



The Dynamics of Indonesia's National Education Policy: A Public Policy Analysis of National Online Media Coverage

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Abstract

This study examines the dynamics of Indonesia's national education policy through a public policy analysis of national online media coverage. A qualitative non-empirical approach employing literature-based document analysis was adopted to investigate how education policies are formulated, implemented, and represented within the digital public sphere. Secondary data were collected from official government publications, national online news media, and relevant scholarly literature. The findings reveal that Indonesia's education policy is characterized by several strategic challenges, including frequent policy adjustments, disparities in educational access, uneven institutional capacity, and the need to improve the quality of human resources through more adaptive educational governance. The analysis also indicates that the government has responded through increased education funding, the implementation of a 13-year compulsory education program, school digitalization, teacher competency development, and improvements in educational infrastructure. National online media play a significant role in communicating policy developments and shaping public understanding of educational reforms. The study concludes that the effectiveness of national education policy depends on policy consistency, institutional coordination, transparent governance, and evidence-based implementation to achieve equitable and sustainable educational development in Indonesia.

Keywords: Educational Governance, Indonesia, National Education Policy, National Online Media, Public Policy Analysis.



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INTRODUCTION

Education has increasingly become one of the most strategic public sectors for strengthening national competitiveness, fostering sustainable economic development, and preparing societies to respond to rapid technological, political, and social transformations occurring across the globe (Darmawan et al., 2024). Within the perspective of public administration, education should not merely be understood as a pedagogical process but as a complex public policy domain through which governments formulate, implement, evaluate, and continuously adjust regulatory frameworks to achieve broader national development objectives (Anderson, 2014). Public policy scholars consistently argue that education policies represent deliberate governmental interventions intended to allocate public resources, regulate institutional arrangements, and address societal inequalities through systematic policy instruments (Dunn, 2018). The increasing complexity of educational governance has also been intensified by digital transformation, globalization, and expanding public expectations regarding transparency, accountability, and policy responsiveness, making education policy a continuously evolving area of public policy analysis (Permana, 2023). These developments indicate that contemporary education systems can no longer be managed through purely bureaucratic approaches but instead require adaptive governance capable of responding to dynamic societal demands and emerging educational challenges (Sain et al., 2024). Indonesia reflects this global tendency by continuously reforming its national education system through legislative changes, curriculum reforms, and administrative restructuring designed to improve educational quality while expanding equitable access to learning opportunities (Darmawan et al., 2024). The complexity of these reforms illustrates that national education policy has become an arena where governmental priorities, administrative capacity, media discourse, and public expectations intersect in shaping educational development. Such conditions

place education policy at the center of contemporary public policy debates rather than positioning it solely as a sectoral administrative concern.

Previous studies have demonstrated that Indonesia's educational policies have continuously evolved in response to changing political leadership, socioeconomic priorities, technological innovation, and institutional reforms, although these changes have not always generated consistent improvements in educational outcomes (Hafidati, 2023). Research examining the historical trajectory of Indonesian education emphasizes that policy reform has frequently been characterized by recurring adjustments in governance structures, curriculum orientation, and financing mechanisms that reflect broader political transformations rather than long-term educational continuity (Darmawan et al., 2024). Other scholars argue that successful education policy implementation depends not only on sound policy formulation but equally on effective coordination among governmental institutions, educational organizations, and local administrative actors throughout the implementation process (Dwi et al., 2024). Studies focusing on policy implementation further reveal that administrative capacity, institutional coordination, and bureaucratic effectiveness remain decisive factors influencing whether educational policies can achieve their intended objectives across diverse regional contexts (Gaol, 2022). Recent investigations have also highlighted persistent structural challenges involving educational financing, unequal resource distribution, and administrative inefficiencies that continue to hinder the realization of equitable educational development despite substantial government investment (Purba et al., 2024). Meanwhile, contemporary discussions increasingly recognize that national education policies are no longer communicated solely through governmental institutions because online news media actively construct public interpretations, political narratives, and competing discourses surrounding educational reforms, including the Merdeka Belajar initiative and other strategic education policies (Andriani et al., 2025). Similar findings indicate that representations of education policy across digital news platforms and official communication channels significantly influence how citizens interpret governmental legitimacy, policy effectiveness, and institutional credibility (Yuliana et al., 2025). Collectively, these studies demonstrate substantial progress in understanding education policy implementation while simultaneously suggesting that education policy should also be examined as a mediated public discourse that shapes policy legitimacy within democratic governance.

Despite the growing body of literature on Indonesian education policy, important conceptual and empirical limitations remain insufficiently addressed, particularly regarding the interaction between policy formulation, media representation, and public policy legitimacy. Recent studies predominantly emphasize policy implementation, curriculum reform, educational financing, or bureaucratic governance while paying comparatively limited attention to how national online media construct, interpret, and disseminate education policy issues to broader society (Putri et al., 2025). Existing public policy analyses also tend to examine governmental decision-making from institutional perspectives, leaving the communicative dimension of policy processes underexplored despite its increasing importance in the digital era (Nugroho, 2017). From a public policy standpoint, media are not passive channels of information but influential actors capable of framing policy problems, shaping public agendas, and influencing citizens' perceptions toward governmental performance through selective reporting and discourse construction (Dye, 2013). This tendency becomes increasingly significant as digital journalism enables policy debates to develop rapidly across online platforms, allowing education policies to be interpreted through competing political, ideological, and societal perspectives rather than solely through official governmental narratives (Nasution & Azizah, 2025). Previous studies investigating media discourse have largely focused on specific policy controversies, such as the Merdeka Belajar program or education budget reductions, without comprehensively examining broader patterns in the representation of Indonesia's national education policy across multiple national online media outlets (Andriani et al., 2025). Consequently, current scholarship has yet to provide an integrated analytical framework that simultaneously connects public policy theory, education governance, and digital media discourse within a single comprehensive analysis. This unresolved gap limits scholarly understanding of how media narratives contribute to policy acceptance, contestation, and legitimacy throughout the policy process in contemporary Indonesia.

Addressing these limitations has become increasingly important because education policy now evolves within an information ecosystem where public opinion is shaped not only by governmental regulations but also by continuous media coverage, digital communication, and public interaction across online platforms (Permana, 2023). Contemporary policy scholars emphasize that effective public policy

cannot be separated from public communication because citizens' understanding of policy objectives substantially influences implementation effectiveness, accountability, and institutional trust (Abidin, 2012). In Indonesia, the rapid succession of education reforms—including curriculum adjustments, funding policies, digital learning initiatives, and administrative restructuring—has generated extensive public discussion that frequently unfolds through national online news media before being fully understood by educational stakeholders (Tintigon et al., 2023). Similar conditions are evident in discussions surrounding the Smart Indonesia Program and other educational assistance policies, where media narratives significantly influence public interpretations regarding transparency, fairness, and policy performance (Supardi et al., 2024). Administrative challenges within educational assistance programs, including data inconsistencies and implementation barriers, further demonstrate that public evaluation of policy effectiveness is strongly mediated by news reporting and public communication rather than by policy documents alone (Saputra, 2025). The persistence of educational inequality, financing issues, governance complexity, and policy inconsistency also reinforces the need for broader analytical approaches capable of integrating policy substance with its public representation across digital media environments (Widiastuti, 2025). Public policy analysis therefore requires greater attention to media narratives because they increasingly function as strategic arenas where governmental legitimacy, policy accountability, and citizen participation are continuously negotiated through public discourse (Abidin, 2012). These developments establish a compelling scientific and practical rationale for examining national online media coverage as an essential component of understanding the contemporary dynamics of Indonesia's national education policy.

Building upon these unresolved issues, this study positions itself within the intersection of public policy analysis, educational governance, and media studies by examining how Indonesia's national education policy is represented and constructed through the coverage of national online news media. Rather than treating media merely as channels for disseminating government information, this research conceptualizes online news platforms as policy actors that actively participate in agenda-setting, issue framing, and the social construction of educational policy discourse. Such a perspective extends conventional public policy analysis beyond institutional decision-making by incorporating the communicative processes through which policy meanings are negotiated, contested, and legitimized in the public sphere. This analytical orientation also responds to the growing recognition that democratic governance increasingly depends upon transparent policy communication and meaningful public engagement, particularly in sectors such as education where policy decisions directly affect diverse societal groups. Examining media coverage therefore provides valuable insights into how policy priorities, governmental narratives, stakeholder interests, and public concerns converge within digital information ecosystems, allowing a more comprehensive understanding of contemporary education governance. By integrating public policy theory with media discourse analysis, this research offers a broader conceptual framework for interpreting the dynamics of Indonesian education policy beyond formal governmental documents and administrative practices. The study consequently contributes to expanding interdisciplinary discussions on the relationship between policy processes, governance communication, and public legitimacy within rapidly evolving digital societies. Such a perspective is expected to enrich the scholarly discourse concerning the governance of education by emphasizing that policy effectiveness is closely associated with how policies are publicly represented, interpreted, and debated rather than solely with how they are formally formulated and implemented.

This study aims to analyze the dynamics of Indonesia's national education policy through a public policy perspective by investigating how national online media construct, represent, and communicate educational policy issues within the contemporary digital information environment. The research seeks to identify the dominant policy narratives, framing patterns, and discursive tendencies that emerge from media coverage while examining their implications for public understanding and policy legitimacy. Rather than limiting the analysis to formal policy documents or governmental regulations, the study places media discourse as an integral component of the policy process that reflects interactions among governmental institutions, journalists, policy actors, and society. This approach is expected to provide a more comprehensive explanation of how education policies evolve beyond administrative decision-making and become subjects of public negotiation within democratic governance. The research also contributes theoretically by integrating public policy analysis with media discourse analysis into a unified analytical framework capable of explaining contemporary education policy dynamics. Methodologically, the study demonstrates the value of systematically analyzing national online media

coverage as an empirical source for understanding policy development, communication, and public accountability in the education sector. Ultimately, the findings are expected to broaden scholarly understanding of education governance while providing practical insights for policymakers, educational institutions, and media organizations in developing more transparent, responsive, and socially legitimate education policies in Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative non-empirical research design using a literature-based document analysis approach to investigate the dynamics of Indonesia's national education policy through the lens of public policy and national online media coverage. A qualitative literature study was considered appropriate because the research sought to generate an in-depth understanding of policy dynamics by interpreting publicly available documentary sources rather than collecting primary empirical data (Dunn, 2018). The primary data sources consisted of secondary materials, including national online news articles, official government policy documents, statutory regulations, publications from the Ministry of Education, academic journal articles, and other authoritative documents discussing Indonesia's national education policy. National online media were selected because they play a strategic role in constructing public narratives, framing policy issues, and disseminating information regarding educational reforms to diverse audiences (Andriani et al., 2025; Yuliana et al., 2025). Official government publications were included to provide authoritative references concerning policy objectives, regulatory frameworks, and implementation strategies, thereby enabling comparisons between formal policy intentions and media representations (Dwi et al., 2024). The selection of documentary sources followed purposive criteria, including direct relevance to national education policy, publication by credible institutions or recognized national media organizations, accessibility of complete textual content, and publication within periods corresponding to major educational policy developments in Indonesia. The analytical framework was grounded in public policy analysis by examining policy formulation, implementation, governance dynamics, and media framing to understand how educational policies are represented and interpreted within Indonesia's contemporary digital public sphere (Dunn, 2018).

The analytical procedure was conducted through a systematic qualitative content analysis involving several sequential stages. First, documentary materials related to Indonesia's national education policy were identified, collected, and organized into a comprehensive database according to publication source, policy issue, and publication period. Second, the collected documents were subjected to open coding to identify recurring themes, policy narratives, implementation issues, governance challenges, and media framing patterns associated with national education policies. Third, thematic categorization was performed to compare similarities and differences across media reports, government documents, and scholarly literature, allowing broader patterns and policy dynamics to emerge through an iterative interpretative process (Gaol, 2022). The final stage involved synthesizing the identified themes to construct an integrated explanation of the evolution, implementation challenges, and public representation of Indonesia's national education policy within online media discourse. To enhance methodological rigor, the study applied source triangulation by comparing information across government documents, peer-reviewed publications, and multiple national online media outlets, thereby reducing interpretative bias and strengthening analytical credibility (Dunn, 2018). The consistency of coding and thematic interpretation was further maintained through repeated document review and continuous comparison among documentary sources to ensure that the findings accurately reflected the broader policy discourse rather than isolated media narratives (Abidin, 2012). Since the research relied exclusively on publicly accessible secondary documents and did not involve human participants, informed consent and institutional ethical approval were not required; nevertheless, the study adhered to principles of academic integrity through accurate citation practices, transparent source selection, and faithful interpretation of documentary evidence (Anderson, 2014).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Dynamics of Indonesia's National Education Policy in National Online Media Coverage

Indonesia's national education policy has experienced continuous transformation in response to evolving socioeconomic conditions, technological advancement, and governmental priorities, as reflected in national online media coverage. The qualitative document analysis indicates that education

policy is portrayed as an adaptive governance instrument intended to strengthen human capital while responding to increasingly complex national and global challenges. Rather than presenting policy reform as an isolated governmental initiative, online media frequently frame educational transformation as part of a broader strategy for improving administrative effectiveness, educational quality, and institutional competitiveness. This representation is consistent with the public policy perspective, which views policy development as a dynamic process involving agenda setting, formulation, implementation, and evaluation rather than a sequence of static regulatory decisions (Dunn, 2018). Contemporary educational reforms reported by national media also demonstrate that policy changes are closely associated with the government's effort to modernize the education system while maintaining constitutional commitments to equitable educational access. These findings suggest that national online media not only disseminate policy information but also contribute to constructing public understanding regarding the objectives and significance of educational reform within Indonesia's broader governance agenda (Yuliana et al., 2025).

Another important finding emerging from the document analysis concerns the relationship between political transition and policy continuity. National online media consistently report that changes in ministerial leadership and governmental priorities frequently influence the direction of education policy, particularly regarding curriculum reform, institutional restructuring, teacher development, and digital learning initiatives. Although policy adjustments are commonly justified as responses to changing educational needs, frequent policy modification also generates uncertainty among educational stakeholders responsible for implementation. Public policy literature argues that policy sustainability depends not only on political legitimacy but also on institutional consistency capable of preserving long-term policy objectives across successive administrations (Anderson, 2014). Similar observations have been reported in recent studies indicating that Indonesian education policy continues to evolve through negotiations among political interests, administrative capacity, and societal expectations rather than following a completely linear policy trajectory (Putri et al., 2025). The media discourse examined in this study reinforces this interpretation by portraying educational policy as an evolving governance process shaped by multiple institutional and political actors instead of a purely technocratic governmental activity.

National online media also place considerable emphasis on policy initiatives designed to improve educational quality through teacher professional development, curriculum innovation, digital transformation, and infrastructure expansion. The frequency with which these themes appear across documentary sources indicates that educational quality remains one of the dominant narratives within Indonesia's education policy agenda. Media reporting frequently associates these strategic programs with broader national objectives such as improving workforce competitiveness, supporting technological innovation, and preparing future generations for the digital economy. Earlier scholarship similarly argues that educational modernization requires coordinated improvements in institutional governance, curriculum development, technological integration, and professional capacity building among educators (Samala et al., 2024). Recent analyses further demonstrate that educational policy increasingly integrates digital transformation into broader governance strategies, reflecting international trends toward technology-enhanced learning environments (Sain et al., 2024). The principal policy issues identified through the documentary analysis are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Analysis of National Education Policy Issues Based on National Online Media Coverage

No.	Policy Issue	Policy Instrument	Primary Media Source	Policy Implication
1	Equal access to education	Compulsory education and educational assistance	National online media & government websites	Increased educational participation
2	Teacher quality improvement	Professional training and certification	National online media	Improved instructional quality
3	Curriculum reform	Curriculum adjustment	National online media	Alignment with future competencies
4	Educational digitalization	Technology-based learning	National online media	Digital learning transformation

5	Education financing	Increased education budget allocation	National online media & government	Strengthened education development
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Source: Author's analysis based on Kompas.com, Tempo.co, CNNIndonesia.com, Detik.com, Antara News, and the Ministry of Education website (2022–2025)

The thematic classification presented in Table 1 demonstrates that national online media consistently prioritize five interconnected policy dimensions rather than reporting isolated educational events. Equal access to education receives extensive attention because disparities between urban and remote regions remain persistent policy concerns within national development. Reports concerning teacher quality, curriculum reform, and educational digitalization frequently appear together, suggesting that media organizations interpret these initiatives as complementary components of systemic educational transformation rather than independent governmental programs. Public policy theory recognizes that interconnected policy instruments are generally developed to address multidimensional public problems through integrated governance approaches rather than fragmented administrative interventions (Dye, 2013). Documentary evidence examined in this research also indicates that education financing functions as a cross-cutting policy issue because financial capacity directly influences the implementation of all other educational initiatives. The pattern identified through media coverage illustrates how policy priorities are communicated to the public as mutually reinforcing components within Indonesia's long-term educational development strategy.

The analysis further indicates that online media perform a significant agenda-setting function by determining which education issues receive sustained public visibility and policy attention. Rather than merely reproducing governmental announcements, national media frequently contextualize education policies by highlighting implementation challenges, administrative constraints, and public responses accompanying each reform initiative. This pattern reflects the communicative dimension of public policy in which media institutions become influential actors shaping policy legitimacy through selective framing and issue emphasis (Permana, 2023). Comparable findings have been reported in critical discourse studies examining media representations of the Merdeka Belajar policy, where journalistic framing substantially influenced public interpretation of governmental educational reforms (Andriani et al., 2025). The documentary materials analyzed in this study reveal similar tendencies, particularly in relation to curriculum reform, educational financing, and digital transformation, where media narratives frequently extend beyond official policy explanations by incorporating broader societal concerns. Such characteristics indicate that policy communication constitutes an integral component of educational governance within Indonesia's increasingly digital public sphere.

The qualitative synthesis ultimately demonstrates that the dynamics of Indonesia's national education policy cannot be adequately understood through formal policy documents alone because national online media actively participate in constructing policy narratives, institutional legitimacy, and public expectations regarding educational reform. Documentary evidence suggests that policy evolution emerges through continuous interaction among governmental priorities, administrative implementation, media interpretation, and public discourse rather than through unilateral governmental decision-making. Educational governance consequently becomes a multidimensional process in which communication, political context, institutional capacity, and policy substance evolve simultaneously. This interpretation aligns with the perspective that education policy should be understood as a dynamic governance process requiring continuous adaptation to social change while preserving long-term developmental objectives (Nugroho, 2017). The analytical findings also strengthen the proposition that examining media narratives offers valuable insights into how education policies are publicly interpreted, contested, and legitimized beyond their formal regulatory framework.

Dominant Policy Issues and Media Framing of National Education Policy

The qualitative analysis of documentary sources demonstrates that national online media consistently construct education policy around several dominant issues that directly influence public perceptions of governmental priorities. Rather than presenting education policy as a single administrative agenda, media organizations emphasize interconnected concerns involving educational equity, curriculum reform, teacher professionalism, digital transformation, and public financing. These recurring themes reveal that media coverage extends beyond simple policy reporting by organizing educational issues into broader narratives concerning national development and human capital

formation. From a public policy perspective, issue framing plays an important role in determining which policy problems become politically salient and receive sustained governmental attention (Abidin, 2012). The prominence of these issues across multiple online news platforms indicates that education remains one of Indonesia's most visible public policy sectors because its outcomes influence economic competitiveness, social mobility, and national development simultaneously. The findings also suggest that media narratives contribute to shaping policy priorities by reinforcing particular educational challenges as matters requiring immediate governmental intervention (Hafidati, 2023).

Among the issues identified, equitable access to education receives the greatest attention because national media frequently associate educational inequality with regional disparities, infrastructure limitations, and unequal educational opportunities. Documentary evidence indicates that reports concerning educational access commonly highlight government initiatives such as compulsory education programs, educational assistance, and infrastructure development while simultaneously discussing implementation constraints experienced in disadvantaged regions. This dual framing illustrates that media narratives acknowledge governmental commitment while maintaining critical attention toward unresolved implementation challenges. Similar observations have been reported by recent studies showing that educational equity remains a central concern within Indonesian education policy because socioeconomic disparities continue to affect educational participation across regions (Widiastuti, 2025). Discussions regarding equal access are also linked to long-term national development strategies that seek to improve educational inclusion through broader public investment and administrative reform (Darmawan et al., 2024). Such reporting demonstrates that educational equity functions not merely as a policy objective but also as an indicator through which governmental performance is publicly evaluated.

Attention devoted to education financing further illustrates how media framing influences public interpretation of policy effectiveness. National online media consistently portray education expenditure as an essential foundation supporting curriculum reform, infrastructure expansion, teacher development, and digital learning initiatives rather than as an isolated fiscal commitment. Reports frequently emphasize the constitutional allocation of education funding while simultaneously questioning whether increased expenditure has generated proportional improvements in educational quality and administrative performance. Previous research similarly argues that financial investment alone cannot guarantee educational improvement unless accompanied by effective governance, transparent administration, and efficient policy implementation (Purba et al., 2024). The major trend in education financing reported during the study period is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Indonesia's Education Budget Allocation in the State Budget (2020–2025)

Year	Education Budget (Trillion IDR)	Percentage of State Budget
2020	508,1	20%
2021	550,0	20%
2022	621,3	20%
2023	612,2	20%
2024	665,0	20%
2025	724,3	20%

Source: Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia (processed by the author, 2025)

The information presented in Table 2 indicates that the Indonesian government has consistently maintained constitutionally mandated investment in education while gradually increasing nominal expenditure over recent years. Documentary analysis reveals that media organizations generally interpret this budget growth as evidence of governmental commitment to strengthening educational quality and expanding public services. Nevertheless, national media also emphasize that increasing financial allocation does not automatically resolve structural issues involving bureaucratic efficiency, policy coordination, and regional disparities. Public policy analysis explains that successful implementation depends upon the interaction between adequate financial resources and effective administrative capacity capable of translating policy objectives into measurable public outcomes (Anderson, 2014). Similar conclusions have been reached in studies examining the implementation of

educational assistance and national education financing, where governance quality significantly influences policy effectiveness despite sustained fiscal support (Saputra, 2025). Media framing therefore positions education financing not only as a budgetary issue but also as a measure of governmental accountability and institutional performance.

The analysis further demonstrates that curriculum reform and educational digitalization receive extensive media attention because they symbolize Indonesia's effort to modernize its education system in response to technological and global developments. Reports concerning curriculum adjustment are frequently accompanied by discussions regarding teacher readiness, institutional adaptation, digital infrastructure, and learning innovation, illustrating that educational transformation involves multiple interconnected policy dimensions. Recent scholarship similarly argues that contemporary education reform increasingly integrates technological advancement with curriculum innovation to prepare future generations for rapidly changing socioeconomic environments (Samala et al., 2024). Studies focusing on policy implementation also indicate that digital transformation requires administrative flexibility, organizational learning, and sustained governmental support to achieve intended educational outcomes (Dwi et al., 2024). National online media reinforce these perspectives by presenting curriculum reform and educational technology as complementary rather than independent policy initiatives. Such framing encourages the public to interpret educational modernization as a comprehensive governance strategy rather than a sequence of isolated policy changes.

Media representation also reveals that policy discourse increasingly incorporates questions of transparency, institutional responsiveness, and public participation alongside discussions of educational performance. News reports frequently extend beyond official governmental statements by including expert commentary, stakeholder perspectives, and public responses that broaden the interpretation of educational policy beyond administrative documentation alone. This characteristic reflects the growing role of digital journalism in shaping democratic policy communication through continuous interaction between governmental institutions and society (Permana, 2023). Critical discourse analyses of Indonesian education reporting similarly demonstrate that media narratives influence how citizens interpret policy legitimacy, governmental credibility, and reform effectiveness by selectively emphasizing particular aspects of educational change (Nasution & Azizah, 2025). The findings of this study indicate that national online media have become influential actors within Indonesia's educational governance ecosystem because they actively construct public understanding of educational priorities while simultaneously evaluating governmental performance. Media framing consequently functions as an important component of contemporary public policy processes in which educational legitimacy is negotiated through communication as much as through formal policy implementation.

Governance Challenges and Future Directions of Indonesia's National Education Policy

Indonesia's national education policy has undergone substantial transformation over the past decade, yet the effectiveness of these reforms continues to depend largely on the capacity of governance institutions responsible for translating policy objectives into practical outcomes. Documentary evidence collected from national online media indicates that policy implementation remains one of the most challenging stages within the education policy cycle because administrative performance differs considerably across national and regional institutions. The implementation of educational reforms frequently requires coordination among ministries, provincial governments, local education offices, schools, and community stakeholders, creating a governance structure characterized by multiple decision-making actors with varying institutional capacities. Public policy scholars argue that successful implementation depends not only on the quality of policy design but also on administrative capability, institutional coordination, and continuous policy evaluation throughout the implementation process (Dunn, 2018). National online media consistently report that implementation challenges emerge in relation to curriculum reform, teacher deployment, educational financing, and digital learning initiatives, illustrating that governance issues remain central to educational development. These findings indicate that strengthening governance mechanisms is essential for ensuring that national education policies generate measurable improvements rather than remaining normative policy commitments.

Governance challenges become more apparent when examining regional disparities in educational development across Indonesia. National online news frequently highlights differences in educational infrastructure, teacher distribution, technological readiness, and administrative

performance between urban and rural areas, indicating that policy implementation is strongly influenced by local institutional capacity. Although successive governments have introduced numerous initiatives to reduce educational inequality, documentary evidence demonstrates that disparities continue to affect the accessibility and quality of educational services in several regions. Educational inequality is therefore not solely associated with financial limitations but also with differences in governance effectiveness, organizational readiness, and policy coordination among regional institutions (Widiastuti, 2025). Similar findings reported in previous studies emphasize that unequal educational development remains a persistent obstacle despite increasing public investment and continuous policy reform (Sain et al., 2024). National online media consequently portray regional disparities as structural governance issues requiring integrated policy responses rather than isolated educational interventions.

Recognizing these governance challenges, the Indonesian government has introduced several strategic programs intended to improve educational quality while simultaneously expanding equitable access to education. Documentary sources consistently identify initiatives such as the Program Indonesia Pintar (PIP), the expansion of compulsory education, school digitalization, teacher competency development, and educational infrastructure revitalization as the principal pillars of contemporary national education policy. These programs are commonly presented by national online media as complementary initiatives designed to strengthen human capital and improve educational competitiveness within an increasingly digital society. Rather than emphasizing individual programs independently, media narratives frequently describe these initiatives as interconnected policy instruments supporting broader national development objectives. The principal strategic initiatives identified through the documentary analysis are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Strategic National Education Policy Programs

No.	Strategic Program	Primary Objective	Target Group
1	Program Indonesia Pintar (PIP)	Educational financial assistance	Primary, junior, and senior secondary students
2	13-Year Compulsory Education	Expanding educational access	School-age population
3	School Digitalization	Technology-enhanced learning	Primary and secondary schools
4	Teacher Competency Development	Improving instructional quality	Teachers and educational personnel
5	Educational Infrastructure Revitalization	Improving educational facilities	Schools nationwide

Source: Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (2023–2025), processed by the author

The strategic initiatives presented in Table 3 illustrate that Indonesia's education policy has gradually shifted from emphasizing educational access alone toward integrating educational quality, technological innovation, institutional modernization, and human resource development within a comprehensive governance framework. National online media frequently associate these programs with broader governmental efforts to strengthen national competitiveness by improving educational outcomes across different regions. Contemporary educational research similarly argues that sustainable policy reform requires simultaneous investment in educational infrastructure, teacher professionalism, curriculum innovation, and digital capability because these components function as mutually reinforcing elements of educational development (Samala et al., 2024). Studies examining the implementation of the Program Indonesia Pintar further demonstrate that transparent governance, administrative efficiency, and accurate beneficiary identification remain fundamental determinants of successful policy implementation (Saputra, 2025). Documentary evidence analyzed in this study also indicates that media organizations evaluate strategic education programs not only by reporting governmental commitments but also by examining implementation performance and policy outcomes experienced by educational stakeholders. Such reporting strengthens public accountability while encouraging greater transparency in the implementation of Indonesia's national education policy, thereby reinforcing the role of media as an important actor within contemporary public governance.

The effectiveness of Indonesia's strategic education programs can be further evaluated through educational participation indicators reported by official statistical institutions. School participation rates provide important evidence of whether national education policies have successfully expanded access to education across different age groups while reducing educational disparities. National online media frequently employ these indicators when discussing the achievements and continuing challenges of education policy because participation rates represent measurable outcomes of governmental intervention rather than policy intentions alone. Public policy evaluation emphasizes that outcome indicators are essential for assessing whether policy implementation has generated tangible public benefits beyond administrative compliance (Dunn, 2018). The documentary analysis similarly indicates that discussions concerning school participation are consistently associated with broader issues such as educational equity, infrastructure availability, and social inclusion. The distribution of school participation rates across different educational levels is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. School Participation Rate (APS) by Age Group in Indonesia

Age Group	2021 (%)	2022 (%)	2023 (%)
7–12 years (Primary)	99,12	99,17	99,20
13–15 years (Junior Secondary)	95,51	95,88	96,10
16–18 years (Senior Secondary)	72,36	73,45	74,12
19–24 years (Higher Education)	23,45	24,12	24,89

Source: Statistics Indonesia (BPS), Education Statistics, processed by the author

The data presented in Table 4 indicate that school participation remains consistently high at the primary education level, reflecting the government's sustained commitment to maintaining universal access to basic education. Participation at the junior secondary level also demonstrates gradual improvement, suggesting that compulsory education policies have contributed positively to educational continuity. In contrast, participation rates decline considerably at the senior secondary and higher education levels, indicating that educational transition remains a significant policy challenge requiring additional governmental attention (Darmawan et al., 2024). These differences imply that expanding access to education is no longer the sole challenge, as improving retention and educational progression has become equally important for achieving equitable educational development (Widiastuti, 2025). National online media frequently associate these participation gaps with disparities in household economic conditions, regional educational infrastructure, and institutional capacity, thereby portraying educational participation as both a social and governance issue (Supardi et al., 2024). To obtain a clearer understanding of recent developments, the longitudinal trend of school participation is further presented in Table 5.

Following the comparison of participation across educational levels, the temporal development of school participation provides additional insights into the effectiveness of Indonesia's education policy during the observation period. Longitudinal analysis enables a clearer understanding of whether policy interventions have produced sustained improvements rather than temporary changes in educational participation. National online media often present participation trends alongside discussions of education financing, digital transformation, and institutional reform to evaluate broader policy performance. The comparative trend of school participation rates between 2021 and 2023 is summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. Trends in School Participation Rates in Indonesia (2021–2023)

Year	APS 7–12 (%)	APS 13–15 (%)	APS 16–18 (%)
2021	99,12	95,51	72,36
2022	99,17	95,88	73,45
2023	99,20	96,10	74,12

Source: Statistics Indonesia (BPS), Education Statistics Indonesia (2023), processed by the author

The longitudinal trend presented in Table 5 demonstrates that participation at the primary education level remained highly stable throughout the three-year period, indicating that Indonesia has successfully maintained universal access to basic education. School participation at the junior secondary level also increased gradually, although the rate of improvement remained relatively modest. A more visible increase occurred at the senior secondary level, suggesting that recent educational policies have begun to improve access beyond compulsory education despite continuing disparities between educational levels (Darmawan et al., 2024). These trends indicate that policy implementation has generated measurable progress while simultaneously revealing that educational participation continues to decline as students move to higher levels of education (Widiastuti, 2025). National online media frequently interpret these patterns as evidence that financial support programs, digital learning initiatives, and educational infrastructure development have contributed positively to educational access, although structural barriers remain evident in several regions (Supardi et al., 2024). The longitudinal evidence therefore demonstrates that future policy evaluation should consider both participation growth and educational continuity in order to assess the overall effectiveness of national education policy.

The findings of this study further suggest that the future direction of Indonesia's national education policy should emphasize stronger governance integration, evidence-based policymaking, and more adaptive institutional coordination to address increasingly complex educational challenges. National online media consistently portray educational reform as an ongoing process that requires continuous collaboration among governmental institutions, educational organizations, local authorities, and wider society rather than isolated policy interventions. Contemporary public policy increasingly recognizes that successful governance depends upon the interaction between effective implementation, institutional accountability, and transparent public communication throughout the policy cycle (Anderson, 2014). Future education policies should also strengthen digital governance capacity, improve policy evaluation mechanisms, and reduce regional disparities so that educational reforms generate more equitable outcomes across Indonesia (Dwi et al., 2024). These priorities are expected to enhance policy consistency while enabling educational institutions to respond more effectively to rapid technological and social transformation. Such a governance perspective confirms that national online media will continue to play an important role in communicating policy developments, facilitating public oversight, and strengthening the legitimacy of Indonesia's national education policy within an increasingly digital democratic environment (Andriani et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the dynamics of Indonesia's national education policy have evolved considerably in response to changing socioeconomic conditions, technological advancement, and the increasing demand for high-quality human resource development. The analysis of national online media coverage reveals that education policy has become a multidimensional public policy issue involving governance, institutional capacity, educational equity, and policy communication rather than merely regulatory reform. Several strategic challenges continue to influence policy implementation, including frequent policy adjustments, regional disparities in educational resources, uneven institutional capacity, and the need to strengthen educational quality across all levels of the education system. The study also indicates that national online media play an important role in communicating policy developments while simultaneously shaping public understanding of governmental priorities and implementation outcomes. These findings highlight that policy effectiveness depends not only on the formulation of appropriate educational regulations but also on the interaction between governance quality, institutional coordination, and public accountability. A comprehensive understanding of education policy therefore requires integrating formal policy analysis with the examination of media narratives that influence public perceptions of educational reform.

The study further shows that the Indonesian government has introduced various strategic initiatives to address governance challenges and improve educational outcomes, including educational financing, compulsory education expansion, curriculum reform, school digitalization, teacher competency development, and educational infrastructure improvement. These initiatives reflect the government's commitment to strengthening national human capital through a more inclusive and adaptive education system. Nevertheless, documentary evidence suggests that successful policy implementation remains closely associated with effective coordination among central and regional

governments, educational institutions, and other stakeholders involved in policy execution. Institutional capacity, administrative effectiveness, and transparent governance continue to determine whether educational policies achieve their intended objectives across Indonesia's diverse regional contexts. Strengthening governance mechanisms and maintaining policy consistency are therefore essential for ensuring that educational reforms produce sustainable and equitable outcomes. Future educational development should also prioritize evidence-based policymaking and continuous policy evaluation to improve implementation quality and institutional responsiveness.

This study contributes to the public policy literature by demonstrating that national online media constitute an important arena through which education policy is communicated, interpreted, and evaluated within Indonesia's contemporary governance system. The integration of public policy analysis with media discourse provides a broader understanding of how educational policies evolve beyond formal governmental documents and become subjects of public discussion and institutional accountability. From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that policymakers should maintain greater consistency in educational policy while strengthening coordination between central and regional governments to reduce implementation disparities and improve governance effectiveness. Educational reforms should also continue to promote transparency, stakeholder participation, and adaptive institutional management in response to rapidly changing societal and technological conditions. For future research, empirical studies involving policymakers, educational practitioners, and regional governments are recommended to examine how national education policies are implemented across different local contexts and to validate the patterns identified through documentary and media analysis. Such investigations would complement the present study by providing a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between policy formulation, implementation, media representation, and educational governance in Indonesia.

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