



Unpacking the Challenges of Credit Point Policy Implementation for Academic Promotion in Nusa Cendana University (2022–2024)

Mitha Karuniawati Steven¹, I Putu Yoga B Pradana^{2*}, Ajis Salim Adang Djaha³

^{1,2,3}Master Program of Administrative Science, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Nusa Cendana University, Jalan Adi Sucipto-Penfui 85148

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 18/07/2025

Revised 26/08/2025

Accepted 03/09/2025

Abstract

The credit point policy for lecturers plays a central role in academic promotion within higher education. However, its implementation often faces multiple challenges, particularly in institutions with limited administrative and digital capacities. This study specifically aims to examine the policy content and implementation context of the credit point system at Nusa Cendana University during 2022–2024, with a focus on identifying the key barriers and enablers shaping academic promotion outcomes. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis involving 15 key informants, including university leaders, faculty administrators, and lecturers. Findings reveal that although the policy is formally grounded in national regulations, its practical application is hindered by limited policy literacy, complex procedural requirements, unequal workload distribution, insufficient technical assistance, and weak institutional support. These barriers have led to ineffective promotion outcomes and underutilization of the policy's potential. To address these challenges, the study recommends simplifying technical guidelines, enhancing institutional coordination, accelerating administrative digitalization, and fostering a supportive academic ecosystem. A web-based information system is also proposed to assist lecturers in calculating and managing credit points more efficiently. By applying Grindle's policy implementation framework, this research contributes to the literature on higher education governance by demonstrating how national-level regulatory instruments are mediated by institutional capacity and local contextual realities, particularly in resource-constrained universities in peripheral regions of Indonesia.

Keywords: Credit Point Policy, Academic Promotion, Policy Implementation, Higher Education

Abstrak

Kebijakan angka kredit bagi dosen memainkan peran sentral dalam kenaikan jabatan akademik di perguruan tinggi. Namun demikian, implementasinya sering menghadapi berbagai tantangan, khususnya di institusi yang memiliki kapasitas administratif dan digital yang terbatas. Penelitian ini secara khusus bertujuan untuk mengkaji substansi kebijakan dan konteks implementasi sistem angka kredit di Universitas Nusa Cendana selama periode 2022–2024, dengan fokus pada identifikasi hambatan utama dan faktor pendukung yang memengaruhi hasil kenaikan jabatan akademik. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi, dan analisis dokumen yang melibatkan 15 informan kunci, termasuk pimpinan universitas, administrator fakultas, dan dosen. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa meskipun kebijakan ini secara formal berlandaskan regulasi nasional, penerapannya di lapangan terhambat oleh rendahnya literasi kebijakan, prosedur teknis yang kompleks, distribusi beban kerja yang tidak merata, minimnya bantuan teknis, serta lemahnya dukungan kelembagaan. Hambatan-hambatan ini menyebabkan hasil kenaikan jabatan menjadi tidak optimal dan potensi kebijakan kurang



dimanfaatkan secara maksimal. Untuk mengatasi tantangan tersebut, studi ini merekomendasikan penyederhanaan panduan teknis, penguatan koordinasi kelembagaan, percepatan digitalisasi administrasi, serta pembentukan ekosistem akademik yang lebih suportif. Sistem informasi berbasis web juga diusulkan untuk membantu dosen dalam menghitung dan mengelola angka kredit secara lebih efisien. Dengan menerapkan kerangka teori implementasi kebijakan Grindle, penelitian ini berkontribusi pada literatur tata kelola pendidikan tinggi dengan menunjukkan bagaimana instrumen regulasi tingkat nasional dimediasi oleh kapasitas institusi dan realitas kontekstual lokal, khususnya di universitas dengan keterbatasan sumber daya di wilayah perifer Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: Kebijakan Angka Kredit, Kenaikan Jabatan Akademik, Implementasi Kebijakan, Pendidikan Tinggi

*Penulis Korespondensi

E-mail : yoga.pradana@staf.undana.ac.id

INTRODUCTION

Academic promotion remains a central aspect of career progression for lecturers within higher education institutions worldwide. The accumulation of credit points as a requirement for ascending to senior academic ranks, such as Associate Professor (Lektor Kepala) and Full Professor (Guru Besar), is a widely adopted performance-based mechanism rooted in the tridharma of universities: teaching, research, and community service. While normative in regulation, this policy instrument functions as a strategic tool to ensure quality assurance, productivity, and the continuous development of academic human resources (Thunnissen & Boselie, 2014; Ha et al., 2023). As such, examining how credit point policies are implemented becomes vital for understanding the institutional readiness of universities to foster merit-based academic advancement.

The significance of this topic lies in its implications not only for lecturer welfare and professional recognition but also for institutional performance, scientific output, and public accountability. In Indonesian higher education, the credit point policy has been further institutionalized by enacting the Minister for Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform Regulation No. 1/2023 and

BKN Regulation No. 3/2023 on academic functional promotion. These regulations are intended to standardize and streamline the pathway toward higher academic ranks, linking performance indicators with measurable outputs. However, the formal regulatory framework often faces disconnection from the realities of implementation, especially at the campus level, where administrative, technical, and socio-cultural constraints remain unresolved (Sembiring, 2020; Wahidah et al., 2022).

Several previous studies have attempted to address these challenges. Kartika Sari et al. (2019) introduced a Waterfall-based application to automate the calculation of credit points and facilitate document management. Likewise, Tristiyanto and Nunyai (2023) developed a Laravel-based system that integrates structured form processing with real-time notifications. While both innovations offer valuable digital solutions, their real-world adoption is constrained by insufficient user training, weak institutional integration, and the absence of adaptive policy frameworks. More broadly, Hariyadi et al. (2022) documented non-technical challenges such as teaching overload, lack of publication skills, and limited access to research funding, all

of which compound the difficulty of meeting promotion thresholds.

A critical review of these studies reveals important limitations. First, many treat credit point submission as a discrete, technical problem without exploring its embeddedness in institutional systems and actor behavior. Second, they do not account for organizational inertia, informal norms, and fragmented governance structures that shape how policies are interpreted and enacted on the ground. Third, the context of resource-constrained universities in Eastern Indonesia, such as Nusa Cendana University, has received limited attention. However, digital infrastructure, policy literacy, and faculty mentoring systems are often underdeveloped (Nyaman et al., 2023). Finally, few studies provide an integrated perspective that connects policy content, implementation environment, and digital innovation coherently and theoretically informed. Moreover, while previous works are valuable in mapping technological or procedural aspects, they stop short of explaining why such systems succeed or fail in specific contexts. As a result, their contributions remain partial and leave the deeper institutional and cultural constraints that determine policy outcomes unexplored.

This study employs the policy implementation theory developed by Merilee S. Grindle (1980) as its core analytical framework to address these challenges. Grindle argues that the success or failure of policy implementation is influenced by two main variables: policy content and implementation context. These variables provide a lens for understanding why some policies succeed in translating into action, while others stall or fail at the point of delivery.

The first variable, policy content, refers to the internal characteristics of the policy itself—its clarity of objectives, the specificity of technical procedures, the availability of resources, and the degree of change it demands from implementing actors. Regarding academic promotion, the policy content includes the national-level regulations issued by the Ministry and the National Civil Service Agency, the technical guidelines for compiling DUPAK, the classification of academic activities, and the mechanisms for credit point verification and approval. While these instruments aim to provide standardization, they often become overly technocratic and rigid, making them difficult to interpret or operationalize, especially for lecturers in remote or under-resourced settings.

The second variable, implementation context, encompasses the broader institutional, social, and political environment in which the policy is enacted. It includes the organizational capacity of universities, the availability of trained personnel, leadership commitment, infrastructure readiness, and the presence or absence of supporting institutional culture. At Nusa Cendana University, context-related challenges are evident in the lack of integrated digital systems, insufficient support for research and publication, and the absence of consistent mentoring or technical assistance. Moreover, the perception of credit points as a bureaucratic burden rather than a developmental incentive further undermines engagement with the policy.

Grindle's framework also highlights the idea of implementation uncertainty, emphasizing that successful policy enactment depends on how well a policy is designed and

how it is interpreted, contested, or adapted by local actors. In academic institutions, where autonomy and discretion are significant, the same policy may be implemented differently across faculties and departments, depending on how actors understand their roles and responsibilities, the informal norms that guide behavior, and the level of institutional support. This theoretical lens enables the research to examine how the disconnect between policy formulation and operational realities produces barriers to policy effectiveness, even when formal compliance mechanisms are in place.

The present study applies this framework to examine both the content and context of academic promotion policy at Nusa Cendana University. Data from interviews, document analysis, and observations will be analyzed thematically through the lens of Grindle's theory. It will allow the research to identify the technical constraints in policy documents and the institutional, behavioral, and cultural dynamics that mediate policy outcomes. This theoretical approach provides the conceptual foundation for analyzing the research question: What are the key constraints and enablers in implementing the credit point policy for academic promotion at Nusa Cendana University?

Accordingly, this research aims to evaluate the implementation process of the credit point policy at Nusa Cendana University and identify the significant systemic and procedural barriers hindering its success. The study is grounded in the empirical phenomenon of policy-practice disjuncture experienced by many lecturers in peripheral Indonesian universities. At Nusa Cendana University, the number of lecturers achieving promotion to

Lektor Kepala or Guru Besar remains disproportionately low, despite formal eligibility. Preliminary interviews revealed widespread confusion regarding DUPAK preparation, lack of technical assistance, inconsistent workload distribution, and inadequate digital tools, highlighting a systemic problem rooted in both governance and resource deficits (Muchtar et al., 2023; Masayu et al., 2023).

The core issue, therefore, is not merely a lack of technological solutions but a more profound lack of institutional capacity to translate national-level policies into localized, effective, and sustainable administrative practices. Digital transformation alone is insufficient if it is not embedded within a broader framework of institutional reform, including procedural simplification, capacity building, and cultural change (Pynes, 2009; Yusoff et al., 2018). Here, the distinction of this research becomes clearer. Rather than treating digitalization as an isolated innovation, it situates technological tools within broader governance reforms, thereby offering a more comprehensive explanation of why previous innovations have struggled to yield consistent outcomes.

This study seeks to fill that gap by offering a comprehensive implementation model that addresses structural and procedural constraints, guided by Grindle's dual-variable framework. The proposed web-based system is not designed merely as a data-entry tool but as an institutional governance mechanism to enhance transparency, real-time tracking, feedback integration, and efficiency in academic promotions.

This research differs from previous studies' theoretical orientation and empirical focus. Theoretically, it bridges policy

implementation theory with higher education's digital governance and HR development frameworks (Pausits, 2014; Berger & Berger, 2004). Empirically, it focuses on a peripheral university in Eastern Indonesia, offering insights rarely captured in studies centered on elite or urban institutions. By directly engaging with institutional deficits, faculty experiences, and governance structures at Nusa Cendana University, the study highlights dimensions of policy implementation that prior works have overlooked, particularly the interaction between formal regulations and informal practices in under-resourced higher education contexts.

This study contributes to the literature in two key ways. First, it enriches the discourse on policy implementation in higher education by employing Grindle's theory in a digital governance context. Second, it provides new empirical data on the barriers faced by lecturers in under-resourced academic environments. Taken together, these contributions highlight the study's originality and value-added: it not only documents policy challenges but also theorizes how contextual realities mediate regulatory frameworks, thereby advancing both scholarly debates and practical solutions.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach with an intrinsic case study design, as conceptualized by Stake (1995) and Yin (2018). A qualitative approach is appropriate for capturing complex social phenomena that require a deep understanding of context, meaning, and process, particularly in cases where implementation involves dynamic interactions between policy content, institutional capacity, and

actor interpretation. The intrinsic case study design is used because the focus of the study is not to generalize findings to other institutions but to gain a rich, holistic understanding of a particular case, namely, the implementation of the credit point determination policy at Nusa Cendana University.

Qualitative methods are suitable for policy implementation studies because they allow for exploration of how stakeholders interpret and respond to policy mechanisms, especially in settings characterized by limited resources, bureaucratic complexity, and varying levels of policy literacy (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The case study method enables researchers to examine the phenomena within their real-life context and to account for both formal structures and informal dynamics that shape policy execution.

The selection of this methodological approach is based on the nature of the research problem, which revolves around the gap between formal policy instruments and actual practice in academic promotion processes. A descriptive case study allows the researcher to uncover not only the administrative procedures and technological limitations but also the perceptions, behaviors, and institutional culture that influence implementation outcomes. Moreover, this approach is particularly relevant for higher education institutions in peripheral regions, where local constraints often mediate national policy execution.

Additionally, the focus on a single university, Nusa Cendana University, allows for an intensive exploration of how the policy operates (or fails to operate) in a specific context. This depth is critical in identifying patterns of meaning, systemic gaps, and practical

implications that may otherwise be overlooked in large-scale or quantitative designs.

The study was conducted at Nusa Cendana University (Undana), a public university located in Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. As one of the oldest higher education institutions in Eastern Indonesia, Undana plays a strategic role in regional development and academic capacity-building. However, like many peripheral universities in Indonesia, it faces significant challenges in terms of digital infrastructure, policy execution capacity, and academic governance.

The context of Undana is crucial for understanding the implementation of the lecturer promotion policy. The institution has a diverse academic workforce, varying levels of policy literacy, and uneven support for research and publication. The credit point policy is formally adopted but not uniformly operationalized, making Undana a compelling case for studying policy-practice gaps.

This study's informants were selected using purposive sampling, specifically targeting individuals with direct experience and responsibility in the academic promotion process. Informants were chosen because their positions and experiences offered unique insights into how the credit point system functions at multiple levels of the institution. By prioritizing informants with firsthand involvement, the study ensured that the data reflected both policy design and practical application. This approach also allowed for capturing diverse perspectives, including those of lecturers attempting to meet promotion requirements, administrative staff handling documentation and verification, and leaders responsible for academic governance.

Informants in this study were selected purposively based on three criteria: direct involvement in the credit point submission process, relevance to academic administration or policy implementation, and willingness to participate in in-depth interviews. A total of 12 informants participated, comprising 7 academic staff (including 1 professor, 1 senior lecturer, 2 assistant professors, 1 junior lecturer, 1 non-promoted lecturer, and 1 faculty dean), and 5 administrative and institutional actors (including 1 head of academic administration, 1 HR officer, 1 member of the credit point assessment team, 1 ICT developer, and 1 research coordinator). This sampling strategy contributed to the depth of the study by providing a comprehensive view of how policy implementation is shaped by different roles and responsibilities, thereby allowing triangulation between perspectives of those designing, managing, and experiencing the policy.

Data collection took place over three months, from March to May 2024, using triangulated qualitative methods. First, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with all 12 informants, each lasting 45 to 90 minutes, and focused on their experiences, perceptions, and institutional challenges related to credit point submissions. Second, non-participant observations were carried out in administrative offices involved in the academic promotion to capture day-to-day procedural realities and coordination mechanisms. Third, document analysis was conducted on institutional guidelines, lecturer performance records, DUPAK files, internal circulars, and the current digital submission platform interface.

Thematic analysis was applied to the data using Braun and Clarke's

(2006) model, which involves six iterative steps: data familiarization, systematic coding, theme generation, theme review, theme definition, and final reporting. During coding, both semantic and latent codes were applied to capture explicit descriptions and underlying meanings. Themes were then clustered to reflect dimensions of Grindle's (1980) policy content and context framework, ensuring that the analysis was theoretically informed while remaining grounded in empirical evidence. To enhance transparency, coding logs and analytical memos were maintained throughout the process, and peer debriefing was conducted to validate theme categorization.

Emerging themes were interpreted within the frameworks of Grindle's (1980) policy content and context theory and Thunnissen & Boselie's (2014) work on talent management in higher education. Analytical rigor was maintained through memo writing, reflexivity, and peer debriefing among academic colleagues.

To ensure the validity of findings, the study applied three forms of triangulation: data triangulation (interviews, observations, documents), source triangulation (lecturers, staff, and university leadership), and theoretical triangulation (policy and HR development theories). These triangulation strategies enhanced the interpretations' depth, reliability, and credibility by allowing for cross-verification across diverse inputs and analytical lenses.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Policy Content: Clarity, Complexity, and Technocratic Rigidities

The formal design of the credit point system at Nusa Cendana

University (Undana) rests on a solid legal and administrative foundation. It draws its legitimacy from national policies such as PermenPAN RB No. 1 of 2023 and BKN Regulation No. 3 of 2023, which serve as the official benchmarks for academic career progression in Indonesia. These policies regulate technical aspects such as eligible educational activities, standard conversion formulas, documentation requirements, and verification mechanisms for determining academic rank.

However, beneath this surface-level clarity lies a deeper complexity. As the findings of this study suggest, while the policy architecture appears well-structured, the actual substance of the policy content is experienced as fragmented, rigid, and disconnected from local realities. This phenomenon is consistent with Grindle's (1980) conceptualization of "technocratic overload," where policies are loaded with procedural precision and technical detail, but lack adaptability and responsiveness to contextual variation.

A senior lecturer at the Faculty of Social Sciences (I-01) noted that *"everything is there in the Permen and BKN rules, but the problem is that they speak a different language than what we do every day. For us, community service could mean working with villagers for months, but the format wants it in categories that do not fit."* This illustrates the gap between national regulations and local academic practice, which directly informs the recommendation to create annotated manuals tailored to Undana's disciplinary contexts.

This quote encapsulates a broader sentiment among the academic community: that the credit point policy, while precise in legal terms, is insufficiently interpretive. Many informants struggled with

classifying activities, especially those falling in grey zones such as multidisciplinary research, inter-faculty collaboration, or public intellectual work. Without interpretive support and structured mentoring, this confusion often results in misclassification, delays, and unnecessary rejections of DUPAK submissions.

A junior lecturer at the Faculty of Education (I-02) added that *"I spent weeks trying to figure out which section my co-authored book chapter fits into. I asked three colleagues, and they gave me three different answers. We need a guidebook, not just regulations."* This statement underlines the importance of institutional mentoring programs, where experienced faculty can guide junior staff through classification and submission challenges.

This difficulty reflects a wider absence of localized interpretive tools. While the national-level policy is uniform, its operationalization requires mediating documents, annotated manuals, faculty-level translations, and department-level mentorship, which are largely absent at Undana. The only available guides are the national regulations, which are often perceived as overly technical and juridical in tone, failing to reflect the organic nature of academic work.

Such challenges are not unique to Undana. Similar concerns have been raised in research by Masayu et al. (2023) and Hariyadi et al. (2022), who found that the success of credit point systems often depends not only on policy content but on policy literacy and interpretive infrastructures at the institutional level. The absence of these infrastructures explains why recommendations must focus on both manuals and mentoring programs, reducing reliance on informal peer interpretation that frequently generates inconsistencies.

One administrative staff member from the Faculty of Engineering (I-03) described their role in assisting lecturers with the system: *"Many of our lecturers come with thick folders, but often what they submit does not match the template. We try to help, but we are also confused sometimes. The BKN format is not very friendly for local documentation styles."* This finding demonstrates why support cannot be left solely to administrative staff, and why institutions must provide official templates and training sessions to align local documentation practices with national requirements.

This remark underscores the disconnect between national policy formats and local administrative routines, particularly in universities on the periphery of Indonesia's academic ecosystem. The rigidity of documentation formats, such as the DUPAK (Daftar Usulan Penetapan Angka Kredit), becomes an obstacle rather than a facilitator of educational progression. Developing annotated DUPAK samples at the faculty level is, therefore, a direct response to the obstacles revealed by these findings.

Beyond interpretive confusion, another core issue lies in the policy's strong orientation toward output-based performance indicators. These include quantifiable benchmarks such as the number of publications in indexed journals, conference attendance, or externally funded research. While these metrics aim to promote meritocracy, they often fail to account for structural inequalities among academic staff, especially between senior and junior faculty, or between permanent and contract lecturers.

A contract lecturer at the Faculty of Law (I-04) voiced concern: *"How can I publish in a Scopus journal when I do not even have access to*

proper journals or mentoring? We are asked to run before we are taught how to walk." This shows how workload imbalance and a lack of structured mentoring create systemic disadvantages. It explains the recommendation to institutionalize mentoring programs and provide research access support for contract and junior staff.

The Academic Quality Assurance and Resource Institute (LPMSDA) 's efforts to organize training and mentoring workshops have been well-received but are described as sporadic and insufficiently institutionalized. Lecturers pointed out that such efforts, while helpful, have not evolved into a sustainable, integrated support structure. This gap directly motivates the recommendation that mentoring must be continuous, embedded in academic development strategies, and synchronized with submission cycles.

A mid-career faculty member (I-05) explained that *"the workshops are good, but they come too late or too early. There is no alignment with the submission cycle. Moreover, after the workshop, we are on our own again."* This observation supports the argument that mentoring should not be episodic but instead sustained through structured peer-support mechanisms at the department or faculty level.

The problem of workload imbalance also compounds these challenges. Many lecturers, particularly junior ones, reported teaching loads of more than 12 credits per semester, leaving little to no time for research or community service. Without formal policies for teaching-release time, lecturers find themselves unable to meet research and publication requirements.

In international literature, equity-minded workload frameworks

emphasize the dangers of uneven workload distribution and advocate for transparent, contextual equity in faculty responsibilities. For example, O'Meara et al. (2022) discuss that *"women faculty do more teaching and service"*, which often goes unrecognized and unrewarded, resulting in lower productivity and retention at acenet.edu. Integrating such principles into Undana's policies could help align workload distribution with equity and well-being.

Grindle's notion of implementation capacity becomes particularly relevant here. Even the most technically sound policies will fall short if implementers, i.e., lecturers, are not provided with sufficient tools, time, and training to internalize and apply them effectively. The challenges of excessive teaching loads and limited mentoring illustrate how implementation capacity is undermined, thus justifying institutional reforms in teaching allocation and faculty development.

Moreover, lecturers perceive the credit point process not as a developmental journey but as a compliance-oriented ritual. Informants express a sense of procedural fatigue. Several participants admitted to abandoning their promotion attempts due to technical frustrations and a lack of clarity on document requirements.

One lecturer (I-06) lamented, *"I tried to complete my promotion to Lektor Kepala, but after my submission was rejected twice over minor technicalities, I gave up. It's not worth the stress."* This finding underpins the recommendation to simplify guidelines and provide faculty-level assistance since repeated rejections without institutional support lead directly to disengagement.

It reveals a troubling phenomenon: the system designed to

encourage academic progression may inadvertently discourage participation, particularly among those already facing structural disadvantages. Hence, shifting from output-based to growth-based models becomes crucial to prevent discouragement and reward incremental contributions, mentoring efforts, and institutional service instead.

To address these multilayered issues, several concrete strategies are suggested. First, the development of annotated manuals at the university and faculty level, featuring clear examples, visual templates, and sample DUPAK documents tailored to each discipline. Second, the institutionalization of mentoring programs that pair junior lecturers with experienced faculty members throughout the promotion process. Third, flexible recognition of interdisciplinary and community-based outputs, especially those that reflect local relevance, Indigenous knowledge, or region-specific social engagement. Fourth, policy reorientation from output-based to growth-based models is needed, particularly for universities in peripheral regions. These recommendations are explicitly connected to the challenges of interpretive confusion, workload imbalance, lack of mentoring, and procedural fatigue identified in the findings.

A policy analyst at Undana's LPMSDA (I-07) summarized the institutional challenge: *"We are chasing numbers, not nurturing scholars. The current system makes us think like accountants, not academics."* This insight captures the epistemic shift the credit point policy has inadvertently induced, a shift from collegiality, curiosity, and creativity

toward bureaucracy, checklists, and formulaic assessments.

Implementation Context: Institutional Environment, Capacity, and Actor Dynamics

The implementation of the credit point policy for academic promotion at Nusa Cendana University (Undana) between 2022 and 2024 unfolds within a complex institutional setting. Although the policy appears well-formulated on paper, complete with procedural steps, scoring metrics, and criteria for academic rank progression, the lived reality is far more intricate. The interplay between institutional fragmentation, inadequate administrative capacity, digital infrastructure limitations, and the disengagement of key actors has shaped an implementation landscape riddled with inconsistencies, delays, and policy fatigue. These challenges demonstrate that a technically sound policy design alone is insufficient without supportive institutional arrangements, reinforcing Grindle's (1980) notion that policy implementation is deeply political and contextual.

Drawing on Grindle's (1980) conceptualization of implementation as a political and administrative process, rather than a mere technical translation of rules, this section explores the multilayered context that mediates how the credit point policy is experienced and enacted by various actors within the university. Empirical data were drawn from twelve informants selected for their direct involvement in, or proximity to, the credit point process, representing diverse functional roles across academic, administrative, and technical domains. This triangulation across multiple actor groups strengthens the reliability of the

findings and highlights the organizational blind spots undermining promotion outcomes.

The first and perhaps most persistent obstacle in the implementation process lies in the blurred organizational structure responsible for academic promotion. The LPMSDA (Academic Quality Assurance and Resource Development Institute) is formally designated as the coordinating body for policy oversight. However, field data reveal that its coordinating role is rarely perceived as effective at the faculty level. Informants consistently pointed out that there was no clear institutional map delineating responsibilities between LPMSDA, faculty administrators, and the Human Resources Bureau. This ambiguity produces fragmented accountability, with no unit bearing ultimate responsibility, a phenomenon similar to "functional overlap" in public sector governance noted by Christensen and Lægread (2020).

As one senior professor explained: "There is a vacuum. LPMSDA is supposed to lead, but they operate like a back office. Faculties are left to interpret the rules themselves, and it is never uniform." (I-03) This ambiguity creates what policy scholars call "functional overlap," where responsibilities are duplicated or neglected. Administrative officers at the faculty level often have limited training or knowledge about promotion regulations, leaving lecturers to navigate the process based on informal precedent rather than institutional guidance. Such gaps necessitate clearer SOPs, inter-unit coordination mechanisms, and transparent communication channels to prevent duplication and procedural delays.

A technical staff member from the academic bureau (I-08) confirmed

that document submissions often bounce between units due to minor formatting issues or unclear requirements. Without a transparent chain of responsibility, applicants are left in procedural limbo, frequently repeating the same steps multiple times. This procedural repetition increases transaction costs, wastes time, and disincentivizes faculty participation, reinforcing the importance of streamlined processes and accountability frameworks in university HR policy (de Boer & Goedegebuure, 2020).

Second, capacity limitations further exacerbate the implementation challenges. Although academic promotion is a core element of university human resource development, Undana lacks specialized personnel to manage the end-to-end process. In most faculties, administrative officers juggle multiple unrelated responsibilities, from student affairs to procurement, leaving little time or expertise to support academic staff through the complex requirements of credit point assessment. This multitasking erodes administrative professionalism, echoing international studies that link inadequate HR specialization to inconsistent policy implementation in higher education (Ferlie et al., 2020).

One mid-level administrator (I-05) from the central office described the situation candidly: "We have no SOPs, no dedicated staff, and very little documentation. Each faculty operates like its own island." This lack of standardized procedures reinforces inequality among faculty. Faculties with more experienced leadership or better resources, such as the Faculty of Science and Mathematics or the Faculty of Agriculture, are more likely to succeed in navigating the system. In contrast, those in peripheral disciplines struggle with basic

compliance. The implication is that without standardized institutional supports, policy outcomes depend heavily on faculty-level capacity, producing inequitable promotion trajectories across disciplines.

Moreover, mentoring for junior lecturers is virtually non-existent. As highlighted by a junior lecturer from the Faculty of Public Health (I-09): "I had no idea how to compile my credit point documents. I just followed what my seniors did, and hoped it was correct. There is no training, no help desk." The cumulative effect of these capacity constraints is a deeply inefficient system in which academic promotion becomes a slow, unpredictable, and often discouraging process. This finding directly supports the recommendation to institutionalize structured mentoring programs, since international evidence shows that consistent mentoring improves faculty productivity and retention (O'Meara et al., 2022).

Third, the digital environment meant to support the credit point process remains underdeveloped. Despite aspirations toward digital governance and smart administration, Undana continues to rely heavily on manual systems for core bureaucratic functions. Informants from seven different units confirmed that submission of hardcopy documents remains mandatory for most promotion processes. It includes printed teaching schedules, physical certificates of participation, scanned journal articles, and bound portfolios. This dual system undermines efficiency, highlighting the gap between symbolic digitization and substantive digital transformation (Gil-Garcia et al., 2020).

As one informant (I-06) involved in the credit point assessment process noted, "We are

stuck in a hybrid system. Everything is uploaded online, but we still need to print it all out and submit a hard copy. It is inefficient and demoralizing." The internal employee information system (SIK) is not integrated with promotion databases or research repositories, meaning credit point data cannot be retrieved automatically. Furthermore, no centralized tracking dashboard monitors submission status, gets feedback, or flags missing documentation. The absence of digital interoperability not only delays promotion cycles but also undermines accountability and transparency, reinforcing calls for integrated platforms in higher education governance (Al-Harthy et al., 2022).

A professor from the Faculty of Engineering (I-04) lamented: "Once you submit your documents, there is no way to know where they go or when you will hear back. It is like throwing paper into a black hole." This system's opacity generates uncertainty, undermines accountability, and disincentivizes early-career academics from pursuing promotion. The lack of automation also burdens evaluators, who must verify each document manually, often under tight deadlines and without access to digital metadata or verification tools. This evidence underscores the recommendation for a centralized digital dashboard, which would allow real-time tracking, feedback provision, and reduced evaluator workload.

As highlighted in Sembiring (2020), digital governance in higher education institutions must go beyond basic digitization; it requires systemic integration, real-time interoperability, and feedback loops that reinforce learning and accountability. Undana's current infrastructure falls far short of these expectations. Therefore, reform should prioritize integrated, user-

friendly platforms that transform digital tools into enablers of transparency and efficiency.

Fourth, in policy implementation, institutional structure and infrastructure are only part of the puzzle. The attitudes, motivations, and cultural perceptions of actors, especially frontline implementers and policy beneficiaries, play a central role in shaping how policies are enacted. At Nusa Cendana University, data from in-depth interviews suggest that many lecturers view the promotion system not as a professional development pathway, but rather as a burdensome bureaucratic requirement. This perception significantly weakens the degree of policy internalization. This disengagement illustrates that successful implementation requires not only compliance but also motivational alignment, consistent with Lipsky's (1980) insights on street-level bureaucrats.

One informant (I-02), a senior lecturer, remarked: "People do not see promotion as a reward for academic excellence anymore. It is just something you are forced to do, and many just delay it or avoid it altogether." This comment reflects a broader culture of disengagement, where the academic promotion process is treated with ambivalence or skepticism. Many early-career lecturers felt unmotivated to compile the required documents due to the absence of clear support systems or incentives beyond rank and salary. As one junior faculty member (I-07) explained: "Even if I get promoted, nothing really changes. My workload remains the same, and no one really recognizes your achievement. Why rush it?" These perceptions justify the recommendation for embedding non-monetary incentives, recognition systems, and workload reforms to

restore the developmental meaning of promotion.

This lack of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation is compounded by what respondents called "toxic competition," wherein some senior lecturers hoard knowledge about the promotion process or are unwilling to mentor junior staff. Such dynamics undermine collective learning and weaken the institution's capacity to build a culture of merit-based advancement. International research shows that toxic competition discourages collaboration, particularly in resource-constrained universities (Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley, 2019), reinforcing the need for institutional mechanisms that foster collegial mentoring.

Moreover, the expectations embedded in the credit point policy, such as publishing in accredited journals, participating in community service, and producing educational innovations, often do not align with the actual working conditions of the lecturers. Several participants mentioned teaching loads of over 12 credits per semester, with no formal teaching-release policies to allocate time for research or community engagement. As noted by one mid-career lecturer (I-01): "We are expected to be researchers, community servants, and teachers all at once, but the system only supports teaching. Research becomes a luxury." This gap between expectations and capacity highlights the urgent need for workload redistribution policies that guarantee time for research, echoing the concerns of O'Meara et al. (2022) regarding equity-minded workload frameworks.

This imbalance in workload allocation contradicts the normative ideals of Indonesia's *tridharma perguruan tinggi* (threefold mission of higher education), which assumes

equal emphasis on teaching, research, and service. In practice, teaching obligations dominate, and research is often conducted in lecturers' time, usually without technical assistance or funding. These structural disincentives feed a cycle of delay and reluctance in pursuing promotion. The implication is clear: without structural support for research and service, the credit point system incentivizes compliance over scholarly development.

Findings from Muchtar et al. (2023) and Ha (2023) echo these dynamics, suggesting that lecturers tend to deprioritize promotion in institutions where academic career progression is not linked to robust mentoring systems, performance-based incentives, or recognition mechanisms. Grindle's (1980) observation that policy success requires formal compliance and the "willingness of actors to act" is profoundly resonant in this context. Therefore, embedding mentoring, equitable incentives, and recognition frameworks into institutional practice is essential for improving actor willingness to engage with promotion.

Fifth, the geographical and logistical realities of implementing a national policy in a peripheral institution like Undana present another significant challenge. Located in East Nusa Tenggara, one of Indonesia's easternmost and least-developed provinces, Undana faces spatial isolation that limits access to professional development, national seminars, workshops, and research collaborations. Several informants noted that opportunities to participate in national scientific forums or trainings related to the credit point system are concentrated mainly in Java or Bali. One senior lecturer (I-10) from a remote faculty remarked, "It is not just about money or will.

Sometimes, we do not even know that these events are happening. There is no network, no information, and no travel support." This situation reinforces Wicaksono's (2022) concept of "academic marginalization," where universities outside Java are excluded from academic networks, necessitating decentralized mentorship and regional capacity-building policies.

Moreover, internet connectivity remains uneven across faculties, particularly for those situated in separate campuses or satellite units. The promise of digital-based submission or remote mentoring remains largely unrealized. Several lecturers reported that uploading documents was time-consuming and unreliable due to weak bandwidth or system downtime. This technological gap underscores the need for hybrid offline-online solutions and asynchronous platforms adapted to the infrastructural realities of Eastern Indonesia.

These constraints necessitate a contextualized implementation strategy that departs from the "one size fits all" approach typically used in national policy frameworks. Rather than replicating Jakarta-centric models, policy support for institutions like Undana should include decentralized mentorship networks, regional policy champions, asynchronous online training, and hybrid assessment formats tailored to Eastern Indonesia's institutional and geographic realities. It aligns with Altbach & de Wit's (2020) call for locally adapted higher education governance models in the Global South.

Sixth, another emergent theme from the interviews relates to trust in the institution's promotion system. Several informants expressed doubts about the fairness and transparency of

the credit point evaluation process. As one lecturer (I-11) shared: "We do not know how scores are calculated. There is no feedback, no appeal system. It feels arbitrary." This concern about opaque decision-making discourages engagement and fosters a sense of alienation. Without clear rubrics or channels for clarification, applicants may feel their efforts are not being fairly judged, undermining the entire system's credibility. This issue highlights the importance of institutional transparency, since research in higher education governance consistently links clear evaluation standards with faculty trust and engagement (Trotter, 2021).

A member of the assessment team (I-12) acknowledged this problem, citing a lack of standard operating procedures (SOPs) and limited training for evaluators: "We try our best, but even among us, interpretations vary. Without clear SOPs, subjectivity is unavoidable." Such variation in evaluator judgment creates inconsistencies that feed rumors of favoritism or administrative inefficiency. These concerns align with the broader literature on governance in public universities, which underscores the importance of procedural transparency, peer accountability, and open communication in maintaining institutional legitimacy (Pynes, 2009; Tristiyanto & Nunyai, 2023). Therefore, developing standardized rubrics, evaluator training programs, and an appeals mechanism is a direct implication of these findings, linking challenges of opacity with actionable reforms.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the implementation dynamics of the credit point policy for academic

promotion to Associate and Full Professor ranks at Universitas Nusa Cendana. Specifically, it analyzed how policy content, institutional structures, and administrative processes interact to shape lecturers' experiences navigating the promotion system. In doing so, the research sought to contribute empirically and conceptually to the broader literature on policy implementation in higher education governance, particularly within the context of universities in peripheral regions.

The findings reveal that although the credit point policy enjoys strong formal legitimacy through national regulations and institutional directives, its practical operability remains problematic. At the level of policy content, the guidelines are overly complex, highly technical, and lack contextual interpretation. Lecturers and technical staff often struggle to understand the categorization of academic activities, the process of credit calculation, and the documentation requirements. The absence of localized technical guidelines and limited administrative literacy further exacerbate the difficulty in applying the policy effectively. It confirms the hypothesis that technocratic rigidity without interpretive infrastructure limits policy usability, especially in institutions with uneven resource distribution.

On the institutional side, the implementation process is hampered by multidimensional structural challenges. These include a lack of human resources with technical expertise in credit assessment, fragmented inter-unit coordination, and the absence of a dedicated support unit for academic promotion. Lecturers are left to navigate the promotion system individually, often without guidance or support. The

study also found that workloads are disproportionately allocated, teaching and administrative duties are prioritized over research and community engagement, creating misalignment with promotion requirements. While some digital innovations have been introduced, such as online submission systems, these remain underutilized and are not yet embedded within a cohesive institutional ecosystem.

At the university level, several actionable steps are recommended. First, a dedicated Academic Promotion Support Unit under LPMSDA should be established to provide continuous mentoring and document verification. Second, upgrade the web-based credit point system into an integrated platform with automated calculators, real-time tracking dashboards, and feedback mechanisms. Third, the system should be complemented with regular training, user manuals, and online helpdesks. Fourth, workload redistribution policies should be adopted, such as teaching-release schemes for lecturers preparing promotion submissions. Finally, evaluation criteria should be broadened to recognize mentoring, community engagement, and institutional service alongside publications.

The impact of the policy, measured through the number of lecturers successfully promoted, is uneven and far from optimal. Although individual success stories exist, many lecturers remain stagnant in rank. The underdeveloped academic ecosystem remains a significant barrier, particularly the lack of structural support for scholarly writing and research. Despite some capacity-building initiatives, such as training workshops and mentoring sessions, these are often ad hoc and

not institutionalized. Moreover, performance metrics that emphasize publication output, especially in reputable international journals, are usually misaligned with many lecturers' actual capacity and context. Without sustained investment in research infrastructure, writing mentorship, proofreading support, and publication incentives, these metrics function more as hurdles than enablers of academic growth.

This research contributes to the growing discourse on policy implementation asymmetry in Indonesian higher education, particularly by offering empirical insight into how national-level policies are filtered through institutional capacities and localized practices. It also adds theoretical value by reinforcing the importance of aligning formal policy design with interpretive, technical, and relational infrastructures to ensure successful implementation.

Despite these contributions, this study has certain limitations. First, it is context-specific and focuses solely on one public university in Eastern Indonesia, which may limit the generalizability of its findings. Second, the study relied primarily on qualitative data from interviews and document analysis, which, while rich in depth, may not capture broader statistical patterns or inter-university comparisons. Third, policy-makers' perspectives at the national level were not included, which may limit the analysis of upstream policy design intentions.

Future research should address these gaps by conducting comparative studies across multiple universities within and beyond Eastern Indonesia to examine how much implementation challenges are shared or context-dependent. Quantitative approaches can be used

to assess correlations between lecturer profiles, institutional supports, and promotion outcomes. In addition, longitudinal studies could offer insight into how institutional reforms evolve and what factors most strongly predict sustained policy effectiveness.

REFERENCES

- Al-Harthy, A., Al-Khanjari, Z., & Kraiem, N. (2022). Integrated platforms for higher education governance: Toward transparency and accountability. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 36(3), 351–368.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-06-2021-0234>
- Altbach, P. G., & de Wit, H. (2020). *Responding to COVID-19: Higher education in global crisis*. Boston College Center for International Higher Education.
- Altbach, P. G., Reisberg, L., & Rumbley, L. E. (2019). *Trends in global higher education: Tracking an academic revolution*. UNESCO Publishing.
- Berger, J. B., & Berger, P. (2004). *Academic pathways to tenure: A policy perspective*. Jossey-Bass.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
<https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a>
- Christensen, T., & Lægreid, P. (2020). The quest for balance: Political and administrative control in hybrid organizations. *Public Organization Review*, 20(1), 13–27.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11115-018-0411-3>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- de Boer, H., & Goedegebuure, L. (2020). Governance in higher education: Change and continuity. *Policy Reviews in Higher Education*, 4(1), 1–15.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/23322969.2020.1712664>
- Ferlie, E., Montgomery, K., & Pedersen, A. R. (Eds.). (2020). *The Oxford handbook of health care management*. Oxford University Press.
- Gil-Garcia, J. R., Dawes, S. S., & Pardo, T. A. (2020). Digital government and public management research: Finding the crossroads. *Public Management Review*, 22(3), 372–394.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2019.1699946>
- Grindle, M. S. (1980). *Politics and policy implementation in the Third World*. Princeton University Press.
- Ha, A. T., Le, Q. T., & Pham, T. T. (2023). Academic career advancement in Southeast Asia: Structural constraints and policy responses. *Higher Education Policy*, 36(2), 215–233.
<https://doi.org/10.1057/s41307-021-00239-4>
- Hariyadi, B., Kusumaningrum, D., & Prasetyo, A. R. (2022). Lecturer promotion challenges in Indonesia: Between regulation and practice. *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan*, 7(1), 45–60.
<https://doi.org/10.24832/jpnk.v7i1.298>
- Kartika Sari, D., Pramono, H., & Nurhayati, A. (2019). A Waterfall-based application for lecturer promotion credit point calculation. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning*, 14(5), 55–65.

- <https://doi.org/10.3991/ijet.v14i05.9968>
- Masayu, A. R., Fauzan, M., & Sari, N. (2023). Policy literacy and academic promotion: Evidence from Indonesian public universities. *Jurnal Ilmu Administrasi*, 20(2), 101–118. <https://doi.org/10.20476/jia.v20i2.934>
- Muchtar, A., Lestari, E., & Rahman, H. (2023). Lecturer promotion stagnation in peripheral Indonesian universities. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 97, 102651. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijeducdev.2023.102651>
- Nyaman, A., Sulistiyo, B., & Rahayu, T. (2023). Digital literacy and academic promotion readiness in Indonesian universities. *Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan*, 18(1), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.21831/jmp.v18i1.49873>
- O'Meara, K., Culpepper, D., Misra, J., & Jaeger, A. (2022). Equity-minded workload reform: Rebuilding academic work to support faculty wellbeing. *American Council on Education (ACE)*. <https://www.acenet.edu>
- Pausits, A. (2014). Human resource development in higher education: Talent management in European universities. *European Journal of Higher Education*, 4(4), 422–435. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568235.2014.971327>
- Pynes, J. E. (2009). *Human resources management for public and nonprofit organizations: A strategic approach* (3rd ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Sembiring, M. G. (2020). Digital governance in Indonesian higher education institutions. *Jurnal Pendidikan Terbuka dan Jarak Jauh*, 21(2), 75–88. <https://doi.org/10.33830/ptjj.v21i2.2431>
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. SAGE Publications.
- Thunnissen, M., & Boselie, P. (2014). A review of talent management: 'Infancy or adolescence?'. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 25(2), 1744–1761. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2013.777543>
- Tristiyanto, A., & Nunyai, E. (2023). Laravel-based digital system for lecturer promotion. *International Journal of Computer Applications*, 185(30), 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.5120/ijca2023922640>
- Trotter, E. (2021). Transparency and trust in higher education governance: Lessons from faculty evaluation systems. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 75(4), 641–655. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hequ.12309>
- Wahidah, R., Hidayat, T., & Ramadhan, A. (2022). Policy gaps in academic promotion: A study of Indonesian higher education institutions. *Jurnal Kebijakan Pendidikan*, 11(2), 120–135. <https://doi.org/10.21831/jkp.v11i2.37895>
- Wicaksono, A. (2022). Academic marginalization in peripheral universities in Indonesia. *Indonesian Journal of Higher Education Policy*, 15(1), 45–61. <https://doi.org/10.7454/ijhep.v15i1.123>
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Yusoff, M. S. B., Ariffin, S. R., & Mohamed, A. H. (2018).

Organizational change and digital transformation in Malaysian universities. *International Journal of Management in Education*, 12(2), 109–125.
<https://doi.org/10.1504/IJMIE.2018.10013921>