

DYNAMICS OF ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: A SEQUENTIAL EXPLORATORY STUDY OF STATE UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES OF ZAMBOANGA PENINSULA

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Abstract

This study explores the dynamics of academic governance in higher education institutions, focusing on state universities and colleges in the Zamboanga Peninsula. Using a sequential exploratory mixed-methods approach, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the governance structures, governance practices, institutional outcomes, stakeholders engagement, and stakeholders insight of governance effectiveness. The research begins with a qualitative phase, involving in-depth interviews with key stakeholders such as state university and college presidents and vice president for academic affairs, and focus group discussions with deans, directors, faculty members, and student representatives. This phase uncovers themes related to transparency, inclusivity, and empowerment. The findings inform the development of a quantitative survey instrument used in the second phase to gather data from a larger sample of participants across multiple institutions. The study reveals that there is gap between the intention of the governance structure as articulated by leadership and its actual impact on faculty and students, transparency and inclusivity are consistently identified as key factors in effective governance, and leadership plays a crucial role in shaping the governance culture and promoting positive change. The research identifies key themes and patterns such as the implementation gap, the importance of transparency and inclusivity, and the role of leadership. Key findings highlight the importance of shared governance, transparent communication channels, and adaptive leadership in fostering effective academic governance. This study contributes to the literature on higher education governance in developing contexts and provides practical recommendations for policymakers and institutional leaders to enhance governance effectiveness in state universities and colleges.

Keywords: academic governance, higher education institutions, state universities and colleges, Zamboanga Peninsula, sequential exploratory study

1. Introduction

In the current state of higher education, academic institutions have been at the center of attention in terms of governance systems and practices. As a result, academic governance is an essential component of the administration of state universities and colleges (SUCs) in order to achieve institutional goals, academic success, and public responsiveness. Higher education governance is a complex process that occurs at different levels and involves a number of actors, rules, and norms that define the organizational environment. Globalization, evolving economic systems, and technological advancements have shaped the current context of higher education institutions (HEIs). This ever-changing society has identified the management of education institutions as an important area of research. This is because academic governance has a significant influence on the performance of HEIs in teaching, learning, research, innovation, and societal responsibilities. The development of societies, both intellectually and economically, depends on the availability of higher education institutions. Another factor that embraces these institutions is academic governance, which entails the structures and rules that define policymaking, management, and decision-making.

The southern part of the Philippines, especially in the Western Mindanao region or the Zamboanga Peninsula region, has many SUCs, there are five (5) to be exact. These institutions are worth the investment because they aid in the development and encourage talent of the region. Nevertheless, they might face certain governance concerns, as in the case with other public HEIs in the Philippines. These may include administrative issues, policies, rules, and resources that have a huge impact on the academic standing of the institution. For the following reasons, it is crucial to establish a clear understanding of academic governance: Firstly, the quality of education is dependent on the structures and practices of governance, which are enforced through coercion. Therefore, efficient governance enhances academic performance, research output, and student satisfaction. Secondly, the results of these studies can assist policymakers in identifying the domains encompassed by current policies and those necessitating modifications in the policies overseeing HEIs. Thirdly, academic governance is based on a balance of power between autonomy and accountability principles. Understanding the equilibrium within the SUCs in the Zamboanga Peninsula region may provide insight into general governance in the Philippines. Finally, by comparing the results of this study with those from other regions or countries, we can broaden our comprehension of academic governance, given its specific geographical focus.

Higher education institutions (HEIs) identify academic governance -the set of policies, structures, and procedures universities and colleges use to control their academic and administrative functions - as a crucial element in their strategic and operational management. In the Philippines, state universities and colleges (SUCs) play an important role in offering affordable education to a large population. Some SUCs are the foundation of higher learning institutions in Mindanao, especially in the Zamboanga Peninsula region. As a result, the problems and prospects that characterize the environment in which these institutions operate are not insurmountable. This study discussed the governance models of state SUCs in the Zamboanga Peninsula region in terms of both internal and external factors. Internal factors include the SUCs themselves, which encompass leadership and management, organizational structure, institutional culture, financial resources management, and other factors, while external factors included national policies, regional and local socio-economic contexts, and institutional legacies. Understanding these factors and their interrelation in the context of governance practices within these institutions is crucial for devising strategies that will improve the quality of education these institutions offer. It is evident that higher learning institutions play a crucial role in the development of society through the provision of education and training. The academic governance system is perhaps one of the most important aspects of the management of the academic system and structure in these institutions.

The academic governance systems that are in place in the HEIs can either enhance or impede the quality of teaching, research, and development. SUCs, along with other HEIs, play a significant role in the development of human capital, or the skills and competencies of individuals in any given society. These institutions aim to develop critical thinking and encourage creativity and innovation among students through imparting knowledge and skills. The current academic governance systems in educational institutions determine the effectiveness of these tasks. The management of academic affairs in an institution is defined by its organizational structures, policies, rules, and processes. Currently, a variety of socio-cultural factors, institutional norms and practices, and government policies shape the academic governance of state-run HEIs in the Philippines. These factors have an impact on academic activity management, organizational culture, and the decision-making process in these institutions. This is because, in order to identify the challenges and prospects of these institutions in offering quality education, it is crucial to examine their governance systems. The idea of academic governance is crucial for considering the

whole context of the HEIs. It includes the physical infrastructure, policies, procedures, and standards that form the foundation of the academic mission of a given institution. Good academic governance is an important factor in the quality of teaching, research, innovation, and other learning facets in higher education institutions.

There are SUCs in the Zamboanga Peninsula region, which is located in the southern part of the Philippines, that play a vital role in the economic, social, and academic growth of the area. National policies and local needs mandate SUCs in the Zamboanga Peninsula region and other regions of the country to provide affordable and quality education. These institutions significantly impact both local communities and the broader national workforce. This study described the governance structure of these SUCs in terms of rules, institutional norms, leadership practices, and the involvement of various stakeholders. The state frameworks set the basic framework for governance; however, the reality and outcomes could be different depending on the context and certain leadership actions. Understanding the governance practices within these institutions is crucial in determining their strengths and weaknesses. The sociocultural environment of the region, as well as the presence of both state and private institutions, allow for the study of different models of academic governance. The objective of this dissertation study was to assess the academic governance process, especially the SUCs, in the Zamboanga Peninsula region. SUCs are public HEIs that aim to provide affordable and quality higher education to Filipino students. Understanding the structures and practices of academic governance in these SUCs, especially in the Zamboanga Peninsula region, can help identify the challenges and opportunities that hinder or improve the performance of these institutions in delivering quality education and achieving their missions.

The study aimed to identify the challenges and opportunities that influence the ability to provide quality education of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and achieve their objectives by examining the academic governance system in the SUCs of the Zamboanga Peninsula region, a culturally and economically diverse region of Mindanao. The study also aimed to evaluate and scrutinize the existing systems, institutions, and practices of academic governance in SUCs located in the Zamboanga Peninsula area. In line with the previously mentioned concept, this study sought to achieve its specific objectives by conducting a sequential exploratory study or analysis of the existing governance structures. The study intended to concentrate on the description of governance practices within this specific regional context as well as the findings that may be beneficial to other HEIs. It also examined how governance affects the effectiveness, sustainability, and flexibility of these SUCs in relation to their clients and society as a whole, including students, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders. This study assessed the governance mechanisms and addresses the challenges. Lastly, the study offered recommendations for enhancing academic governance in these SUCs in Zamboanga Peninsula region.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1.
A conceptual paradigm showing the interrelationship of variables.

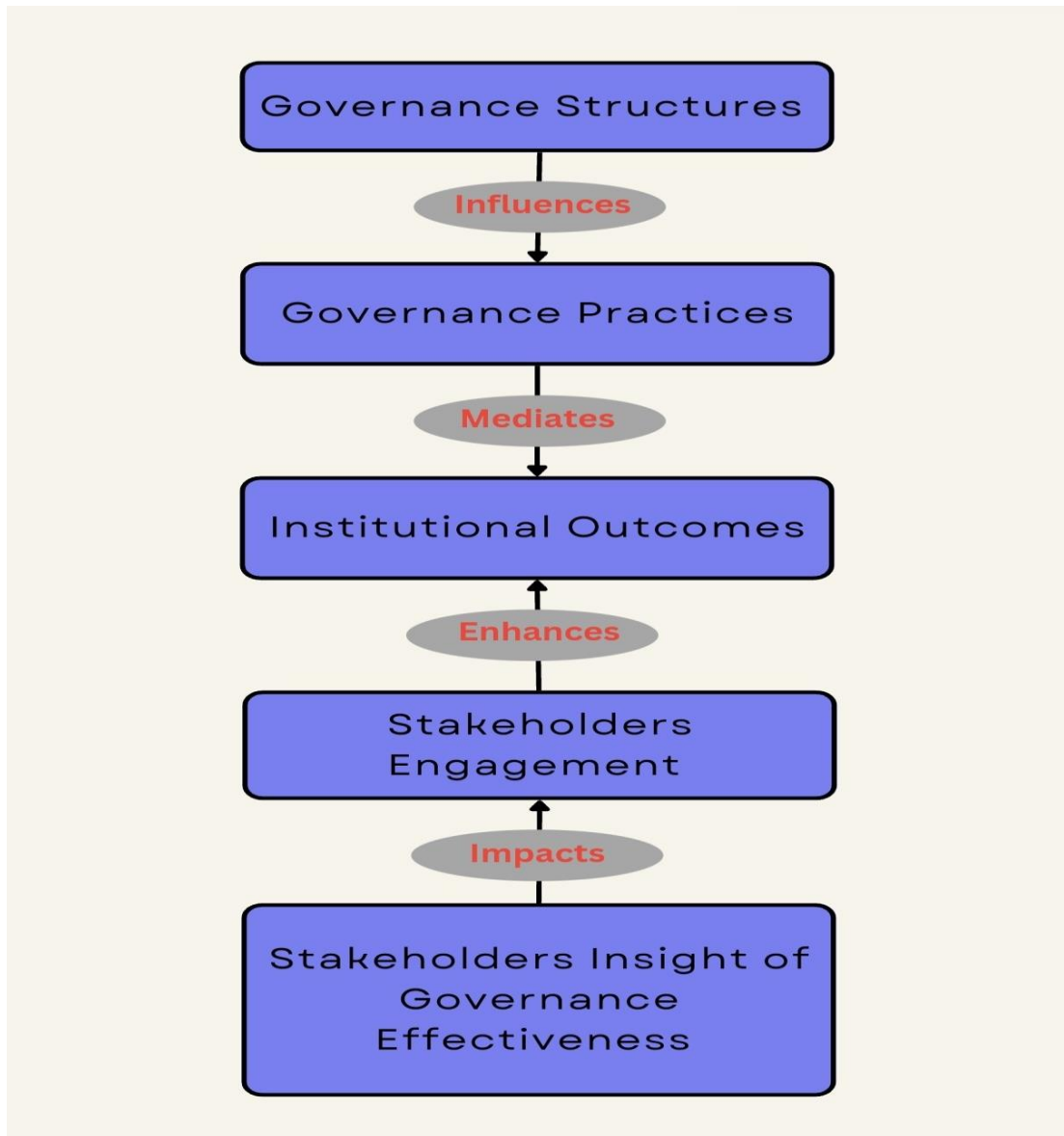


Figure 1 shows the (1) influence of governance structures on governance practices, (2) the mediatory role of governance practices, (3) the impact of stakeholder engagement, and (4) the outcome and perception relationship.

Governance structures influence governance practices. Governance practices within institutions are defined and influenced by formal and informal organizational frameworks, including boards

of regents and trustees, councils, and administrative roles. Effective structures support robust practices.

Governance practices mediate between governance structures and institutional outcomes. Governance practices, such as transparency, accountability, and decision-making processes, mediate between the structures in place and the institutional outcomes. These practices convert structural capacities into governance that is both effective and actionable.

Stakeholders' engagement enhances institutional outcomes. Stakeholders, including faculty, students, the government, and the community, actively engage to improve governance practices. Their participation and input guarantee that institutional practices are transparent, accountable, and pertinent, thereby enhancing their effectiveness.

Stakeholders' insights of governance effectiveness have an impact on their engagement. The effectiveness of governance practices, as observed by stakeholders, directly influences the perception of governance effectiveness. Satisfaction and favorable perceptions further reinforce institutional outcomes.

2. Methodology

In order to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the intricacies of academic governance dynamics within higher education institutions (HEIs), particularly the state universities and colleges (SUCs) in the Zamboanga Peninsula, this study employed a mixed method approach, which involved the use of a descriptive qualitative and quantitative research designs. The sequential exploratory research design proposed by Creswell (2015) was utilized in this study. This is a mixed-methods research design that consisted of two distinct phases: a qualitative phase and a quantitative phase. This method was employed to conduct a comprehensive investigation of a phenomenon through qualitative collection and analysis, followed by a subsequent quantitative phase that tests or validates the initial qualitative results on a larger scale. By employing an exploratory sequential design, the primary goal is to leverage the advantages of qualitative data to inform and improve the subsequent quantitative phase, thereby facilitating a more thorough comprehension of the research problems addressed in this study.

This study utilized the following methods in collecting the data, to wit: for qualitative phase, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were conducted to gather rich, detailed information about the research problems. Then, the qualitative data were analyzed to identify themes, patterns, and key findings. Then, instruments or hypotheses will be developed based on the qualitative findings. Five (5) interviews were conducted among the five (5) SUC Presidents and another five (5) interviews were conducted among the Vice-Presidents for Academic Affairs. Three (3) focus group discussions were conducted with five (5) participants from the deans in the first group, another five (5) participants from the faculty members in the second group, and other participants from the students in the third group. For quantitative phase, based on the themes and findings from the qualitative phase, instruments such as survey or questionnaires were developed. Then, these instruments were administered to a larger, more representative sample to gather quantitative data, with twenty-five (25) participants from each five (5) SUCs. Then, the quantitative data will be analyzed statistically to test hypotheses and confirm or expand upon the qualitative findings. The combined qualitative and quantitative data were presented, analyzed, and interpreted to come up with findings, and draw comprehensive conclusions and recommendations.

This study utilized purposive sampling for the participant selection for the interviews. It is a type of sampling technique where the subjects were chosen based on certain set of criteria and characteristics that were relevant to the objectives of the study. This study also employed snowball

sampling for the focus group discussions. It is a type of sampling technique through which the current study participants recruited other participants of the study from their social contacts. Participants were further requested to identify other people for the study after the preliminary interviews. This study also employed simple random sampling for the survey. It is a type of sampling technique where every member of the population had an equal chance of being selected. This method is ideal for homogenous populations like the ones in this study.

3. Results

3.1. Addressing the Research Questions (Interviews)

Research Question No. 1: Governance Structures

The interviews show clear support for open and collaborative models of governance from Presidents and Vice Presidents for Academic Affairs (VPAAAs). However, they also show the challenge of the proper implementation of such models within academic institutions. Specifically, the intricacy of aligning the interests of multiple stakeholders and ensuring meaningful participation can hinder the proper development of such governance systems. While town hall meetings and cross-functional committees are applied widely to involve stakeholders, ensuring regular and effective communication between all institutional levels is one of the biggest challenges. Online forums, despite being useful for feedback and idea sharing, require constant improvement to make them flexible to the evolving needs of the academic community. Despite these challenges, there is certain recognition of cooperative governance as significant in developing ownership and accountability among all stakeholders.

Research Question No. 2: Governance Practices

The interviews give specific examples of governance practices aimed at building collaboration, innovation, and community involvement. Presidents and VPAAAs employ a range of tactics for building open communication and collaborative problem-solving. Leadership retreats and mentorship programs are employed in the interest of building successful teams and building professional development among the next generation of leaders. Practices such as "Coffee with the President" and "State of the University" addresses provide casual spaces for leaders to express their vision and gather useful feedback from the community. Electronic suggestion boxes and campus walks are also employed to increase accessibility and openness, ensuring continual collection of feedback and follow-up action. These practices show an active governance orientation, with focus on inclusiveness and continuous communication with the academic community.

Research Question No. 3: Impact on Institutional Outcomes

The Presidents and Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs attest that their governance plans are at the heart of achieving their strategic goals and institutional performance. Through the creation of an environment that encourages innovation and interdisciplinary cooperation, they aim to enhance educational and research achievements, thereby strengthening the overall performance of the institution. Encouragement of innovative teaching and research, interdisciplinary program evaluations, and partnerships with local industry are all aimed at fostering continuous improvement and excellence. The efficacy of these governance plans is demonstrated through the successful implementation of innovative projects and programs that enable innovative solutions and intellectual advancement. The commitment to rigorous monitoring and evaluative structures, such as regular reviews of strategic plans and governance audits, further ensures that institutional programs enhance strategic goals and enable continuous intellectual distinction.

Research Question No. 4: Perceived Effectiveness

The interviews reveal that Presidents and Vice Presidents for Academic Affairs (VPAAAs) feel more urgency to respond to transparency and inclusivity challenges in their governance systems. They are actively engaged in initiatives to enhance communication and stakeholder engagement in order to improve the perceived value of their governance practices. By adopting clearly outlined charters for committees, establishing key performance indicators (KPIs), and undertaking detailed needs analyses in conjunction with SWOT analyses, they target the establishment of a systematic and inclusive governance system. Phased implementation plans and continuous feedback mechanisms enable real-time adjustments and improvements, ensuring that initiatives are responsive to emerging challenges and support institutional objectives. Leadership training programs provide current and future leaders with appropriate skills and knowledge needed to propel the institution forward, thus establishing a culture of excellence and accountability. Through these visionary strategies, Presidents and VPAAAs demonstrate dedication to cooperative and open governance models that are critical to addressing challenges, fostering innovation, and ensuring that their institutions are aligned with their strategic goals and dedicated to academic excellence.

3.2. Addressing the Research Question Responses (Focus Group Interviews)

Research Questions Nos. 1 and 2 (Governance Structures and Practices)

The Deans hold the opinion that the existing governance frameworks are there to facilitate exhaustive and comprehensive decision-making. This opinion is guided by the formalized nature of the meetings, careful documentation, and adherence to formal procedures that facilitate the collation and taking of diverse opinions. The Deans are hopeful that these processes create a predictable and reliable environment for policy-making and academic planning, which is essential for the institution's long-term success.

Nonetheless, even with this systematic process, the authors recognize that transparency is not always fully attained. Transparency issues can be caused by a number of factors, such as the intricate nature of governance mechanisms, the necessity of discretion in specific determinations, and the constraint of effectively disseminating information to all concerned stakeholders. This transparency deficiency may lead to misinformation and a feeling of alienation among the faculty members and students, who might feel they are not adequately informed or included in important decisions that impact their responsibilities and obligations.

Moreover, the Deans acknowledge the possibility of delays in policy implementation. Such delays are possible because of administrative obstacles, the necessity of careful consultations, and the time taken to align competing departments and interests. Although these delays are generally regarded as unavoidable to achieve completeness and precision, they might cause frustration among those who are awaiting changes or enhancements. The acknowledgment of these delays is a demonstration of the realization that although the processes involved in decision-making are in themselves robust, their implementation at times is wanting, and continuous refinement and adjustment are essential.

The faculty members hold varying perceptions. Some are involved in policy making through consultation, whereas others perceive that academic freedom is restricted and that decisions are handled by management. They also refer to the tiered participation, in which the faculty members of higher ranks have greater influence. The diverse perspectives among the faculty reflect the complexity of and challenges involved in governance at universities. On the one hand, the consultation process is seen as a necessary instrument for ensuring that a diversity of perspectives

is heard and considered in policy-making. Such an inclusive approach can lead to decisions that are more representative and holistic and better aligned with the needs and aspirations of the university community. Faculty members who see themselves contributing to the shaping of policies through consultations often appreciate the opportunity to contribute their expertise and insights, which creates a sense of ownership and engagement within the institution.

However, there also exists a competing narrative because there are some lecturers who perceive that their academic freedom is curtailed. This usually occurs when management has tight control over decision-making, which may hinder creativity and autonomy of thought. The conflict between management authority and academic freedom has been a historical one in higher education, with the tension between institutional control and individual freedom having to be tightly managed to uphold the integrity of scholarly pursuits.

Additionally, the tiered involvement emphasized by faculty brings the variations in power in the governance structure into focus. Upper-level faculty or faculty members with higher tenure hold greater power in the decision-making process, which can result in disenfranchisement among the lower-level members. This hierarchical interaction can affect faculty morale and motivation, as individuals may perceive that their efforts are not being given proper recognition or appreciation. These different perceptions reflect that while consultation is a step in the right direction, there is still room for growth in its implementation and acceptance. The issues of academic freedom must be addressed and equitable participation of all levels of faculty guaranteed to have a more peaceful and cooperative system of governance. Through the identification and settlement of these issues, the organization can work towards a more equitable and inclusive model of governance where all voices are heard, and the collective wisdom of the faculty is used.

The students typically complain regarding the transparency and inclusiveness within the academic governance processes. The students feel that the decisions are typically taken "behind closed doors" and that they have minimal input. The sense of transparency and inclusiveness has very tangible implications for both student satisfaction and engagement. Exclusion from decision-making can result in a feeling of disenfranchisement and disconnection from the institution. These sentiments can have a detrimental effect on their academic experience as well as on their motivation to participate in institutional activities beyond the classroom.

Moreover, the notion of decisions being made in a "behind closed doors" manner encourages an atmosphere of distrust and skepticism. Students can question the intentions and agenda of the administration, which can prevent the establishment of a unifying and inclusive academic community. To assist these issues, institutions of higher education must make an effort to employ more participatory and open systems of governance that engage students actively in discussions and decisions that impact their educational lives.

Several measures can be initiated by institutions to become more inclusive and transparent. Timely town hall meetings, open forums, and feedback sessions provide opportunities to students to put across their points and concerns. Having student members on important committees and decision-making bodies ensures that their opinions are also considered when shaping and adopting policies. Overall, the development of a culture of openness and inclusiveness increases student trust and participation and the general health and vitality of the academic community. By prioritizing student feedback and promoting open governance values, schools can create a more caring and responsive learning environment that is consistent with the values of modern educational governance.

Research Question No. 3 (Effect on Institutional Outcomes)

The Deans highlight the importance of achieving a balance between institutional autonomy and accountability to stakeholders, noting that achieving a delicate balance between the two is important so that the academic institution is able to govern and sustain itself. Institutional autonomy allows the university to make decisions that are most appropriate to its mission, values, and long-term goals, thus creating room for innovation, academic freedom, and strategic development. Autonomy allows the institution to adapt to changing education environments, overcome emerging challenges, and capitalize on opportunities that enhance its status and influence.

But the Deans acknowledge that this autonomy has to be complemented by a high level of accountability to the diverse stakeholders, including faculty, students, staff, alumni, and the broader community. Accountability guarantees that decisions are made in an open, ethical, and responsible manner, taking into account the competing needs and expectations of these stakeholders. This involves the establishment of oversight, evaluation, and feedback mechanisms, which enable the involvement of stakeholders in governance processes so that they can voice their concerns and aspirations.

By prioritizing decision-making in the best interests of their constituents and reducing adverse consequences, the Deans advocate for a welfare-oriented governance system that prioritizes the well-being of the university community. This involves a meticulous consideration of the probable outcomes, risks, and benefits of every decision so that the consequences align with the values and strategic objectives of the institution. Additionally, it requires an active engagement with stakeholders, fostering an atmosphere of trust, cooperation, and respect for each other.

Through the fine balance between responsibility and autonomy, the Deans aim to establish a system of governance that promotes sustainable development, encourages positive relationships, and improves overall education and research levels. Achieving such balance is crucial in an effort to solve complex problems, resolve conflict of interest, and ensure that the institution remains responsive to the changing needs of its stakeholders without losing its integrity and reputation.

In short, the Deans' focus on this balance is a testament to their dedication to maintaining the tenets of good governance, fostering inclusiveness, and facilitating continuous improvement in institutional practice. This perspective is a reflection of the understanding that good governance transcends power and control, and that stewardship, accountability, and the collective striving for excellence are the objectives. Faculty members cite activities like special research days and reduced teaching loads for researchers as having a positive impact on academic governance.

These efforts are strategic steps to enhance academic governance by setting scholarship and research work as priorities. In creating scheduled research days, the organization acknowledges the importance of giving scholars blocks of time so that they can focus on conducting research in its entirety. Through such a step, not only is the institution developing a culture of scholarship and innovation but also adhering to the vision of the organization to spur knowledge development and creating scholarly output.

Moreover, the relief of teaching burdens for researchers is a major step towards recognizing and easing the dual roles played by faculty members as researchers and teachers. This relief allows faculty members to devote more time and resources to their research activities, leading to enhanced quality of outputs and greater contributions to their respective fields. It also avoids burnout and the possibility of maintaining a healthy work-life balance, which is crucial in maintaining long-term academic excellence.

These initiatives are evidence of a commitment to building a culture where research is appreciated and fostered, thereby building the reputation and image of the institution and in the academic world. By giving the faculty the time and resources to excel in their research endeavors, the institution fosters a more vibrant and active academic community that is able to make meaningful breakthroughs and innovations.

Students believe that they need to have a part in any decision made that affects their experience and learning. This notion highlights one of the most important principles of democratic participation in higher learning environments. By the promotion of participation in decision-making, students are essentially practicing an advocacy for participatory and open government. This is due to the fact that they wish to be seen as core stakeholders whose experiences and views carry significant weight in shaping the academic environment.

The incorporation of varied inputs in the decision-making ensures that reforms and policies are not only properly informed but also from the varied needs and aspirations of the students. This process bridges the gap between the administrative system and the students, and it helps in establishing a culture of cooperation and respect. This involving process can result in more efficient and responsive governance as decisions are taken with a clear understanding of their probable impact on the students.

In addition, including students in governance systems can potentially increase their ownership and responsibility for the institution. Since students feel that their opinions are being heard and valued, they will be more likely to be active in their own educational process and promote institutional causes. This can lead to better academic outcomes, higher retention rates, and more active campus life.

On a wider canvas, the involvement of students in the decision-making process fits into the new theories of governance that highlight cooperation, participation, and shared leadership. Such a model rejects the conventional top-down hierarchical models and fosters an environment in which responsibility and power are more equally distributed. Such a practice is as useful to the students as it is to the institution because varied thinking can generate creative solutions and provide a more vibrant academic environment.

Research Question No. 4 (Perceived Effectiveness)

Involving stakeholders through consultation is yet another crucial aspect foregrounded by the Deans. The process involves seeking inputs and suggestions from various constituencies of the university community before making crucial decisions. Through a participatory process, not only is the decision-making process enriched with various ideas, but stakeholders are also empowered through the ability to shape the direction of the institution. This kind of engagement fosters a team spirit where collective knowledge of the community is leveraged to address problems and maximize opportunities.

In addition, the Deans highlight the need for continuous professional development of leaders. Good governance requires leaders who are not just experienced and informed but also committed to continuously improving their skills. Professional development of leaders enables them to identify prevailing trends, best practices, and emerging issues in higher education governance. Moreover, such programs enable leaders to enhance their skills in strategic planning, financial management, conflict resolution, and stakeholder management. Prioritizing the professional development of their leaders ensures that the institution benefits from leaders who are best equipped to manage the complexities entailed in contemporary higher education governance.

The Deans' emphasis on open governance, alignment of institutional mission, stakeholder involvement, and professional growth represents a holistic model of leadership in the institution. The model not only optimizes the effectiveness of governance but also creates a culture of accountability, participation, and continuous improvement. If these values are followed, the institution is well placed to be better positioned to better achieve its mission, meet the needs of its stakeholders, and achieve its long-term strategic objectives.

Faculty members highlight the need for professional growth, membership in elite groups, and assistance to scholarly research. Professional growth is required for the faculty since it offers them the most recent knowledge, skills, and methods needed to achieve academic and research success. This entails attending conferences, seminars, and workshops, and pursuing higher degrees or certifications in the fields they specialize in. With continuous investment in their professional growth, faculty are able to keep up with recent developments in the fields of their specialization, design innovative teaching practices, and come up with high-impact research.

Collaborations with premier institutions broaden the reach and influence of faculty by enhancing networking and collaboration. Collaborations can lead to collaborative research, exposure to cutting-edge facilities and equipment, and knowledge sharing with top experts in the field. Collaborations not only enhance the quality and volume of research but also enhance the image of the institution and attract high-quality talent and funding.

Research support includes a variety of forms of support, including money grants, administrative support, access to specialized facilities, and time for research work. Through providing significant resources and facilities, the institution acknowledges the significant role of research in generating knowledge and solving complex issues. Additionally, this support encourages a culture of inquiry and intellectual excellence and stimulates faculty members to pursue challenging and innovative research.

Students want to actively and directly be involved in managing institutions, especially in academic issues. They want their input to be heard and acted upon. The desire by students to be actively and directly engaged in the governance of institutions, particularly academic-related matters, is a sign that they are interested in their academic life and its results. When students talk about having their inputs heard and appreciated, they are asking for a more participative and inclusive method of governance, thus including their voices in the decision-making process that would lead to their academic path.

This initiative is based on the idea that students are not mere passive consumers of learning but active stakeholders whose views matter in the development and prosperity of the institution. Integration of student participation in decision-making enables institutions to gain the value of the unique perspectives and hands-on knowledge students can bring to the table. These contributions have the potential to make programs and policies more appropriate and effective and more attuned to the true needs and difficulties of the students.

Second, student participation in governance increases accountability and transparency. When students can directly influence decisions, their chances of trusting the institution and being certain that their concerns and ideas are actually being listened to are higher. This policy of inclusiveness can also empower students, making them feel responsible and owners of their learning community. Therefore, students are also likely to be more participative and enthusiastic, and this can positively impact their learning outcomes and satisfaction.

In the school setting, student contributions are especially important. As the major recipients of education services, student opinions can be essential in terms of the efficacy of teaching styles, curriculum structure, assessment policies, and student services. Through student participation in

these domains, schools can ascertain that their education programs are high-quality, appropriate, and sensitive to the changing needs of the student population.

Along with this, student engagement through institutional governance adheres to modern theories of shared leadership as well as co-governance. These indicate the sharing of authority and responsibility among different constituencies, leading to an environment of inclusivity and respect for one another. By doing this, higher education institutions are able to create a strong and creative learning environment where diverse viewpoints are greatly appreciated, with better as well as more resilient outcomes.

4. Discussions

4.1. Governance Structures

The administrative structures in state universities and colleges (SUCs) in the Zamboanga Peninsula are considered by Deans and Directors as methodically arranged, with built-in protocols and policies. These structures aim to provide a clear-cut framework for decision-making procedures and operational processes, thus making the institutions run smoothly and effectively.

Deans and Directors, who sit mostly at the center of such governance structures, appreciate the importance of establishing a sound and systematic process. They know that well-established policies and procedures are important in providing order and setting a strategic direction for the operations of the institution. They emphasize the importance of an integrated model of governance in being able to manage the complexities of academic administration and maintaining the standards and goals of the institution.

Nevertheless, Faculty and Students have complained of the real practice of these governance models. Whereas the Deans and Directors may perceive the existing protocols as being effective and functional, the people on the ground—Faculty and Students—often feel the lapses in inclusiveness and transparency. This discrepancy indicates that theoretical models of governance may not necessarily find expression in the lived experience of all the stakeholders.

Transparency is an essential aspect of good governance, in which decisions are taken in the open and information is disseminated to all parties. Students and teachers have complained of a lack of transparency, stating that they are excluded from important decision-making and policymaking at times. Lack of transparency leads to a perception of distrust and alienation and therefore undermines the spirit of cooperation that governance models aim to promote.

Inclusivity is a key component that Faculty and Students both identify as missing from the governance structure's implementation. Inclusive decision-making refers to the concept of involving all the stakeholders' inputs and experiences and, in so doing, fostering a common sense of purpose and belonging. The concerns identified demonstrate that Faculty and Students feel frequently excluded and lack influence on decisions that affect their condition directly. Such a sense of exclusivity can kill innovation and hamper the institution in solving effectively emerging challenges and opportunities.

Despite the fact that the administrative systems within SUCs in the Zamboanga Peninsula are seen to be organized by top-level administrative managers, there is an urgent need to address the Faculty and Students' concerns of having an open and participatory system. Closing the divide between procedures set and their implementation will need a collective effort to make governance open and participatory in character, where all the stakeholders are made to feel important and involved in the institution's decision-making processes.

4.2. Governance Practices

The dominant governance practices employed in state universities and colleges (SUCs) in the Zamboanga Peninsula region focus on actions to involve faculty members through mechanisms such as consultations, strategic planning, and aligning governance structures with the institutional mission. These practices are necessary to facilitate the transparent articulation of the institution's goals and to ensure a collective effort to their attainment.

Faculty consultations are a pillar of good governance because they offer a forum for faculty members to offer their views, contribute their knowledge, and participate in decision-making. Faculty consultations can be done in different formats, such as periodic meetings, focus group meetings, and questionnaires. Through faculty participation in governance, SUCs can tap multiple viewpoints from different stakeholders, improve collaboration, and improve the overall learning environment.

Strategic planning is another important practice that is meant to establish long-term objectives and map out the processes required to meet the same. This entails a determination of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis) of the institution and charting a course that is harmonious with the mission and vision of the SUCs. Strategic planning helps governance to be proactive and not reactive, and institutions can anticipate challenges and opportunities in the future.

Efforts to align the governance according to the mission of the institution are crucial in keeping the sense of direction and purpose. Alignment directs all the governance activities, decisions, and policies to realizing the core functions of the SUCs. It provides the basis for assessing the efficiency of governance practice and making respective adjustments.

Yet, inconsistency in the application of these practices in various SUCs and between various stakeholder groups is also a typical occurrence. While a few institutions are excellent in strategic planning and faculty consultation, others might not be able to rally their academic workforce or possess a clear strategic plan. Such inconsistency can introduce variability in governance effectiveness and affect institutional performance.

Different stakeholder groups, including Directors, Deans, Faculty, and Students, will probably experience the effects of these governance processes differently. Whereas senior administrative executives might perceive governance as formal and mission-focused, Faculty and Students might find difficulty in accessing information, participating in consultations, or seeing their inputs reflected in decisions.

In order to address these contradictions, there must be an attempt to harmonize governance practice in all SUCs and render them inclusive, transparent, and participatory. Institutions should strive to create a culture where everyone feels valued and empowered to take part in governance processes. This can be achieved through regular evaluation of governance practice, feedback mechanisms, and continuous improvement programs.

While the prevailing practices of SUC governance in the Zamboanga Peninsula region are intended to enhance faculty engagement, strategic planning, and mission alignment, their performance varies across institutions and stakeholder groups. Bridging this gap is critical to enhancing governance systems, institutional performance, and SUC strategic goals.

4.3. Impact of Governance Structures and Practices on Institutional Outcomes

A connection is generally thought to exist between good institutional performance and good governance, but not necessarily. The evidence is that those governance habits that promote transparency, inclusiveness, and strategic coherence are likely to be associated with positive evaluations of institutional effectiveness.

The relationship between good governance and good institutional outcomes is usually investigated in academic and administrative circles; however, it is still a multifaceted and complex concern. Good governance is usually defined by attributes such as transparency, inclusiveness, and consistency in strategy, all of which are essential to the overall well-being and success of an institution.

Transparency in governance means that the processes, decisions, and policies of an institution are transparent and open to all the stakeholders involved. Transparency leads to increased trust and accountability as faculty, students, and administrative staff can understand the reasoning behind decision-making. If the governance processes are made transparent, there is less likelihood of misunderstanding and conflict, while at the same time, it fosters a culture of integrity and honesty. Inclusivity is part of good governance. Inclusivity provides a voice for all and considers their voice while making decisions. This is particularly important in the educational setting, where various voices can contribute to the institution's strategy and policy. Inclusivity in governance refers to the intentional seeking of opinions from a diverse range of stakeholders, especially the marginalized or underrepresented. This helps to create a sense of belonging and empowerment among students and staff, leading to greater participation and satisfaction.

Strategic alignment refers to the degree to which governance practices are aligned with the vision, mission, and long-term goals of the institution. Strategic alignment of governance ensures that all decisions and policies are aimed at promoting the overall goals of the institution. Alignment in this way enables the institution to address problems and take advantage of opportunities effectively, thereby fostering active and forward-looking management.

Despite the presumed link between good governance and positive institutional performance, the link is not necessarily apparent in the empirical setting. Governance practice performance is established by a broad array of variables, such as organizational culture, leadership, and external factors. Additionally, it is difficult to measure the impact of governance on institutional performance since it is made up of qualitative variables that are difficult to quantify.

Nonetheless, empirical evidence reveals that organizations prioritizing transparency, inclusiveness, and strategic alignment in their governance structures are associated with higher institutional effectiveness perceptions. Students and academic staff who are assured that their voices are being heard, and contributions being valued tend to be more likely to exhibit engagement and motivation, which, in turn, leads to enhanced academic performance and overall institutional performance. Similarly, administrative staff serving in open and strategically aligned governance structures tend to be more likely to exhibit efficiency and effectiveness in their respective roles.

Even though the link between good governance and effective institutional performance is sometimes not necessarily axiomatic, the promotion of practices honoring transparency, inclusiveness, and strategic alignment can go a long way towards improving perceptions of institutional effectiveness. Institutions that strive to incorporate these qualities into their governance structure are better able to achieve their strategic goals and create a healthy academic environment.

4.4. Perceived Effectiveness of Academic Governance

Perceptions of governance effectiveness vary between stakeholder groups. Deans and Directors are more likely to be positive about governance effectiveness than Faculty and Students. This suggests a potential disconnect between opinion and leadership perceptions and views of those most directly impacted by governance decisions.

The differences in the perceptions observed can be attributed to several reasons. People in positions of authority, including Deans and Directors, are likely to have better access to information and engage more in decision-making. Their roles allow them to see the overall strategic goals and the rationale behind governance decisions, which could lead to a more positive evaluation of governance effectiveness. They could also have an interest in presenting governance in a positive manner since such presentations have consequences for their leadership and managerial skills.

On the other hand, students and faculty members, as the stakeholders most directly affected by governance decisions, might feel disconnected from the decision-making process. They might feel that there is a lack of transparency and involvement, and this can create a sense of disenfranchisement. These stakeholders' issues are more about the adequacy of communication, representation of their interests, and how much their voices are heard and heeded. If the governance structures fail to properly address these issues, it can create dissatisfaction and a sense that the governance is of limited value.

The leadership and other stakeholders' gap highlight the imperative to bridge communication gaps and foster a culture of governance that is more participatory. Faculty and Students must be given substantive opportunities to participate in governance processes, for this is essential in enhancing their perceptions of effectiveness. To attain this goal can entail embracing constant consultations, open forums, and open channels of communication that allow stakeholders to air their views and concerns. In addition, leadership has to prioritize feedback mechanisms that embody a firm commitment to listening and reacting to the Faculty and Students' needs.

Enhancing perceptions of stakeholders regarding the effectiveness of governance involves a collective effort to harmonize the governance practices with the values of transparency, inclusiveness, and strategic alignment. Through active engagement with students and faculty and through dispelling their anxieties, institutions can become more united and nurturing milieus. This can result in increased engagement, satisfaction, and overall institutional achievement.

The different perceptions regarding governance effectiveness of Deans, Directors, Faculty, and Students highlight the importance of a more communicative and participative governance approach. Reducing such a disconnect with greater stakeholder involvement and open decision-making procedures can promote trust and collaborative culture, which is vital to deliver the positive institutional outcomes that effective governance aims to accomplish.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusions

The academe governance of the state universities and colleges (SUCs) of the Zamboanga Peninsula is a continuous process. While there are some things that are commendable and positively identified, there are some things that require more attention and improvement.

Addressing Faculty and Student Concerns

It is crucial to take note of and act on the grievances raised by the faculty and the students. This means listening to them, hearing what they have to say, and taking steps to correct the wrongs that have been committed. This can help make the governance system more participative and sensitive to the concerns of its most important stakeholders.

Improving Communication and Transparency

The principles of transparency and communication are essential components of effective governance. A serious effort must be initiated and put in place to communicate decision-making clearly to all stakeholders and be open about the rationale for the decisions. Transparency has the potential to enhance the level of trust and sense of shared purpose within the organization.

Aligning Governance Practices with Institutional Mission and Strategic Goals

Governance practices must align with the strategic objectives and the mission of the institution to reflect relevance and harmony. Alignment ensures that the institution moves forward and attains its goals. Frequent reviews and evaluations of the governance practices should be conducted to ensure alignment with the changing goals of the institution.

Promoting Collaboration and Inclusivity

Creating a culture of inclusive and collaborative governance is key to creating a positive and productive learning environment. Enabling engagement from various stakeholder groups, including students, staff, and faculty, will lead to promotion of more effective and successful governance processes.

Strengthening Leadership Commitment

The investment of Presidents and VPAAAs, especially, in values of innovation, collaboration, and transparency lies at the heart of influencing the culture of governance. Presidents and VPAAAs making such commitment can lead to positive change and a more enabling governance environment.

Tailoring Governance Solutions to Local Context

The challenges and opportunities for SUCs in the Zamboanga Peninsula must be addressed in the formulation of governance solutions. The limitations of scarce resources, technical issues, and calls for participation at the grassroots level must be addressed in formulating effective and context-appropriate governance solutions. Solutions must be contextualized, taking into consideration the diverse needs and uniqueness of the region. Regional context must also be integrated in the governance solutions and processes.

Enhancing Institutional Effectiveness

The governance practices of transparency, inclusivity, and strategic alignment have been linked to perception of positive institutional effectiveness. By prioritizing these, SUCs can be more effective overall and more supportive of the success of their students, faculty, staff and communities.

By focusing on these areas, the SUCs of the Zamboanga Peninsula can work towards establishing a better, balanced, and responsible system of governance that promotes the success of their students, faculty, staff and communities.

5.2.Recommendations

Based on the findings of the research study, certain recommendations can be made to enhance the academic governance of State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) in the Zamboanga Peninsula.

First, inclusive decision-making systems must be established. The objective can be achieved by establishing forums and committees that include representatives from all the stakeholder groups—students, faculty, and staff. These inclusive systems ensure that several viewpoints are considered, leading to more comprehensive governance decisions.

Also, investment in leadership development is imperative. Instituting training and development initiatives for Presidents and Vice Presidents for Academic Affairs (VPAAAs) on collaboration, transparency, and innovative leadership practices can enhance these values within the governance framework. Effective leadership can go a long way in fostering a healthy governance environment. Another very important recommendation is to create regional governance frameworks specific to the SUCs' needs in the Zamboanga Peninsula. With the unique challenges of a limited resources, technology infrastructure, and the demand for community engagement, these must be considered in the formation of effective governance solutions. Specially crafted solutions to address regional issues and concerns will be more effective.

In addition, improving communication channels is critical to the improvement of transparency. Improving clearly defined and consistent channels for conveying governance decisions, plans, and results to all stakeholder groups will improve openness and trust. Open communication is one of the cornerstones of good governance.

Ongoing monitoring and assessment of governance processes are necessary. Deployment of audits to identify areas of improvement, while at the same time ensuring alignment with strategic goals, will guarantee continuous improvement of the governance system. Outcomes of these audits can be used in guiding data-based and evidence-informed changes.

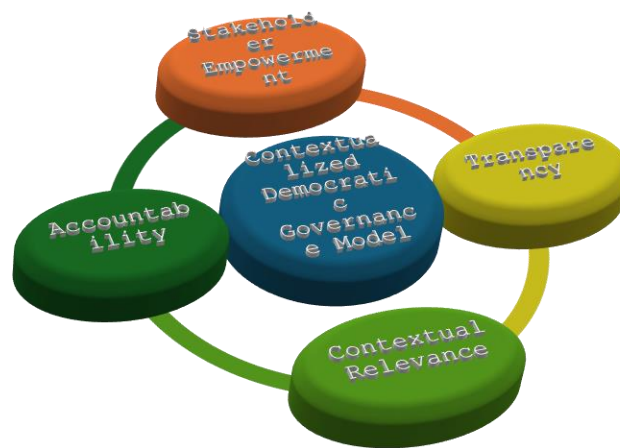
Lastly, partnerships with the community are recommended. Increasing cooperation with local communities through collaborative activities and projects that advance institutional goals will enhance the value and impact of SUCs in the region. Good community relations will benefit both the institutions and the broader community.

The SUCs of the Zamboanga Peninsula can enhance their system of governance to be more effective, collaborative, transparent, and inclusive. These changes will ultimately accrue to the benefit of students, teachers, and the affiliated communities.

Proposed Governance Model

Although the dominant forms of leadership and governance encourage stakeholder engagement and democratic values, the day-to-day experiences of students and scholars reflect that there is a wide disjunction. What this means is that dominant models are not effectively converting these values into real and tangible practices.

Figure 2.
Contextualized Democratic Governance Model (Mohammad, 2025)



Borrowing from the stakeholder empowerment dimension as well as contextuality, the title given to this new governance model is **Contextualized Democratic Governance Model (CDGM)**. A Contextualized Democratic Governance Model (CDGM) is a governance model that seeks to enhance stakeholder involvement by being true to democratic principles but aware of the local context and interests of the specific community involved. The model seeks to integrate indigenous

knowledge and customary practices in decision-making, thus making the governance context-specific and responsive to the particular cultural, social, and economic contexts of the stakeholders involved.

The major features of the CDGM are:

- (1) Stakeholder Empowerment - Involving stakeholders in governance structures, thus evoking a sense of ownership and participation.
- (2) Transparency - Guaranteeing that all governance-related actions are transparent and readily available, thereby fostering trust and accountability.
- (3) Contextual Relevance - Aligning governance plans with the local situation, customs, and knowledge systems, thereby making the decisions more effective and suitable.
- (4) Accountability - Establishing systems that hold the decision-makers accountable for their actions and thereby ensure that government is always in the best interest of everyone involved.

By adopting the CDGM, SUCs can bridge the gap between espoused and actual practice, thus creating a system of governance that is truly responsive and reflective of the aspirations and needs of their corresponding communities.

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