

CROSS-ISLAND EDUCATION GOVERNANCE CONFIGURATION: A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG BUREAUCRACY, DECENTRALIZATION, AND NETWORKS IN THE COORDINATION OF CENTRAL, REGIONAL, AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

Cross-island education management requires adaptive bureaucratic relations through a decentralization mechanism, enabling the central government, regional governments, and educational units to share roles effectively based on geographical context and local needs. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the configuration of scientific knowledge regarding bureaucratic relations, decentralization, and networks in cross-government educational coordination through a bibliometric approach based on Scopus publication data. The method used is a literature review using bibliometric analysis of scientific publication data sourced from the Scopus database, with the following criteria: publications between 2021 and 2025, Subject area: social science, document type: article, publication stage: final, country: Indonesia, source type: journal, and English language. The results of the study found that (1) the topic that has been widely carried out related to cross-island education governance is about Higher Education; (2) research related to cross-island education governance has shifted towards artificial intelligence and project-based learning topics; (3) topics that have been frequently carried out related to cross-island education governance currently are topics related to Higher Education and Digital Literacy; and (4) further research topics needed to enrich studies on educational governance are on Project-Based Learning. In general, this research contributes to mapping the direction of development of studies on cross-island educational governance. It emphasizes the importance of integrating bureaucratic relations, policy decentralization, and collaborative networks to enhance coordination among the central government, regional governments, and educational units.

Keywords: *Bureaucracy, Cross-island, Decentralization, Governance, Networks*

PENDAHULUAN

The transformation of education governance in the 21st century is characterized by increasingly complex relationships between government actors, educational institutions, and stakeholders across regions (Destiana et al., 2025; Missouri et al., 2025). Globalization, the digitalization of public administration, and demands for accountability in education services have encouraged countries to restructure procedures or coordination mechanisms between the central government, regional governments, and educational institutions (Setiawan & Arti, 2024). In an archipelagic country, this complexity is further exacerbated by geographic factors, disparities in administrative capacity, and variations in socio-economic conditions across regions. Therefore, the configuration of education governance across islands has become a strategic issue related not only to bureaucratic effectiveness but also to the fair distribution of education services, policy consistency, and sustainable national education system reform. The urgency of this study lies in understanding how the relationships among bureaucratic structures, decentralization policies, and networking mechanisms shape multi-level education policy coordination. Conceptually, the educational bureaucracy is a crucial and primary instrument of a country in ensuring certainty regarding policy implementation so that it can run according to national standards, especially through regulation, supervision, and resource allocation (Arifin et al., 2024). However, the modern public administration paradigm emphasizes that an overly hierarchical bureaucracy tends to be less adaptive to local needs. It is where decentralization policies play a crucial role, granting local governments and educational units greater authority to

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adapt policies to local contexts. Several previous studies have shown that decentralization can increase the responsiveness of educational services (Eli Shabrifa et al., 2025; Priyani et al., 2025; Rambe et al., 2025), strengthen community participation (Matin et al., 2025; Rachmad et al., 2023; Suriadi et al., 2024), and encourage policy innovation at the local level (Handini et al., 2025; Hasanah & Syah, 2025). On the other hand, other studies highlight that decentralization also has the potential to give rise to policy fragmentation (Lestario, 2025; Wijayanti et al., 2025), inequality in service quality (Sampar & Hasanudding, 2025), and conflicts of authority between levels of government (Sakdiyah, 2025; Wijayanti et al., 2025) if not accompanied by an effective coordination mechanism.

As collaborative governance approaches continue to evolve, the concept of network governance has gained increasing attention in the educational administration literature. This approach emphasizes that policy coordination no longer relies solely on formal hierarchical structures but also on horizontal interactions between actors, including the government, educational institutions, community organizations, and the private sector. Previous research confirms that institutional networks can improve information flow (Syamsudin & Swarnawati, 2025), accelerate decision-making processes (Barus et al., 2025; Supriatna, 2023), and strengthen policy implementation capacity. However, the literature also indicates that network effectiveness is highly dependent on the quality of institutional trust (Moizin et al., 2025), role clarity (Widjaja & Dhanudibroto, 2025), and the integration of information systems across levels of government (Budijaya & Situmeang, 2025).

Although studies on bureaucracy, decentralization, and networks in educational governance have advanced rapidly, most research still focuses on each dimension separately. Studies on educational bureaucracy tend to emphasize organizational structure and regulatory compliance (Utami et al., 2025); research on decentralization tends to focus on the impact of policies on service performance (Indah et al., 2024; Surya et al., 2021; Wicaksono, 2012; Yuliani & Indriasih, 2023); while network studies tend to focus on collaboration between organizations at the local or regional scale (Mukarto, 2025; Nathan, 2025; Sulikah et al., 2021). Approaches that simultaneously integrate these three dimensions remain relatively limited, particularly in cross-island coordination, which presents unique geographic and administrative challenges. Furthermore, most research uses qualitative methods or limited case studies, thus failing to provide a comprehensive picture of the development of scientific knowledge in this field.

Another limitation in the literature is the lack of a systematic mapping of global research on the relationship between bureaucracy, decentralization, and networks in multi-level educational coordination. Without such mapping, it is difficult to identify which topics have been extensively researched, which themes are emerging, and which areas have received little or no academic attention. Understanding the structure of scientific knowledge is crucial for formulating a strategic research agenda, avoiding research duplication, and strengthening theoretical and practical contributions to educational governance. Therefore, an analytical approach capable of objectively mapping the research landscape based on international scientific publication data is needed.

It is in this context that bibliometric analysis becomes relevant as a method for quantitatively and systematically examining the development of literature. This analysis allows researchers to identify patterns of author collaboration, topic distribution, citation networks, and the evolution of research themes over time. Using a reputable international publication database offers the advantage of broad, standardized literature coverage, enabling analysis results to more comprehensively and holistically reflect the development of global academic discourse. By utilizing a bibliometric approach, research not only reviews the content of the literature but also uncovers the structure of knowledge, the relationships between fields of study, and the dynamics of research topic development.

Based on this description, there are clear research gaps. First, there is no comprehensive bibliometric study that specifically maps the relationship between bureaucracy, decentralization, and networks in central, regional, and educational unit coordination. Second, there is little research that traces the shifting focus of studies over time to understand the direction of scientific development in the field of multi-level educational governance. Third, there has been no systematic synthesis that formulates a bibliometric evidence-based follow-up research agenda to address the challenges of educational coordination in regions with complex geographic characteristics. This gap indicates the need for studies that are not only descriptive of the literature but also analytical in mapping the structure and dynamics of research.

In line with these needs, this study aims to analyze the configuration of scientific knowledge regarding bureaucratic relations, decentralization, and networks in cross-governmental educational coordination through a bibliometric approach based on Scopus publication data. Specifically, this study aims to identify: (1) research topics that have been frequently conducted related to cross-island educational governance; (2) shifts in research topics in this field over time; (3) research topics that have been frequently conducted currently related to cross-island educational governance and (4) further research topics needed to enrich the study of cross-island educational governance. Thus, this study is expected to provide theoretical contributions by mapping the structure of scientific

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knowledge and the conceptual relationships among key variables, as well as practical contributions in the form of recommendations for research directions and relevant policies to strengthen the coordination of multi-level educational systems. Overall, this study positions itself at the intersection of public administration studies, education policy, and scientific analysis. The integrative approach employed allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how academic discourse shapes perspectives on education governance across regions. By systematically mapping the research landscape, this study is expected not only to enrich the literature but also to provide an empirical basis for developing an adaptive, collaborative, and context-specific model of education coordination that addresses the geographic and institutional challenges facing modern education systems.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition and Dimensions of Educational Governance

Educational governance refers to how the education system is planned, regulated, implemented, and supervised by various parties involved, including the government, educational institutions, and the community (Muhadi et al., 2021). This concept emphasizes how decision-making, resource management, and the implementation of educational policy are carried out effectively, transparently, and accountably to achieve educational goals. Through good governance, education can be managed effectively, improving learning quality and ensuring that every policy implemented truly supports student development and the advancement of educational institutions.

The dimensions of educational governance encompass several important, interrelated aspects. First, transparency, namely openness in managing information, policies, and the use of educational resources. Second, accountability, which emphasizes the responsibility of educational institutions and their administrators for the results and processes of educational delivery. Third, participation, namely the involvement of various stakeholders such as teachers, parents, the community, and the government in the decision-making process (Puspita et al., 2025). Furthermore, there are dimensions of effectiveness and efficiency that ensure that every education policy and program optimally achieves its goals by appropriately utilizing resources. By considering these dimensions, education governance can foster the creation of a quality and sustainable education system.

Bureaucratic Perspective and Governance Models (Centralization - Decentralization)

The bureaucratic perspective on government systems emphasizes the importance of a clear organizational structure, formal rules, and a well-defined division of tasks (Vanthica et al., 2025). Within this framework, bureaucracy serves as the engine of state administration, ensuring that public policies are implemented consistently and under control. Bureaucracies typically operate through hierarchies of authority, standard procedures, and accountability mechanisms to provide stability and certainty in the delivery of public services. However, this approach is often criticized for its potential to create rigidity, slow processes, and distance between the government and public needs if not balanced with institutional flexibility and innovation.

Meanwhile, the centralized and decentralized governance models describe how decision-making authority is distributed within the government system (Hillan et al., 2025). Centralization places most power in the central government, enabling more uniform and coordinated national policies. Conversely, decentralization grants local governments greater authority to manage resources and determine policies tailored to local conditions (Hillan et al., 2025; Mina, 2016). In practice, many countries combine these two approaches to achieve a balance between efficient national coordination and responsiveness to local needs, enabling more adaptive and effective governance.

Multi-level governance and the relationship between central and regional authorities and educational units

Multi-level governance describes a system of government that involves various levels of authority, from the central government to regional governments, and down to educational units, in the decision-making and policy implementation process (Andriyana & Jowono, 2021). In the educational context, this concept emphasizes that education management is not entirely top-down but also involves interaction and coordination between levels of government. The central government typically establishes strategic policies, national standards, and regulatory frameworks that serve as shared references. Meanwhile, regional governments play a role in adapting these policies to local social, economic, and cultural conditions to ensure their implementation is more relevant and effective. The relationship between central and regional authorities in a multi-level governance system is complementary. In this regard, the central government has the authority to establish national curriculum standards and education evaluation systems, as well as macro policies related to financing and equitable education quality. Meanwhile, regional governments have the authority to manage operational aspects, including human resource management, teacher

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distribution, and the development of education programs based on regional needs. This relationship requires strong coordination to avoid overlapping authority or gaps in policy implementation. At the level closest to students, educational institutions play a crucial role in translating policies into learning practices. Schools have limited autonomy to develop learning strategies, manage the learning environment, and involve the community in the educational process. Within a multi-level governance framework, educational institutions function not only as policy implementers but also as sources of feedback for regional and central governments. Thus, the authority relationships among the central government, regional governments, and educational institutions form an interconnected system in which the success of educational policies depends heavily on coordination, communication, and clear role allocation at each level of government.

Bibliometric Analysis

Herawati et al (2022) explain that bibliometric analysis is used to advance the development of a science by examining the nature and progress of a particular discipline. Furthermore, van Nunen et al (2018) note that bibliometric analysis is a technique that provides a macroscopic overview of a large body of academic literature. Similarly, Waritsman & Hariyanti (2024) explain that bibliometric analysis is a quantitative method used to provide an overview of research trends and to explore emerging areas within a particular field, drawing on a large body of academic literature. Based on these three explanations, bibliometric analysis is a quantitative method used to examine and map the development of science by analyzing a large body of academic literature. It provides an overview, patterns, and research trends in a specific field, and indicates the direction of development and progress in that field.

METHOD

This study uses bibliometric analysis in VOSviewer to map cross-island education governance, focusing on bureaucratic relations, decentralization, and coordination among the central government, regional governments, and educational units. The bibliometric analysis focused on three main components: Network Visualization to identify topics already widely studied and opportunities for further research related to cross-island education governance; Overlay Visualization to identify shifts in research topics related to cross-island education governance; and Density Visualization to identify current research topics frequently conducted on cross-island education governance. The research data were sourced from the Scopus database (scopus.com). Before conducting a Bibliometric analysis of journal articles, articles were first screened using the Systematic Literature Review method to identify articles suitable for bibliometric analysis. The journal articles were searched using a search formula generated by Scopus AI. The resulting search formula for related articles was ("education" OR "learning" OR "instruction" OR "teaching") AND ("governance" OR "management" OR "administration" OR "oversight") AND ("configuration" OR "structure" OR "framework" OR "system") AND ("cross-island" OR "inter-island" OR "regional" OR "transit").

In searching for scientific publications in the Scopus database, additional settings were applied according to predetermined criteria, including publication dates between 2021 and 2025, subject area: Social science, document type: Article, publication stage: Final, country: Indonesia, source type: Journal, English language, and open access. After searching the Scopus database, 3,429 articles were retrieved (accessed March 8, 2026, at 12:20 PM) using the search formula. A systematic literature review was then conducted before Bibliometric analysis. The 588 selected articles were then entered into VOSviewer for bibliometric analysis.

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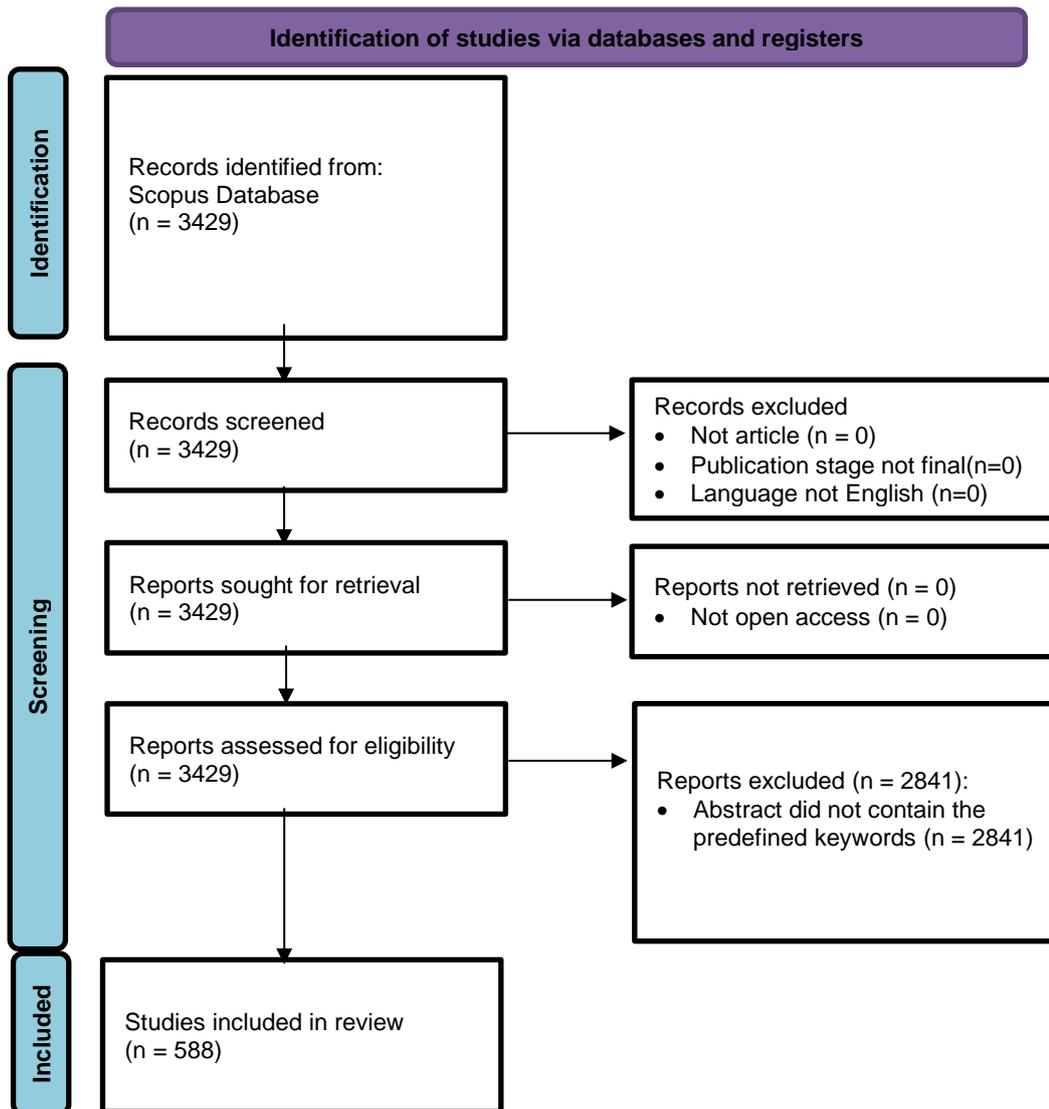


Figure 1. Systematic Literature Review Stages (Liberati et al., 2009)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Based on the Bibliometric analysis, a Network Visualization was obtained, as presented in Figure 2.

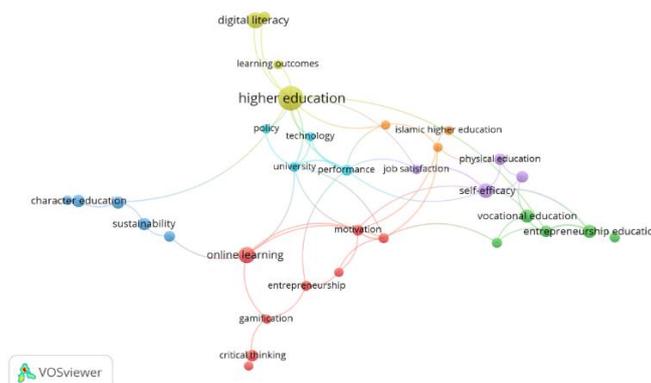


Figure 2. Network Visualization

Based on Figure 2, the most widely discussed topic in cross-island education governance is higher education. Furthermore, the results of the Overlay Visualization are presented in Figure 3.

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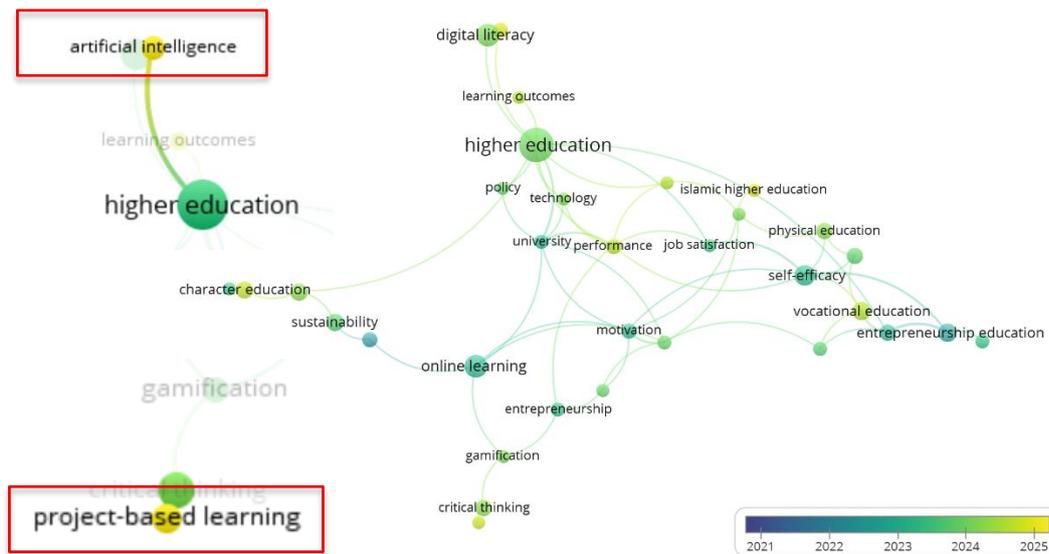


Figure 3. Overlay Visualization

The Overlay Visualization results show that research related to cross-island education governance has shifted toward artificial intelligence and project-based learning (See Figure 3) . Furthermore, the Density Visualization results are presented in Figure 4.

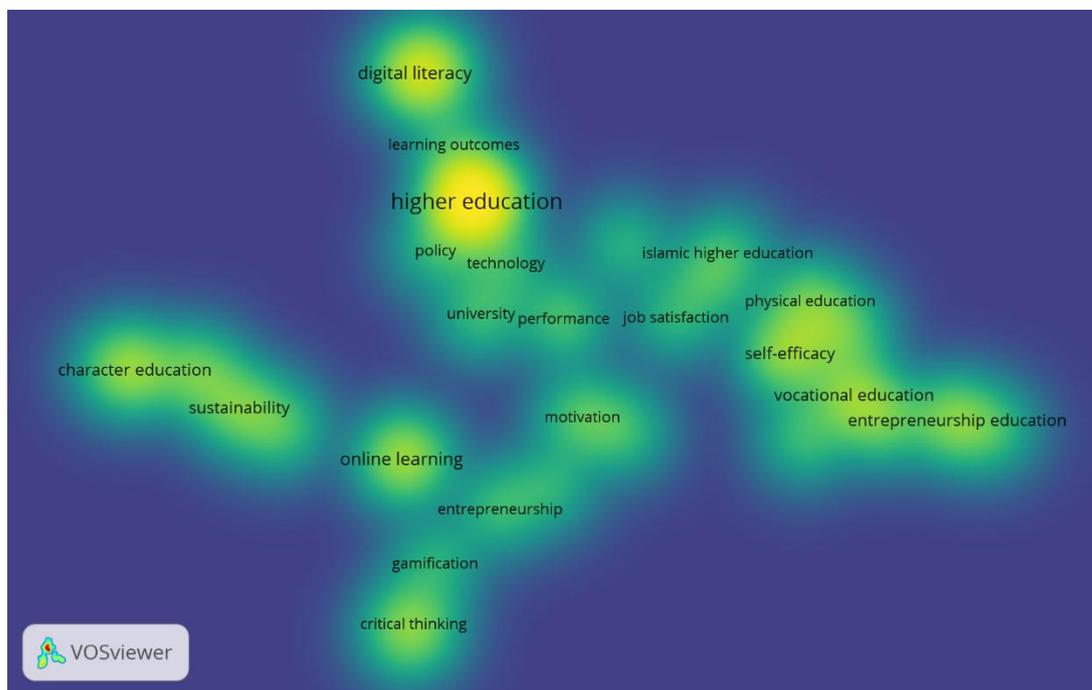


Figure 4. Density Visualization

Based on Figure 4, the most frequently researched topics in cross-island education governance currently concern higher education and digital literacy. The analysis then identified the necessary topics for further research.

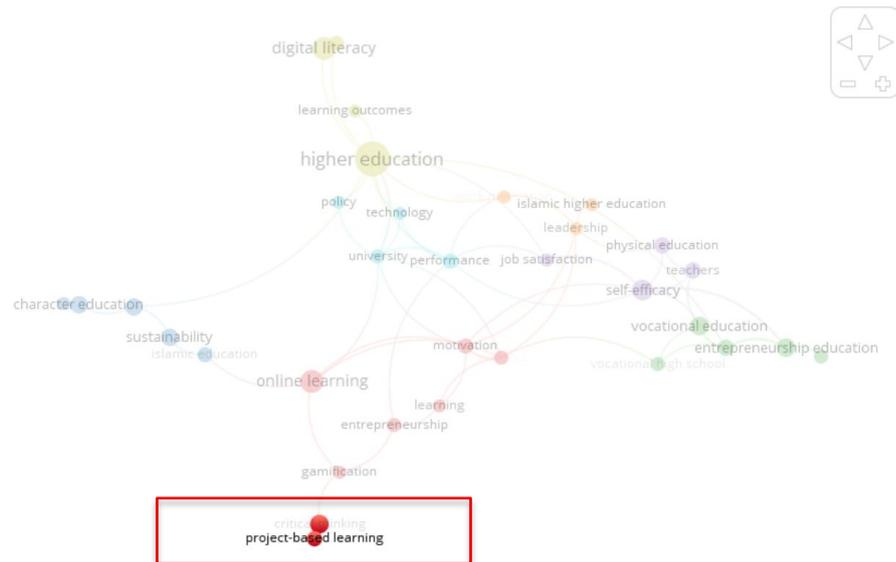


Figure 5. Further Research Topic

Referring to Figure 5, the further research topic needed to enrich the study of educational governance is Project-Based Learning.

Discussion

Bibliometric analysis results indicate that the most dominant topic in studies of cross-island educational governance is higher education. This finding indicates that academic attention has so far been predominantly focused on higher education institutions, which are seen as the main actors in developing an education system capable of reaching areas across Indonesia. From the perspective of bureaucratic relations and educational decentralization, the dominance of higher education studies is understandable, as universities have relatively stronger institutional capacity, resources, and collaboration networks than educational units at other levels. Universities often serve as coordination nodes between the central government, regional governments, and educational units through various community service programs, capacity building, and educational policy innovation. Thus, this finding indicates that, in the cross-island educational governance configuration, higher education plays a crucial role as a link in the bureaucratic coordination network spanning various levels of government.

Furthermore, the research findings revealed a shift in research topics toward artificial intelligence and project-based learning. This shift reflects a paradigm shift in education governance, increasingly influenced by the development of digital technology and innovative learning approaches. Within the framework of educational decentralization, the adoption of technologies such as artificial intelligence opens new opportunities for central and regional governments to reduce disparities in educational access across regions, particularly in island regions with limited physical infrastructure. This technological integration also strengthens network coordination patterns between educational institutions, government, and non-governmental actors through digital platforms that enable more flexible knowledge exchange. Therefore, this shift in topics not only reflects developments in educational technology but also indicates a shift in bureaucratic relations, increasingly based on digital collaboration and knowledge networks.

Another important finding is that during the current research period, the most frequently studied topics related to cross-island education governance were higher education and digital literacy. The combination of these two topics indicates that digital transformation is becoming an increasingly strategic aspect of education management in archipelagic regions. Digital literacy relates not only to an individual's ability to use technology but also to institutional and policy readiness to integrate technology into the education system. In the context of coordination between the central government, regional governments, and educational institutions, digital literacy is a crucial prerequisite for creating effective collaborative networks. Without adequate digital capacity, educational decentralization efforts may face obstacles in policy coordination and the implementation of cross-regional education programs. Furthermore, this study identifies that project-based learning is an area of further research with significant potential to enrich studies on cross-island education governance. The project-based learning approach emphasizes collaboration, contextual problem-solving, and the active involvement of diverse educational stakeholders. In the

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context of an archipelagic region, this approach can be a relevant pedagogical strategy because it allows for integrating local context into the learning process. It also strengthens the relationships among educational units, local governments, and communities in building an educational ecosystem that is better adapted to local geographic and social conditions. Thus, the development of project-based learning studies has the potential to broaden the perspective of education governance, focusing not only on bureaucratic structures but also on the dynamics of learning networks involving various actors.

Overall, the findings of this study provide an important contribution to the development of cross-island education governance studies by demonstrating dominant topic patterns, the dynamics of shifting research issues, and opportunities for future research. Integration of bureaucratic relations, policy decentralization, and strengthening collaborative networks is a key factor in building an effective education coordination system in archipelagic regions. This study also emphasizes that the development of digital technology and innovative learning approaches plays a strategic role in strengthening the relationships among the central government, regional governments, and educational units. Therefore, this study not only enriches the literature on education governance but also provides a conceptual basis for developing an education coordination model that is more adaptive to the geographic and institutional complexities of archipelagic regions.

CONCLUSION

This study found that studies on cross-island education governance in the scientific literature are dominated by higher education topics, indicating the strategic role of universities in strengthening coordination between the central government, regional governments, and educational institutions. From the perspective of bureaucratic relations and educational decentralization, universities serve as important nodes in collaborative networks that support policy development, learning innovation, and the strengthening of institutional capacity in archipelagic regions. Furthermore, bibliometric analysis also indicates a shift in research focus toward more contemporary issues, such as artificial intelligence and project-based learning. This shift reflects the dynamics of education governance, increasingly influenced by the development of digital technology and the need for learning approaches that are more adaptable to the geographical and institutional challenges in the context of cross-island education.

The research findings also indicate that, in recent years, higher education and digital literacy have become a primary focus in studies of cross-island education governance. It confirms that strengthening digital capacity is a crucial factor in supporting effective coordination and networking among educational actors in a decentralized system. Furthermore, project-based learning has been identified as a research topic with significant potential for future development, as it promotes contextual learning while strengthening the involvement of various educational stakeholders. Therefore, this research contributes to charting the direction of development in studies of cross-island education governance and emphasizes the importance of integrating bureaucratic relations, policy decentralization, and collaborative networks to enhance effective coordination among the central government, local governments, and educational institutions.

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