



# I nternational Journal of Innovation and Thinking

Journal Website: [ij-it.com](http://ij-it.com)

E-ISSN: 3066-4047

---

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### Trajectory of Timorean Education

**Pascoal Soares Madeira**

Instituto São João de Brito, Kassait, Timor-Leste

Corresponding Author, Email: [pascoalsoares631@gmail.com](mailto:pascoalsoares631@gmail.com)

---

#### ARTICLE INFO

##### *Keywords*

Education, Cultural Identity,  
Values, Ancestral Heritage.

#### ABSTRACT

This article reflects on various themes grounded in the social and educational realities of life, considering science, attitudes, and historical narratives as expressions of Timorese identity in the current context. Life's limitations and numerous unfavorable experiences teach us to create something new and better, while preserving our cultural originality. The meaning of life through the lens of attitudes and scientific understanding leads us to constant reflection. The demand for education, rooted in Timorese cultural context, is essential in the ongoing struggle to transform lifestyles not just for success, but to achieve meaningful development through quality education. The current societal reality stands in contrast to our expectations. Most children, adolescents, and young people are unable to receive a proper education due to a lack of attention from families and society. As a result, we observe a decline in appropriate attitudes and a diminishing emphasis on human development. Without a positive mindset, the originality and cultural values of the Timorese people are at risk of being lost. Thus, it is vital to respect and value cultural diversity as part of our identity, and to foster healthy relationships in both society and the school environment through teaching and learning that promote assertive behavior. This includes honoring our historical struggle for national liberation and building quality education based on the pain and hardship endured during periods of foreign colonization.

---

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. Challenges, Possibilities Regarding Cultural Reality and the Education Process in Timor-Leste

The article will reflect on various topics, based on the reality of social and educational life in terms of science, attitudes, and past histories linked to Timorese cultural identity. Through this elaboration, the author seeks to express the situations of families in society and understand how they educate their children at home and at school, as well as the challenges faced during colonization. The solution to so many



obstacles in society lies in our effort and collaboration to overcome these challenges through care techniques and to work together, based on our own will, in family and school life, to be integrated into the common society. Nature and culture are the foundations of science and attitudes that contribute in any way to the life of human beings in this country as original identity. Limitations are life experiences, and so many unfavorable attitudes teach us to do something new, but they do not eliminate our originality. The meaning of life in terms of attitudes and sciences helps us reflect on each moment to lead us to the desired goal.

To have adequate awareness for a quality, transparent, and inclusive education, it is worth reflecting on all past events, both good and bad, and it is necessary to better infiltrate this awareness through practices that occur in the family and social environment. All of this is fundamental, as it is important to understand the relationship with oneself and with others, with nature and the world, to welcome others through dialogue and mutual listening, to be more responsible in our work, and to always work in good collaboration in accordance with our Timorese cultural identity. Demand is a very necessary sense in the struggle to change the lifestyle, not only oneself, but especially those who need it. For the current reality in society demonstrates a sad situation, in which most children, adolescents, and young people have not been able to receive a good education in schools due to a lack of attention from their own families and the state. This can lead some people to negatively reflect on human exploitation, the sale of dignity, the devaluation of culture, and so many other acts of theft committed in society, all while disobeying public order. In the current context, appropriate attitudes are diminishing, and human development is nowhere to be found, because capitalism truly directs people's thinking toward money and commodity consumption. The pursuit of good educational outcomes, ensuring that professionals in training acquire fundamental knowledge and skills for society in a transparent and inclusive manner, is crucial. It's a shame that not everyone does this to fulfill their role as good motivators to ensure a full education for life through the relationship between society and the State. At the very least, express gratitude to those individuals and family members who have contributed greatly, ensuring a peaceful life on the path of peace and tranquility.

The Timorese people have experienced three defining moments in their lives, including the Portuguese colonization period from 1512 to 1974 (Durand, 2009, p. 51), the Indonesian invasion from 1975 to 1999 (Durand, 2009, p. 126), and the independence of East Timor in 2002 (Durand, 2009, p. 145). What we can see from education is that most of the new generations only completed a very low level of education and formed families very early. Others still did not want to study due to their family's financial situation and inappropriate social pressure over time. After independence, the country still finds that few Timorese people completed higher education with a bachelor's degree, and even fewer with master's and doctoral degrees. Due to the lack of human resources in the area of education, the quality of Timorese education becomes a major concern.

Considering the Timorese situation during the decades of prolonged foreign colonization, we can imagine that it was extremely difficult, and that people born at that time had no other option but to escape reality due to the dominant powers and so many other unjust oppressions in the country. The only option for the oppressed was to obey the decision to work as slaves, contributing to the well-being of their oppressors. We can imagine that it was difficult to witness the happiness of those who lived through the



crucial moments mentioned above; many were even punished, losing their lives and their families unjustly.

During the Portuguese colonization period, education was exclusive. Those who could access education were the children of the elite, the children of the *liurais*.<sup>1</sup> and members of religious congregations (Catholic), and the students did not achieve high academic qualifications like they do today. The highest level they could reach at the time was fourth grade, which today is considered high school. The impact of not having access to education was due to several challenges: education was not popular, the colonizers did not want the Timorese people to have access to education, there were no schools in each region, there were no roads for people to easily access schools, there were not enough teachers, and there was no transportation. Schools were built by the Portuguese, and there were few schools in specific locations, limiting the number of students who wanted to access them.

At the time of the Indonesian invasion, there were many changes in terms of education, infrastructure, economic and political issues in the country because the invaders wanted to take over the *lorosa'e*<sup>2</sup> land as the 27th province of Indonesia. Parents reported that, since 1975, most families had 15 or more sons and daughters. They felt it was difficult to obtain food and access to healthcare, especially for those living outside the cities. Many died of hunger and various diseases. Even though they had land to plant cassava, pumpkin, corn, and beans to sustain their lives, they had no way to go to the fields to collect them, because if enemies encountered them on the way, they would have to be killed due to the differing ideologies of the Timorese people and the Indonesian military at that time.

The reality of Timorese society has been so bitter and burdensome throughout these times, due to the complex world in which capitalism and hegemonic power demand that people center their ideas on foreign ideological intentions, thus creating so many political, economic, cultural, racial, and color-based competitions, etc., to dominate the country and its people. Thanks to our Timorese intellectual fighters, who lacked sufficient educational opportunities, but wisely made decisions to definitively reject the false ideologies that oppressed the Timorese people at the time.

For this reason, we must consider that strengthening education after the country's independence becomes aThe wealth of a nation lies in its cultural and linguistic diversity, which reinforce its own identity, encourage respect for diversity, and facilitate the sharing of knowledge and experiences in a solid and transparent way with new generations. However, these elements can also represent obstacles to national unity, since, in certain circumstances, they can provoke conflicts or hinder communication and integration between different groups intentionally created by people.

The legacies of Portuguese colonialism and the Indonesian occupation profoundly impacted education and culture, shaping the nation's identity in intricate and diverse ways. Portuguese hegemony, which lasted approximately 400 years, left a lasting legacy in language, religion (with the predominance of Catholicism), and social

<sup>1</sup> It is the person who holds a special position of ruling the Timorese people in different regions of Timor-Leste at the time of Portuguese colonization.

<sup>2</sup> The Tetum language which means "East" or "The Land of Rising Sun".



and cultural practices. The Indonesian occupation, which lasted 24 years, presented obstacles of resistance and a battle for independence, as well as an impact on political and social structures. The combination of these two historical stages created a Timorese identity characterized by cultural diversity. After self-determination, it is necessary to fight for the preservation of local traditions while simultaneously distinguishing external elements, such as Portuguese and Indonesian, in the daily lives of the Timorese people. Languages are considered and acceptable, as written in the Constitution of the Republic of Timor-Leste (CRDTL, 2002), but foreign culture is definitively disregarded in uncovering the origins of our culture, which had been buried by external cultures for so long. This means that the Timorese people can grow with their local and contextual experience in terms of culture, history, economy, education, health, etc.

Globalization has encouraged an increase in cultural uniformity through education, values, customs, and cultural products that enable people to grow through education in a democratic, free, and critical way. We work tirelessly to infiltrate cultural diversity in this country, especially cultures that do not benefit our people. We must prevent the intervention of foreign cultures for the sake of money. And we are always firm in maintaining our origins and national cultural identity. Therefore, education is the only alternative to solve these problems. This demand for uniformity in Timorese contextual education aims to maintain our customs and cultural heritage so as not to jeopardize local traditions and cultural identities in this country. Without this consideration, our cultures run the risk of being lost to the force of a globalized culture. We can testify that, unfortunately, the Timorese educational curriculum does not incorporate the cultural history and enduring struggles of our people throughout the colonial era. It is a shame that the long-lasting struggles and bitter histories of this nation's educational intellectuals are not fully considered. We hope that soon, possibly, education will consider including Timorese cultural history in the curriculum so that new generations can properly maintain and value national identities. At the same time, we are observing a growing resistance in several communities, which struggle to maintain their traditions, languages, beliefs, and traditional lifestyles, understanding the importance of maintaining their uniqueness to reinforce cultural diversity in this country and to avoid the hegemonic influence of foreign cultures.

The presence of solid public policies, combined with natural and human resources, has compromised the effective promotion of culture in Timor-Leste to play a crucial role in the cultural formation of individuals, in the educational system, starting from obstacles such as the lack of investment in cultural programs, the lack of appropriate training for educators and the lack of inadequate infrastructure in educational institutions, etc. These elements, combined with regional inequality and the lack of integration between the various levels of government, hinder universal access to culture for the critical and creative growth of our people and our nation.

From personal observation, schools are a space of tension, given that sometimes the teaching-learning process faces complex situations that fail to achieve its goals, or occasionally, infrastructure stalls due to insufficient funding. In a way, schools have a very complex characteristic regarding the development of educational quality, directly linked to the standards established in legislation, educational policy, the political-pedagogical project, and the legal documents related to education. If you look at these documents, there's no doubt about it, because they clearly state what should and shouldn't be done. However, in daily practice, unfortunately, things are quite different



because some people don't reflect on the issue of collective work. Therefore, some schools are much more developed than others.

The school is the central space that organizes the development processes in relation to public policies in various segments to improve the quality of students through the professional training of teachers in the classroom.

The importance of these actions is interconnected with the intersectoral nature of public policies and the issues of leisure, culture, sports, and other areas. In a sense, school infrastructure must be well-organized financially for school development, such as the payment of a minimum wage commensurate with the level of education provided. It relies on the solidarity of state and municipal entities to improve quality, which reflects the real situation in this country.

## 2. Appreciation of Timorese Culture Through Education

As a nation with such strong cultural characteristics, it's important to embrace them and highlight the advantages that the people of this country experience in their daily lives. Without in-depth study of the cause, people won't experience positive changes in intellectual competition in the world of education, much less adequately value their cultural identity going forward.

In cultural implementation, people always collaborate well with the State through the trust placed in it, to promote society and solve problems that arise in accordance with the Constitution (CRDTL, art. 72, paragraphs 1 and 2). This point was clearly evident in the Timorese community, as contribution is fundamental to the good of society, through collective efforts to affirm and acknowledge the shortcomings that should be addressed sustainably and progressively. The cultural influence of Timorese education contributes greatly to a peaceful society, in harmony, creating infinite possibilities for "becoming," being educated and influenced by parents and children, friends, and the people of this nation.

The Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste (CRDTL), art. 59, paragraph 5, states that "everyone has the right to cultural enjoyment and creation, as well as the duty to preserve, defend, and enhance cultural heritage." Indeed, the crocodile country boasts a natural wealth of people, crafts, music, dance, cuisine, and more. Each municipality has its own tribes (sacred houses). Within these, important crafts, such as *belak*, are preserved from ancient times. , *morten* , *kaebauk* ,*surik* , *keka* These pieces are preserved by each tribe to remember the inheritance of their ancestors from generation to generation. Each tribe also keeps a piece of wood and a stone as a sacred symbol, where the *lia nain* is placed. can perform a ritual, that is, a prayer so that all people within that tribe can receive the blessing of nature. In the Tetum language, it is called *fatuk lulik* what's up *lulik* All of this is interconnected with our cultural identity, which we need to value through education at all times. Education is the only way to promote, value, qualify, and discuss our identities internationally through activities such as traditional dances, as it is considered a fundamental part of our culture, and when people or performers use such techniques, for women and such manners For men, during important celebrations where many people are present, both within the country and abroad. When traditional celebrations take place, tribal leaders, who decide on the ritual process, demonstrate justice, respect, and human dignity in a transparent manner.



They usually have a dialogue, after sending the message verbally to their sisters, aunts, and married brothers who live far away.

This makes us understand that cultural identity promotes the dignity of people in a safer, more transparent, collaborative and inclusive environment to help human beings in the common understanding of social issues such as the culture, politics and history of the country.

Santos (2024) presented his fundamental idea regarding the traditional norm that has existed since antiquity until today and stated that, because of Timorese tradition, the government chose to implement a pluralistic state in terms of legal law, as customary law is seen as a component of this country's culture. (Madeira, 2024, p. 122) further stated that "new generations have the hope that our culture preserves the identity of the Timorese people in a transparent and inclusive way." Indeed, we have come to realize that culture is the identity of this nation and it demonstrates our customs, our being, and our human existence to maintain a living relationship, now and forever.

From the perspective of worship or (hamulak ). They have their own prayers to begin any cultural ceremony. Before beginning the ceremony, the lia nain or kuku He secretly performed the prayer inside his sacred house, as he is considered the only person with a special "gift" and the ability to converse with the spirit of nature. In this prayer, he asks for the intercession of the spirit of nature to open the way for all those who will participate in this ceremony, to prevent those who come with bad intentions, and to thwart the evil force of the devil.

At the beginning of the ritual, the lia nain pronounces, "Through the intercession of nature that dwells in this sacred house, I call upon Father Heaven and Mother Earth to open to us the path of goodness, the opportunity of life, and that we may not fall into the temptation of evil forces..." After finishing the ceremony, the lia nain once again thanks the spirit of nature for its protection. If any problems arise during the ceremony, the lia nain apologizes, perhaps because he or she did not communicate well with the spirit of nature. This hamulak existed long before the arrival of the Catholic religion in East Timor.

(Boff, 2017) We must learn and show our affection to Mother Earth, as she gives us life to sustain human beings through the food we consume daily. Indeed, we recognize that the earth germinates and nourishes living beings, and therefore, we need to care for it and maintain a good relationship with it. Saint Francis of Assisi said that, in which we are part of nature and feel its beauty, etc. (Francisco, 2015), he emphasized the importance of preserving history and its architecture as human cultural wealth to avoid the consumerist invasion that is increasingly advancing in today's world.

Francis emphasized that the land is not for profit; it possesses good things, given freely by God and our ancestors. Therefore, we must show respect and maintain the original identity and local values of our culture.

(Francisco, 2020) emphasized that each of us must love and care for our own land, culture, and local identity. Preserving identity enables human beings to access a wealth of information and promote quality throughout their existence on this earth. If we can implement these attitudes, the country will have the advantage of showcasing its





unique personality in the eyes of others around the world. Therefore, it is to avoid social inequality, which is increasingly becoming a concern for our people. Cunha and Santos (2024) argued that inequality occurs in society because of the division between rich, poor, and intellectually advanced individuals.

(Madeira, 2016) defined that in the Timorese context, the sacred house is considered a social institution throughout the territory because it has a very strong connection with nature, family, and society as a whole. Each sacred house has its own architecture. Thanks to our ancestors for experiencing the local culture and passing down stories verbally from generation to generation, Timorese education must therefore value these riches to ensure that the country's cultural uniqueness is not lost in future generations.

A. What is a normative function of the school?

From this perspective, it can be understood that the normative function is what truly distinguishes an Education Council and through which a councilor interprets legislation with due care.

Augusto Cury explained that, "under the pretext of regulating or regulating infraconstitutional matters, specific initiatives may be undertaken whose constitutional or legal validity is uncertain." In a sense, the "normative function cannot be *contra legem*, *ultra legem*, or *praeter legem*. It can only be *secundum legem* and *intra legem*." However, it brings the organization of national education within the law, interpreting it, and applying it to further the broader goals of school education.

B. What is the difference between discretion and arbitrariness?

Discretion is the aforementioned aspect that is becoming a new field in a technologically advanced society and is imposed *intra legem*. The *intra legem* nature, that is, under the criteria of merit, equity, and justice; from a practical standpoint, discretion is justified and avoids the automatism that prevails in the dynamics of the public interest, which requires flexibility of action, with which it may prove incompatible with the lawmaking process.

Arbitrariness represents an act outside the law. Therefore, its nature is different from discretion.

C. What are the fields of activity of the National Education Council?

The National Council of Education operates in various educational fields, including Basic Education at various stages, such as Early Childhood Education, Primary Education, General Secondary Education, and Vocational Technical Education. Its purpose is to serve rural populations with a variety of ways to create a quality life. From this perspective, it is based on its competence, its form, and its specific purposes through public and collegiate school bodies, to which the law assigns the normative function to interpret legislation in specific areas and apply standards to specific situations as a means of fulfilling citizens' rights in this nation.

D. What does school education mean for leadership?



In this sense, the leadership role entails being an intellectual of school education legislation so that, through its considered application, the rights of teachers and students are guaranteed fairly. Therefore, leadership becomes important in legal organizations that contribute to issues of educational policies and the quality of student and teacher education in the teaching-learning process. In a way, the regulatory system requires clarity regarding both legal aspects and the reality of educational and social factors affecting school reality. In turn, leadership must seek, along with legality, its legitimacy through spirit and strength as mechanisms of participation, supported by the constitutional principle of democratic governance, while maintaining cultural origins as the fundamental basis of education throughout Timor-Leste.

## METHODOLOGY

This study uses qualitative research, including documentary investigation and analysis, on the context of Timorese education during the period of foreign colonization. Given the country's circumstances, documentary research is planned, along with a bibliographical survey.

Regarding the data collected, it is clarified that they were analyzed and interpreted through the content addressed in relation to the history of Timorese education and culture; reflecting on the challenges to build a better future.

### Data Collection Instruments

The instruments were books, websites and scientific journals, etc.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The reference research for this study allows us to conclude that Timor-Leste needs to work intensively on education, building on past history to improve the quality of teaching and learning everywhere. The relevant Ministry needs to actively collaborate to ensure quality teaching and learning throughout rural schools and cities. Timor-Leste has overcome two significant periods in which its people suffered greatly due to teaching methods. To overcome these difficulties, it is important that new vocational education teachers use new methodologies to foster better and more transparent contributions to the student learning process through scientific and ethical considerations, without forgetting the contributions of other institutions that are under ethical and moral responsibility in this society. Ensuring educational quality lies in the responsibility of everyone, including the principal, vice-principal, teachers, and all staff, students, and the community at large in public and private schools. To maintain common sense, individualism and favoritism must be set aside.

School leaders also need to remain vigilant about the situations and conditions of school spaces to avoid putting anyone at unexpected risk. Those responsible for managing schools must maintain the pace of school administration appropriately so that all staff members feel comfortable in their daily work. Good professionals learn from administrators in various school sectors, and teachers working with traditional methodology need to adapt their teaching strategies to update their pedagogical practices to engage students in the classroom. The results of this study showed that most students still feel they lack new learning due to some unfavorable methodologies in previous schools, which still affect them today. The best way is for teachers who play





an important role in the school structure to work hard to ensure the quality of students' future. Therefore, teachers working in schools need to receive regular didactic training to improve their teaching and learning methodologies.

Rules, collaboration, mutual respect, discipline, and dedication are fundamental to education at all times. This way, we have the potential to reduce inequality, injustice, self-interest, ignorance, ambition, and favoritism in this society.

However, it's important to remember that all these experiences, whether of uncertainty, doubt, or joy, always teach us many things. Going through remarkable moments, the Timorese people ultimately seek to transform their lives through quality education with a clear perspective. The reason for being and human existence can bring a strong desire for education and a commitment to not giving up. The goal of this choice is to discover success.

## CONCLUSION

The Timorese people have experienced three defining moments in their lives, including the period of Portuguese colonization, the Indonesian invasion, and the independence of East Timor. The reality of these times has been so bitter and burdensome in society due to the complexities of the world in which capitalism and totalitarian power force people to focus their intentions on the domination of unjust policies, thus creating so many political, economic, cultural, racial, and color-based competitions, all of which are ultimately aimed at eliminating our very identity. We Timorese need to have a concrete vision of what has human and inclusive value.

Valuing education in Timor-Leste is essential, as future developments will demonstrate significant changes in human life through our past histories and cultures. Before colonization in Timor-Leste, different populations used their intellectual skills in their daily lives to solve problems, providing verbal solutions to others, etc. However, because the populations faced difficulties in writing, some records of past history have not been found, so new generations need to write these stories down to better preserve them in Timorese society.

In this way, education can contribute to fulfilling the need for a definitive renewal in the curriculum structure of science and technology, with new concepts linked to the Timorese social context. This can be understood as a fundamental part of the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste (CRDTL, 2002), which states that "everyone has the right to cultural enjoyment and creation, as well as the duty to preserve, defend, and value cultural heritage." Education has the power to transform this reality through intellectuals. Without it, it can become a dream lost in the dark.

## REFERENCES

1. Constituição da República Democrática de Timor-Leste (2002). Assembleia Constituinte, Sessão Plenária, 22 de março.
2. Cunha, A. O. M. da, Santos, E. L. dos (2024). Desigualdade social tuir Jean-Jacques Rousseau. PT. Nas Media Indonesia, 82 p.
3. Gusman, P., Priantoro, T., Poleng, A., da Costa, E. (1993). Pengobatan Tradisional di Timor-Timur. Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, Direktorat Jenderal



- Kebudayaan, Direktorat Sejarah dan Nilai Tradisional, Proyek Penelitian Pengkajian dan Pembinaan Nilai-nilai Budaya, 1-83.
4. Madeira, P. S. (2024), *Reflexão Pedagógica: Atitudes e Ciências São Fundamentos da Educação Profissional*, Jawa Tengah Indonesia: Amerta Media, 130 p.
  5. Papa, F. (2015). *Carta Encíclica Laudato Si; Sobre o Cuidado da Casa Comum*, (Reimpressão) São Paulo, Paulinas, 197 p.
  6. Papa, F. (2020). *FRATELLI TUTTI: Sobre a Fraternidade e a Amizade Social*, (Reimpressão) São Paulo, Paulus, 149 p.
  7. Santos, H. P. dos (2024). *Direito Costumeiro em Timor-Leste; vista numa perspectiva dos direitos humanos*. Jawa tengah Indonesia: Amerta Media, 154 p.
  8. Linsingen, I. Von. (2007). *Perspectiva Educacional CTS : aspectos de um campo em consolidação na América Latina*, 1(1989).
  9. *ATLAS DE TIMOR-LESTE* (1996), Autor Institucional, Portugal, 2002PIRES, L.
  10. Pires, L. (1996); *A Descolonização de Timor, Missão Impossível?* Editora Dom Quixote (Lisboa).