Integration of Technology and Governance in Indonesian Schools: Toward a Smart School Ecosystem

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the integration of technology and governance in education management as a strategic effort to establish a smart school ecosystem. The increasing reliance on digital tools necessitates that schools adopt systems aligned with transparent, accountable, and participatory governance principles. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed to explore how digital technologies and governance practices are implemented and mutually reinforce one another in educational settings. Data were gathered through interviews, observations, and documentation from secondary schools in Bandung identified as smart schools due to their use of digital learning and management systems. The findings indicate that the adoption of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) significantly improves efficiency, transparency, and accessibility in school management. Initiatives such as online learning platforms, digital assessment tools, and Bandung's SaKOJA program enhance the quality of education and widen access, including for students with disabilities. Furthermore, ICT integration strengthens administrative processes, fosters collaboration among stakeholders, and supports responsive and flexible learning environments. The synergy between technology and governance plays a crucial role in driving sustainable educational transformation. Schools that adopt ICT-driven governance models are better positioned to create inclusive, adaptive, and future-ready learning environments.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has profoundly reshaped global educational practices. This digital transformation affects not only the delivery of learning but also the broader management of educational institutions. In an era characterized by complexity, uncertainty, and accelerating innovation, the integration of technology into school governance is no longer optional—it is a strategic imperative (Maritsa et al., 2021). Schools must transition from conventional administrative models to dynamic systems that utilize digital tools to manage data, automate processes, and facilitate real-time communication among stakeholders. Digital systems such as Learning Management Systems (LMS), School Information Systems (SIS), and online collaborative platforms now play critical roles in creating governance models that are agile, accountable, and responsive to change (Hermawansyah, 2021).

However, despite increasing digitization, many schools—particularly in developing contexts like Indonesia—continue to face significant challenges in aligning technological adoption with good governance principles. These include fragmented implementation, inadequate infrastructure, low stakeholder digital literacy, and lack of integrative models that connect administrative efficiency with inclusive and participatory decision-making processes (Destari, 2023; Kusnandi, 2019). As such, the full transformative potential of ICT remains underrealized. One of the core problems lies in the absence of a coherent framework that harmonizes technological tools with transparent, participatory, and accountable governance practices.

Technology offers tremendous potential to address disparities in access and inclusion. Online and hybrid learning models, for example, have opened educational opportunities for students in remote or underserved areas (Agustian & Salsabila, 2021). Tools such as virtual classrooms and mobile learning applications remove spatial and temporal barriers to education. Yet, without visionary leadership and governance that promotes digital equity, such innovations may exacerbate existing inequalities. Effective school governance in the digital age requires more than deploying tools—it involves strategic planning, data-driven policy, inclusive stakeholder engagement, and capacity-building initiatives that ensure all members of the educational ecosystem can meaningfully participate in and benefit from technological advancements (Husaini, 2017).

Critically, good governance is a determining factor in whether the digital transformation in education is merely technical or truly transformational. Governance encompasses the systems and processes through which decisions are made, resources are allocated, and accountability is ensured. In the digital era, this involves leveraging ICT to create evidence-based, transparent, and collaborative environments. School principals and management teams must be empowered to interpret real-time data for planning, monitor educational performance, and ensure stakeholder accountability through accessible and integrated digital systems (Putra & Roni, 2021). Equally important is fostering a culture of digital literacy across all levels of the school community, ensuring that technology is not perceived as a separate function but as an intrinsic component of everyday educational practice.

The concept of a smart school ecosystem has emerged in response to these evolving demands. A smart school is defined not only by its use of technology but by its ability to integrate digital tools into a holistic governance and learning framework. Such ecosystems rely on data-informed decision-making, interconnected platforms, flexible learning models, and continuous professional development (Sijabat et al., 2021). They are designed to be adaptive, inclusive, and future-ready—cultivating critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and digital fluency. This transformation requires more than infrastructure; it calls for a shift in mindset among educators and policymakers toward continuous innovation and community-based problem-solving (Siti Harlina, 2019).

Several studies have explored the benefits and challenges of educational technology adoption. For example, Lestari (2018) emphasized the role of digital literacy in enabling 21st-century learning competencies, while Usman (2014) underscored the importance of aligning technology implementation with educational policy and management reform. More recent research has highlighted how school leaders' capacity for data-driven decision-making influences the success of ICT initiatives (Putra & Roni, 2021). Additionally, the integration of School Management Information Systems (SMIS) has been linked to improvements in transparency and administrative efficiency (Hizbullah & Haidir, 2021).

Despite these insights, significant gaps remain in the literature—particularly in the context of secondary education in developing countries. Much of the existing research focuses on either primary education or isolated aspects of technology integration, such as teacher training or e-learning platforms, without addressing the systemic interplay between technology and governance. Moreover, there is limited empirical exploration of models that link administrative systems with participatory governance in a coherent and sustainable manner. Studies often overlook the role of stakeholder collaboration—including parents, local governments, and the private sector—in building resilient digital ecosystems that can adapt to ongoing educational challenges (Purfitasari et al., 2019).

This study addresses these gaps by examining how technology and governance can be integrated to create a sustainable smart school ecosystem, with particular attention to secondary schools in urban areas of Indonesia. Drawing on qualitative data collected from schools in Bandung that have implemented digital learning and management systems, the research explores the interplay between ICT adoption and governance reform. It seeks to understand how administrative systems can support participatory planning, real-time monitoring, and evidence-based decision-making while fostering inclusivity and stakeholder engagement.

By adopting a holistic approach, this research aims to contribute to the development of practical models for smart school ecosystems that are adaptable to diverse educational contexts. It offers insights into the critical success factors for integrating ICT into governance, identifies barriers to implementation, and proposes strategies for scaling successful practices across the education sector. Ultimately, this study seeks to inform policy, guide school leadership, and support the broader transformation of education systems in the digital era.

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the integration of technology and governance in the management of secondary schools, with the aim of developing a sustainable and replicable smart school ecosystem model suitable for application in diverse educational settings across Indonesia.

2. METHODS

2.1 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative descriptive case study approach as outlined by Yin (2018), which is well-suited for exploring contemporary phenomena within real-life contexts—particularly when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. The case study method enables an in-depth exploration of how technology and governance are integrated into the management of smart schools, by examining multiple data sources and perspectives. This design is appropriate for the study's objective to describe the processes, practices, and experiences of stakeholders involved in the digital transformation of school governance.

2.2 Sampling Strategy

A purposive sampling technique was used to select the study sites and participants. Schools were selected based on their established status as "smart schools" by the Bandung Education Office, characterized by the implementation of digital learning and management systems such as Learning Management Systems (LMS), School Information Systems (SIS), and local innovations like SaKOJA. The selection criteria included geographic location within the Bandung metropolitan area, accessibility to researchers, and diversity in school type (public vs. private). This approach ensured that the schools selected were relevant to the research objective and provided rich, contextual data.

2.3 Participants

Participants were selected based on their direct involvement in the management, implementation, or use of technology in school operations. These included school principals, IT coordinators, teachers, and administrative staff. In total, 15 participants from three schools were involved in the study. Their details are anonymized and presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Participant Profile

Participant Role	Number of Participants	School Code
Principal	3	A, B, C
IT Coordinator	3	A, B, C
Teachers	6	A, B, C
Administrative Staff	3	A, B, C
Total	**15**	

Each participant was assigned a pseudonym during transcription and analysis to ensure confidentiality.

2.4 Data Collection

Data were collected through three main methods:

- In-depth semi-structured interviews with all participants to gather detailed insights into the use of ICT tools, governance mechanisms, and perceived outcomes.
- Non-participant observation of digital-based administrative and learning activities (e.g., online assessments, digital attendance systems, and data dashboards).
- Document analysis, which included school strategic plans, policy documents, and records from digital platforms such as LMS and SIS.

These multiple sources allowed for triangulation, enhancing the credibility and richness of the data.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

All participants were provided with informed consent forms outlining the study's purpose, voluntary participation, the right to withdraw, and confidentiality measures. Data collected were anonymized and stored securely, with access restricted to the research team. Personal identifiers were removed during transcription to protect participant identity.

2.6 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the six-step framework developed by Braun and Clarke (2006):

1. Familiarization with data – Transcripts and field notes were read repeatedly.
2. Generating initial codes – Key features of the data were systematically coded.
3. Searching for themes – Codes were grouped into potential themes related to technology use, governance strategies, and stakeholder experiences.
4. Reviewing themes – Themes were checked against the data set for consistency.
5. Defining and naming themes – Clear definitions were developed for each theme.
6. Producing the report – Themes were synthesized to address the research questions.

NVivo software was used to organize codes and facilitate systematic analysis. To enhance data validity, source triangulation was applied by cross-referencing findings from interviews, observations, and documents. Peer debriefing with fellow researchers was also conducted to minimize bias and ensure objectivity.

By combining purposive sampling, rigorous data collection, and structured analysis, this study ensures a comprehensive and credible investigation into the integration of technology and governance in smart school ecosystems. The use of a case study framework supports a nuanced understanding of context-specific challenges and innovations that can inform scalable models for educational reform.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the research findings derived from interviews, observations, and document analysis in selected smart schools in Bandung, Indonesia. Findings are thematically categorized and followed by an in-depth discussion that integrates relevant theoretical frameworks, prior research, and critical reflection. Each thematic subheading aligns with the research questions to maintain focus and clarity.

3.1 Administrative Efficiency Through School Management Information Systems (SMIS)

The implementation of School Management Information Systems (SMIS) has brought substantial improvements to administrative efficiency and transparency in the participating schools. Across all three case sites, school leaders and administrative staff described a noticeable shift in how day-to-day

operations are handled. The introduction of centralized digital platforms streamlined key processes such as attendance tracking, academic reporting, student record management, and financial documentation.

One school principal emphasized the drastic time savings in academic reporting, noting, *"We used to spend three to four days preparing mid-semester reports manually. Now, with the system, it's all done in just a few hours. Everything is already integrated—we just verify the data and print."* This sentiment was echoed by an administrative staff member who shared, *"The system catches errors we used to miss, especially when inputting grades or financial data. It flags inconsistencies before we submit anything, which really saves us from backtracking later."*

Financial reporting, particularly for School Operational Assistance (BOS) funds, also saw enhanced accountability. All three schools utilized digital modules that enabled precise tracking of income and expenditures. A finance officer explained, *"We can now generate detailed BOS fund reports with just a few clicks. It's not only faster, but also makes audits easier because every transaction is recorded and traceable. The transparency helps build trust with stakeholders."*

Beyond administrative tasks, SMIS has facilitated stronger internal communication and data accessibility. Teachers, for instance, can now access students' academic performance and behavioral records in real-time. As one teacher described, *"I can log in and immediately see a student's attendance, grades, even notes from counseling. This helps me tailor my approach in the classroom because I have the full picture."* Parents also benefit from improved communication, with mobile apps providing up-to-date information on their children's academic progress. A parent user interface coordinator noted, *"Parents really appreciate being able to check report cards and attendance through the app. It keeps them engaged and reduces the number of inquiries we get at the office."*

These first-hand narratives underscore how SMIS not only reduces administrative workload but also enhances accuracy, transparency, and collaboration within schools. The integration of technology into school management has redefined traditional workflows, empowering educators and stakeholders with timely, reliable information that supports data-driven decision-making.

3.2 Learning Innovation Through Digital Platforms

The integration of Learning Management Systems (LMS) such as Google Classroom and Moodle has significantly transformed teaching and learning practices in smart schools. Teachers across the case study sites reported that these platforms enabled them to streamline classroom activities—ranging from content delivery and assignment distribution to discussion facilitation and performance evaluation. This shift supported a blended learning approach that catered to varied student needs by combining the flexibility of online learning with the structure of in-person instruction.

One teacher explained, *"Google Classroom really changed the way I manage my class. I can upload videos, slides, and worksheets, and students can access everything in one place. It's much easier to track their progress."* Another teacher added, *"For students who need more time, the recorded lessons help a lot. They can pause, rewind, and rewatch whenever they don't understand something."* This kind of flexibility was particularly appreciated by students. A Grade 11 student shared, *"Sometimes I miss things during the live class, but with Moodle, I can go back and check the materials anytime. I don't have to worry about falling behind."*

Multimedia integration played a central role in enhancing student engagement. Animated videos, interactive quizzes, and audio content like podcasts were frequently cited as tools that made learning more dynamic and relatable. One student remarked, *"The quizzes are fun because they're instant—you know right away if you got it right or wrong. It makes learning feel more like a game."* Teachers used online quizzes with automatic grading features for formative assessments, which not only saved time but also provided immediate feedback to students. Final evaluations were often a hybrid of digital submissions and in-person assessments, striking a balance between convenience and academic integrity.

An important technological advancement noted in one school was the use of the eKTSP (Electronic School-Based Curriculum) system. This digital platform allowed teachers to upload syllabi, instructional designs, and lesson plans to a centralized cloud system that could be accessed by

supervisors and education authorities. Teachers described the system as a helpful tool for improving lesson structure and aligning teaching with curriculum standards. As one curriculum coordinator noted, *"With eKTSP, we can ensure every teacher is on track with the national curriculum. It also makes it easier for supervisors to give timely feedback."* A senior teacher reflected, *"Before, we had to submit printed lesson plans. Now, everything is online and organized. It's more efficient and transparent."*

These participant insights highlight how LMS platforms and digital curriculum tools are not only enhancing instructional delivery but also fostering better planning, monitoring, and student-centered learning. The combination of multimedia resources, automated assessment, and real-time access to instructional content has empowered both teachers and students to engage more meaningfully in the learning process. As one school principal summarized, *"Technology has helped us build a more responsive and inclusive learning environment. It's not perfect, but it's a huge step forward."*

3.3 Enhanced Stakeholder Participation Through Communication Technology

The widespread use of digital communication tools significantly enhanced stakeholder engagement, particularly between schools and parents. Platforms such as WhatsApp groups, digital newsletters, and the locally developed SaKOJA (Sarana Komunikasi Orang Tua dan Sekolah) system were frequently cited by school staff and parents as instrumental in maintaining a steady flow of information. These tools enabled schools to share updates on student progress, upcoming events, and policy changes in a timely and accessible manner. One school administrator explained, *"With SaKOJA, we can reach parents instantly. They no longer have to wait for monthly meetings—everything from grades to announcements is available in real time."*

Virtual parent-teacher meetings, initially introduced as a necessity during the COVID-19 pandemic, have continued due to their convenience and ability to increase parental involvement. A teacher noted, *"Before the pandemic, it was hard to get more than a few parents to attend meetings. Now, with Zoom or Google Meet, attendance is much better—even working parents can join during their breaks."* Parents also expressed appreciation for the transparency and efficiency these tools provided. One parent shared, *"I used to feel disconnected from what was happening at school. Now I get updates on my phone, I can message teachers directly, and I know exactly how my child is doing."* Another echoed this sentiment, saying, *"I feel more involved in my son's education now than ever before. It's like the school is just one message away."*

Students, too, benefited from enhanced digital communication through integrated LMS platforms that included discussion forums and messaging features. These tools allowed students to engage in academic dialogue outside regular school hours, ask questions, and collaborate with peers. A senior student explained, *"Sometimes I don't feel comfortable asking questions in class, but I can message my teacher after school or post in the forum. I get the help I need without feeling embarrassed."* This level of interaction not only extended learning beyond the classroom but also promoted student autonomy and confidence. Teachers observed that students who were typically quiet in class became more vocal and inquisitive through these platforms. As one teacher put it, *"The digital forums give students a voice. Some of the most thoughtful questions come from those who barely speak in class."*

The integration of digital communication tools has thus reshaped the relationship between schools, parents, and students. By fostering continuous dialogue, increasing transparency, and reducing barriers to engagement, these tools have created a more inclusive and supportive educational environment. As a school principal summarized, *"Technology has brought us closer to parents and students. It's not just about efficiency—it's about building stronger, more responsive relationships."*

3.4 Data-Driven Decision-Making in School Planning and Evaluation

The use of dashboard systems and data analytics tools has become a cornerstone of data-driven decision-making in the participating schools. Principals and curriculum coordinators reported that real-time data from platforms such as *Student360* significantly improved their ability to monitor school-wide performance indicators, including student achievement, attendance patterns, and teacher

workload. One school leader explained, *"The dashboard gives us a complete picture at a glance. If attendance suddenly drops in one class or a group of students is underperforming, we're alerted immediately. It helps us respond faster and more precisely."*

Teachers, too, described how assessment analytics provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of their instruction. By reviewing data from quizzes, assignments, and summative evaluations, they were able to identify trends and adjust their teaching accordingly. A teacher shared, *"After our midterm assessments, I noticed that many students struggled with one particular concept. The analytics highlighted it clearly, so I revised my next lessons to go over that topic again using different methods."* This reflective approach was widely credited with improving lesson quality and student comprehension.

Periodic assessment data also served to flag students needing additional academic support. In several cases, schools used this information to schedule remedial classes or refer students for individualized interventions. As one curriculum coordinator noted, *"We don't wait until report cards anymore. If the data shows a student falling behind, we act right away—sometimes with tutoring, sometimes by pairing them with a peer mentor."*

Beyond classroom instruction, data insights informed broader institutional planning, including professional development. For instance, one school used analytics to uncover a consistent gap in students' writing performance across multiple grade levels. In response, targeted workshops were organized to help teachers strengthen strategies in teaching writing. *"The data didn't just tell us that students were struggling—it showed us where our teaching needed reinforcement,"* said a school principal. *"So we tailored our training programs accordingly."*

Resource allocation was another area where data proved transformative. Schools strategically deployed teaching assistants to classrooms with the highest instructional load or largest number of struggling students. Some even restructured the timetable to include supplementary sessions for critical subjects. An administrator explained, *"We no longer base decisions on assumptions. The data tells us where support is most needed, so we make sure our resources go there first."*

These accounts underscore how dashboard systems and analytics are fostering a culture of evidence-based practice. By humanizing the numbers with real-time insights, schools are not only improving educational outcomes but also ensuring that interventions are timely, targeted, and effective. As one principal put it, *"Data has become our compass—it doesn't just guide planning, it drives transformation."*

3.5 Promoting Inclusion and Accessibility Through Technology

Smart schools made significant strides toward educational inclusion by integrating technology to accommodate diverse student needs, particularly those with disabilities, those living in remote areas, and students from underprivileged backgrounds. Across the participating schools, administrators and teachers described deliberate efforts to reduce barriers to access and participation in digital learning environments. One school principal shared, *"Inclusion was a priority from the beginning. We knew that if we were going digital, we had to make sure every student could come along—regardless of where they live or what device they have."*

To support students in underserved communities, many schools optimized their online learning platforms for mobile access and provided asynchronous learning options to allow for flexible engagement. This flexibility proved essential for students in remote areas with limited internet access or those sharing devices at home. A teacher explained, *"We recorded all our lessons so students could watch them later if they missed a class or had connectivity problems. It wasn't perfect, but it gave them a fighting chance to keep up."*

In response to economic disparities, some schools implemented device loan programs, distributing tablets and low-cost laptops to students in need. *"Several of our students didn't have access to a smartphone, let alone a computer,"* noted a school administrator. *"We started a loan system so they wouldn't be left behind just because they couldn't afford a device."* This initiative was especially appreciated by parents, one of

whom commented, *"The school lent us a tablet for my daughter. Without it, she wouldn't have been able to study at all during the lockdown."*

Teachers also reported adapting their instructional materials to suit different learning styles and abilities. Visual learners were provided with infographics and animation-based content, while auditory learners accessed podcasts and narrated presentations. One teacher reflected, *"Some of my students learn best by seeing, others by listening. So I tried to create content in different formats—videos, diagrams, even voice notes—so everyone had a way to connect with the material."* Students with mobility challenges were supported through fully remote learning environments, where they could attend classes and submit assignments digitally without the need to commute. A parent of a student with a physical disability shared, *"The online setup was a blessing. My son could participate fully from home without the physical strain of traveling to school every day."*

Despite these inclusive efforts, challenges persisted. Unreliable internet connections and the lack of personal devices remained major obstacles, particularly in rural regions. A teacher expressed frustration, saying, *"Sometimes students would disappear for days—not because they didn't care, but because their internet was down or they had to share a phone with three siblings."* Engagement was another concern, especially for students whose parents were unable to provide supervision or support at home. *"It's hard to keep students motivated when there's no one at home encouraging them,"* noted one teacher. *"You feel like you're teaching into a void."*

These narratives highlight both the promise and limitations of digital inclusion in smart schools. While technological interventions expanded access and learning opportunities for many marginalized students, systemic inequalities such as infrastructure gaps and socio-economic barriers continue to limit the full realization of inclusive education. As one principal aptly concluded, *"Technology can open doors, but we still have to work harder to make sure everyone can walk through them."*

Discussion

The integration of digital technology and governance in Bandung's smart schools represents a critical development in shaping inclusive, efficient, and future-oriented educational systems. This discussion grounds the study's findings in both empirical evidence and theoretical discourse while drawing on policy insights and international frameworks. Key themes include digital governance, technology-enhanced pedagogy, participatory platforms, data-driven leadership, digital equity, and sustainability—each illustrated with direct links to observed practices and supported by scholarly literature.

Digital Governance and Principles of Good Governance

The implementation of School Management Information Systems (SMIS) in Bandung schools reflects a strong alignment with the United Nations Development Programme's (1997) principles of Good Governance—specifically transparency, accountability, participation, and responsiveness. Digitization of administrative records, budgets, and student performance data has increased operational clarity and stakeholder trust. For instance, real-time dashboards allow parents to monitor attendance and academic progress, while school leaders rely on data for informed decision-making.

These mechanisms create multi-level accountability—teachers are accountable for classroom outcomes, and administrators for resource management. As shown in the data, such systems improve responsiveness, allowing for timely interventions on academic or behavioral issues. These findings emphasize that governance, when coupled with digital infrastructure, transitions from a supervisory role to a catalyst for quality education (UNDP, 1997).

Technology-Enhanced Pedagogy: Empirical Reflections on TPACK and SAMR

Teachers in Bandung's smart schools displayed the effective application of the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). Lesson plans integrated multimedia resources, interactive quizzes, and collaborative cloud-based tools to support

differentiated and student-centered learning. These practices correspond with the SAMR model (Puentedura, 2014), particularly at the modification and redefinition levels, where digital tools fundamentally transformed teaching strategies rather than merely replicating traditional methods.

For example, students received automated feedback on digital assessments, fostering self-directed learning. Such transformation required more than access to hardware—it demanded pedagogical innovation and sustained professional development. While some educators thrived, others reported needing more guidance in areas like inclusive content design and data interpretation. These findings underscore the importance of embedding digital competence within teacher training initiatives.

Participatory Governance Through Digital Platforms

Digital tools such as SaKOJA, messaging apps, and virtual conferencing platforms expanded opportunities for stakeholder engagement. These tools enabled parents to participate more regularly in school consultations and planning processes, reflecting the participatory ideals described by the OECD (2020) and Arnstein's (1969) Ladder of Participation.

Teachers and students also benefited from increased communication pathways. Online forums empowered students to express opinions and collaborate with educators, fostering shared ownership of learning outcomes. This evolution from top-down management to participatory governance signifies a cultural shift, embedding stakeholder interaction within daily operations. The empirical data revealed that schools with more integrated platforms saw higher levels of stakeholder trust and community involvement.

Data-Driven Leadership and Educational Accountability

Platforms like Student360 enabled school leaders and educators to make data-informed decisions. By tracking academic, attendance, and behavioral indicators in real time, administrators could tailor interventions and allocate resources effectively. This aligns with global trends promoting evidence-based education (Burns & Schuller, 2007). Notably, principals demonstrated data literacy, using analytics to support teachers in modifying instruction for struggling learners.

However, the study also found that excessive data management posed challenges. Teachers reported being overwhelmed by constant monitoring demands, echoing concerns raised by Benoliel and Schechter (2023) about potential burnout in data-saturated environments. These insights highlight the urgent need for clear data governance frameworks that define data ownership, ethical use, and privacy standards.

Addressing Equity and the Digital Divide

The digital transformation in Bandung's smart schools has illuminated the persistent issue of digital inequity. While many students benefited from technology-enhanced learning, those from lower-income households faced barriers such as device scarcity, unstable internet, and limited parental digital literacy. These findings mirror global trends (World Bank, 2021), which show that marginalized groups are often excluded from the digital revolution.

Some schools responded by offering device loans, creating low-bandwidth materials, and facilitating offline content access. However, these were short-term measures rather than systemic solutions. Achieving digital equity demands long-term policy commitments, including investment in infrastructure, internet subsidies, and digital literacy programs for parents. These supports are essential to ensuring every student can participate fully in ICT-based education.

Toward a Sustainable Smart School Ecosystem

The success of smart schools lies not only in adopting digital tools but in embedding them within the broader educational ecosystem. This aligns with Zhou's (2022) vision of a smart school as a holistic environment where technology strengthens both academic functions and social relationships. Teacher empowerment was found to be a central enabler. Schools that invested in ongoing professional development and fostered teacher autonomy observed higher levels of innovation and instructional adaptation.

Nonetheless, disparities in training access revealed systemic weaknesses. Reliance on external funding and ad hoc initiatives threatens the sustainability of digital reforms. Dacholfany (2024) emphasizes the necessity of cultural transformation—a mindset that values risk-taking, collaboration, and lifelong learning. Sustainable integration also depends on incorporating digital objectives into strategic school planning and budgeting to ensure alignment with national education priorities.

Critical Reflections and Limitations

Several limitations temper the study's findings:

- Digital Readiness Gaps: Variations in teacher digital skills impacted the consistency of technology integration. Schools with structured training outperformed those lacking support systems.
- Parental Digital Literacy: Low engagement among digitally unskilled parents diluted the benefits of participatory governance. Targeted capacity-building initiatives are needed.
- Data Governance: The absence of robust data policies raises ethical and security concerns. Schools must establish protocols for data collection, access, and use.
- Sustainability: Many initiatives were pilot programs or externally funded. Without integration into government frameworks, their long-term viability remains uncertain.

These constraints suggest the necessity of a national strategy to scale and institutionalize successful practices while addressing ethical, infrastructural, and professional gaps.

This research affirms that digital governance and technology integration in Bandung's smart schools contribute meaningfully to educational improvement. Digital tools enhanced instruction, streamlined administration, and fostered inclusive stakeholder engagement. Yet, for digital transformation to reach its full potential, critical barriers—particularly inequity, data governance, and training disparities—must be addressed.

Sustainable, system-wide change requires coordinated action across school leaders, educators, policymakers, and communities. A truly smart education system must be digitally connected, ethically grounded, and socially inclusive—one that not only prepares students for the future but empowers all stakeholders to shape it.

4. CONCLUSION

This study found that integrating technology with school governance helps improve how schools are managed, how learning is delivered, and how all stakeholders—teachers, students, parents, and school leaders—work together. The use of digital tools like school management systems, online learning platforms, and communication apps has made administration more efficient, learning more flexible, and decision-making more data-driven. These tools also help make education more inclusive, especially for students with special needs or those living in remote areas. Based on the findings, schools should create clear policies that guide the use of technology, offer ongoing training for teachers to use digital tools effectively, and invest in better ICT infrastructure to ensure equal access. However, this study focused only on a few secondary schools in Bandung, so the results may not represent all schools in Indonesia. Future research should compare schools in different regions or education levels to find broader strategies for building smart schools that can meet diverse needs and challenges.

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