

Systematic Review of the Phenomenon of the Establishment of the University of the Republic of Indonesia: Policy Analysis, Talent Management, and Governance of Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study evaluates the establishment of the University of the Republic of Indonesia (URI) in July 2026 and its implications for national higher education and bureaucratic talent management. The study focuses on institutional governance, strategic talent management, and bureaucratic reform efficiency.

Design/methodology/approach: This study used a qualitative Systematic Literature Review (SLR). Relevant literature published between 2020 and 2026 was identified using the PRISMA guidelines and analysed based on institutional governance, talent management, and bureaucratic reform perspectives.

Findings: The findings show that URI adopts characteristics of the École Nationale d'Administration (ENA) model in France and aims to strengthen national bureaucratic leadership. However, its establishment may conflict with the autonomy of Legal Entity State Universities (PTN-BH) and raise concerns about state budget efficiency and academic freedom.

Research limitations/implications: This study is based on secondary literature, while empirical evidence on the long-term performance of URI is still limited because the institution is newly established.

Practical implications: The government should review the URI policy and consider strengthening leadership development programmes at existing reputable universities.

Originality/value: This study provides an early evaluation of URI by examining the policy from institutional governance, talent management, and bureaucratic reform perspectives. It also highlights the importance of balancing bureaucratic leadership development with university autonomy and academic freedom.

Paper type: Systematic Review

Keywords: academic freedom, leadership, talent management, governance, university.

A. INTRODUCTION

Higher education occupies a central position in national development (Tian & Arguelles, 2024). These institutions function as the main producers of quality, innovative, and ethical human resources. In Indonesia, higher education governance continues to evolve (Muljani et al., 2025). This data was intended to respond to the challenges of globalization and bureaucratic needs. On July 22, 2026, education governance underwent a fundamental shift. The President of the Republic of Indonesia approved the policy establishing the University of the Republic of Indonesia (URI). This institution is an official university. URI is specifically designed to produce superior national leadership cadres (Gandi & Saurombe, 2025). Unlike regular universities, URI is conceptualized to prepare strategic human resources. Its graduates will fill top positions in government, as state civil servants (ASN), and in State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) (Kravariti & Johnston, 2019).

URI plans to operate in North Bogor, with an initial campus that uses a state-owned building in Jakarta. The government is also targeting the construction of ten similar campuses throughout Indonesia. The student selection system implements a strict meritocratic system. This step aims to prevent nepotism and *brain drain* in the public sector (Gandi & Saurombe, 2025). The government also provides full scholarships through the State Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBN). URI's scientific focus includes science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), as well as health sciences, which align with the demands of the job market in the artificial intelligence era (Kondybayeva & Celletti, 2025). The academic public immediately highlighted a sociological anomaly in this institution. The university used the nomenclature "Governor" and "Deputy Governor" for the top leadership. Retired military officers filled this inaugural position, reflecting an authoritarian leadership style and a hierarchical command structure (Mynbayeva et al., 2024).

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Historically, establishing special educational institutions for bureaucrats is not new. The concept of URI explicitly takes inspiration from the *National School of Administration* (ENA) in France (Prafitri et al., 2025). The government also refers to the university model in Japan and China (China). These countries position the campus as a center of industrialization and a motor of global economic revival. The Indonesian government is also trying to make the UK a source of input. The government has established a joint communication with the *Russell Group*. This consortium consists of 24 leading research universities in the UK. This communication aims to explore providing teaching staff for the URI project (Serrano et al., 2025).

However, the talent management literature notes the inherent weaknesses of such an exclusive institution (Kravariti & Johnston, 2019). ENA in France eventually faced harsh public criticism. This institution is seen as producing an elitist bureaucratic oligarchy and creating social stratification. Literature reviews in developed countries show otherwise. An autonomous environment free of bureaucratic intervention is the best ecosystem to cultivate adaptive leaders (Alumbro & Bauyot, 2026; Ghamrawi et al., 2025). In human resource governance, strategic talent management emphasizes the importance of talent containers (*Talent pool*) and high performance (Kravariti & Johnston, 2019). Talent management in higher education is essential. Performance optimization can only be achieved through a free academic climate, strong digital literacy, and organic governance (Ghamrawi et al., 2025; Ramaditya et al., 2022).

The government claims URI as a solution to the national leadership crisis. However, this claim contradicts empirical reality in Indonesia's higher education ecosystem. Currently, Indonesia has more than 4,300 universities. More than 63 percent are private universities (PTS) that struggle to maintain effective quality management (Serrano et al., 2025). Strong criticism emerged from various academics and public policy observers. They argued that establishing URI could trigger unfair competition in lecturer recruitment. This policy is also considered a waste of the state budget (APBN), which is prone to misappropriation and corruption (Irianto et al., 2025).

On the other hand, Indonesia does not experience a shortage of leadership education infrastructure. Various existing institutions and regular human resource development programs have served bureaucratic regeneration (Mishra & Painoli, 2023). From a governance perspective, the emergence of URI created a sharp anomaly. The militaristic nomenclature of URI is contrary to constitutional principles that uphold institutional autonomy and academic freedom (Ghamrawi et al., 2025; Spannagel, 2024). This shift marks a setback for institutional reform. This centralistic approach moves away from the inclusive principles of New Public Governance (NPG) toward a rigid, traditional bureaucratic style (Prafitri et al., 2025).

This study aims to conduct a systematic literature review of URI formation. This study has three specific objectives. First, the researcher evaluates strategic talent management theory in relation to the urgency of establishing a URI. Second, the researcher identifies the economic, governance, and sociological implications of this policy. Third, the researcher analyzes this phenomenon through the lens of a paradigm shift in higher education administration. This study is expected to fill the gap in the holistic literature on the policy. The results of this scientific review are expected to serve as an objective reference for policy formulation. The government can efficiently reorganize national higher education without damaging the existing academic ecosystem.

B. METHODOLOGY

This study uses a descriptive-analytical qualitative approach (Scott, 2019). The researcher applies a systematic literature review (SLR) method (Mengist et al., 2019). The SLR method was chosen for its ability to synthesize research findings in a transparent, structured manner. The study adopts the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 protocol (Page et al., 2021). Using PRISMA ensures an objective literature-screening flow and helps prevent selection bias. The data search relies on searches in various reputable academic databases. These databases include Scopus, *Web of Science* (WoS), *Education Resources Information Center* (ERIC), and the Sinta portal (Kasaraneni & Rosaline, 2024). Search strategies combine specific keywords and Boolean operators.

Researchers establish strict inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure the literature's validity. The inclusion criteria include four main prerequisites. First, the article must be published within the last seven years (2020-2026). Second, the article must be published in a journal indexed in Scopus or Sinta 1 and Sinta 2. Third, the article must focus on higher education policy, strategic talent management, adaptive leadership, or governance reform. Fourth, the article must be available in full text and in English or Indonesian. Instead, researchers apply exclusion criteria to filter out irrelevant literature. They eliminate non-academic mass media opinions, conceptual drafts without methodology, and fictitious journals outright.

The article selection process followed the four systematic stages of the PRISMA framework, ensuring consistent and transparent reporting. In the first stage (Identification), the initial literature search yielded 607
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records. The researcher removed 65 duplicate articles and 273 records with incomplete metadata, leaving 269 unique articles. In the second stage (Screening), the researcher evaluated titles and abstracts, excluding 199 irrelevant articles. The third stage (Eligibility) involved a rigorous full-text review of the remaining 70 articles. Of these, 64 studies were excluded because they lacked robust methodological frameworks or did not specifically address higher education governance and public sector talent management. Ultimately, in the fourth stage (Inclusion), 6 highly relevant articles were selected for the final qualitative synthesis.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study successfully extracted data from the final literature identified through the PRISMA selection process. The academic findings highlight the relationship between talent management, higher education leadership, institutional autonomy, and public policy. The table below systematically summarizes these key articles. This summary provides an empirical foundation for evaluating the formation of the University of the Republic of Indonesia.

Table 1. Database of Analyzed Articles

Research Title	Author & Year	Key Empirical Findings	Theoretical & Policy Implications
<i>Reinventing talent management: How to maximize performance in higher education</i>	(Ramaditya et al., 2022)	Systematic implementation of talent management (TM) directly improves university performance. The TM model relies heavily on a conducive academic climate.	Institutions must design a supportive, free academic environment and retain excellent educators through participatory methods rather than coercion.
<i>Talent management: A critical literature review and research agenda for public sector human resource management</i>	(Kravariti & Johnston, 2019)	Public sector TM differs from the private sector due to bureaucratic constraints. Rigid structures and exclusive (elitist) approaches trigger cultural resistance.	Policymakers must implement TM through open, inclusive institutional approaches to avoid elitism and systemic friction.
<i>Fostering high-performing organizations in higher education: the effect of participative leadership, organizational culture, and innovation...</i>	(Faisal et al., 2025)	In the PTN-BH ecosystem, an autonomous culture and participatory leadership positively affect institutional commitment and innovation.	Full autonomy is crucial for university transformation. The government must protect PTN-BH autonomy and avoid imposing command structures.
<i>Reforming Public Sector Bureaucracy: A Systematic Literature Review of New Public Management in Indonesia</i>	(Prafitri et al., 2025)	The New Public Management (NPM) paradigm is stagnant in Indonesia because of a traditional, patrimonial bureaucracy. Reform requires a shift to New Public Governance (NPG).	Bureaucratic reform must shift from unilateral governance to participatory integration and cross-sectoral collaboration (NPG).
<i>A Systematic Review of the Adaptive Leadership Practices Among Higher Education Institutions</i>	(Alumbro & Bauyot, 2026)	Adaptive leadership correlates strongly with institutional resilience. Rigid state regulations and centralized instructional power act as major obstacles.	Universities must dismantle feudalistic hierarchies. Leadership demands structural flexibility and shared legitimacy to produce adaptive leaders.
<i>Leading backward in a forward era: Destructive middle leadership in the pursuit of Higher Education 5.0</i>	(Ghamrawi et al., 2025)	Hierarchical, militaristic, and instructional leadership patterns destroy collaboration and dampen the academic community's creativity.	Society 5.0 demands an autonomous approach based on critical thinking. Evaluating university leadership must rely on shared governance.

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Drawing directly from the empirical findings synthesized in Table 1, several central themes regarding university governance emerge. The table above reveals several central themes related to URIs. The first results highlight the dimensions of talent management. The effectiveness of talent management depends heavily on an independent academic climate and a collaborative culture (Ramaditya et al., 2022). Superior talent should not be segregated into institutional isolation. Talent must be developed in harmony with the diversity of the organizational ecosystem (Kravariti & Johnston, 2019). The second outcome is centered on the urgency of higher education autonomy. A participatory institutional structure in PTN-BH is an absolute prerequisite for fostering innovation (Faisal et al., 2025). Hierarchical leadership silences the academic community's critical reasoning (Ghamrawi et al., 2025).

The third result confirms a paradigm shift in state administration. Bureaucratic reform through rigid management styles often leads to operational failures (Prafitri et al., 2025). The modern paradigm, New Public Governance (NPG), places collaboration between institutions as the key to success (Prafitri et al., 2025). These findings indicate that future national leaders must integrate with an autonomous academic ecosystem and adequate digital literacy (Ghamrawi et al., 2025).

Discussion

Building upon the empirical findings of the literature review, this section presents the author's critical interpretation and policy evaluation of the URI establishment. Establishing URI requires critical surgery through various theoretical lenses. In talent management theory, government rationalization has a philosophical footing. Talent management is grounded in the ability to build a container of high-performance talent (Kravariti & Johnston, 2020). Establishing URI can be seen as a form of strategic national talent management. The meritocracy-based selection system aims to reduce the departure of top talent from the public sector (Barkhuizen & Masale, 2025). URI's curriculum plan also focuses on future competencies such as STEM and health sciences. This focus aligns with the era's emphasis on competency-based learning, Society 5.0, and job-market sustainability (Ghamrawi et al., 2025).

The literature demonstrates a clear theoretical intersection between strategic talent management, New Public Governance (NPG), and higher education autonomy. Effective public-sector talent management requires an open, collaborative environment (Kravariti & Johnston, 2019). This result aligns directly with the NPG paradigm, which champions cross-sectoral collaboration over rigid centralization (Prafitri et al., 2025). To support this collaboration, universities must have institutional autonomy, as decentralized governance has been shown to foster the innovation required for adaptive leadership (Faisal et al., 2025; Alumbro & Bauyot, 2026).

While the government frames URI as a strategic talent management tool to curb public-sector brain drain (Gandi & Saurombe, 2025), transplanting the French ENA model to Indonesia presents a sociological paradox. ENA succeeded in producing technocrats but eventually became a symbol of social repression and bureaucratic elitism, disconnected from the working class. Fostering public leadership talent in a pluralistic country like Indonesia requires an inclusive university ecosystem (Mishra & Painoli, 2023), an ecosystem that already thrives within the nation's existing autonomous universities.

Institutional governance is a crucial debate. In the last two decades, Indonesia's higher education reform has relied on managerial independence. This spirit is manifested through the status of Legal Entity State Universities (PTN-BH) (Faisal et al., 2025). Various studies show that PTN-BH autonomy is positively correlated with institutional innovation (Faisal et al., 2025). The university's global quality assurance and competitiveness system also requires full participation and support (Manuel et al., 2025). Unfortunately, establishing URI brought a regression in the governance paradigm. URI adopts a centralized, thick leadership style with structural command nuances (Bendas & Bush, 2024). Using militaristic terms to describe leadership undermines the tradition of scientific collegiality. The university must be a space for independent discourse, and this is constitutionally guaranteed (Spannagel, 2024). Imposing destructive leadership structures in the academic environment can paralyze innovation and critical reasoning (Valiente et al., 2020).

Political economy and budget efficiency offer the sharpest criticism of URI. The government plans to build ten URI campus complexes using state budget funds. This plan sparked a fierce debate regarding fiscal priorities. Indonesia's higher-education infrastructure is already abundant in quantity, but some institutions still struggle to balance institutional management (Mishra & Painoli, 2023). In addition, unilateral fund allocation is vulnerable to fraud or misappropriation within the institution if not closely supervised (Irianto et al., 2025). Allocating large funds to an exclusive campus entity directly contradicts the principles of efficiency and budget governance.

Furthermore, URI's governance structure represents a regression. In the last two decades, Indonesia's higher education reform has successfully championed managerial independence through the PTN-BH status.

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Imposing a centralized, militaristic nomenclature ("Governor") upon an academic institution undermines the tradition of scientific collegiality and constitutionally guaranteed academic freedom (Spannagel, 2024). As the literature strongly suggests, destructive, heavy-handed leadership structures paralyze innovation (Ghamrawi et al., 2025).

From a political economy perspective, allocating massive state funds to construct ten new, exclusive URI campuses contradicts the principles of budget efficiency and NPG. The NPG paradigm explicitly cautions against institutional fragmentation and creating redundant new agencies (Prafitri et al., 2025). Therefore, as a policy recommendation derived from this analysis, the government should shift its strategy from building a new, exclusive institution to establishing a "National Leadership Fellowship". This fellowship program would sponsor top bureaucratic talents to study within existing autonomous PTN-BH universities. This approach directly aligns with NPG principles by fostering inter-institutional collaboration, ensuring budget efficiency, and immersing future leaders in a diverse, non-militaristic academic ecosystem that nurtures adaptive, critical thinking.

D. CONCLUSION

The establishment of the University of the Republic of Indonesia (URI) highlights a critical tension between the government's desire for strategic talent management and the established principles of modern higher education. This systematic review finds that URI's centralized, exclusive, and militaristic governance model contradicts the proven success factors of university autonomy (PTN-BH) and the collaborative paradigm of New Public Governance (NPG). Building isolated, elitist institutions risks stifling academic freedom and perpetuating budget inefficiency.

To align with evidence-based best practices, policymakers should reconsider URI's structural approach. Instead of building new silos, the government should implement a "National Leadership Fellowship" that leverages the robust, autonomous ecosystems of existing PTN-BH universities. This collaborative alternative ensures fiscal efficiency and cultivates adaptive, democratic leadership. A limitation of this research is that it evaluates the URI policy in its nascent stages (2026); future empirical studies must critically assess the long-term fiscal accountability and practical outcomes of this educational maneuver.

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