

MULTI-WORD EXPRESSIONS IN EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND REFORM DOCUMENTS

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ABSTRAK

Dokumen kebijakan pendidikan menggunakan ekspresi multi-kata (*multi-word expressions*/MWEs) yang berulang untuk menyampaikan konsep, tetapi jenis dan fungsinya dalam perundang-undangan masih belum banyak dijelaskan dalam konteks peraturan pendidikan Indonesia. Kajian terhadap ekspresi tersebut penting karena pilihan bahasa membentuk cara tanggung jawab pendidikan dan konsep kebijakan disampaikan. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengidentifikasi jenis, frekuensi, dan fungsi MWEs dalam Undang-Undang Nomor 20 Tahun 2003 tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis korpus untuk mengkaji undang-undang tersebut. Voyant Tools digunakan untuk membantu mengidentifikasi ekspresi berulang, yang kemudian diklasifikasikan dan ditafsirkan berdasarkan bentuk kebahasaan serta fungsinya dalam wacana kebijakan pendidikan. Hasil penelitian mencakup sepuluh MWEs dengan frekuensi gabungan sebanyak 68 kemunculan. Kolokasi memiliki frekuensi kumulatif tertinggi di antara tiga kategori, sedangkan ekspresi terkait sumber daya manusia pendidikan membentuk kelompok tematik dengan frekuensi tertinggi. Ekspresi lainnya merujuk pada tata kelola, penjaminan mutu, infrastruktur, proses belajar mengajar, dan akses pendidikan. Pola ini menunjukkan bahwa MWEs menjadi sumber kebahasaan berulang untuk menyampaikan konsep dalam undang-undang. Penelitian menyimpulkan bahwa penggabungan analisis frekuensi dan interpretasi wacana kontekstual dapat mendukung pemahaman terhadap bahasa kebijakan. Namun, klaim mengenai prioritas kebijakan atau orientasi ideologis memerlukan data korpus lengkap dan bukti konkordansi memadai.

Kata kunci: Analisis Wacana Kritis, Ekspresi Multi-Kata, Kebijakan Pendidikan, Lexical Bundles, Sistem Pendidikan Nasional.

ABSTRACT

Educational policy documents use recurring multi-word expressions (MWEs) to communicate concepts, yet their types and functions in legislation remain insufficiently described. Examining these expressions matters because language choices shape how educational responsibilities and policy concepts are presented. This study aimed to identify the types, frequencies, and functions of MWEs in Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System. A corpus-based qualitative approach was used to examine the legislation. Voyant Tools supported the identification of recurring expressions, which were classified and interpreted according to their linguistic forms and functions in educational policy discourse. The findings covered ten MWEs with a combined frequency of 68 occurrences. Collocations had the highest cumulative frequency among the three categories, while expressions concerning educational human resources formed the most frequent thematic group. Other expressions referred to governance, quality assurance, infrastructure, teaching and learning, and educational access. These patterns suggest that MWEs provide recurring linguistic resources for expressing concepts in the



legislation. The study concludes that combining frequency analysis with contextual discourse interpretation can support an understanding of policy language. However, claims about policy priorities or ideological orientations require complete corpus data and concordance evidence.

Keywords: *Critical Discourse Analysis, Educational Policy, Lexical Bundles, Multi-Word Expressions, National Education System.*

INTRODUCTION

Multi-word expressions (MWEs) are combinations of two or more words that tend to occur together and function as recognizable units in language use. These expressions may exhibit varying degrees of lexical fixedness, frequency, compositionality, and conventionality, depending on their linguistic form and communicative context (Ren, 2021; Guo & Ellis, 2021). In corpus linguistics, MWEs are important because recurring word combinations reveal patterns of language use that may not be fully captured by examining individual words in isolation. These expressions can contribute to textual cohesion, information organization, and the consistent communication of specialized meanings. Therefore, examining MWEs provides a useful basis for understanding how language patterns operate in formal and institutional texts.

Educational policy documents represent a distinctive form of institutional discourse because they communicate educational objectives, establish regulatory frameworks, and articulate priorities for the development of educational systems. Unlike academic writing, which primarily presents and develops scholarly knowledge, policy discourse often uses formal, normative, and administrative language to define responsibilities, establish standards, and guide institutional practices. Recurring expressions in these documents may therefore serve both linguistic and institutional purposes by maintaining terminological consistency and presenting policy concepts in recognizable forms. Research on education policy discourse has also demonstrated that linguistic choices and discursive framing can shape representations of educational problems, policy priorities, and proposed reforms (Yoon et al., 2024; Woo, 2023). Consequently, analyzing MWEs in educational policy documents can help explain how recurring linguistic patterns organize information and communicate institutional priorities.

Previous research has examined MWEs in academic and professional writing, particularly through corpus-based investigations of lexical bundles and recurrent word combinations. Recent studies by Indonesian researchers have examined lexical bundles in academic writing by investigating their frequency and discourse functions in students' argumentative essays, their structural patterns in published research articles, and their distribution across academic disciplines (Oktavianti & Prayogi, 2022; Insani, 2022; Zulyanputri, 2024). These studies demonstrate that recurring word sequences provide useful evidence for understanding the structural, functional, and disciplinary characteristics of academic discourse. These studies illustrate how corpus-based approaches can identify recurring expressions and examine their distribution across genres, disciplines, and writer groups. However, findings from academic writing cannot automatically be generalized to policy documents because the communicative purposes and institutional functions of these genres differ.

Despite the development of corpus-based research on MWEs, the specific relationship between recurring expressions, policy meaning, and ideological representation in educational policy discourse requires further investigation. Existing studies have contributed to understanding recurring linguistic patterns in academic and disciplinary writing, particularly through analyses of lexical bundles in English and Indonesian research articles (Yuliawati et al., 2021). Research on education-related policy discourse has also demonstrated how lexical



choices can shape public interpretations of educational priorities and policy implications (Purnama et al., 2024). Bringing these perspectives together makes it possible to investigate not only which expressions occur frequently but also how their contextual use contributes to the construction of policy meanings. In this study, MWEs are examined through three analytical categories: lexical bundles, collocations, and fixed expressions. Lexical bundles are treated as recurrent sequences identified through corpus analysis, collocations as word combinations characterized by recurrent co-occurrence, and fixed expressions as conventionalized combinations whose forms or meanings are relatively stable; these categories require explicit operational criteria because their boundaries may overlap.

To address this research gap, the present study examines MWEs in Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, which provides a specific context for investigating recurring expressions in Indonesian educational policy. The analysis focuses on identifying frequently occurring MWEs and examining their functions in relation to educational governance, institutional responsibilities, quality assurance, and access to education. Corpus-based analysis provides a systematic means of identifying recurring expressions and examining their frequency and distribution, while contextual discourse analysis enables researchers to interpret how linguistic patterns construct meaning and reflect broader social and ideological positions (Haq et al., 2021; Nasyaya et al., 2025). This combination allows the study to connect observable linguistic patterns with the broader meanings expressed in the policy document. The analysis therefore considers both the formal characteristics of MWEs and their potential role in representing educational priorities and institutional perspectives.

Based on this background, the study addresses two research questions: (1) What types of multi-word expressions occur most frequently in Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System? (2) How do these expressions function in constructing meaning and representing ideological perspectives within the document? Accordingly, the study aims to identify and classify the most frequent MWEs and interpret their contextual functions in educational policy discourse. By connecting corpus-based identification with contextual interpretation, the research seeks to contribute to the understanding of recurrent linguistic patterns in policy texts. It also offers a basis for examining how conventionalized expressions contribute to the communication of educational objectives, institutional priorities, and policy values.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a corpus-based qualitative design combining corpus analysis with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine multi-word expressions (MWEs) in educational policy discourse. The corpus analysis was used to identify recurring word combinations, determine their frequencies, and classify them into three analytical categories: lexical bundles, collocations, and fixed expressions. CDA was subsequently applied to interpret the contextual functions of the identified expressions and examine how they potentially represent educational priorities, institutional values, and ideological perspectives. The primary data source was Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, which was examined as an official Indonesian educational policy document. The document was selected because of its relevance to national educational governance; however, the final manuscript should specify its official publication source, access URL, the exact text version analyzed, and the inclusion and exclusion criteria used to establish the corpus.

The analysis was conducted using Voyant Tools to explore word frequencies, recurring expressions, and their distribution within the corpus. The procedure involved preparing the

document in a machine-readable format, examining recurrent word sequences, identifying candidate MWEs, and classifying the selected expressions according to their operational definitions. Frequency counts were used to determine the most recurrent expressions, while contextual examination was conducted to verify their use and interpret their functions within the policy text. To ensure methodological transparency, the researchers should specify the minimum frequency threshold, the length of expressions considered, the treatment of repeated occurrences and linguistic variations, and whether frequencies were normalized; if a single document was analyzed, the ranking should be based on clearly defined raw-frequency counts or another explicitly stated measure. Finally, the identified expressions were interpreted through CDA by examining their surrounding textual contexts and relationships with policy objectives, governance, educational quality, and access, with ideological interpretations grounded in textual evidence rather than frequency alone.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The analysis of *Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System* identified ten multi-word expressions (MWEs) reported in the research findings according to their frequency of occurrence. These expressions were classified into three categories: lexical bundles, collocations, and fixed expressions. Based on the ten expressions presented, their cumulative frequency reached 68 occurrences. This figure represents the combined frequency of the ten reported expressions rather than the total number of MWEs identified throughout the entire document. The details of each expression, its category, frequency, and identified function are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Types, Frequencies, and Functions of Multi-Word Expressions

No.	Multi-Word Expression	Category	Frequency	Identified Function
1	autonomy of higher education	Lexical bundle	12	Institutional autonomy in higher education
2	development of educational personnel	Collocation	10	Development of educational human resources
3	educators and education personnel	Fixed expression	9	Reference to educators and educational personnel
4	educational facilities and equipment	Collocation	7	Support for educational facilities and infrastructure
5	evaluation, accreditation, and certification	Fixed expression	6	Educational quality assurance and control
6	national education system	Lexical bundle	6	National educational governance and regulation
7	quality of education	Collocation	5	Educational quality and standards
8	teaching and learning process	Lexical bundle	5	Instructional activities and learning interactions

9	equal access to education	Fixed expression	4	Equality in educational access
10	professional development of teachers	Collocation	4	Improvement of teachers' competence and professionalism
Total frequency of the ten expressions			68	

Source: Compiled from the research data reported in the manuscript.

Table 1 shows that *autonomy of higher education* had the highest reported frequency, with 12 occurrences, followed by *development of educational personnel* with 10 occurrences and *educators and education personnel* with nine occurrences. These results indicate that expressions associated with institutional autonomy and the development of educational personnel were prominent among the ten expressions reported. In contrast, *equal access to education* and *professional development of teachers* each appeared four times, representing the lowest frequencies in the table. However, these frequencies describe only the reported expressions and cannot establish the dominant themes of the entire document without complete corpus data.

To provide a clearer overview of the linguistic patterns, the ten expressions in Table 1 were grouped according to their respective categories. This classification makes it possible to compare the number of expressions and their cumulative frequencies across lexical bundles, collocations, and fixed expressions. The percentage for each category was calculated using the combined frequency of 68 occurrences as the denominator. The resulting distribution is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of Multi-Word Expressions by Category

Category	Number of Expressions	Cumulative Frequency	Percentage of Total Frequency
Lexical bundles	3	23	33.82%
Collocations	4	26	38.24%
Fixed expressions	3	19	27.94%
Total	10	68	100%

Source: Calculated from the frequencies of the ten expressions in Table 1.

Table 2 indicates that collocations had the highest cumulative frequency, with 26 occurrences, accounting for 38.24% of the total frequency reported in the table. This category includes *development of educational personnel*, *educational facilities and equipment*, *quality of education*, and *professional development of teachers*. Lexical bundles followed with 23 occurrences, representing 33.82%, while fixed expressions accounted for 19 occurrences, or 27.94%. Therefore, collocations were the most frequent category among the ten expressions examined. This distribution should be interpreted cautiously because it reflects only the expressions included in the reported findings rather than all MWEs potentially present in the document.

In addition to their linguistic classification, the identified MWEs were grouped according to the functions assigned to them in the original findings. This thematic grouping provides an overview of how the expressions relate to different aspects of educational policy. Based on their reported functions, the expressions were organized into four analytical themes: educational governance, educational human resources, educational quality and infrastructure, and teaching, learning, and educational access. The number of expressions and their cumulative frequencies within these themes are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Thematic Grouping of Multi-Word Expressions

Analytical Theme	Multi-Word Expressions	Number of Expressions	Cumulative Frequency
Educational governance	autonomy of higher education; national education system	2	18
Educational human resources	development of educational personnel; educators and education personnel; professional development of teachers	3	23
Educational quality and infrastructure	educational facilities and equipment; evaluation, accreditation, and certification; quality of education	3	18
Teaching, learning, and educational access	teaching and learning process; equal access to education	2	9
Total		10	68

Source: Analytical grouping based on the functions reported in Table 1.

Table 3 shows that educational human resources had the highest cumulative frequency, with 23 occurrences across three expressions. Educational governance and educational quality and infrastructure each accounted for 18 occurrences, while teaching, learning, and educational access accounted for nine occurrences. This pattern indicates that the reported expressions relate to several dimensions of educational policy, including institutional governance, workforce development, quality assurance, infrastructure, instructional processes, and access to education. The thematic grouping is an analytical interpretation of the functions assigned to the ten expressions and should not be treated as a definitive representation of all themes in the document. Furthermore, frequency alone cannot establish the relative policy importance of these themes because linguistic repetition does not necessarily correspond to policy priority.

Overall, the reported analysis identified ten MWEs with a combined frequency of 68 occurrences in the selected list. *Autonomy of higher education* was the most frequent individual expression, while collocations constituted the category with the highest cumulative frequency. Based on the functional grouping, educational human resources had the highest cumulative frequency, followed by educational governance and educational quality and infrastructure. These patterns suggest that the reported expressions represent several dimensions of educational policy, including institutional autonomy, workforce development, quality assurance, educational facilities, instructional processes, and equality of access. Consequently, the findings provide an initial overview of the lexical patterns used in the examined education



policy document, although they cannot establish the dominant patterns of the entire document without more comprehensive corpus data.

From a discourse-analytical perspective, recurring expressions may help explain how educational concepts, actors, and regulatory provisions are represented through policy language. Nevertheless, frequency data alone cannot demonstrate the presence of a particular ideology or establish that one policy agenda is prioritized over another. Such interpretations require contextual examination of the sentences in which the expressions occur, their functions within specific provisions, and their relationship to the broader structure and purpose of the document. Accordingly, the findings currently support conclusions about the frequency patterns and functional groupings of the ten reported expressions, whereas claims about the ideological orientation of educational policy require additional contextual evidence. Taken together, the results provide a basis for understanding the use of MWEs in educational policy language and highlight the need to connect frequency analysis with concordance evidence and contextual interpretation.

Discussion

The findings of this study address the research objective of identifying the types, frequencies, and functions of multi-word expressions (MWEs) in *Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System*. The ten expressions reported in the results indicate that recurring word combinations represent several dimensions of educational policy, including institutional autonomy, educational personnel, quality assurance, infrastructure, teaching and learning, and access to education. The prominence of collocations among the ten expressions suggests that recurring word combinations contribute to the expression of concepts related to educational governance and administration, consistent with research on lexical bundles in Indonesian legal and regulatory texts (Putri & Suhardijanto, 2022). Corpus-based analysis of Indonesian legislation also illustrates how recurring lexical patterns can be used to examine the representation of specific policy issues in legal documents (Sukma et al., 2024). However, because the present analysis reports only ten expressions rather than the complete corpus output, the findings should be interpreted as an overview of the selected expressions rather than a comprehensive representation of the entire document. Thus, the research objective is addressed by describing the reported linguistic patterns and their potential functions, while broader conclusions require more extensive corpus evidence.

From a phraseological perspective, the findings support the view that multi-word expressions function as recurring units through which meanings are organized in particular communicative contexts. Recent corpus-based studies have demonstrated that lexical bundles perform different discourse functions, including referential, stance-related, and organizational functions, depending on their linguistic context (Lestari et al., 2025; Oktavianti & Budiwati, 2026). These recurring word sequences contribute to the organization of information and the communication of specialized knowledge within particular registers. In the present study, expressions such as *national education system* and *teaching and learning process* appear to serve referential functions by naming institutional and educational processes, while *autonomy of higher education* identifies a specific governance concept. These examples suggest that the significance of MWEs lies not only in their frequency but also in their ability to package policy concepts into recognizable linguistic units. Nevertheless, the classification of each expression as a lexical bundle, collocation, or fixed expression should be supported by explicit operational definitions and consistent analytical criteria.



The functional grouping further indicates that expressions related to educational human resources account for the highest cumulative frequency among the four analytical themes. The expressions *development of educational personnel*, *educators and education personnel*, and *professional development of teachers* collectively foreground the personnel involved in educational provision and development. This pattern may indicate that human resources constitute a salient lexical theme within the selected expressions, although it does not establish that personnel development is the principal policy priority of the entire legislation. From a discourse perspective, repeated references to educational personnel can be examined to understand how educators and other personnel are represented within the regulatory framework, as educational policy discourse may position teachers in relation to professional expectations, institutional priorities, and reform agendas (Astriyani et al., 2025; Sugilestari & Sobari, 2026). Further interpretation would require examining the clauses surrounding these expressions to determine whether educational personnel are positioned primarily as recipients of policy, responsible actors, or subjects of regulatory requirements.

The findings can also be interpreted through the framework of critical discourse analysis (CDA), which examines how language constructs social relationships, institutional roles, and representations of policy. Recent research on Indonesian education policy has demonstrated how policy discourse can reflect ideological assumptions, distribute institutional authority, and shape representations of educational actors (Ramadhani et al., 2025; Putri, 2026). These perspectives support the relevance of examining recurring expressions in policy documents, but they do not establish that the same ideological processes necessarily operate in the Indonesian legislation analyzed here. Therefore, expressions such as autonomy of higher education and equal access to education should be interpreted in relation to their surrounding provisions before claims are made about institutional power, inclusion, or ideological orientation.

The present findings also highlight the importance of combining quantitative corpus analysis with contextual interpretation. Frequency counts help identify which expressions occur most often in the selected data, while concordance analysis can reveal how those expressions function within complete sentences and specific regulatory provisions. For example, expressions such as *in accordance with*, *based on*, and *with respect to* may perform regulatory or referential functions, but their actual roles must be verified against their original textual contexts. This approach is consistent with corpus-assisted discourse analysis, in which recurring linguistic patterns are examined alongside their social, political, and institutional contexts rather than treated as self-explanatory evidence of ideology. Recent methodological research emphasizes that corpus analysis can identify salient linguistic patterns, while discourse analysis is needed to interpret how those patterns function within broader social practices (Gillings et al., 2023; Gillings et al., 2024). Accordingly, the current analysis provides a preliminary description of recurring expressions, while a more detailed concordance examination would strengthen the explanation of how the legislation formulates and connects educational concepts.

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings. First, the reported analysis presents ten expressions with a combined frequency of 68 occurrences, but the total corpus size, the complete list of extracted MWEs, and the frequency threshold used to select them are not provided in the available results. Second, the thematic groupings represent the researchers' analytical interpretation of the reported functions and should not be treated as independently verified categories of policy priorities. Third, the ideological implications of the expressions cannot be established through frequency alone and require contextual evidence from the relevant provisions. Future research could address these limitations by documenting the full corpus, specifying the extraction and classification procedures, and providing



representative concordance lines for each major expression. Overall, the study offers an initial account of how MWEs represent educational concepts in the selected Indonesian education law and establishes a basis for further research integrating phraseological analysis with critical discourse interpretation.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the types, frequencies, and functions of multi-word expressions (MWEs) in *Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System*. The findings indicate that recurring expressions represent several dimensions of educational policy, including institutional governance, human resource development, quality assurance, teaching and learning, and educational access. These patterns suggest that MWEs serve not only as recurring linguistic units but also as resources for expressing and organizing key educational concepts within policy documents. The study therefore highlights the value of combining phraseological analysis with contextual interpretation to understand how educational policies are formulated through language. However, conclusions about policy priorities and ideological orientations require more comprehensive corpus data and closer examination of the contexts in which the expressions occur.

The findings may benefit educational policymakers, researchers, and practitioners by encouraging greater attention to the clarity, consistency, and contextual meaning of language used in educational regulations. For policymakers, examining recurring expressions can help identify how educational concepts and institutional responsibilities are communicated to stakeholders. For researchers, this study provides a starting point for further investigations combining corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis across a broader range of Indonesian educational policies. Future studies should examine additional policy documents, document the complete corpus and analytical procedures, and analyze concordance patterns to establish more robust interpretations of linguistic and ideological functions. Such developments could support more transparent policy communication and a deeper understanding of how language shapes the formulation and interpretation of educational regulations.

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