

Digital Transformation of Educational Administrative Services in an Archipelagic Region: A Case Study of the Buru Regency Education Branch Office

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INFO ARTIKEL

History Article:

Submitted 08 22, 2026

Received 08 27, 2026

Published 09 14, 2026

ABSTRACT

Digital transformation can reduce administrative distance in archipelagic regions, but digital channels do not automatically produce integrated public services. This study analyzes the transformation of educational administrative services at the Buru Regency Education Branch Office, Maluku Province, Indonesia. A qualitative documentary case-study design was applied to publicly verifiable institutional documents and digital-service evidence available through August 2026. Evidence was assessed across four dimensions—governance, service-process transformation, digital infrastructure, and system/data integration—and interpreted through public-value and administrative-burden perspectives. Source triangulation compared local, provincial, national, statistical, and regulatory records, while claims unsupported by public evidence were explicitly bounded. The results show a digital presence through the institutional website, electronic communication, education-data administration, and infrastructure mapping, supported by provincial and national platforms including Lawamena Satu Data Maluku. However, evidence of end-to-end transactions, service tracking, interoperable workflows, standardized response times, and locally documented platform use remains limited. The next transformation stage requires process standardization, one-door service orchestration, data governance, traceability, security, staff-capacity development, and assisted channels for schools facing connectivity constraints.

Keywords: Digital Transformation; Educational Administration; Digital Government; Public Service; Archipelagic Region

How to Cite:

Ali, R., Tuanaya, W., Bahasoan, A., & Muhtar, M. (2026). Digital Transformation of Educational Administrative Services in an Archipelagic Region: A Case Study of the Buru Regency Education Branch Office. LANCAH: Jurnal Inovasi Dan Tren, 4(2), 454-464. <https://journal.lembagakita.com/ljit/article/view/8507>

INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation in the public sector is more than the adoption of websites, messaging applications, or information systems. It involves organizational change in processes, structures, culture, and value creation (Mergel et al., 2019; Vial, 2019). Digital-government research therefore emphasizes the interaction of technology with managerial support, institutional conditions, process redesign, and service outcomes (Tangi et al., 2021; Haug et al., 2024). This distinction is important because digital tools can coexist with fragmented workflows and manual verification.

Indonesia's policy framework reinforces this organizational view. Presidential Regulation No. 95/2018 established the Electronic-Based Government System (SPBE), while Presidential Regulation No. 82/2023 strengthened the agenda for integrated national digital services, explicitly emphasizing integration and interoperability. Educational administration is a relevant domain because schools depend on government services for data management, correspondence, verification, reporting, personnel documentation, consultation, and coordination. Digital mechanisms can reduce travel and accelerate information exchange, but they can also reproduce administrative burdens when users must navigate multiple systems, resubmit documents, or seek informal confirmation because service status is unclear (Purwani et al., 2024).

These issues are sharper in archipelagic regions. Maluku combines geographic dispersion with uneven telecommunications and electricity infrastructure, so digital-first services cannot assume continuous connectivity. Resilient design requires assisted access, fallback procedures, and alternative channels. Buru Regency is therefore a useful setting for examining how digital administration operates under territorial constraints documented in official regional statistics (Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Buru, 2026).

The Buru Regency Education Branch Office is a territorial unit of the Maluku Provincial Education and Culture Office responsible for secondary and special education services, particularly SMA, SMK, and SLB. Its published service scope includes educational administration, teacher and education-personnel development, curriculum support, monitoring and evaluation, information and consultation, and student development (Cabang Dinas Pendidikan Buru, 2026). The office thus occupies an intermediary position between provincial policy and geographically dispersed schools.

The case is also timely because Maluku's digital-data ecosystem expanded in 2026 with the launch of Lawamena Satu Data Maluku, which publishes provincial datasets including education indicators. National education services also rely on platforms such as Dapodik, Rapor Pendidikan, ARKAS, belajar.id, and Rumah Pendidikan. These platforms create opportunities for integration, but their availability does not by itself demonstrate that branch-office workflows are integrated.

The analysis combines Digital Government Transformation (Tangi et al., 2021), Digital-Era Governance (Dunleavy et al., 2006), public-value perspectives (Scupola & Mergel, 2022; Luna et al., 2024), and administrative-burden research (Hegemann & Ritz, 2026). Together, these perspectives direct attention to governance, process reintegration, interoperability, accessibility, efficiency, transparency, and the learning or compliance costs that digital services may impose. Prior research also shows that interoperability requires legal, organizational, semantic, and technical alignment and that public-sector data collaboration depends on standards, trust, privacy, and security (Kalogirou et al., 2022; Schmeling et al., 2025).

Despite this literature, intermediary territorial units of provincial education administration remain

underexamined. Studies more often focus on ministries, local governments, schools, or digital learning platforms. Less is known about how a branch office combines local, provincial, and national channels into a coherent administrative service for dispersed schools. This study therefore asks: (1) what forms of educational administrative digitalization are publicly verifiable at the Buru Regency Education Branch Office; (2) how are local channels positioned within provincial and national digital-service ecosystems; (3) what transformation gaps are visible in governance, service processes, infrastructure, and system/data integration; and (4) what strengthening priorities follow from the evidence?

METHODS OF RESEARCH

This study used a qualitative documentary case-study design. The case was defined as the digital transformation of educational administrative services at the Buru Regency Education Branch Office and its connections with the provincial and national digital-service ecosystem. The design was selected because the study seeks to establish a transparent, publicly verifiable baseline of institutional arrangements rather than to infer unobserved organizational behavior.

Data were drawn from official or institutionally attributable public documents available up to August 2026. Sources included the Branch Office website and service/activity pages; Lawamena Satu Data Maluku and Maluku Provincial Government publications; BPS Kabupaten Buru statistics; national SPBE regulations; and official information on relevant education platforms. Documents were included when they were directly relevant to educational administrative services, had identifiable institutional authorship, remained accessible for verification, and contained enough information to assess implementation status.

To improve validity and reduce source bias, the study used source triangulation. Claims were cross-checked across different institutional levels and document types: local service pages were compared with provincial publications, statistical records, national regulations, and platform information. A claim was treated as verified only when it was directly observable in an attributable source or corroborated by another independent official source. Promotional or aspirational statements were not treated as evidence of operational implementation unless supported by a documented service feature, activity record, dataset, procedure, or regulatory requirement. Contradictory or incomplete evidence was retained as a limitation rather than resolved through assumption.

The analysis proceeded in three stages. First, evidence was entered into a matrix containing source, service type, institutional level, verified function, implementation status, and claim limits. Second, evidence was coded across four dimensions: governance, service-process transformation, digital infrastructure, and system/data integration. Human-resource competence was not treated as a standalone analytical dimension because public documents do not provide sufficient evidence to assess staff competence distribution objectively; staff capacity is discussed only as a cross-cutting implementation requirement. Third, the four dimensions were interpreted through public-value and administrative-burden perspectives to distinguish demonstrated digitalization from inferred transformation.

The documentary design cannot establish actual processing times, repeated data-entry frequency, user satisfaction, staff competence, system-log performance, or lived administrative burdens. These indicators require interviews, observation, service registers, or user-level data. The study therefore applies a conservative evidence rule: absence of public documentation is reported as “not publicly verifiable,” not

as proof that a practice or capability does not exist.

Table 1. Documentary Evidence and Analytical Use

Source	Evidence extracted	Analytical use
Branch Office website	Main services, personnel roles, contact channel, service stages, activity records	Local digital presence, governance signals, communication and service scope
TKA infrastructure mapping publication	Cross-agency digital infrastructure data collection and integration statement	Evidence of digital data coordination and infrastructure readiness activity
Lawamena Satu Data Maluku	Provincial integrated-data platform and education datasets	Provincial data ecosystem and integration opportunity
Maluku Media Center	Lawamena launch and telecommunications constraints	Provincial transformation context and archipelagic connectivity
BPS Buru 2026	Official statistical context for Buru Regency	Territorial context and source triangulation
SPBE regulations	National requirements for integrated digital government	Policy benchmark for governance, interoperability, security, and services

Source: Author compilation from verified institutional documents and regulations, 2026.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1 Local Digitalization Is Visible in Information, Communication, Data Administration, and Infrastructure Mapping

The first result is that digitalization at the Branch Office is visible and verifiable, but it is concentrated in several specific functions rather than in a single integrated transaction platform. The institutional website acts as the most observable local digital interface. It publishes the office profile, main service categories, personnel, service stages, contact information, and activity reports. Educational administration is explicitly described as including school, teacher, and student data management. This indicates that digital communication and data-related work are part of the office's operational identity.

Electronic communication is another verified component. The website provides an email address and message form for service-related communication. These channels can lower information-search costs and reduce the need for immediate face-to-face contact. However, the available interface does not publish a formal service-ticket mechanism, response-time standard, status-tracking function, or completion record. Consequently, the digital channel currently functions more clearly as an information and communication layer than as a complete service workflow.

A more substantive example of digital administrative coordination is the infrastructure mapping for the Academic Ability Test (TKA) conducted in September 2025. The activity involved provincial, regency, and Ministry of Religious Affairs stakeholders and included technical explanations regarding infrastructure data collection and data integration for test implementation. This activity demonstrates the Branch Office's participation in data-driven coordination and the practical importance of infrastructure readiness for digital educational services.

Taken together, these forms of evidence show that the Branch Office has progressed beyond a purely paper-based administrative environment. Nevertheless, the visible digitalization is functionally distributed:

information is published on the website, communication occurs electronically, data administration is part of the service mandate, and infrastructure data are collected for specific programs. The public record does not yet show that these functions are orchestrated through a unified service journey from request submission to verification, processing, notification, and archival completion.

2 The Branch Office Operates within a Multi-Level Digital Ecosystem

The second result is the presence of a layered ecosystem. At the local level, the Branch Office maintains its own website and communication channels. At the provincial level, the Education and Culture Office and other provincial agencies operate databases, public-information services, financial systems, and the Lawamena Satu Data environment. At the national level, education administration is supported by systems such as Dapodik, Rapor Pendidikan, ARKAS, belajar.id, Rumah Pendidikan, SRIKANDI, and SP4N-LAPOR!. The digital-service environment experienced by schools is therefore not generated by one organization but by multiple authorities and systems.

Lawamena is particularly relevant because it formalizes a provincial direction toward integrated data. The platform was launched in May 2026, and the Provincial Education and Culture Office is listed as a data producer. Education datasets were already available in 2026, including secondary-school participation and teacher-to-student indicators. This confirms that a provincial data infrastructure exists that could support evidence-based coordination and reduce isolated local data practices.

However, the documentary evidence also reveals a governance boundary. The availability of a provincial or national platform does not establish how a specific Branch Office uses it, who holds access rights, how corrections are escalated, whether data are reused across services, or whether local users can track requests across systems. This distinction is important because a multi-platform ecosystem can either enable integration or create fragmentation, depending on the quality of orchestration and governance.

Table 2. Verified Digital-Service Ecosystem and Limits of the Evidence

Digital element	Level	Verified function/status	Limit of current evidence
Institutional website	Branch Office	Profile, service information, personnel, activities, contact channel	No evidence of end-to-end transaction or status tracking
Electronic consultation	Branch Office	Email and website message form available	No published ticket number, response-time standard, or resolution log
Education data administration	Branch Office	Data management is published as a core administrative service	Application, verification workflow, and integration level not publicly specified
TKA infrastructure mapping	Cross-agency/local	Digital infrastructure data collection and integration discussed for test readiness	Program-specific; not evidence of all-service integration
Lawamena Satu Data Maluku	Province	Integrated-data portal with education datasets	Branch-office-specific operational workflow not public
National education platforms	National	Platforms support identity, data, planning, finance, and service functions	Systematic Branch Office use requires local logs, SOPs, and account evidence

Source: Branch Office website; Maluku Provincial Government; Lawamena Satu Data Maluku; author analysis, 2026.

3 The Main Transformation Gap Is Orchestration Rather Than the Absence of Technology

The third result is that the most visible gap is not the total absence of digital tools but the absence of publicly documented orchestration across service channels. The Branch Office website, provincial data services, and national platforms provide multiple digital components. Yet, a user-oriented service architecture requires a clear answer to practical questions: which channel should be used for each service, what documents are required, which data source is authoritative, who verifies the request, how long processing should take, how status can be checked, what happens when systems disagree, and how users escalate unresolved cases.

The current public interface does not yet provide a comprehensive local catalogue that connects these elements. This creates a risk that schools must understand institutional boundaries themselves and navigate multiple systems without a single service map. From a Digital-Era Governance perspective, this represents incomplete reintegration: digital components exist, but the burden of assembling them may remain with users.

The need for stronger orchestration is also consistent with provincial policy direction. Lawamena was designed to improve integrated and accountable data management, while national SPBE policy emphasizes integrated services and interoperability. The Branch Office is therefore positioned at a critical implementation layer where these broader architectures must be translated into understandable local service processes.

4 Archipelagic Connectivity Turns Inclusion and Continuity into Core Design Requirements

The fourth result concerns the archipelagic service context. In July 2026, the Maluku Provincial Government publicly acknowledged continuing telecommunications challenges associated with electricity constraints and high infrastructure costs. Although that statement concerns the province as a whole rather than every school in Buru, it provides a relevant policy context: connectivity cannot be assumed to be uniform or continuously reliable in an archipelagic province.

This context changes the meaning of digital transformation. A fully digital workflow may reduce physical travel for well-connected users, but it can increase burden for schools that face weak connectivity, limited devices, or intermittent electricity. Digital inclusion therefore requires service continuity mechanisms such as assisted digital services, clear fallback procedures, asynchronous submission options where technically feasible, and guidance for synchronizing transactions once connectivity is restored.

The TKA infrastructure mapping activity reinforces this point because infrastructure readiness was treated as a prerequisite for digital assessment implementation. The same principle applies to administrative services: service design must account for the technical conditions under which schools actually access government platforms.

5. A Four-Dimension Strengthening Agenda Emerges from the Documentary Evidence

The documentary findings support four directly evidenced priorities. First, governance should be formalized through a local digital-service catalogue and public SOPs specifying requirements, responsible personnel, processing stages, expected times, official channels, and escalation routes. Second, priority service processes should be mapped end to end so that duplicate steps, manual handoffs, and missing status information can be identified. Third, infrastructure planning should include assisted access, fallback procedures, and continuity arrangements for schools facing connectivity constraints. Fourth, system and

data integration should define authoritative data sources, access rights, correction workflows, security responsibilities, and interoperability with provincial and national systems. Staff-capacity development remains necessary to implement these priorities, but the present documentary evidence does not support an empirical assessment of competence distribution.

These priorities do not require a new database for every service. A more realistic strategy is orchestration: a one-door local catalogue can guide users to authoritative source systems while the Branch Office coordinates requirements, assistance, corrections, escalation, and status information. Public-value and administrative-burden indicators such as processing time, repeat submissions, office visits, complaints, accessibility, and user experience should then be measured as outcomes of the redesigned service.

Table 3. Transformation Gaps and Strengthening Priorities

Dimension	Documentary finding	Priority
Governance	Responsive service identity and coordination are visible; formal digital-service standards are not fully public	Publish service catalogue, SOPs, roles, response standards, and performance indicators
Service process	Digital channels exist but end-to-end workflow is not publicly traceable	Map priority services; remove duplicate steps; introduce traceability and notifications
Infrastructure	Digital activities depend on connectivity; archipelagic infrastructure remains a provincial challenge	Maintain assisted channels, fallback procedures, and infrastructure monitoring
System and data integration	Provincial/national platforms exist; local operational integration is not publicly documented	Define authoritative data, access rights, correction workflow, security, and interoperability
Public value and burden	Potential for reduced travel and faster information; actual user burden is not yet measured	Track processing time, repeat submissions, office visits, complaints, accessibility, and user experience

Source: Author analysis based on documentary evidence and the analytical framework, 2026.

Discussion

The main finding is a gap between visible digitalization and integrated transformation. The Branch Office uses digital information, communication, data administration, and infrastructure coordination, but the public record does not demonstrate an end-to-end, traceable service architecture. This supports Mergel et al. (2019) and Vial (2019), who define transformation as organizational and value-creation change rather than technology adoption. In Buru, the immediate challenge is therefore to connect existing channels, clarify process ownership, standardize procedures, and make service progression visible rather than simply add another application.

The layered local–provincial–national ecosystem also confirms the relevance of Digital-Era Governance. Reintegration means that schools should not bear the cost of navigating organizational boundaries (Dunleavy et al., 2006). A local one-door service layer can provide authoritative requirements, links, assistance, status information, and escalation routes even when transactions remain in provincial or national source systems. This is especially important where multiple education platforms already exist.

Interoperability is consequently an organizational and data-governance problem, not only a technical interface problem. Kalogirou et al. (2022) emphasize legal, organizational, semantic, and technical alignment, while Schmeling et al. (2025) highlight standards, trust, privacy, and governance. Lawamena

Satu Data Maluku provides an enabling provincial data environment, but its transformative value for the Branch Office depends on documented mechanisms for data use, correction, access rights, monitoring, and follow-up.

Public value and administrative burden provide outcome criteria for judging whether this integration succeeds. Relevant benefits in Buru include reduced travel, fewer repeated submissions, shorter processing times, clearer status, and more equal access for distant schools (Scupola & Mergel, 2022; Luna et al., 2024). At the same time, weak connectivity can shift costs to users through repeated uploads, extra communication, dependence on particular operators, or travel to obtain a stable signal (Hegemann & Ritz, 2026; Buyannemekh et al., 2026). Digital transformation in an archipelagic region should therefore be assessed by both efficiency and distributional inclusion.

The novelty of the study lies in locating digital transformation at an intermediary territorial unit. National and provincial platforms may function as designed while schools still experience fragmentation at the organizational interface where requirements are interpreted, corrections are coordinated, and service responsibility is clarified. The Branch Office can therefore be understood as an institutional orchestrator or translator between schools and higher-level systems. This shifts analytical attention from platform ownership to the governance of interactions among users, systems, and authorities.

The theoretical implication is that transformation in intermediary public organizations should be evaluated through orchestration capacity: the ability to reintegrate fragmented channels, govern authoritative data, reduce administrative burden, and preserve access under infrastructure constraints. Human-resource capacity is relevant to this process, but the present evidence does not justify treating staff competence as an observed result. It is more appropriately framed here as an implementation condition to be tested in subsequent field research.

The practical implication is a staged roadmap centered on a one-door service catalogue rather than a new standalone database. The first stage should publish services, requirements, responsible officers, standard response times, official links, assistance channels, and complaint routes. Later stages can add ticketing, status tracking, notifications, dashboards, and service analytics. Assisted access and fallback procedures should remain available for schools with unstable connectivity, while staff training should be tied to documented process and data-governance responsibilities.

The study remains limited by its documentary design. It verifies channels, platforms, activities, and published procedures but cannot establish actual response times, staff competence, user satisfaction, data-quality incidents, or manual duplication. A subsequent field study should combine interviews, observation, process mapping, service registers, correction logs, and connectivity evidence across selected priority services. This would test whether the documentary gaps identified here correspond to measurable reductions or persistence of time, travel, repeated data entry, uncertainty, and exclusion.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the digital transformation of educational administrative services at the Buru Regency Education Branch Office through a qualitative documentary case-study approach. The findings show that the office has established verifiable digitalization through institutional information services, electronic communication, education-data administration, and participation in digital infrastructure

mapping. These local mechanisms operate within an expanding provincial and national digital ecosystem, including Lawamena Satu Data Maluku and national education platforms.

However, the evidence does not support a claim that educational administrative services have reached fully integrated, end-to-end digital transformation. The central gap is service orchestration: publicly visible mechanisms for standardized digital workflows, traceable status, data reuse, interoperable correction processes, response-time standards, and locally documented platform integration remain limited. This finding reinforces the argument that digital transformation is fundamentally an organizational and governance process rather than an application-acquisition project.

For an archipelagic service context, transformation must also be inclusive and resilient. Connectivity constraints require assisted access, fallback procedures, and service-continuity mechanisms. The evidence supports four directly observed strengthening priorities: formal digital-service governance, end-to-end process mapping and standardization, resilient infrastructure arrangements, and stronger data governance and interoperability. Staff-capacity development is an important implementation requirement, but its current distribution cannot be assessed from public documents. A one-door service catalogue that orchestrates existing authoritative systems offers a realistic first step.

Future research should validate this documentary baseline through interviews with officials and school users, direct observation of selected service processes, analysis of service times and correction records, and mapping of user journeys across local, provincial, and national platforms. Such evidence would allow the transformation of educational administration in Buru to be evaluated not only by digital availability but by measurable reductions in time, travel, repeated data entry, uncertainty, and exclusion.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors acknowledge the publicly accessible information provided by the Buru Regency Education Branch Office, the Maluku Provincial Government, Lawamena Satu Data Maluku, and BPS Kabupaten Buru. Generative AI tools were used to assist with English-language drafting, structural editing, and document formatting. The authors remain responsible for source verification, interpretation, accuracy, and the final content of the manuscript.

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