

Intergovernmental Collaboration in Secondary Education Governance

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Abstract: The decentralization of secondary education authority to provincial governments has created a need for collaboration across levels of government because educational services remain territorially embedded within regencies and cities. This study aims to examine intergovernmental collaboration between provincial and regency/city governments in the governance of secondary education in East Java, Indonesia. An exploratory qualitative approach was employed, with data collected through literature studies, observations, interviews, and documentation and analyzed using Spradley's domain, taxonomic, componential, and cultural theme analysis. The findings show that intergovernmental collaboration operates primarily through technical and informal coordination between Provincial Education Office branches and regency/city government agencies. Although this arrangement supports the implementation of secondary education, collaboration lacks a formal institutional and regulatory framework, particularly regarding coordination mechanisms, shared responsibilities, and financial support. The study contributes to the understanding of intergovernmental relations by demonstrating that the decentralization of formal authority does not eliminate intergovernmental dependence in public service delivery. Instead, effective secondary education governance requires stronger institutionalized collaboration between provincial and local governments.

1. Introduction

Education is one of the pillars of nation-building; without it, the quality of human resources will decline. The efforts made by the Government of Indonesia are to issue laws related to the obligations of local governments in handling compulsory education in Indonesia. The government law also divides authority regarding basic education, including that basic education is under the authority of district/city governments, while senior secondary education is under the authority of the provincial government (Bafadal et al., 2019; OECD, 2021; Sinabutar et al., 2022; Seman et al., 2020). However, dividing authority poses implementation challenges, since senior secondary education is implemented at the district/city level. The community served is the community in the district/city area. Regencies/cities should be more

precise and closer to understanding the people. Therefore, provincial and district/city governments need to coordinate and establish a relationship of authority.

The implementation of quality education is a mandate from Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System that the government must guarantee equal educational opportunities and improve the quality, relevance, and efficiency of education management. Efforts to ensure equal distribution of educational opportunities are to improve the quality of service. Service quality depends on many factors, including the availability of facilities and infrastructure, the quality of educators and management resources, and the affordability of services. In the context of educational decentralization, local governments play an important role in adapting education governance to local institutional and territorial conditions. However, decentralization also creates variations in local governance practices and requires effective coordination among governmental levels to maintain the quality and consistency of educational services (Zamzani, 2020). This aligns with the idea that public organizations must deliver services that reflect stakeholder interests (Benn et al., 2016). There are three functions in service, namely: a) institutional functions, concerned with renewing the legitimacy and attractiveness of resources so the organization can meet the expectations of external stakeholders; b) managerial functions, which are centered on the structure and process of improvement and internal allocation; c) technical functions, which are related to product quality and service effectiveness. The quality of service is important to improve and to achieve common goals; for this, it is necessary to have coordination between all existing institutions. The concept of intergovernmental relations (IGR) captures the dynamics of authority relations between governments, both vertical and horizontal. Therefore, systematic collaborative work within the IGR framework can help regional governments manage a locus of authority that extends beyond their territories. IGR has become more formalized and institutionalized, including through horizontal IGR (Lowatcharin et al., 2019; Sentanu et al., 2023).

Several countries such as Canada, Australia, Austria, and Nigeria have also initiated horizontal IGR by forming a leader forum at the sub-national level. This cooperation between regions is an integral part of the complexity of modern government processes, an important feature of government systems that involve multiple levels of government (Phillimore, 2013). This intergovernmental cooperation requires policy stability, accountability, and rules for administrative relations. The stability of these elements creates space for cooperation and coordination between governments, as well as conflict-resolution mechanisms (Burgos & Mertens, 2022; Lowatcharin et al., 2019). Law No. 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Government supports intergovernmental collaboration to achieve common goals by providing a legal basis for collaboration among regional governments to improve public welfare. Based on this framework, this study examines intergovernmental collaboration between the East Java Provincial Government and regency/city governments in promoting equitable secondary education services. East Java was selected as the study setting due to its heterogeneous population and the need for coordination across levels of government in delivering secondary education services.

In this study, intergovernmental relations (IGR) provide the theoretical framework for analyzing collaboration between provincial and regency/city governments in secondary education governance. Previous research has established that educational decentralization redistributes responsibilities across levels of government and that effective intergovernmental relations require coordination, institutional arrangements, and formal and informal mechanisms to manage interdependent responsibilities (Phillimore, 2013; Lowatcharin et al., 2019; Purwanto et al., 2019; Dewi, 2021). However, existing studies have primarily examined the consequences of decentralization, the distribution of educational authority, or

intergovernmental relations more broadly, leaving insufficient explanation of how collaboration operates when formal authority is assigned to the provincial government while educational services and their outcomes remain territorially embedded within regencies and cities. This limitation is important because the formal transfer of authority does not necessarily eliminate the interests, resources, and administrative roles of governments at other levels. To address this gap, this study analyzes intergovernmental collaboration through four interrelated dimensions: regulatory and institutional arrangements, collaboration scope and mechanisms, resource and financial arrangements, and institutional coordination and accountability. By integrating these dimensions, the study contributes to the IGR literature by explaining how formal decentralization can coexist with continuing functional interdependence across levels of government in secondary education governance. Accordingly, this study aims to examine how intergovernmental collaboration operates between provincial and regency/city governments in secondary education governance and to identify the institutional arrangements that facilitate or constrain such collaboration in East Java, Indonesia.

2. Literature Review

Intergovernmental Relations and Intergovernmental Collaboration

Intergovernmental relations (IGR) provide a framework for understanding interactions among different levels of government in managing public responsibilities that extend across jurisdictional boundaries. IGR encompasses not only the formal distribution of authority but also the institutional, administrative, and informal relationships through which governments coordinate their responsibilities. [Phillimore \(2013\)](#) emphasizes that intergovernmental relations involve both formal and informal processes, and that greater institutionalization can provide greater certainty across governmental levels. Similarly, [Lowatcharin et al. \(2019\)](#) highlight the increasing formalization and institutionalization of IGR, including the development of horizontal relationships among governments. These perspectives suggest that the allocation of governmental authority alone does not determine how public services are governed when responsibilities and interests remain interconnected across jurisdictions.

Intergovernmental collaboration is one mechanism for managing such interdependence. Formal and informal mechanisms can coexist rather than operate as mutually exclusive forms of collaboration. [Park et al. \(2021\)](#) demonstrate that formal administrative mechanisms can create conditions that facilitate informal collaborative interactions, while [Ki \(2023\)](#) shows that governments may employ formal and informal collaborative mechanisms as different strategies for managing intergovernmental relationships. Lee and [Lee \(2022\)](#) further demonstrate the importance of collaborative networks in addressing collective-action problems across fragmented jurisdictions. Consequently, effective IGR depends not only on the legal allocation of authority but also on the mechanisms through which governmental actors communicate, coordinate, and manage their interdependence.

Educational Decentralization and Intergovernmental Interdependence

Educational decentralization redistributes authority and responsibilities across levels of government, but such redistribution does not necessarily eliminate intergovernmental interdependence. In Indonesia, the decentralization framework assigns responsibility for basic education to regency/city governments, while provincial governments administer senior secondary education. This arrangement creates a distinctive governance setting because senior secondary schools remain geographically located within regencies and cities even though their formal administrative authority lies with provin-

cial governments. Previous research illustrates the governance consequences of this redistribution of authority. [Purwanto et al. \(2019\)](#), examining the transfer of secondary education management to the West Java Provincial Government, identified challenges related to intergovernmental relationships, educational management and control, and financial assistance following the transfer of authority. [Dewi \(2021\)](#) similarly demonstrates that educational decentralization has strengthened the role of subnational governments in Indonesia, although decentralization itself does not automatically address differences in educational outcomes across regions.

These studies indicate that formally redistributing educational authority may create new coordination requirements rather than eliminate relationships among governmental levels. This condition is particularly relevant to senior secondary education because regency/city governments continue to have territorial and developmental interests in educational services delivered within their jurisdictions. Educational outcomes contribute to local human resource development, while vocational education is closely connected to local labor-market and economic development. Therefore, the separation between formal provincial authority and local territorial interests creates continuing functional interdependence between provincial and regency/city governments, reinforcing the need for intergovernmental coordination in senior secondary education governance.

Institutional and Regulatory Arrangements

Institutionalization is an important component of intergovernmental collaboration because it provides rules and organizational arrangements for coordinating responsibilities. Formal arrangements may clarify the roles of participating governments, establish coordination procedures, and provide greater continuity beyond relationships among individual officials. [Phillimore \(2013\)](#) identifies formalization and institutionalization as important developments in contemporary IGR, while [Clement et al. \(2022\)](#) demonstrate the relevance of formalized governmental strategies for strengthening collaboration with relevant stakeholders. However, formal arrangements do not necessarily replace informal relationships. [Park et al. \(2021\)](#) show that formal mechanisms may support collaboration indirectly by facilitating informal interaction. This suggests that institutionalized and informal arrangements can perform complementary functions. In intergovernmental settings where formal authority is clearly separated but practical responsibilities remain interconnected, institutional arrangements are especially important for linking the formal division of authority to the operational requirements of public service delivery. Accordingly, the regulatory and institutional dimension of IGR concerns not simply whether authority has been legally distributed, but whether appropriate institutional mechanisms exist to manage continuing relationships across governmental levels. This distinction is particularly important in decentralized secondary education, where provincial authority must operate within the territorial and administrative environments of regencies and cities.

Coordination Mechanism and Intermediary Institutions

Intergovernmental collaboration can operate through formal procedures, technical coordination, collaborative networks, and informal relationships among governmental actors. [Lee and Lee \(2022\)](#) demonstrate that collaborative networks can emerge among autonomous jurisdictions when governments confront collective-action problems that extend beyond individual administrative boundaries. [Ki \(2023\)](#) similarly emphasizes that formal and informal collaborative mechanisms constitute alternative but potentially complementary strategies for managing intergovernmental relationships. Informal coordination

can provide flexibility when formal collaborative arrangements are incomplete. Personal communication, professional networks, and ad hoc coordination may enable governmental actors to address immediate administrative problems. Nevertheless, overreliance on informal relationships can create institutional vulnerabilities because coordination may depend on particular individuals rather than established organizational procedures. The coexistence of formal and informal mechanisms therefore raises an important question concerning how governments institutionalize collaboration without eliminating the flexibility provided by informal interaction. Intermediary institutions can play an important role in this process by connecting governmental authority at one level with administrative actors and service environments at another. In decentralized governance, such institutions may facilitate information exchange, technical coordination, and administrative representation. However, administrative presence alone does not necessarily constitute institutionalized intergovernmental collaboration unless the roles, responsibilities, and accountability relationships among governmental actors are clearly established.

Research Gap

Intergovernmental collaboration also depends on how financial and administrative resources are distributed and mobilized. The formal allocation of a governmental function determines which level of government holds primary responsibility, but service delivery may continue to affect the interests and resources of other jurisdictions. This creates challenges when governments are willing to collaborate but lack clear institutional mechanisms to share or mobilize resources. Otieno et al. (2023) show that functional interdependence among governmental levels does not automatically generate effective coordination when functional assignments and resource allocation remain unclear or contested. In the Indonesian secondary education context, Purwanto et al. (2019) similarly identify financial assistance as a challenge associated with transferring secondary education management to the provincial level. These findings indicate that fiscal collaboration requires more than available resources or willingness to participate. It also requires clarity regarding financial authority, accountability, and legitimate mechanisms for intergovernmental resource mobilization. Resource arrangements are therefore closely connected to institutional and regulatory arrangements. When one level of government holds formal authority while other levels retain substantial territorial interests, unclear rules on resource contributions can constrain collaboration. Fiscal coordination therefore matters for understanding whether intergovernmental relationships can translate shared interests into coordinated public service provision.

3. Research Methods

This study employed an exploratory qualitative approach to examine intergovernmental collaboration in secondary education governance in East Java Province. Exploratory research was used to provide an in-depth understanding of the research object (Lester et al., 2020), with the research focus established based on problems identified by informants, relevant policy domains, potential contributions to knowledge, and issues related to existing theories (Hilhorst et al., 2020; Neuman, 2014; Tan et al., 2019). The study focused on the relationships between the East Java Provincial Government, particularly the Provincial Education Office and its branch offices, and relevant regency/city government institutions involved in education and regional development. Data were collected through literature review, observations, interviews, and documentation concerning the implementation and coordination of secondary education governance. The empirical inquiry covered institutional arrangements and interactions across levels of government, including regulatory arrangements, collaboration mechanisms, institutional roles, financing, and supporting resources.

The unit of analysis was the relationship between the provincial education administration and regency/city government institutions rather than individual schools or a measured level of cooperation. Interview informants included employees from government institutions involved in secondary education governance, including the Provincial Education Office and its branch offices, regency/city education offices, youth and sports offices, and regional development planning agencies. The study selected informants using purposive sampling based on their institutional roles, responsibilities, and involvement in implementing and coordinating secondary education governance. This approach enabled the study to obtain information from personnel directly involved in intergovernmental relations and coordination between provincial and regency/city governments.

The data were analyzed using Spradley's qualitative analysis model through four sequential stages: domain, taxonomic, componential, and cultural theme analysis. Domain analysis identified broad areas of intergovernmental collaboration, followed by taxonomic analysis to organize relationships within those domains. Componential analysis examined specific characteristics and differences within these relationships, while cultural theme analysis integrated the identified domains into broader patterns of intergovernmental collaboration. Guided by the intergovernmental relations (IGR) framework, the analysis focused on four dimensions: regulatory and institutional arrangements, collaboration scope and mechanisms, resource and financial arrangements, and institutional coordination and accountability. These dimensions provided the analytical structure for interpreting how collaboration between provincial and regency/city governments operates in secondary education governance. Data interpretation involved cross-checking the legal allocation of authority, institutional roles, and findings from interviews, observations, and documentation. The interpretation was organized around the four IGR dimensions to identify recurring patterns of intergovernmental collaboration and examine the consistency between formal institutional arrangements and collaborative practices in secondary education governance.

4. Results and Discussion

Educational Context of East Java

East Java is a substantial educational governance context because of its large population and extensive educational infrastructure. In 2021, the province had a population of 40,878,789, with an average annual population growth rate of 0.67%. Educational indicators show relatively high participation at the basic education level, with a Net Enrollment Rate (APM) of 97.90% and a Gross Enrollment Rate (APK) of 104.52% for SD/MI. Educational facilities are distributed across the province, including senior high schools (SMA) in 2,476 villages/wards and vocational high schools (SMK) in 1,642 villages/wards. These conditions provide the broader service-delivery context within which intergovernmental collaboration in secondary education operates.

Regulatory and Institutional Arrangements

The findings reveal a substantial gap between the formal allocation of authority and the institutionalization of intergovernmental collaboration in secondary education governance. Law No. 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Government establishes the provincial government as the authority responsible for senior secondary education. Following the transfer of authority, assets, facilities and infrastructure, teachers, educational personnel, and other administrative resources related to senior secondary education were transferred to the provincial government. However, the findings indicate that this formal redistribution of authority has not been accompanied by specific derivative regulations or formal agreements

governing collaboration between the provincial and regency/city governments. No specific regional regulation or Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was identified as a formal basis for such collaboration. Despite this regulatory gap, coordination continues in practice, particularly for technical activities such as student programs and competitions.

Law No. 23 of 2014 legally allocates authority for senior secondary education to provinces, establishing the formal basis for provincial responsibility in this sector. The findings indicate that specific derivative regulations or formal agreements governing collaboration between provincial and regency/city governments were not identified in the institutional arrangements examined in this study. Nevertheless, operational coordination continues through Provincial Education Office branches, indicating that intergovernmental interaction persists despite the limited formalization of collaborative arrangements. This condition demonstrates an important distinction between the formal distribution of governmental authority and the practical requirements of public service delivery. Although senior secondary education is formally under provincial authority, schools and the communities they serve remain territorially located within regencies and cities. Regency/city governments therefore continue to have an interest in educational outcomes because these outcomes contribute to local human resource development and regional development indicators. The findings consequently indicate that transferring formal authority does not eliminate functional interdependence between levels of government.

From the regulatory and institutional arrangements dimension of IGR, this finding suggests that vertical redistribution of authority requires corresponding institutional mechanisms to manage ongoing interdependence. The absence of a specific regulatory framework means that intergovernmental relations operate without clearly institutionalized rules concerning shared roles and responsibilities. This finding aligns with [Phillimore \(2013\)](#), who argues that greater formalization and institutionalization can provide more certainty in relationships across governmental levels. [Park et al. \(2021\)](#) similarly show that formal administrative mechanisms can support collaboration by creating conditions that facilitate and sustain informal collaborative processes. [Clement et al. \(2022\)](#) further found that local governments that formalize their strategies tend to collaborate more extensively with relevant stakeholders, illustrating how institutional arrangements support collaborative relationships. In the Indonesian education context, [Purwanto et al. \(2019\)](#) identified intergovernmental, management, and control problems after transferring secondary education authority to the provincial government in West Java, while [Dewi \(2021\)](#) shows that decentralization has expanded subnational governmental roles without automatically resolving disparities in educational outcomes. The East Java findings extend these studies by showing that the central challenge is not merely the formal redistribution of authority but also the institutionalization of relationships among governmental levels that remain functionally interdependent.

Collaboration Scope and Mechanism

The findings show that intergovernmental collaboration primarily covers operational and program-related activities. In practice, provincial and regency/city governments collaborate mainly through Provincial Education Office branches and relevant regency/city government institutions. Because a specific legal framework for collaboration has not yet been established, these interactions tend to be technical and informal rather than institutionally structured. Interview findings further indicate that several areas could potentially benefit from stronger formal collaboration, particularly vocational education. Vocational High Schools (SMK), for example, are expected to produce skilled graduates who can enter the local labor market, making their performance relevant not only to the provincial government but also to regency/city governments responsible for local development and employment.

The informal character of collaboration is also evident in its work mechanisms. Formal interaction generally relies on correspondence between institutions, while day-to-day coordination may depend on personal relationships among officials. The findings provide an example from the Madiun region, where a previous professional relationship between an Education Office Branch official and the Ngawi Regency Education Office facilitated communication and coordination. In other instances, regency/city government institutions interact directly with schools without involving the Provincial Education Office branch. These practices demonstrate that informal relationships can facilitate administrative coordination when formal collaborative mechanisms are limited.

The Madiun–Ngawi example illustrates how existing professional relationships can facilitate coordination between governmental institutions. Together with interinstitutional correspondence and direct interactions between regency/city agencies and schools, this finding demonstrates that intergovernmental coordination operates through multiple channels. These practices highlight the importance of informal and interpersonal mechanisms in maintaining coordination when formal collaborative arrangements remain limited. Within the collaboration scope and mechanisms dimension of IGR, informal interaction serves as an adaptive mechanism for managing interdependence across governmental levels. Such arrangements provide flexibility in addressing practical coordination needs, but reliance on personal relationships may also make collaboration dependent on individual actors rather than stable institutional procedures. [Park et al. \(2021\)](#) provide strong empirical support for this interpretation, demonstrating that informal mechanisms such as communication, ad hoc interaction, and voluntary coordination are positively associated with collaboration, while formal mechanisms can indirectly strengthen collaboration by facilitating informal processes. [Ki \(2023\)](#) likewise demonstrates that formal and informal collaborative mechanisms constitute different strategies through which local governments manage intergovernmental collaboration. [Lee and Lee \(2022\)](#) further show that autonomous jurisdictions strategically establish informal collaborative networks when addressing collective-action problems across fragmented jurisdictions. The East Java findings align with these studies by demonstrating the practical value of informal coordination while also revealing its institutional limitations. Personal and technical relationships can sustain coordination when formal mechanisms are underdeveloped, yet they offer less certainty about authority, continuity, and responsibility. Informal coordination should therefore be understood as a complement to, rather than a substitute for, institutionalized intergovernmental collaboration.

Resource and Financial Arrangements

Resource and financial arrangements constitute another important dimension of intergovernmental collaboration. The findings show that funding for senior secondary education is derived primarily from the East Java Provincial Government, consistent with the formal allocation of authority under the existing legal framework. Although Provincial Education Office branches may submit budget proposals, the Provincial Education Office retains final budget authority, and approved allocations do not necessarily match the amounts proposed by branch offices. At the same time, the findings indicate that regency/city governments are interested in contributing financial resources to secondary education. However, such involvement has not been implemented because of accountability concerns and the absence of regulations that explicitly permit regency/city governments to allocate their budgets to secondary education under provincial authority. This constraint also affects opportunities to provide additional educational assistance, including support for disadvantaged students and the development of educational resources. Human resources display a similar institutional separation. After the transfer of secondary

education authority, personnel were given options for their administrative status, after which human resource management fell under their respective governmental authorities. The findings also indicate differences in employee welfare arrangements between provincial and regency/city personnel, although subsequent adjustments improved the welfare of provincial education personnel.

The distinction between budget proposals submitted by Provincial Education Office branches and final allocations determined by the Provincial Education Office illustrates the separation between locally identified needs and provincial fiscal decision-making authority. At the same time, concerns about regency/city financial contributions suggest that cross-level resource mobilization is closely linked to clear budgetary authority and accountability mechanisms. These conditions constrain how far shared interests in secondary education can translate into formal financial collaboration. From the resource and financial arrangements dimension of IGR, these findings demonstrate that intergovernmental collaboration depends not only on willingness to cooperate but also on the institutional capacity to mobilize and share resources across jurisdictions. Regency/city governments' willingness to contribute does not automatically translate into financial participation when budgetary authority and accountability mechanisms remain unclear. This pattern aligns with [Purwanto et al. \(2019\)](#), who identified disparities in financial assistance among the problems associated with transferring secondary education management to the provincial level in West Java. [Otieno et al. \(2023\)](#), examining service delivery under multilevel governance, similarly found that weak intergovernmental coordination can arise from disputes over functional assignments and resource allocation despite substantial functional interdependence between governmental levels. Their findings demonstrate that resource allocation and the clarity of governmental functions are closely connected to the effectiveness of intergovernmental coordination. The East Java case extends this argument by demonstrating that the constraint is not merely the availability of resources or willingness to contribute, but the absence of an institutional mechanism through which regency/city resources can be legitimately mobilized for a service formally assigned to the provincial government. Effective IGR therefore requires alignment among functional responsibilities, financial authority, resource mobilization, and accountability mechanisms.

Institutional Coordination and Accountability

The findings identify the East Java Provincial Education Office branches as key intermediaries in governing senior secondary education. Twenty-four branch offices currently represent the Provincial Education Office across East Java, with jurisdictions covering one to three regencies/cities. Their establishment reflects an effort to extend provincial administrative authority to the territorial locations where secondary education services are delivered. Institutionally, these branch offices interact with several regency/city government agencies whose functions intersect with secondary education. These include regency/city education offices, youth and sports offices, Bappeda, and other relevant regional apparatus organizations. Although the institutions have different formal responsibilities, their functions remain interconnected. Regency/city education offices, for example, manage junior secondary education, whose graduates feed into senior secondary schools, while Bappeda is responsible for regional development planning, including human resource development. These functional connections create continuing demands for coordination despite the formal separation of authority.

However, the findings show that no specific institutional arrangement has been established to manage authority relations between the provincial and regency/city governments in secondary education. The Provincial Education Office branches primarily perform administrative and technical coordination rather than functioning as formal intergovernmental collaborative bodies. Consequently, the existing in-

stitutional structure facilitates interaction but does not fully define shared responsibilities, coordination procedures, or accountability across governmental levels. The 24 Provincial Education Office branches provide a territorial administrative interface between provincial authority and regency/city contexts. Their interactions with regency/city education offices, regional development planning agencies, and other relevant institutions demonstrate their intermediary role in facilitating technical and administrative coordination. However, this intermediary function remains primarily operational, as the existing institutional arrangements do not clearly establish shared procedures, responsibilities, and accountability mechanisms for intergovernmental collaboration. Through the institutional coordination and accountability dimension of IGR, the Provincial Education Office branches can therefore be understood as intermediary actors connecting provincial authority with local administrative and developmental interests. Their existence demonstrates that transferring authority upward to the provincial government does not remove the need for institutional interfaces at the regency/city level. This interpretation aligns with [Phillimore \(2013\)](#), who emphasizes that distributing responsibilities across governmental levels creates a continuing need for mechanisms through which governments manage their relationships. [Purwanto et al. \(2019\)](#) similarly demonstrate that transferring secondary education authority to the provincial level can create management and control difficulties because schools remain geographically dispersed from the provincial center. More broadly, [Otieno et al. \(2023\)](#) show that even when different levels of government recognize their functional interdependence, inadequate coordination can undermine public service delivery when functional assignments and resource responsibilities remain contested. The East Java case adds an institutional perspective by showing that administrative representation through branch offices is not equivalent to institutionalized intergovernmental collaboration. While branch offices provide an important organizational interface between provincial authority and local contexts, clearer rules governing coordination, responsibility, and accountability are still needed to transform technical interaction into a more institutionalized form of IGR.

Synthesis of The IGR Dimensions

Taken together, the four IGR dimensions reveal a consistent pattern: the formal decentralization of secondary education authority to the provincial government has not eliminated intergovernmental interdependence. Instead, this redistribution has generated ongoing demands for institutional coordination, collaborative mechanisms, resource alignment, and accountability across governmental levels. This pattern supports [Phillimore's \(2013\)](#) argument that IGR extends beyond the formal distribution of governmental responsibilities to include the formal and informal processes through which governments manage their relationships. It also complements [Purwanto et al. \(2019\)](#), who identified management, financial, and intergovernmental challenges following the transfer of secondary education authority in West Java. Furthermore, the interaction between formal and informal mechanisms identified in East Java corresponds with [Park et al. \(2021\)](#) and [Ki \(2023\)](#), while the continuing functional interdependence across formally separated jurisdictions parallels the findings of [Otieno et al. \(2023\)](#).

However, the East Java case advances this discussion by demonstrating how technical coordination, informal relationships, and Provincial Education Office branches function as compensatory mechanisms when formal intergovernmental arrangements remain underdeveloped. The four dimensions are therefore interconnected: limited regulatory institutionalization encourages reliance on informal collaborative mechanisms; unclear collaborative rules constrain cross-level resource mobilization; and branch offices provide an institutional interface without fully resolving issues of shared responsibility and accountability. Accordingly, decentralization should not be understood merely as the redistribution of authority. In

territorially interconnected public services such as secondary education, decentralization also creates a continuing need for institutional arrangements that can manage intergovernmental interdependence.

5. Conclusion

This study shows that transferring secondary education authority to the provincial government has not eliminated intergovernmental interdependence between the East Java Provincial Government and regency/city governments. Findings across the four IGR dimensions reveal a gap between the formal allocation of provincial authority and the continued involvement and interests of regency/city governments in secondary education governance. This gap is reflected in the limited institutionalization of collaborative arrangements, the predominance of technical and informal coordination, constraints on cross-level resource mobilization, and the intermediary role of Provincial Education Office branches in connecting provincial authority with local administrative contexts. Theoretically, this study contributes to the intergovernmental relations literature by demonstrating that decentralization should not be understood solely as a redistribution of formal authority. In territorially interconnected public services, transferring authority may instead generate ongoing functional interdependence across levels of government. The findings further indicate that informal coordination and intermediary institutions can facilitate intergovernmental interaction when formal collaborative arrangements remain limited; however, they do not fully substitute for institutionalized mechanisms governing responsibilities, resource sharing, coordination, and accountability.

Practically, strengthening secondary education governance requires clearer institutional arrangements between provincial and regency/city governments. Such arrangements should clarify collaborative roles, coordination mechanisms, financial participation, and accountability while maintaining the flexibility of existing technical and informal interactions. Provincial Education Office branches can play an important intermediary role by connecting provincial authority with the administrative and developmental interests of regencies and cities. This study is limited to the qualitative examination of secondary education governance in East Java; therefore, the findings should be interpreted within this institutional and territorial context. Future research could extend the analysis to multiple provinces and incorporate perspectives from a broader range of provincial, regency/city, and school-level actors. Comparative research could also examine how variations in institutional arrangements influence intergovernmental coordination, resource sharing, accountability, and secondary education service delivery across different regional contexts.

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