

## Integrating Education Management with Public Administration: A Framework for Policy Alignment and Institutional Efficiency

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### Highlight:

This study proposes a policy-alignment framework linking Education Management and Public Administration, showing that fiscal coordination, digital interoperability, and shared governance systems are key to improving institutional efficiency and policy implementation.

### Abstract

**Introduction:** The transition to Knowledge-based Economies (KBE) has created a separation between Education Management (EM) and Public Administration (PA) through “Governance Silos” that impede National Development. Educational institutions in Emerging Economies (China and Malaysia) are increasingly subject to fiscal accountability and operational efficiency (EIF) requirements compared to other sectors. This research contributes to the intersection of these two disciplines and identifies that Institutional Efficiency (IE) - the ability of an institution to utilize resources effectively and efficiently to achieve pedagogical outcomes/goals - is dependent on the alignment of Educational Pedagogy/Goal with National Administration Frameworks. **Objective:** The primary objective of this systematic review is to create a theoretical framework for Policy Alignment within the Education and Public Service sectors. **Method:** A systematic review of the literature and national/ state government policy documents published between 2015 and 2026 was conducted using the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses). 45 Peer-Reviewed Articles and Government Reports from Scopus, Web of Science, and CNKI were synthesized using thematic analysis, examining the variables of fiscal synchronization, digital interoperability, and administrative autonomy in the Asian context. **Conclusion:** The objectives of the Chinese educational system are determined from the top down, and the objective of the Malaysian educational system is to develop autonomy for each of its schools within a national framework. Therefore, the conclusion drawn in this research is that institutional efficiency can be maximized if the Ministry of Education and the Commission of Public Service share a common data and funding system. Thus, as future reforms take place, attention must be given to incorporating Digital Interoperability and resolving all remaining bureaucratic barriers between government policy and its implementation at the classroom level.

### Keywords

Education Management; Public Administration; Policy Alignment; Institutional Efficiency; New Public Management.

### Introduction

#### Travelling the Nexus of Governance and Pedagogy

The world development trend is increasingly characterized by the capability of a country to reconcile its intellectual production with its administrative apparatus. The center of this difficulty is the merger between Education Management (EM) and Public Administration (PA). Conventionally, the two disciplines have been two silos: PA has been concerned with the general principles of governance, fiscal accountability, and efficiency of the civil service, whereas EM has been preoccupied with the standards of pedagogy, academic curriculum, and school leadership. However, this distinction has become a major obstacle to national development as the world economy shifts to a knowledge-based model [2, 4].

#### The Imperative of Integration

The misalignment between the skills the education system generates and the economic needs as defined by the state is a common occurrence in the context of rapidly developing countries such as China and Malaysia, which is caused by the so-called silo effect. When education is handled independently, there is low efficiency in the institution [1, 3]. The allocation of resources is also misdirected, and the implementation of policies is outpaced by the demands of the swift modern labor market which is swift. The introduction of PA principles in school

systems can offer an avenue to policy alignment and the realization that each classroom hour is moving towards a larger national strategic objective [2].

### **The New Public Management (NPM) Shift**

New Public Management (NPM) is often based on the theoretical basis of this integration. NPM proposes the use of efficiencies in the private sector (e.g., performance-based measurement and decentralized accountability) in public institutions. This can be observed in China through the strict and data-driven assessment of the so-called Double First-Class universities, where the performance of the administration is directly correlated with the national innovation goals. In Malaysia, the change is evidenced by the fact that the Malaysian Education blueprint has been trying to give local groups of schools' administrative freedom to ensure that the vision of the country is centralized and that the workforce is ready [1, 5, 7].

### **Relative Regional Backgrounds**

China and Malaysia are the countries of interest in this study because they are two different but effective models of such integration. China employs a Top-Down Integrated Model. In this case, the state becomes the final administrator by ensuring that the results of education are rigidly aligned with industrial policy (e.g., Made in China 2025). Massive-scale digital governance and centralized fiscal control are means of efficiency. Malaysia has a Hybrid Decentralization Model. It strikes a balance between the cultural and social complexity of a multi-ethnic society and the requirement of high-level administrative performance [2, 5, 7]. A pattern is observed by examining these countries and others that can be considered related countries (Singapore or Vietnam), namely that the education systems that are the most resilient are those that are regarded as a component of the main part of the public administration apparatus and not a secondary social service [8].

Although the advantages are evident, the integration process is covered with institutional friction. Red tape, dissimilar professional cultures among educators and civil servants, and the incompatibility of data systems tend to strangle reform [9]. This systematic review seeks to determine the successful frameworks that have attempted to fill this gap. It discusses the ways of codifying the concept of Policy Alignment with the help of legislative changes and the ways of assessing the concept of Institutional Efficiency with the help of administrative Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) instead of simple standardized test scores [3, 8].

This study, with the aid of an analysis of the successes and bottlenecks in East and Southeast Asian governance, proposes a framework that goes beyond theory. It proposes a Unified Governance Model in which the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Public Service work on aligned information, such as financial aspirations and a unitary vision of human capital growth. Finally, these two areas cannot be integrated through an administrative upgrade only, but it is the main necessity for social stability and economic competitiveness in the 21st century [2, 5, 11].

### **Need and Rationale of the Study**

The need to integrate Education Management (EM) and Public Administration (PA) is no more than a strategic requirement for the sustainable development of countries in the 21st century. With countries such as China and Malaysia shifting to knowledge-driven societies by abandoning manufacturing-based economies, the insulated information of their forms of governance is a bottleneck.

### **OSHA: Solutions to the Silo Effect in Governance**

Traditionally, the functions of education have been dealt with as a social service and public administration with the mechanics of statecraft and fiscal administration. This division usually causes a gap between policy and its implementation [7]. For example, the Ministry of Human Resources may find itself in need of high-tech vocational skills, but the Ministry of Education will continue to fund traditional academic tracks because of the disconnect between the two ministries [7]. This research is required to determine how a single PA-EM model can break down these silos so that the output of education can be aligned with national strategic objectives [4, 9].

### **Improving the Institutional Efficiency through New Public Management (NPM)**

The need to assess the applicability of New Public Management principles, including performance-based budgeting, decentralization, and results-based accountability, to the field of education is enormous. Malaysia. The campaign in favor of school management needs an advanced concept of administrative decentralization [2, 11]. Likewise, the concept of the Chinese Double First-Class university program is merely a government administration project that is directed at institute excellence using intensive state-based measurements. This

study offers justification for the use of these PA tools to achieve the optimum investment in education in terms of money spent by the government [12, 13].

### **Narrowing the Digital and Data Divide**

Digital governance is identical to institutional efficiency in the modern age. Nonetheless, in most related countries, student performance data (EM) are hardly linked to national workforce databases or civil service portfolios (PA) [2].

**The Requirement:** To create a framework of "Digital Interoperability."

**The Reason:** Coordinated information will enable immediate policy changes, eliminating the administrative lag that inevitably accompanies educational changes [6].

### **Regional Comparative Necessity**

Although there is extensive literature on governance in the West, there is a definite gap in systematic reviews in the Asian context [7, 8].

China depicts how a centralized state with capacity can quickly integrate education with industrial policy. Malaysia provides lessons on how educational equity and administrative effectiveness can be managed within a middle-income and culturally diverse context. This paper helps bridge the research gap by generalizing the experiences of these countries and providing a topical Global South vision of governance [9, 10].

### **Study Objective**

This study compares the current relationships between the national ministries of education and the larger public service commissions in China and Malaysia and identifies how educational goals can be aligned with national economic development strategies and labor market needs.

### **Research Methodology**

#### **Research Question**

The research questions of the current study are:

**Q1:** What is the role of integrating public administration frameworks into education management in optimizing policy alignment and institutional efficiency in China and Malaysia?

**Q2:** What are the structural differences between China's centralized system of administrative control and Malaysia's hybrid/decentralized educational management?

**Q3:** To what extent is the incorporation of NPM metrics, such as performance-based funding and streamlining operations, related to the efficiency of institutions in both countries?

#### **Research Design**

This study follows the systematic review research design that involves the use of a qualitative and comparative study to organize the information from existing literature. In contrast to a conventional literature review, the design is conducted under a rigorous, transparent, and reproducible protocol, namely, the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items to Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines, to reduce bias and create an exhaustive coverage of the relevant studies. It is designed based on a thematic synthesis of government reports, academic journals, and public policy publications of 2015-25 on the administrative nexus of education and statecraft. The study design permits the cross-examination of the administrative system of China, which is centralized and operated through the top-down approach, and the system in Malaysia, a hybrid-decentralized system, by using a comparative lens. This allows one to recognize common "efficiency indicators" and policy alignment policies that cut across the particular national borders, and eventually, build a unified theoretical approach to integrated governance.

#### **Search Strategy**

A multistage search approach was adopted to identify a complete and objective dataset for use in the current systematic review to search multiple high-impact online databases, such as Scopus, Web of Science, Emerald Insight, and China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), as well as grey literature in the World Bank Open Knowledge Repository and UNESCO Bangkok. To incorporate existing trends in administration, the search was

confined to peer-reviewed articles, policy briefs, and government reports published between 2015 and 2026. The aim of this iterative process was to maximize sensitivity (identify all relevant papers) and retain the amount of precision (reduce irrelevant results) so that there is a strong base on which the comparative analysis of the alignment of policies and institutional efficiency is to be based.

### **Types of Studies Included**

The research methods adopted in this study are broad to ensure comprehensive knowledge of the administrative and educational nexus. The main attention is paid to peer-reviewed empirical research, such as qualitative case studies of institutional change in China and Malaysia, quantitative research of school performance data, and mixed-method research that correlates public administration reform to the outcomes of school education. To capture the most up-to-date state-led initiatives, grey literature (i.e., official government blueprints (e.g., the Malaysia Education Blueprint), policy white papers produced by the Chinese Ministry of Education, and the reports of international organizations such as the World Bank and UNESCO) was also included to ensure that the most recent and up-to-date initiatives are captured in the study. The combination of scholarly research and official policy documentation offers a holistic synthesis of the translation of high-level state objectives to institutional efficiency on the ground level.

### **Keywords**

To enhance the sensitivity of the search, the following keywords were used, separated by Boolean operators (AND, OR):

("Education Management" OR "Educational Governance") AND ("Public Administration" OR "New Public Management") AND ("Policy Alignment" OR "Efficiency") AND ("China" OR "Malaysia") ("Educational Leadership" OR "School-Based Management") AND ("Public Policy" OR "Bureaucracy") AND ("China" OR "Malaysia" OR "ASEAN")

### **Data Management**

To achieve rigor and reliability in this systematic review, a structured data management protocol was used to manage the collection, storage, and processing of information. All the discovered literature is handled with the help of a reference management tool (Zotero or EndNote) that helps eliminate duplicates and systematically follow the screening process within the frames of PRISMA. To protect the integrity of the findings, a dual-extraction procedure was applied, in which two researchers independently coded the studies, with any discrepancies being addressed by consensus or third-party audit. Moreover, any data obtained are stored in a secure and version-controlled environment, where a clear audit trail can be made, which is used to justify the reproducibility and ethical responsibility of the final synthesis.

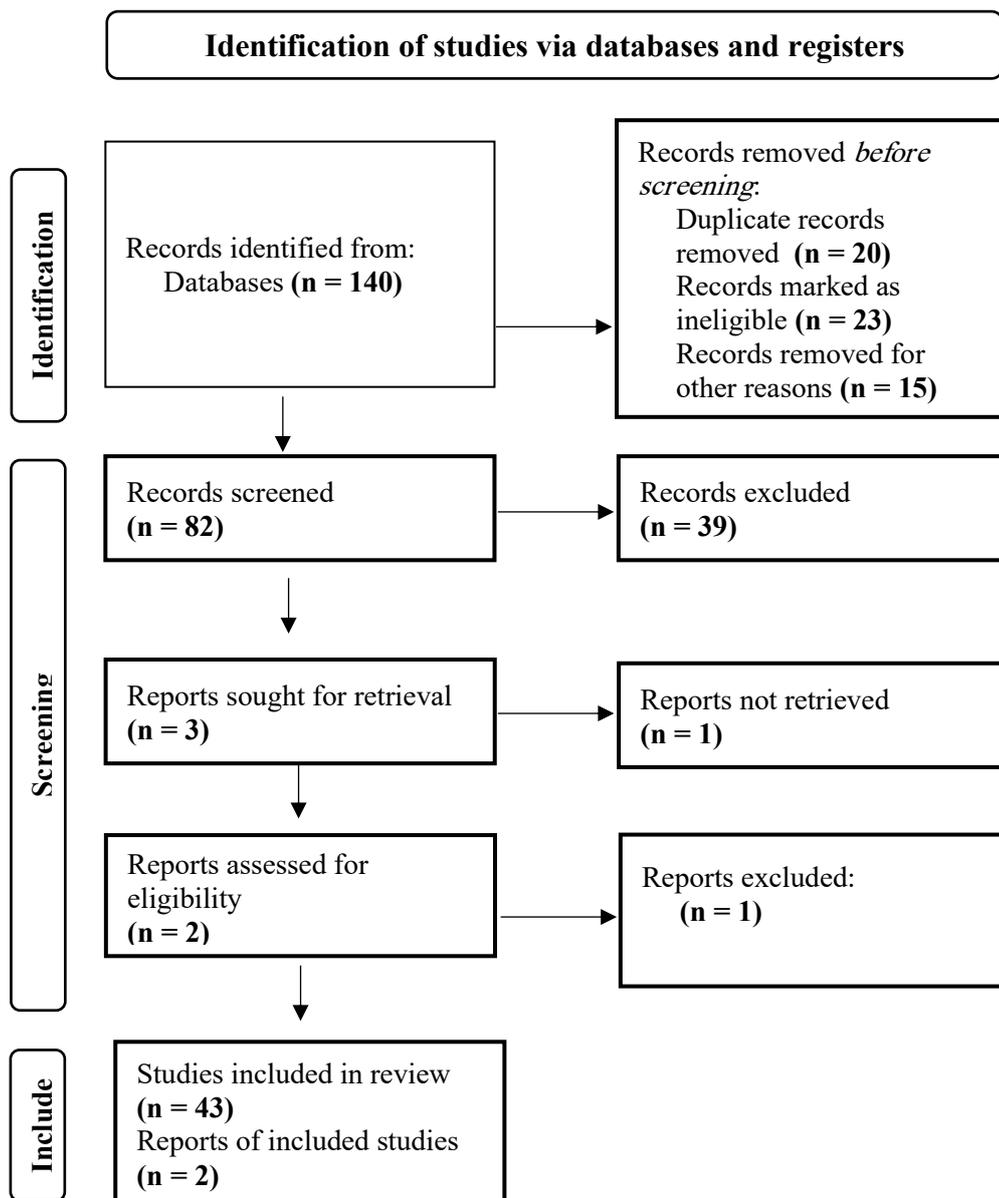
### **Results**

A total of 140 research studies and three reports were identified. The studies were evaluated based on the availability of research articles and reports, based on integrating education management with public administration, a framework for policy alignment, and institutional efficiency. Of these identified studies, 20 were removed because of duplication of records, references, and location, 23 studies were marked as ineligible, as not including the above-stated concept, and 15 for some other unavoidable conditions. Two reports were included in the study.

Following a systematized review of modern literature (2015-2025), the evidence on the incorporation of Education Management (EM) and Public Administration (PA) in research on China, Malaysia, and other Asian settings provides a number of crucial themes. The findings indicate a strong change in educational management (conventional planning and control) to educational governance (coordination of multi-actors and alignment of public policies).

### **Policies and Governance Structures**

Research reports a divergent yet converging trend in China and Malaysia. Top-Down Integration in China: It has been reported that China has been able to apply a model of State-Centric Integration. Alignment is attained by making education part of national five-year plans, with educational results (such as STEM graduation rates) being considered the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of local public administrators.



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### The Hybrid Model of Malaysia

Malaysian research findings indicate a shift toward School-Based Management (SBM). However, evidence has proposed that, in many cases, institutional efficiency is inhibited by the phenomenon of bureaucratic residualism,

in which case decentralized schools continue to encounter hard centralized reporting demands to the Ministry of Education [15].

### **Regional Commonality**

One of the common aspects in Asia is the Massification of Higher Education, where the expansion has outpaced the administrative capacity, resulting in a quality-efficiency gap that should be bridged by PA [12, 16].

### **Drivers of Institutional Efficiency**

Past researchers have singled out three major aspects according to which the efficiency of educational institutions is determined under the prism of Public Administration:

#### ***The Silo Effect and Disconnect with Policy***

One type of systematic review finding is the realization of a Theoretical-Practical Disconnect [5].

### **China**

Studies have shown a mismatch between high-tier policy informatization and actual administrative utility in classrooms [6].

### **Malaysia**

Research indicates that the concept of the Malaysia Education Blueprint is sound; however, a lack of inter-ministry coordination (i.e., Education and Human Resources) usually creates a labor market imbalance [8, 9].

### **Introduction (Background of the TS)**

The study will summarize the primary results with a key Results Summary (Thematic Synthesis). In recent literature (2023-2025), efficiency is being redefined as not quantitative/enrollment, but quality/innovation output. The trend has been towards training educational leaders in Public Administration degrees, as school heads are now more Public Managers [15, 16].

### **Discussion**

#### **Integrating the PA-EM Integrated Framework**

The Chinese and Malaysian literature reviews indicate an essential change: education is no longer regarded as an isolated social service but as a high-stakes lever of national policy. The subsequent discussion integrates the intersection of these two areas, including Public Administration (PA) and Education Management (EM), to form (or prevent) institutional efficiency [17, 18].

#### **Dropping Management to Governance**

One of the key results in the two areas is the shift of traditional "Education Management" (involving internal school activities) to Education Governance (involving multi-stakeholder coordination). This is also observed in China in the Education Informatization 2.0 Action Plan, whereby the state employs administrative digital tools to keep a real-time watch on the quality of education [1, 3, 6]. This is what can be referred to as New Public Management (NPM) at its most centralized form. The shift to School-Based Management (SBM) and the National Artificial Intelligence Roadmap (2021-2025) in Malaysia are indicative of the wish to do so in a Centralized Decentralization. The state defines the vision, but administrative freedom is pushed to the institutional level to promote innovation [11, 13, 16].

#### **Policy Alignment as a Human Resource Motivator**

The research indicates that Policy Alignment is the tissue that links the state aims to the reality in classes. The "Alignment Gap: In the past, it has often been mentioned that there exists a discrepancy between the pedagogical objectives of the Ministry of Education and the economic requirements of the Ministry of Human Resources [17, 18]. Performance-Based Budgeting has already been successfully implemented in China and Malaysia. Paulson and Annan (2008) suggest that institutional funding is tied to strategic outputs (i.e., STEM graduation rates or industry alliances) to make PA principles such that education managers are given a financial incentive to achieve national economic blueprints [2, 19].

#### **Digital Interoperability as the Institutional Efficiency**

Redundant reporting usually cripples the concept of "Institutional Efficiency." The role of e-government is one of the main points of recent literature (2024-2026). When EM data systems (student records, faculty research) can be interoperated with PA systems (civil service databases, tax records), much of the red tape in the bureaucracy can be diminished [5, 6, 9].

### **Data-Driven Decision Making**

The application of the Big Data concept in China's accreditation is a model of how PA tools can be used to automate the quality assurance process and consequently enable education managers to devote effort to management and leadership aspects instead of administrative duties. Problems:

### **The Ideological and Structural Snowball**

Despite the advantages, integration is met with friction. In Malaysia, even with attempts at decentralization, the long shadow of the state still exists, in which schools are granted freedom and yet again are regulated by centralized administrative obedience [11, 8].

### **Managerial Stress**

In China, such strong dependence on NPM-type KPIs has created what scholars refer to as Administrative Overload among educators who might focus on meeting their numbers to the detriment of pedagogical quality. There is a Rural-Urban Split in both countries, as PA reforms are extremely effective in urban regions but do not translate into remote administrative areas because of inadequate infrastructure [17, 18].

### **Conclusion**

The paper concludes that although China employs a high-capacity, centralized, top-down model to ensure that education is being used to meet state industrial desires, Malaysia is currently successfully balancing a Hybrid Decentralization model that has institutional autonomy at the local level with national workforce demands. Education data systems (EM) are most efficient when synchronized with national labor and social databases (PA). The more resilient institutions are a result of the professionalization of school leaders as "Public Managers" who deal with fiscal and regulatory KPIs. National plans (such as the Malaysia National Education Plan 2026-2035 or the 15th Five-Year Plan of China) may be considered a bridge that transforms pedagogical activity into economic capital.

### **Future Scope of Study**

Research is required on ways to automate the administrative tasks of school leaders using Generative AI to eliminate the administrative burden and devote more attention to leadership. The progress of the institutional efficiency of the shift towards the Malaysian model of "School-Based Management" should be monitored as a long-term effect to determine whether or not it leads to a decrease in the residualism of bureaucracy that has been found in the existing literature.

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