

**INTERNALIZATION OF THE THREE PILLARS OF HIGHER
EDUCATION THROUGH ACADEMIC COLLABORATION,
INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS, AND GLOBAL COMMUNITY
EMPOWERMENT**
**A Legal Perspective on Higher Education in the Era of
Internationalization**

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ABSTRACT

The internationalization of higher education represents a paradigmatic transformation that requires the integration of global dimensions into the implementation of the Three Pillars of Higher Education (Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi). This article analyzes the internalization of education and teaching, research, and community service through academic collaboration, industry partnerships, and global community empowerment from the perspective of Indonesian higher education law. This study employs a normative juridical approach through the analysis of statutory regulations and academic literature. The findings indicate that the successful internationalization of the Three Pillars necessitates legal certainty in cross-border cooperation, protection of intellectual property rights, strengthening of contractual governance, and harmonization of global academic ethical standards.

Keywords: Three Pillars of Higher Education, internationalization, higher education law, academic collaboration, industry partnerships.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Three Pillars of Higher Education (Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi) constitute both a normative mandate and a philosophical construct that affirms the strategic position of higher education institutions within Indonesia’s constitutional system and national development framework. From a juridical perspective, the Tri Dharma is rooted in the constitutional mandate to educate the nation and is concretized in higher education regulations that position education, research, and community service as an integrated institutional function.¹ This conception affirms that higher education institutions are not merely academic entities, but public institutions endowed with social and legal responsibilities.

Conceptually, education and teaching function as processes of knowledge transformation and intellectual character formation; research serves as a mechanism for the production of knowledge and innovation; and community service operates as an instrument for distributing the benefits of scholarship to promote public welfare. These three dimensions are integrative and interdependent. High-quality education must be grounded in relevant research, while meaningful research must ultimately contribute tangibly to society. Therefore, the Tri Dharma is not merely an administrative obligation, but an epistemological paradigm that connects knowledge with social responsibility. From the perspective of social contract theory, the existence of higher education institutions may be understood as part of an implicit agreement between the state and its citizens. The state provides legitimacy, funding, and a regulatory framework for higher education institutions, while such institutions are obligated to produce competent graduates, innovative research, and significant social contributions. This relationship reflects the principle of reciprocity that lies at the core of modern social contract theory. Accordingly, the Tri Dharma represents a concrete manifestation of the moral and legal obligations of higher education institutions toward society as the holder of sovereignty.

In the era of globalization, the landscape of higher education has undergone structural transformation, characterized by increasing academic mobility, cross-border knowledge exchange, and innovation-driven economic integration. The internationalization of higher education is no longer limited to student exchange programs; it encompasses the integration of global curricula, transnational research collaboration, the establishment of university consortia, and strategic partnerships with

¹ See Article 1 point 9 of Law Number 12 of 2012 concerning Higher Education.

multinational industries.² This phenomenon expands the scope of the implementation of the Tri Dharma from the national level to a global dimension.

In this context, higher education institutions are required to internalize global values without losing their national identity. The integration of curricula with international standards, for instance, must still take into account national character and domestic development needs. Likewise, international research collaboration opens opportunities for technology transfer and the enhancement of academic reputation, yet simultaneously raises issues concerning ownership of research outputs, distribution of economic benefits, and data protection. Internationalization thus presents both opportunities and risks that require law-based governance and management. The theory of the rule of law (*rechtsstaat*) provides a normative foundation for understanding the importance of a legal framework in the internationalization of the Tri Dharma. In a rule-of-law state, every activity of public institutions, including higher education institutions, must be grounded in law, uphold legal certainty, and protect the rights of legal subjects. The principles of legality, legal certainty, and accountability constitute the foundation for drafting international cooperation agreements, managing research funds, and regulating intellectual property rights. Without a clear legal framework, international cooperation may give rise to jurisdictional conflicts and uncertainty of rights.

In addition to rule-of law theory, the governance approach particularly the concept of good university governance becomes relevant in the context of higher education internationalization. Governance emphasizes transparent, participatory, accountable, and responsive management toward stakeholders. In global cooperation, universities interact not only with the state but also with industry, international organizations, and civil society. Therefore, the governance of academic collaboration must prioritize contractual transparency, risk management, and effective internal oversight mechanisms.

Within the framework of global governance, higher education institutions also function as non-state actors contributing to knowledge diplomacy. Through research collaboration and global community empowerment, universities build epistemic networks that transcend national territorial boundaries. However, this role remains

² Jane Knight, “Internationalization of Higher Education: A Conceptual Framework,” dalam *Internationalization of Higher Education*, OECD, 2008.

embedded within national and international legal frameworks, thereby requiring regulatory harmonization to prevent overlapping authorities.

Normatively, the Indonesian higher education system is grounded in the principles of institutional autonomy, public accountability, and quality assurance.³ Autonomy grants institutional discretion to establish international cooperation and to develop innovation. However, such autonomy is not absolute; it is limited by the obligation of public accountability and compliance with statutory regulations. From the perspective of the rule of law, autonomy must operate in conjunction with oversight and mechanisms of checks and balances. In practice, international cooperation frequently encounters challenges related to choice of law, choice of forum for dispute settlement, and the regulation of intellectual property rights over jointly produced research outputs. Differences in legal systems among countries may give rise to conflicts of norms that affect the validity and enforceability of contracts. Furthermore, the advancement of digital technology has generated new issues concerning personal data protection, cybersecurity, and cross-border academic integrity. These challenges demonstrate that the internationalization of the Tri Dharma cannot be separated from the dimension of transnational law.

Therefore, the internalization of the Tri Dharma in the era of globalization requires a multidimensional approach integrating academic, managerial, and legal aspects. Higher education institutions must be capable of designing adaptive contractual instruments, strengthening institutional legal capacity, and ensuring that every international cooperation arrangement aligns with the principles of the rule of law and good governance. In this way, internationalization becomes not merely a reputational strategy, but a transformative process grounded in legal legitimacy and social responsibility. Based on the foregoing, this article aims to analyze how the internalization of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education can be optimized through academic collaboration, industry partnerships, and global community empowerment from the perspectives of rule-of-law theory, governance theory, and social contract theory. This analysis is expected to provide a conceptual contribution to strengthening the legal framework of higher education in Indonesia in responding to global dynamics.

II. INTERNALIZATION OF EDUCATION AND TEACHING WITHIN THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

³ Article 62 of Law Number 12 of 2012 concerning Higher Education.

The internationalization of education is reflected in joint degree programs, double degree programs, student exchange schemes, and international credit recognition (credit transfer systems). Legally, such cooperation constitutes a civil contractual relationship subject to the principle of freedom of contract as stipulated in Article 1338 of the Indonesian Civil Code (KUHPPerdata).⁴ However, such freedom is not absolute. Academic cooperation agreements must fulfill the validity requirements of contracts as stipulated in Article 1320 of the Indonesian Civil Code, namely consent, legal capacity, a certain object, and a lawful cause.⁵ In addition, the recognition of degrees and international accreditation must conform to national higher education standards. In this context, the state possesses regulatory authority to ensure quality assurance and the protection of students as legal subjects.⁶ Accordingly, the internalization of education must be constructed upon a balance between institutional autonomy and state regulation in order to guarantee legal certainty and academic quality.

III. RESEARCH, INNOVATION, AND INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS

The research dimension of the Tri Dharma has become increasingly integrated with industry through the university–industry linkage model. Such collaboration promotes research downstreaming and the commercialization of innovation. However, from a legal perspective, strategic issues arise concerning intellectual property rights (IPR). Patent rights and copyrights arising from research outputs must be clearly regulated in cooperation agreements to prevent disputes over ownership.⁷ In the global context, the protection of intellectual property is also linked to international regimes such as the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS).⁸

⁴ Article 1338 of the Indonesian Civil Code, which stipulates that all legally formed agreements shall bind the parties as law (*pacta sunt servanda* principle), cannot be revoked except by mutual consent or on legally recognized grounds, and must be executed in good faith.

⁵ Article 1320 of the Indonesian Civil Code, which stipulates the four essential requirements for the validity of a contract: consent of the parties, legal capacity to enter into an agreement, a specific and certain subject matter, and a lawful cause.

⁶ Government Regulation Number 4 of 2014 concerning the Implementation of Higher Education and the Management of Higher Education Institutions.

⁷ Law Number 13 of 2016 concerning Patents, which regulates the protection of patent rights, including the requirements for patentability, the scope of exclusive rights granted to patent holders, the duration of protection, patent licensing, transfer of rights, and legal remedies in cases of infringement. This law provides the legal basis for safeguarding research-based technological innovations, including those generated through university–industry collaborations.

⁸ Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), 1994.

Furthermore, international research collaboration requires regulation concerning data protection, confidentiality of information (non-disclosure agreements), and royalty-sharing arrangements. Without a firm legal framework, potential conflicts of interest between academics and industry may undermine scientific integrity.

Therefore, harmonization among contract law, intellectual property law, and academic ethics constitutes a prerequisite for sustainable industry partnerships. The research dimension of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education has undergone significant transformation alongside the development of the university-industry linkage model, which emphasizes synergy between academic institutions and the industrial sector. This model aims to accelerate research downstreaming, enhance national competitiveness, and promote market-driven innovation. Within the paradigm of a knowledge-based economy, research no longer culminates merely in scientific publications but is directed toward generating economic added value through the commercialization of inventions and technology transfer.

Normatively, research activities in higher education institutions are regulated within the legal framework of higher education, which affirms that research constitutes a systematic activity to obtain knowledge and technology for the advancement of science and public welfare. ¹This principle demonstrates that research possesses two dimensions: an academic dimension and a utilitarian dimension. Integration with industry strengthens the utilitarian dimension while simultaneously demanding more complex legal regulation. From the perspective of intellectual property rights (IPR), research outputs that produce inventions, scientific works, industrial designs, or software fall within the category of legally protected objects. In Indonesia, patent protection is governed by Law Number 13 of 2016 concerning Patents, while copyright protection is regulated under Law Number 28 of 2014 concerning Copyright. Both regulations affirm that exclusive rights over inventions or creations belong to the inventor or author, unless otherwise stipulated in an employment relationship or specific agreement. In the context of research collaboration between universities and industry, the regulation of IPR ownership becomes a central issue. When research is funded by industry, questions arise as to who holds the patent rights whether the researcher as inventor, the university as institution, or the sponsoring company. Therefore, research cooperation agreements must explicitly regulate: (i) initial ownership, (ii) royalty-sharing arrangements, (iii) exclusive or non-exclusive licensing rights, and (iv) commercialization mechanisms. Without clear regulation, potential ownership disputes may hinder downstreaming processes and cause losses to the parties involved.

In addition to national law, IPR protection in international collaborations is also subject to global regimes, particularly the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS). This agreement establishes minimum standards of IPR protection that must be observed by member states of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Accordingly, cross-border research cooperation must consider the harmonization of patent protection standards, duration of protection, and enforcement mechanisms in each jurisdiction.

Furthermore, data protection and confidentiality have become increasingly crucial in collaborative research, particularly in the fields of information technology, biotechnology, and artificial intelligence. In Indonesia, personal data protection has been strengthened through Law Number 27 of 2022 concerning Personal Data Protection, which obliges data controllers to safeguard the security and confidentiality of data subjects. In international research cooperation, cross-border data transfers must comply with principles of consent, security, and accountability. Moreover, the use of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) constitutes a preventive legal instrument to protect sensitive information before patents are registered or research results are published. In practice, NDAs must be drafted in accordance with the principle of freedom of contract as regulated in the Indonesian Civil Code, while still observing limitations related to public interest and academic freedom. Another issue frequently encountered is conflict of interest between academics and industry. When research is funded by corporations, there is a risk of bias in research design, data interpretation, and publication of results. Therefore, in addition to contract law and IPR law, strengthening academic codes of ethics and research funding disclosure mechanisms is essential. From a good governance perspective, transparency and accountability are key principles in maintaining scientific integrity.

Furthermore, the integration of research and industry must align with national policies on the innovation system. Regulations concerning the national research and innovation system emphasize the importance of collaboration among government, universities, and industry within the framework of the triple helix model. This model positions universities as centers of knowledge production, industry as the engine of commercialization, and government as regulator and facilitator. Thus, harmonization among contract law, intellectual property law, data protection law, and academic ethics constitutes a fundamental prerequisite for building sustainable industry partnerships. A comprehensive legal framework not only provides certainty and protection for the parties involved but also ensures that research downstreaming remains oriented toward the

public interest and the advancement of science. In the context of a rule-of-law state, research collaboration is not merely an economic relationship but a legal relationship that must adhere to the principles of legality, justice, and accountability.

IV. Community Service and Global Community Empowerment

Community service represents the manifestation of the social responsibility of higher education institutions. In the global context, community service has evolved into cross-border community empowerment, including sustainable development programs. Normatively, community empowerment must align with the principles of human rights protection and social justice.⁹ Higher education institutions, as subjects of both public and private law, bear moral and legal responsibility to ensure that empowerment programs do not generate inequality or exploitation. Moreover, cooperation with international organizations requires compliance with the national law of partner countries as well as relevant international law. Therefore, governance based on the principles of good governance constitutes an essential foundation for the implementation of global community service. Community service constitutes both a normative and ethical dimension of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education, affirming the position of universities as public institutions inseparable from their social responsibilities. Conceptually, community service should not merely be understood as ceremonial activities or temporary assistance programs, but as a knowledge-based process of social transformation aimed at enhancing the capacity, self-reliance, and welfare of communities. Within the framework of national higher education law, community service is an institutional obligation inherent in the functions of education and research, such that research outcomes and innovations must be disseminated for the public good. This principle reflects the constitutional orientation of the state to realize social justice and public welfare. to educate the life of the nation as mandated in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia.

In the context of globalization, the paradigm of community service has expanded in meaning from a local approach to cross-border community empowerment. Higher education institutions are now involved in sustainable development programs, capacity-building for marginalized communities, the transfer of appropriate technology, and collaboration with international communities within the framework of sustainable development. This orientation aligns with global agendas such as those of the United Nations through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which emphasize the

⁹ See the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, fourth paragraph.

importance of multi-actor collaboration in achieving inclusive and sustainable development. Thus, global community service constitutes not only the implementation of the Tri Dharma but also an academic contribution to international development governance. Normatively, community empowerment must be carried out in accordance with the principles of human rights protection, non-discrimination, and social justice. These principles are rooted in constitutional commitments as well as various national and international legal instruments that guarantee respect for human dignity. Higher education institutions, in their capacity as subjects of public law as well as private legal entities, bear a dual responsibility: a moral responsibility as institutions of knowledge and a legal responsibility as implementers of programs that directly impact communities. Therefore, every empowerment program must be designed using a participatory and community-based approach, avoiding paternalistic or exploitative patterns of relationship. In the practice of cross-border cooperation, the legal dimension becomes increasingly complex. The implementation of global community service programs often involves partnerships with international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and foreign educational institutions. Each form of collaboration must comply with the national law of the partner country, including operational permits, funding provisions, and regulations concerning data protection and security. At the same time, cooperation must also observe relevant international legal norms, whether binding (hard law) or in the form of international principles and standards (soft law). Non-compliance with local or international legal provisions may give rise to jurisdictional disputes and undermine the institutional legitimacy of higher education institutions.

Furthermore, from a governance perspective, the implementation of global community service must be grounded in the principles of good governance, including transparency, accountability, participation, effectiveness, and the rule of law. Transparency is required in the management of international grants and program reporting; accountability ensures that each activity can be justified legally and ethically; participation guarantees the active involvement of communities as subjects, rather than objects, of development; while the rule of law ensures that all processes operate within a framework of legality. This governance approach is essential to prevent abuse of authority, conflicts of interest, or unequal distribution of benefits. Thus, community service at the global scale cannot be regarded merely as a supplementary activity to academic functions, but rather as a concrete manifestation of the social responsibility of higher education institutions within both national and international legal orders. The internalization of global community service demands integration between academic values, human rights principles, and sound legal governance. Within the framework of a

rule-of-law state, global community service must serve as a vehicle for equitable and sustainable empowerment that respects human dignity, thereby enabling universities to function truly as agents of social transformation in global society.

V. Regulatory Challenges and Legal Implications

The internalization of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education in the context of internationalization is inseparable from various complex structural and normative challenges. One of the primary challenges is the difference in legal systems among countries (legal pluralism), which directly affects the validity and implementation of cross-jurisdictional academic cooperation. Each country possesses distinct characteristics in its legal system – whether based on civil law, common law, or mixed systems – which influence contractual construction, intellectual property protection, dispute resolution mechanisms, and standards of public accountability. In international cooperation, these differences frequently give rise to issues concerning choice of law and choice of forum. Unclear regulation may trigger conflicts of laws that potentially hinder the sustainability of academic collaboration and joint research. In addition to the plurality of legal systems, the lack of harmonization in higher education regulations also constitutes a significant obstacle. Differences in accreditation standards, degree recognition, academic credit systems, and quality assurance mechanisms may impede student and faculty mobility as well as global curriculum integration. At the national level, regulations that are not fully synchronized among higher education policy, research and innovation policy, and intellectual property regulation may create overlapping authorities and administrative uncertainty. In the context of internationalization, regulatory harmonization becomes a crucial prerequisite for establishing equitable cooperation and mutual recognition. Another equally important challenge is the risk of excessive commercialization that may shift fundamental academic values. Although the integration of universities with industry opens opportunities for research downstreaming and increased funding, a dominant market orientation may distort academic freedom and scientific independence. When profit logic becomes the primary determinant in setting research agendas, there is a risk of marginalizing basic research, which may be less economically profitable but holds long-term strategic value for the advancement of knowledge. Therefore, a balance between commercial orientation and scientific mission must be maintained through clear regulations and firm codes of ethics.

On the other hand, the limited legal capacity of higher education institutions in international negotiations also constitutes a structural issue. Not all institutions possess human resources with adequate understanding of transnational legal aspects,

international contract drafting, cross-border data protection, or legal risk management. As a result, universities often occupy a weaker bargaining position in global collaboration agreements, particularly when dealing with multinational industry partners or leading world universities. This limited capacity may lead to unbalanced contractual clauses and potential legal liabilities in the future. In this context, strengthening national regulations that are adaptive to global dynamics becomes an urgent necessity. The state, as regulator, plays a strategic role in providing a comprehensive legal framework responsive to the development of higher education internationalization. The formulation of standard contractual guidelines for international cooperation—including provisions on intellectual property ownership, royalty-sharing, dispute resolution, and data protection—can serve as preventive instruments to minimize legal conflicts. In addition, oversight and accountability mechanisms must be reinforced through transparent reporting systems, institutional audits, and the strengthening of legal units within higher education institutions.

Thus, the internalization of the Tri Dharma in the era of globalization requires the integration of regulatory reform, enhancement of institutional capacity, and commitment to academic values. Harmonization of national law with international standards aims not only to create legal certainty but also to safeguard the integrity and sustainability of the higher education mission as a pillar of knowledge-based development.

VI. CONCLUSION

The internalization of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education in the era of internationalization requires the integration of academic and legal dimensions. Academic collaboration, industry partnerships, and global community empowerment can only operate effectively when supported by legal certainty, protection of rights, and transparent and accountable governance.

Accordingly, law functions not merely as a normative instrument, but as a strategic foundation in building globally competitive higher education institutions oriented toward social justice.

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