (Kettunen, 2015). Internal stakeholders include students and academic staff, while external stakeholders include corporations, partner institutions, and the government (Camilleri, 2021). Currently, there are only 24 universities with PTN-BH status, 14 of which have been included in the global rankings according to QS World University Rankings. Meanwhile, the higher education institutions under PTKIN that are included in the QS World University Rankings for the Asian region are UIN Jakarta, ranked 751–800, and Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University, ranked 901 (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2024a). However, none of these institutions hold PTN-BH status.

Historically, PTKIN has often been underrepresented in global rankings. Rosser (2019) notes that limited research culture, lack of financial autonomy, and low

number of lecturers with doctoral degrees are the main obstacles. Although the government has launched strategic policies such as Law No. 12 of 2012 on Higher Education, the World Class Professor program, and incentives for international publications, the results achieved have not been entirely uniform. Webometrics data (2024) shows that UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta and UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung are relatively more advanced, while UIN Raden Fatah Palembang is ranked 116th nationally, with low scores on the indicators of impact, openness, and excellence. Theoretically, the participation of PTKIN in internationalization policies and global ranking systems is a positive step towards reducing the visibility gap between Islamic and non-Islamic universities in Indonesia.

Like other state universities, PTKIN is also involved in efforts to achieve WCU level. These efforts are not only interpreted as a strategy to increase rankings in global ranking systems such as QS World University Rankings or Times Higher Education, but also as a form of participation in providing broader social, political, and scientific contributions (Sudirman et al., 2025). For example, Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University in Malang integrates Ulul Albab values into the internationalization process to mitigate the negative impacts of the commercialization of education, while strengthening moderate Islamic identity in the global academic arena (Sudirman et al., 2025). In the context of research culture, caring leadership oriented towards has proven to play an important role in fostering a spirit of research, creating a conducive academic atmosphere, and enhancing international collaboration. This is in line with the argument that empathetic academic leadership can increase the motivation of lecturers and students to contribute to internationally reputable research, thereby strengthening the position of PTKIN in global competition (Walid et al., 2025). The significant research funding gap between PTKIN and public universities remains a major challenge, but the existence of funding programs such as Litapdimas from the Ministry of Religious Affairs shows a positive direction in strengthening research capacity (Walid et al., 2025). Meanwhile, the experience of the Islamic University of Indonesia (UII) shows that digitization and the use of information technology since the late 1990s have been one of the important foundations for achieving WCU. The implementation of integrated academic information systems such as UNISYS, e-learning services, as well as repositories and e-journals not only improve the efficiency of academic services but also open up wider access to global research collaboration (Darmadji & Andriansyah, 2016). Thus, advances in digital technology can be seen as an important prerequisite for universities to be able to compete in a global landscape that emphasizes speed of access to information, transparency, and quality of publications. Based on these findings, it can be asserted that the achievement of WCU in the PTKIN environment is largely determined by a combination of three key factors: internationalization rooted in local values, strengthening research culture through caring leadership, and strategic use of information technology. These three factors complement each other in

building global competitiveness while maintaining the unique Islamic institutional identity that characterizes PTKIN in Indonesia.

### **The Challenge of World Class Universities in Indonesian Higher Education**

The WCU concept has become a global benchmark in higher education development. WCU is understood as a university with an international academic reputation, high research productivity, reputable publications, and the capacity to produce graduates who are competitive in the global market. In various countries, WCU also functions as a center for innovation, cultural diplomacy, and strengthening international networks. Its urgency is not only limited to improving the quality of education, but is also closely related to the role of universities in supporting a knowledge-based economy, public diplomacy, and national competitiveness at the international level. In line with this, governments in various parts of the world have made WCU a strategic target. World-class universities are seen as important instruments in building national image, attracting international research collaboration, improving the country's global ranking, and supporting socio-economic transformation through the provision of superior human resources. Therefore, WCU has now become a symbol of higher education modernization as well as an arena for international competition in the global arena.

The issue of WCU has become one of the main agendas in higher education development in various countries, including Indonesia. The WCU concept refers to universities that are able to break into global rankings, are internationally competitive, and have a real contribution to the development of science, research, and innovation. A number of indicators, such as the quality of human resources, the intensity of international publications, academic reputation, graduate competitiveness, and global collaboration networks, are important benchmarks in achieving WCU. In Indonesia, the discourse on WCU is not only a government ambition, but has also become an institutional strategy in various universities, both public and private, including Islamic universities. However, various studies show that the journey towards WCU in Indonesia still faces serious challenges.

A number of studies emphasize the lack of transparency in Good University Governance (Yudianto et al., 2021) and political intervention that hinders academic autonomy (Rosser, 2019). This condition is similar to findings in China, where universities struggle with strict political control that limits academic freedom despite large funding support for internationalization. The difference is that universities in China are able to offset political intervention with massive investment in research and global collaboration, something that is still lacking in Indonesia due to limited research budgets (Jacob et al., 2012). The issue of the quality of academic human resources is also a significant obstacle. In Indonesia, the low number of lecturers with doctoral degrees and the weak culture of research and international publication remain major weaknesses (Logli, 2016; Kusumawati et al., 2020). This situation has

similar to other universities in Thailand and Vietnam, which also experience a shortage of lecturers with doctoral qualifications and a dominance of teaching over research. However, unlike Malaysia, which has succeeded in increasing the number of international publications through incentive policies and strict targets, Indonesia still faces resistance from lecturers to the global performance- based system.

In terms of internationalization, research in Indonesia (Sakhiyya, 2022; Wahyudi, 2023) shows that universities' orientation is still instrumental, pursuing global reputation rather than strengthening substantive academic value. This is in line with criticism in South Africa, where internationalization is seen as a form of "academic neo-colonialism" that prioritizes Western standards. However, in countries such as Singapore, internationalization is more integrated into state policies that position universities as centers of global innovation, demonstrating that the success of internationalization is greatly influenced by consistent government support and long-term national strategies. Another prominent aspect in Indonesia is the inequality of access and distribution. Students from poor and remote areas are still underrepresented in higher education (Logli, 2016). This phenomenon is also seen in India, where the higher education system is still dominated by the urban middle class, while students from rural areas or lower castes have limited access. Unlike South Korea, which has succeeded in expanding access through scholarship policies and digitization, Indonesia still lags behind in providing distance learning infrastructure (Jacob et al., 2012). Epistemic challenges are also no less important. The internationalization of higher education in Indonesia tends to still be subject to Western knowledge standards, while efforts to decolonize the curriculum and research are limited to small initiatives (Sakhiyya, 2023). Similar problems are faced by universities in Africa and South Asia, which struggle to balance the demands of global rankings with efforts to maintain local relevance. However, there are positive examples from Latin America, where certain universities integrate local knowledge and cultural values into their internationalization programs, resulting in a more reflective and contextual academic form.

From this comparison, it is clear that the challenges faced by Indonesian universities in becoming WCU are not an isolated phenomenon, but rather part of a global dynamic that other countries also face. The similarities lie in weak research capacity, the dominance of Western standards in internationalization, and social access gaps. The difference lies in contextual factors: in Indonesia, political intervention and weak research funding are the main distinguishing factors compared to neighboring countries that are more focused on human resource quality and innovation. Therefore, Indonesia's strategy needs to combine two things: first, strengthening governance transparency and academic autonomy through collective leadership models such as distributed leadership; second, encouraging more reflective internationalization through the integration of local values and Islam as an alternative epistemic basis.

Higher education institutions in Indonesia face increasingly complex challenges in their efforts to improve global competitiveness and achieve World Class University (WCU) status. Various studies have examined the dynamics of governance, human resource quality, and internationalization strategies, with findings showing a serious gap between policy ambitions and the reality of implementation in the field. Research by Yudianto et al. (2021) shows that Good University Governance (GUG) and Intellectual Capital (IC) play an important role in improving university performance. GUG has been proven to increase IC by 54.1%, and together they contribute 59.8% to university performance. However, the description of the actual conditions reveals weaknesses in the aspects of governance transparency and human capital quality, even though structural capital is relatively stronger. This shows that Indonesian university governance does not yet fully support the improvement of the overall performance of the three pillars of higher education, as research and community service performance are still in the low category. Furthermore, Sukoco et al. (2021) found that the transformation of universities towards WCU is not only influenced by internal factors but also by external pressures from various stakeholders. Institutional pressures, both in the form of government policies and global competition, as well as market pressures in the form of demands for reputation and relevance of graduates in the international job market, are the main drivers. However, the dynamics between universities that are already ranked in the world's Top 500 and those that are not show different patterns: established universities are more driven by internal pressures, while other universities tend to be driven by external pressures. In terms of government support, research by Kusumawati, Nurhaeni, and Nugroho (2020) confirms a strong commitment to promoting internationalization, which is manifested through regulations, publication incentive programs, World Class Professor, and institutional strengthening. This policy has proven to increase the number of Indonesian international publications to second place in ASEAN. However, limitations in human resource quality, a weak research culture, and low motivation among lecturers to publish internationally remain serious obstacles. On the other hand, Wahyudi (2023) highlight the importance of academic diplomacy as an instrument of internationalization. Their findings show that Indonesian universities' international networks remain weak, with limited global research collaboration and low international visibility. Higher education institutions still depend on government initiatives, so they do not yet have a proactive education diplomacy strategy. The issues of quality and relevance are also raised by Lambey et al. (2023), who found that academic standards in Indonesian higher education institutions are still inconsistent, with weaknesses in accreditation, a low number of lecturers with postgraduate qualifications, and a disconnect between the curriculum and industry needs. The complexity of the higher education system—with more than 4,500 universities and 25,000 study programs—has not been matched by significant global achievements.

Studies by Jacob et al. (2012) and Logli (2016) also show that despite the push for reform in the form of quality improvement, autonomy, and institutional diversification, issues of access and equity remain strong. Higher education institutions still face financial constraints, low lecturer qualifications (the majority only have master's degrees or even bachelor's degrees), regional disparities, and low international research output. In fact, Rosser (2019) asserts that political intervention and patronage practices exacerbate these conditions, so that the government's ambition to make Indonesian universities WCU tends to be limited to rhetoric. Furthermore, Sakhiyya's (2022) research highlights the tension in the role of university elites who display cosmopolitanism in the discourse of internationalization but in practice are still trapped in the logic of the global market. This shows that the internationalization of higher education is more directed at improving global rankings than at strengthening substantive academic values. Meanwhile, Zulfa (2012) emphasizes that internationalization must be understood as a strategic transformation that touches on academic activities, competencies, ethos, and institutional systems, not merely an instrument of global image building. Finally, research by Kusumawati, Astuti, and Nugroho (2025) found a large gap between ambitious government policies and actual implementation in universities. Although the number of international publications has increased, quality equity among universities remains weak, most universities still focus on teaching rather than research, and human capital has not developed optimally. From these findings, it can be concluded that the main problems in higher education in Indonesia include weak governance transparency, low quality of academic human resources, gaps in access and equity, and internationalization that is still instrumental in nature. These empirical facts show a gap between the government's macro policies and the micro reality at the university level. Therefore, further research is needed to formulate strategies that integrate governance, human resource quality improvement, internationalization, and higher education diplomacy within a more critical, reflective, and sustainability-oriented framework. Sakhiyya's (2023) research found that internationalization initiatives at three Indonesian universities began to be accompanied by decolonization efforts, which were articulated through three main areas: curriculum, academic self (academic identity), and research. Decolonization is practiced by questioning the dominance of Western knowledge, methodologies, and academic norms, as well as providing space for non-Western voices and local knowledge. From an analysis of international class curricula, digital visits, and interviews with university leaders and academics, it was found that these universities adapted instructors, teaching materials, and learning resources to be more inclusive of local perspectives—for example, by including Indonesian literature, enriching discussions with local cultural contexts, and critiquing global academic standards that are often considered absolute. From a descriptive perspective, although internationalization is still closely linked to global reputation and rankings, the academics involved demonstrate critical awareness: they reevaluate

how they "see themselves" as academics within a global framework, attempt to reconstruct an academic identity that is not entirely subordinate to the West, and choose research that combines Western and local methodologies. These findings confirm that to make internationalization more equitable and authentic, Indonesian universities need to continue systematic decolonization—in their curricula, personal academic practices, and research—so that the process of becoming a WCU is not only about meeting global standards but also about strengthening local intellectual uniqueness and sovereignty.

## Conclusion

Studies on higher education governance, particularly in the PTKIN environment, have provided valuable insights despite their limitations, calling for further research on their relationship with the dynamics of higher education internationalization and contemporary governance challenges. Several research topics, such as practices of transparency, accountability, academic community participation, integration of Islamic values with modern governance, and the effectiveness of digital policy implementation, show great potential for developing more in-depth and contextual future studies. Through further research, the complexity of the relationship between governance principles, tridharma achievements, and strategies towards WCU can be explored more broadly. In addition, trends in existing studies indicate that discussions on how governance in PTKINs affects tridharma performance are still limited, leaving a gap in the literature. For example, there is not much research that explains in detail the role of governance in supporting research and community service. We suggest that future studies focus more on a deeper understanding of internal governance practices at PTKIN, especially how collective leadership, distribution of authority, and digital policy adaptation shape the quality of higher education tridharma. Further exploration of this dimension can enrich the discourse on the internationalization of higher education by presenting an empirical evidence base that departs from the local context.

Understanding the complex relationship between governance, tridharma, and internationalization is an urgent need in the era of higher education globalization. First, good governance remains the moral and ethical foundation of an organization, so that exploring how governance shapes transparent and accountable attitudes can contribute to the creation of a healthy academic culture. Second, the rapid growth of social, economic, and technological complexity reflects the need for adaptive and innovative governance. In this case, university governance can serve as a guideline for facing the increasingly complex challenges of globalization and digitization of education. In an era of globalization and increasing connectivity, understanding the fundamental role of governance in strengthening the capacity of universities towards WCU can provide broader and more contextual insights. It is important to develop solutions that can be applied globally, while remaining rooted in Islamic values and

local needs. In many countries, university governance remains an important instrument in creating quality education, research, and community service. Thus, understanding the dynamics of higher education governance at PTKIN such as UIN Raden Fatah Palembang can open opportunities for the formulation of contextual, adaptive, and sustainable transformation strategies.

Despite its urgency, there are several common challenges in understanding the relationship between governance and internationalization at PTKIN. These challenges include: bureaucratic complexity, limited human resources and digital infrastructure, and diverse local leadership dynamics. In addition, there is also the risk of policy inconsistency due to changes in national regulations and political pressure, which can hinder the implementation of modern governance. Global context changes and international accreditation requirements also add to the complexity of identifying the real impact of governance on WCU achievement. Therefore, future studies should pay more attention to the local context, the diversity of organizational dynamics, and global changes in order to produce a more holistic and accurate understanding.

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