

Received: May 2023 Accepted: June 2023
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.58262/ks.v11i02.175>

Contemporary Aspects of University Governance: An Empirical Evidence from the Lao Pdr

Phouvong Aphay¹, Somsak Srisontisuk^{2*}, Awuth Ruenpakpoj³

Abstract

This article aims to analyze the factors influencing university governance in Lao PDR. The study surveyed 454 respondents from various institutions, including the Ministry of Education and Sports and several universities. Data was collected using a 49-item questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale. Exploratory factor analysis identified the key components of university governance, termed "SMART" (Systematic and Equitable Human Resource Development, Management University System with Transparency and Fairness, Access and Participation of Stakeholders, Responsibilities and Assignment in Accordance with Quality Standards, Teaching and Learning Management, Monitoring System, and University Communication Channel). This research contributes to understanding contemporary academic administration in Lao PDR.

Keywords: Contemporary University Governance, Components of University Governance, SMART University, Exploratory Factor Analysis, Lao PDR

Introduction

The origins of university governance in Laos have their roots in the era of French colonial rule. Launched in 1911, the École Normale Supérieure de Vientiane marked the initiation of higher education in Laos. While its primary mission was to train teachers, it also provided coursework in various other academic disciplines (Swe K., M. & Liu, Y., 2022). Following Laos' independence in 1954, the government established colleges that offered a diverse range of diploma and bachelor degree programs (Boni, 2022).

These institutions were tasked with providing higher education across various disciplines (Halpern, J. & Tinsman, M. C., 1966). Regrettably, the colleges faced severe disruptions due to the protracted civil war that endured from 1954 to 1975. The historical backdrop of university governance in Laos is intricate, shaped by the legacies of colonialism, socialism, and the demands of post-independence state-building (Noonan, R., 2014).

The centralization of governance and constraints on academic liberties have presented substantial hurdles to the advancement of higher education within the nation (Punya, S., & Rehbein, B., 2020). Nonetheless, contemporary initiatives aimed at enhancing educational quality, fostering research activities, and forging international collaborations indicate a promising path forward. Ever since the advent of literacy, human resource development within the educational system has been guided by specific objectives at various levels (Tanaka et al., 2019). The progress of a nation necessitates not only the cultivation of skilled laborers but also the nurturing of individuals with advanced knowledge (Kyophilavong, P., Ogawa, K., Kim, B., & Nouansavanh, K., 2018), demanding effective management (Hayden, M., 2019; International Labour Organization, 2022).

¹Champasak Provincial Education and Sports Department, Lao PDR. Email: phouvong.phd@gmail.com

²Khon Kaen University, Thailand. Email: somstri4@kku.ac.th; * Corresponding Author

³Surat Thani Rajabhat University, Thailand. Email: awuth.rue2@sru.ac.th

The Lao People's Democratic Republic, a member of the ASEAN Community, has joined forces with the intention of fulfilling its national workforce goals (Government of the Lao PDR, 2018). In the past, Laos faced the challenge of limited resources, funding, and qualified personnel for its higher education institutions (Inui, M., 2021). This situation prevented the establishment of comprehensive university-level education (MOES, 2023). In pursuit of improved higher education standards, a pivotal step was taken in 1996 with the establishment of the National University of Laos, formed by amalgamating 10 public higher education institutions from various ministries (Prime Minister's Office, 1995). This university comprised 10 faculties and a foundation study school. Subsequent to this, in response to the burgeoning national socio-economic plan and labor market demands (Government of the Lao PDR, 2016; MOES, 2015), a Prime Ministerial

decree was revised in 2000 to enhance the quality and quantity of human resource development (Prime Minister's Office, 2000). This led to the founding of Champasak University in 2002 (Prime Minister's Office, 2002), Suphanouvong University in 2003 (Prime Minister's Office, 2003), the elevation of the Faculty of Health Sciences to a University of Health Sciences in 2008 (Prime Minister's Office, 2008), and the establishment of Savannakhet University in 2009 (Prime Minister's Office, 2009). These universities now offer a range of academic programs, from undergraduate to PhD levels. Concurrently, private education also experienced growth (MOES, 2023).

Guided by the “Decree on Higher Education” from 2015, higher education activities were mandated to uphold principles such as alignment with human resource development needs, the national socio-economic development plan, incorporation of educational characteristics and principles, facilitation of lifelong learning, and ensuring equitable access to education (Government of the Lao PDR, 2015). The administration and management of education aimed to enhance efficacy through decentralized implementation, in line with the “Three-Builds” Policy at all administrative levels (Punya, S., & Rehbein, B., 2020).

Over time, there have been significant improvements and changes in education administration and management (Sithirajvongsa, S., 2022). However, certain issues still require attention to ensure the system's effectiveness and long-term sustainability (MOES, 2022). While the policy of decentralization aims to delegate authority, there is a need to enhance the capacity of implementers, especially in terms of skills and technical expertise among educational administrators and staff (Demas, A., Naka, E., & Mason, J. A., 2018).

In the contemporary context, the terms “governance” and “good governance” have gained prominence in development theories and strategies for sustainable goals (United Nations, 2021). The concept of governance, spanning corporate, international, national, and local domains, is not new, with its application rooted in various working procedures (Leicht, A., Heiss, J., & Byun W. J. (eds.), 2018). The United Nations has outlined nine key attributes of good governance, including participation, the rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity, effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability, along with a strategic vision (Keuleers, P, 2014).

Despite past efforts to upgrade administrative processes and structures across the four universities, the quality of education and graduates has not yet reached a satisfactory level, as noted in a recent report by the Ministry of Education and Sports in 2023 (MOES, 2023). Only one of the four universities is affiliated with the Asian University Network (AUN), which aims to elevate teaching and research standards in higher education (AUN Secretariat, n.d.) (ITO & HOSOYA, 2016).

Various endeavors have been made to modernize administrative procedures and organizational structures within these universities (Chanphengxay, K., Sroinam, S., & Intusamith, M., 2019). Notably, three significant committees—the University Council, Academic Council, and University Executive Board—play crucial roles (Sirilak S., & Wannasri, J., 2023). Yet, the Lao government's aspiration to elevate university management to international standards remains challenging in practice (Prix, P., 2020).

Therefore, the researcher suggests investigating management guidelines for the four institutions in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, with the objective of aligning them with global standards and thereby enhancing the quality of higher education in the country. In recent times, an escalating discourse has emerged regarding the prospective trajectory of university governance in Laos. Divergent viewpoints have surfaced, with some advocating for sustained government involvement in the university system, while others contend that universities should enjoy greater autonomy. Over the past few years, a burgeoning discourse has emerged regarding the prospective evolution of university governance in Laos. Within this discourse, certain individuals advocate for the sustained, robust involvement of the government in the university system, while others contend that universities should be granted greater autonomy. The conclusive outcome of this ongoing debate remains uncertain. Nevertheless, it is evident that the landscape of university governance in Laos is presently undergoing a phase of transformation. As such, this article endeavors to delve into the factors that exert influence over the governance of universities in Lao PDR (Vo & Ton-That, 2020).

Review of Literature

University Governance Trends

International research has highlighted the global trends in university governance. Universities worldwide are transitioning from traditional hierarchical models to more decentralized and participatory governance structures (Gornitzka, et al., 2017). This shift emphasizes stakeholder involvement, accountability, and responsiveness to societal needs. Hong (2018) compared public university governance in China and Australia, finding that: Australian universities have more autonomy and power than Chinese universities. They are governed by university councils and use a more business-oriented management mechanism. Australian universities are also increasingly reliant on revenue from full-fee paying international students. In contrast, Chinese universities are more subject to government oversight and use a more bureaucratic and hierarchical management structure. They are still primarily funded by the government, but government funding has been decreasing. These differences in university governance reflect the different political and economic systems in Australia and China. The research titled “University governance in China and Japan: Major findings from national surveys” (Huang, F., 2018) reveals that, although changes have occurred in the governance arrangements of universities in both countries under the influence of the new public management, entrepreneurialism, and other factors, the two case studies suggest while reforms in each country share some features in common with many systems, the two national systems embody two distinctive patterns of governance (Ding, Lenhart, & Behncke, 2014).

Higher Education Governance in Southeast Asia

Higher education governance in Southeast Asia is evolving, with a growing emphasis on institutional autonomy and performance-based funding. However, challenges remain, such as a lack of transparency and accountability in some countries and limited capacity of some universities to manage their own affairs effectively (Shin, J. C., Li, X., Nam, I., & Byun, B. K. (2022). Research specific to Southeast Asia acknowledges the diversity in governance models across countries in the region. Governance structures are influenced by historical, cultural, and political factors (Ratanawijitrasin, S., 2015). The study in Laos contributes to this understanding by providing empirical evidence of governance dynamics in a Southeast Asian context (St. George, E. (2020).

Governance and Institutional Performance

Good governance is the foundation for high institutional performance. Well-governed institutions are efficient, effective, accountable, and responsive to their stakeholders. They are also more likely to adapt to change and promote economic development and social progress. The key factors of good governance are the rule of law, accountability, participation, and effectiveness. When these factors are present,

institutions are more likely to deliver on their goals and meet the needs of their citizens (Saito, et al., 2015). The culture of institutional governance at a Lao public university is hemmed in by State controls and ideology, has an overwhelmingly bureaucratic and managerial culture, and lacks the governance structure to support institutional and academic autonomy. Resource constraints also contribute to the institution's limited capacity to exercise autonomy (Moxom, N., & Hayden, M., 2018). Numerous studies have established a strong link between effective governance and institutional performance in higher education. Effective governance practices are associated with improved educational quality, research productivity, and community engagement (Sternberg, R. J., et al., 2015; Maassen & Olsen, 2007). The introduction of the governance model in the study aligns with the development of governance models and frameworks to guide effective university administration. International best practices often emphasize strategic planning, transparency, and stakeholder engagement (Altbach, P. G., & Salmi, J. (Eds.), 2011; Chaleunphonh, S., 2013).

Quality Assurance and Accreditation: Governance in higher education is closely tied to quality assurance and accreditation processes. Ensuring adherence to quality standards is a key aspect of contemporary governance (Harvey & Green, 1993). The Lao government has implemented reforms to increase the autonomy and quality of higher education institutions. However, some critics argue that these reforms are based on a neoliberal, dichotomous framework that is not appropriate for the Lao context. They argue that the focus on autonomy and competition will lead to increased inequality between universities and to a decline in the quality of education for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. They also argue that the dichotomous framework is not relevant to the needs of the Lao economy, which requires a more diverse range of higher education institutions (Tappe, O., 2013).

Challenges in University Governance: According to Yamada, N. (2018) researching titled “Legitimation of the Lao People’s Revolutionary Party: Socialism, Chintanakan Mai (New Thinking) and Reform” the argument posits that the Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP) has pursued legitimacy since the establishment of the regime by employing a dialectical combination of economic reform and socialist ideology (Sonoda et al., 2017). This has led to a transformation in the state's university management philosophy in Laos, creating a new challenge in the development of state organizational management systems. Challenges in university governance, such as balancing autonomy with accountability and addressing issues of academic freedom, have been topics of interest in higher education research (Deem et al., 2007).

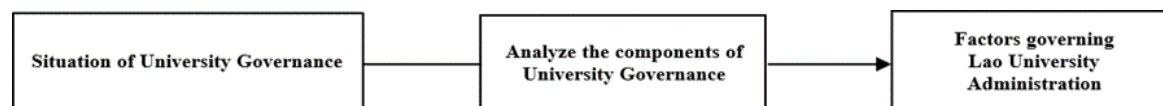


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Research Methods

Population and Samples: This article aims to analyze the factors that impact university governance in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) using a quantitative approach. A total of 454 respondents were selected from a population of 3,163 individuals using a purposive sampling method based on specific criteria. The respondents included administrators and lecturers from key institutions, such as the Ministry of Education and Sports, Lao PDR, National University of Laos, Suphanuwong University, Savannakhet University, and Champasak University.

Demographics of Survey Respondents.

Gender: The majority of survey respondents were male (70.5%).

Age: The majority of survey respondents were between the ages of 31 and 40 (48.5%).

Education: The majority of survey respondents had a master's degree (66.1%).

Job Title: The most common job title of survey respondents was university lecturer (72.5%).

Job Experience: The most common range of job experience was between 11 and 15 years (31.5%).

Data Collection: Data collection was conducted using a questionnaire consisting of 49 items with I.O.C

.9390 and Cronbach's Alpha .9760. These items were assessed using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Through the utilization of quantitative analysis methods and a comprehensive approach to data analysis, this study aims to uncover the factors influencing university governance within Lao PDR. By employing rigorous statistical techniques, the research intends to contribute to a deeper understanding of governance dynamics in the context of higher education institutions.

Data Analysis: Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was utilized to uncover the underlying structural factors and latent constructs among the variables. Initially, eigenvalues for each factor were computed to identify significant factors. To assess construct validity and the appropriateness of the data for EFA, the Kaiser- Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were employed. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity significance was set at $p < 0.05$. In cases of cross-loading or incorrect factor loading during the initial EFA, items were systematically removed and the process iterated until a clear solution emerged. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS 22. The KMO value exceeded the threshold of 0.5, and the Bartlett test demonstrated a p-value below 0.05, affirming the accuracy of the sample and the factors extracted. Maximum likelihood extraction (MLE) was employed, retaining eigenvalues greater than 1 during the analysis. Items with correlation coefficients below 0.5 were excluded due to their lack of significant correlation (Verbeke, W. A., & Viaene, J., 2000; Costello & Osborne, 2005). This rigorous approach ensured the validity and reliability of the factor analysis results.

Acknowledgement

The research outcomes are part of the project “The Governance of Lao Universities,” which received ethical approval from the Khon Kaen University Ethics Committee in Human Research (reference: HE643246, record: 4.3.01: 1/2022).

Research Findings

The survey results suggest that the majority of survey respondents were well-educated professionals with a significant amount of work experience in education. This is consistent with the fact that the most common job title of survey respondents was university lecturer. The results also suggest that the majority of survey respondents were interested in education and research, as evidenced by their high level of education and their work experience in academia. The survey results can be used to better understand the demographics and career interests of university lecturers. This information can be used to improve the recruitment and retention of university lecturers, as well as to develop programs and resources that meet their needs.

Validation of Data for Elemental Analysis: Examination of Data Utilized in Composition Analysis: Upon assessing the data employed for the composition analysis, the following observations were made: the data used in the analysis align with the preliminary assumptions, whereby 30 items exhibited statistical significance at the 0.05 level of confidence. This significance was established through a statistical relationship. (Wiersma, W., 1991)

Data Validation Results for Composition Analysis: The validation of data intended for composition analysis was undertaken using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test. The KMO value computed was 0.976, surpassing the recommended threshold of 0.6 (Burns, R. B., 1990). This validates the

applicability of the set of 49 items for composition analysis. Subsequently, employing Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, an approximate Chi-Square value of 20663.609 was derived. The calculated statistical significance (Sig.) of 0.000 is notably lower than the predetermined significance level of 0.05. This outcome supports the interconnectedness of all 49 items, as demonstrated in Table 1.

Table 1: KMO and Bartlett's Test Result

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.976
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	0663.609
	Df	1176
	Sig.	0.000

Factor Extraction: Upon the completion of element extraction, it was observed that the Initial Community value for all items stood at 1. This signifies that each individual item effectively captured the variance present in every other item. Following the extraction process, the values of Extraction Community for the components surpassed the threshold of 0.5. Consequently, these components can be distinctly categorized and qualify for inclusion in the exploratory component analysis (Shiker, M., 2012). The Principal Component Analysis (PCA) methodology was employed to consolidate the 49 items. Each item was standardized to attain a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1. This analytical procedure revealed the identification of 5 major components within the set of 49 minor items.

2.1) Explanation of Total Variance: During the assessment of Initial Eigenvalues, it was discerned that 5 distinct elements emerged. Each of these elements possessed an Eigenvalue exceeding 1, surpassing the standardization of variance. This observation is reflected in Table 2, where these elements are elaborated upon.

Table 2: Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
S	25.971	53.001	53.001	8.611	17.574	17.574
M	3.164	6.457	59.459	7.585	15.479	33.052
A	2.037	4.157	63.615	6.154	12.560	45.612
R	1.346	2.748	66.363	6.147	12.545	58.157
T	1.148	2.342	68.705	5.169	10.549	68.705

2.2) The term “component” pertains to fundamental constituents that are generally subject to removal.

In this context, the number of components equals the number of items, resulting in a value of 49.

2.3) Initial Eigenvalues indicate the capacity of a component to encapsulate the total variance present in the original item. The total explained variance by each component is as follows: Component S has the highest variance at 25.971, followed by Component M with 3.164, Component A with 2.037, Component R with 1.346, and Component T with 1.148. The “% of Variance” denotes the proportion represented by each component, relative to the total number of components. Mathematically, “% of Variance” = (Total variance/total number of components) \times 100. The “Cumulative %” depicts the accumulation of variances in a cumulative percentage form. The cumulative variance of the five components, i.e., 53.001 + 6.457 + 4.157 + 2.748 + 2.342, amounts to 68.705. This signifies that the combined explanatory power of components 1 to 5 accounts for 68.705% of the overall variance exhibited by the 49 subcomponents.

2.4) Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings quantifies the squared weight of each element. It pertains to the squared contribution of each item in relation to the Total % of Variance and Cumulative %

calculations. These calculations align with the method used for Initial Eigenvalues but focus solely on elements with Eigen Values exceeding 1, which amounts to the 5 components mentioned earlier.

Regarding Factor Loading analysis within the Extraction Method (Principal Component Analysis), the objective is to identify items with high Factor Loading values, typically close to +1 or -1. It was observed that Component S exhibited the highest Factor Loading values across all items.

However, upon closer examination, some items displayed similar Factor Loading values in different components. Consequently, the appropriate assignment of these items to the correct components became less evident. Employing the oblique rotation technique, the researcher proceeded to allocate the items to their respective components in a methodical manner.

Factor Rotation: Orthogonal Rotation employing the Varimax algorithm was conducted using two distinct methods: Principal Component Analysis Case Extraction Method and Varimax with Kaiser Normalization Rotation Method. The rotation process reached convergence after six repetitions. The significant influence on the largest Factor Loadings arises from the directive to rotate the axis, which leads to the emergence of additional components.

Upon axis rotation, the following outcomes were determined: Items I8, I9, I12, I13, I19, I29, I34, I35, I36, I39, I45, and I46 demonstrated high Factor Loading values within Component S; Items I23, I24, I25, I26, I27, I28, I30, I31, I32, I47, I48, and I49 displayed high Factor Loading values within Component M; Items I15, I33, I37, I38, I40, I41, I42, I43, and I44 showcased high Factor Loading values within Component A; Items I1, I2, I3, I4, I5, I6, I7, I10, I11, I16, and I17 exhibited high Factor Loading values within Component R; Items I14, I18, I20, I21, and I22 manifested high Factor Loading values within Component T. Resulting from the spindle rotation technique, it can be confidently deduced that items were accurately assigned to their respective components, substantiating the appropriate composition.

Selection of Factor Loadings: In light of the axis rotation, the items have been restructured into the newly derived 5 components. The determination of each element's weight is made based on the insights presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Factor Loading Score for 5 components.

Item	Factor Loading Score				
	S	M	A	R	T
I1				0.730	
I2				0.701	
I3				0.724	
I4				0.606	
I5				0.506	
I6				0.501	
I7				0.582	
I8	0.566				
I9	0.543				
I10				0.555	
I11				0.572	
I12	0.738				
I13	0.638				
I14					0.502
I15			0.552		
I16				0.552	
I17				0.542	
I18					0.547
I19	0.668				
I20					0.639

Item	Factor Loading Score				
	S	M	A	R	T
I21					0.663
I22					0.560
I23		0.572			
I24		0.573			
I25		0.700			
I26		0.660			
I27		0.674			
I28		0.657			
I29	0.543				
I30		0.642			
I31		0.547			
I32		0.534			
I33			0.667		
I34	0.504				
I35	0.666				
I36	0.577				
I37			0.571		
I38			0.570		
I39	0.730				
I40			0.661		
I41			0.573		
I42			0.652		
I43			0.550		
I44			0.638		
I45	0.676				
I46	0.623				
I47		0.596			
I48		0.593			
I49		0.701			

Implications of Elemental Analysis; The outcome of the elemental analysis has led to the categorization of items into five distinct groups, denoted as: S: Systematic and Equitable Human Resource Development; M: Management of University Systems with Transparency and Equity; A: Access and Participation of Stakeholders; R: Responsibilities and Assignment in Alignment with Quality Standards; T: Teaching and Learning Management, Monitoring System, and University Communication Channel.

This configuration reflects a specific framework for university administration within the context of Lao PDR, encapsulated in the SMART model. The administration of state universities in the Lao People's Democratic Republic encompasses a comprehensive spectrum, accounting for a substantial 68.705 percent.

Key Success Factors in University Governance within Lao PDR Derived from Research Findings

The quantitative research findings have revealed that there are five distinctive components within each element, which collectively constitute the SMART model: Systematic and Equitable Human Resource Development; Management of University Systems with Transparency and Equity; Access and Participation of Stakeholders; Responsibilities and Assignment in Alignment with Quality Standards; Teaching and Learning Management, Monitoring System, and University Communication Channel.

To enhance university administration, the strategic approach involves leveraging the outcomes of quantitative research that validate the five success attributes encapsulated within the SMART model. This model forms a foundational framework for the advancement of university governance strategies in the context of Lao PDR. Based on the information presented in Table 4, the interconnectedness of the five components can be visualized in Figure 2 below.

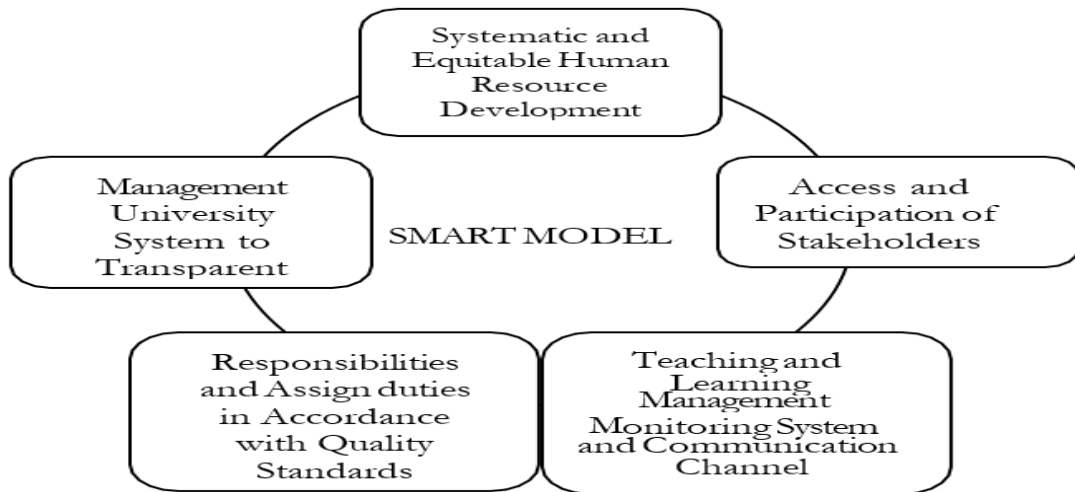


Figure 2: SMART model: The Lao University Governance

Discussions

The study titled “Contemporary Aspects of University Governance: An Empirical Evidence from the Lao PDR” provides valuable insights into the evolving landscape of university governance in Laos. This discussion will delve into the key findings and implications of the research while referencing relevant scholarly literature.

Evolution of University Governance in Laos: The study identifies a shift in the governance framework of Lao universities, moving from traditional models to contemporary paradigms (Moxom, N., & Hayden, M., 2018; Huang, F., 2018). This evolution is in line with global trends emphasizing transparency, accountability, and responsiveness (Siharath, B., 2010; Hong, M., 2018).

Introduction of the SMART Model: The research introduces the SMART model, which includes elements such as systematic human resource development, transparency in management, stakeholder engagement, adherence to quality standards, and effective communication channels. This conceptualization aligns with contemporary governance principles emphasizing the importance of strategic planning, stakeholder involvement, and performance monitoring (Altbach, P. G., & Salmi, J. (Eds.), 2011; Chaleunphonh, S., 2013).

Governance's Impact on University Success: The study underscores the critical role of governance in shaping the success of Lao universities. Effective governance, as outlined in the SMART model, is linked to improved educational quality, research productivity, and community engagement (St. George,

E. (2020). This finding aligns with international research highlighting the relationship between good governance and institutional performance (Sternberg, R. J., et al., 2015).

Implications for Policymakers: The research has practical implications for policymakers and educational institutions in Laos. It emphasizes the need to adopt contemporary governance practices that prioritize transparency, stakeholder participation, and quality assurance (Tappe, O., 2013; Ratanawijitrasin, S., 2015; Sonoda et al., 2017; Shin, J. C., Li, X., Nam, I., & Byun, B. K., 2022). These recommendations align with global efforts to enhance higher education governance (Papanthymou, A., & Darra, M., 2022).

Future Research Directions

The study opens avenues for future research. Subsequent studies could delve deeper into specific aspects of university governance, such as the role of academic autonomy and the impact of governance reforms on student outcomes (Yamada, N., 2018; Hong, M., 2018). Additionally, comparative research with universities in other countries could provide valuable insights into global governance trends.

Conclusion

Recent shifts in university governance within Laos are steering away from traditional centralized models, embracing principles of autonomy, accountability, and transparency. Although still in its nascent stages, this new paradigm holds the promise of elevating the quality of education and research in Laos. Contrasting the previous governance framework of Lao universities with the current approach, the former was predominantly centralized and bureaucratic, while the latter promotes decentralization and flexibility. The recent model prioritizes educational quality and research advancement. Though the efficacy of these governance models is yet to be definitively established, the contemporary approach demonstrates the potential to enhance educational and research standards in Laos. Moreover, the governance indicators utilized by the United Nations (UN) are more widely adopted compared to those employed by Lao universities. These UN indicators serve as benchmarks globally for evaluating governmental performance across diverse sectors. In contrast, the utilization of Lao universities' governance indicators is relatively limited and confined to a few organizations within Laos. Drawing from research findings, Lao universities' governance indicators are structured around five dimensions: S: Systematic and Equitable Human Resource Development M: Management of University Systems with Transparency and Equity A: Access and Participation of Stakeholders R: Responsibilities and Assignment in Alignment with Quality Standards T: Teaching and Learning Management, Monitoring System, and University Communication Channel. The governance landscape of Lao universities is intricate and constantly evolving. Historically, centralized governance models dominated, with the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES) playing a pivotal role. However, recent developments underscore the necessity for enhanced university autonomy. This shift has precipitated reforms, including the establishment of a University Council and the enactment of a new Higher Education Law. The University Council plays a vital role in this emerging governance structure, setting strategic trajectories for universities and ensuring accountability to both government and the public. Comprising representatives from MOES, the university, and the private sector, the Council wields substantial influence. The Higher Education Law furnishes a comprehensive framework for university governance, delineating roles and responsibilities for stakeholders, including MOES, the University Council, and university management. Additionally, the law introduces various quality assurance mechanisms. Recognizing the legacy of centralized public administration's influence on university administration in Lao PDR, efforts are now directed toward instilling effective governance through a model rooted in good governance principles. The goal is to fortify and elevate university management with a flexible approach, enabling Lao universities to attain global standards of excellence in quality and academic performance. In conclusion, the study on university governance in the Lao PDR aligns with global and regional trends in higher education governance. It contributes empirical evidence to the discourse on governance models and their impact on university success. This research provides valuable insights into the evolving landscape of university governance, not only in Laos but also within the broader context of Southeast Asia.

References

Altbach, P. G., & Salmi, J. (Eds.). (2011). *The road to academic excellence: The making of world-class research universities*. World Bank Publications.

- AUN Secretariat. (n.d.). AUN Core Member University. <https://www.aunsec.org/discover-aun/membership>
- Burns, R. B. (2000). Introduction to research, methods. (*No Title*).
- Boni, A. A. (2022). A Special Edition Focused on new Clinical and Commercial Opportunities in Digital Health. *Journal of Commercial Biotechnology*, 27(1), 3. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5912/jcb1021>
- Chaleunphonh, S. (2013). The Road to Academic Excellence: The Making of World-Class Research Universities ed. by Philip G. Altbach and Jamil Salmi. *The Review of Higher Education*, 37(1), 104-106.
- Chanphengxay, K., Sroinam, S., & Intusamith, M. (2019). The Future of the Universities of Lao People's Democratic Republic. *Suthiparithat Journal*, 33(108), 226-238.
- Costello, A. B., & Osborne, J. (2005). Best practices in exploratory factor analysis: Four recommendations for getting the most from your analysis. *Practical assessment, research, and evaluation*, 10(1), 7.
- Ding, W., Lenhart, S., & Behncke, H. (2014). Discrete time optimal harvesting of fish populations with age structure. *Letters in Biomathematics*, 1(2), 193-207.
- Deem, R., Hillyard, S., Reed, M., & Reed, M. (2007). Knowledge, higher education, and the new managerialism: The changing management of UK universities. *Oxford University Press*.
- Demas, A., Naka, E., & Mason, J. A. (2018). *The Learning Crisis in LAO PDR: Challenges and Policy Priorities*. World Bank.
- Gornitzka, Å., Maassen, P., & De Boer, H. (2017). Change in university governance structures in continental Europe. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 71(3), 274-289.
- Government of the Lao PDR. (2015). Decree No. 177/Gov. on Higher Education, 5 June 2015. Vientiane: Government of Lao PDR.
- Government of the Lao PDR. (2016). National Human Resource Development Strategy (2016-2025), 27 January 2016. Vientiane: Government of Lao PDR.
- Government of the Lao PDR. (2018). Lao People's Democratic Republic: Voluntary National Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, July 2018. Vientiane: National SDG Secretariat.
- Halpern, J. & Tinsman, M.C. (1966): "Education and Nation Building in Laos". *Comparative Education Review*, 10 (3), 499-507.
- Harvey, L., & Green, D. (1993). Defining quality. *Assessment & evaluation in higher education*, 18(1), 9-34.
- Hayden, M. (2019). Challenges to Higher Education in Laos and Cambodia. *International Higher Education*, Number 97: Spring 2019.
- Hong, M. (2018). Public university governance in China and Australia: A comparative study. *Higher Education*, 76, 717-733. <https://doi.org/10.1007/S10734-018-0234-5>.
- Huang, F. (2018). University governance in China and Japan: Major findings from national surveys. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 63, 12-19.
- International Labour Organization. (2022). Decent Work Country Programme for the Lao People's Democratic Republic, 2022-2026. Vientiane, Lao PDR: International Labour Organization Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.
- ITO, T., & HOSOYA, K. (2016). Re-examination of the type series of Parazacco spilurus (Teleostei: Cyprinidae). *FishTaxa-Journal of Fish Taxonomy*, 1(2).
- Inui, M. (2021). Improving Education Access and Quality in the Lao PDR. *The Journal of Lao Studies*, 7(1), 75-98.
- Keuleers, P. (2014). Governance for Sustainable Development. *New York: United Nations Development Programme*.
- Kyophilavong, P., Ogawa, K., Kim, B., & Nouansavanh, K. (2018). Does Education Promote Economic Growth in Lao PDR? *Journal of Developing Areas*, 52(2), 1-11.
- Leicht, A., Heiss, J., & Byun W. J. (eds). (2018). Issues and trends in Education for Sustainable Development. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
- Maassen, P., & Olsen, J. P. (Eds.). (2007). University dynamics and European integration (Vol. 4). Dordrecht: Springer.
- MOES. (2015). Agreement No. 46196/MOES on Equivalent Education. Vientiane: Ministry of Education Sports.

- MOES. (2022). Education and Sports: Sector Development Plan 2021-2025. Vientiane, Lao PDR: Ministry of Education and Sports.
- MOES. (2023). Summary of the Implementation of the 2022 Development Plan and the 2023 Action Plan. *Education and Sports Management Conference 2022, 7-9 February 2023, Luang Prabang Province.*
- Moxom, N., & Hayden, M. (2018). The culture of institutional governance at a University in Laos: an ethnographic exploration. *Journal of International and Comparative Education (JICE)*, 35-48.
- Noonan, R. (2014). US Aid to Education in Laos, 1955-1975: A Contribution To Historical Comparative Education, Embedded In Time And Space. *Journal of International and Comparative Education*, 3(1), 153- 169.
- Papanthymou, A., & Darra, M. (2022). Quality in Higher Education: Defining the Conceptual Contents and their Relative Predominance. *Higher Education Studies*, 12(4), 18. <https://doi.org/10.5539/hes.v12n4p18>.
- Prix, P. (2020). Lao PDR: UNESCO country strategy 2020–2021. UNESCO Office Bangkok and Regional Bureau for Education in Asia and the Pacific.
- Prime Minister's Office. (1995). Decree No.50/PM on Establishment of National University of Laos, 9 June 1995. Vientiane: Prime Minister's Office.
- Prime Minister's Office. (2000). Decree No.87/PM on Human Resource Development, 20 June 2000. Vientiane: Prime Minister's Office.
- Prime Minister's Office. (2002). Decree No.214/PM on Establishment of Champasak University, 28 November 2002. Vientiane: Prime Minister's Office.
- Prime Minister's Office. (2003). Decree No.169/PM on Establishment of Souphanouvong University, 4 November 2003. Vientiane: Prime Minister's Office.
- Prime Minister's Office. (2008). Decree No.155/PM on Establishment of University of Health Sciences, 3 September 2008. Vientiane: Prime Minister's Office.
- Prime Minister's Office. (2009). Decree No.091/PM on Establishment of Savannakhet University, 27 March 2009. Vientiane: Prime Minister's Office.
- Punya, S., & Rehbein, B. (2020). Sustainable Development Goals under Party-led Development in Laos. *Journal of Mekong Societies*, 16(1), 89-111.
- Ratanawijitrasin, S. (2015). The evolving landscape of South-East Asian higher education and the challenges of governance. *The European higher education area: Between critical reflections and future policies*, 221-238.
- Saito, J., Keosada, N., Tomokawa, S., Akiyama, T., Kaewviset, S., Nonaka, D., Waikugul, J., Kobayashi, J., Souvanvixay, M., & Jimba, M. (2015). Factors influencing the National School Health Policy implementation in Lao PDR: A multi-level case study. *Health Promotion International*, 30(4), 843-854. <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/dau016>.
- Shiker, M. (2012). Multivariate Statistical Analysis. *British Journal of Science*, 6, 55-66.
- Shin, J. C., Li, X., Nam, I., & Byun, B. K. (2022). Institutional autonomy and capacity of higher education governance in South Asia: A comparative perspective. *Higher Education Policy*, 1-25.
- Sirilak S., & Wannasri, J. (2023). The Management Model for Higher Education Institutions in the Digital Era. *Journal of Education Naresuan University*, 25(1), 46-52.
- Siharath, B. (2010). The higher education in Lao PDR and roles of international cooperation for its university Development-National University of Laos. *Vientiane: National University of Laos.*
- Sithirajvongsa, S. (2022). Laws, Decrees and Strategies on Teachers in Lao PDR: A Situation Analysis. *Lao PDR: Ministry of Education and Sports.*
- Sonoda, M., Syhavong, B., Vongsamphanh, C., Phoutsavath, P., Inthapanith, P., Rotem, A., & Fujita, N. (2017). The evolution of the national licensing system of health care professionals: a qualitative descriptive case study in Lao People's Democratic Republic. *Human Resources for Health*, 15, 1-13.
- St. George, E. (2020). Higher education quality and autonomy—a case study of Lao PDR. *Higher Education*, 79, 753–771. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-019-00435-y>.
- Sternberg, R. J., Davis, E., Mason, A. C., Smith, R. V., Vitter, J. S., & Wheatly, M. (Eds.). (2015). Academic

leadership in higher education: from the top down and the bottom up. Rowman & Littlefield.

- Swe K., M. & Liu, Y. (2022). Handbook of Research on Teacher Education: Innovations and Practices in Asia. Springer Nature.
- Tappe, O. (2013). Faces and Facets of the Kantosou Kou Xat – The Lao "National Liberation Struggle" in State Commemoration and Historiography. *Asian Studies Review*, 37, 433-450. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2013.770448>.
- Tanaka, S. C. S., Hortolani, A. C. C., Pissetti, C. W., Paschoini, M. C., Cintra-Ruiz, M. T., Rodrigues, V., & Balarin, M. A. S. (2019). Polymorphisms in the IL17A gene are not involved in the development of preeclampsia in the Brazilian population. *Jornal Brasileiro de Patologia e Medicina Laboratorial*, 55, 170-181.
- United Nations. (2021). Lao PDR - United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2022-2026. *Vientiane: United Nations - LAO PDR*.
- Verbeke, W. A., & Viaene, J. (2000). Ethical challenges for livestock production: Meeting consumer concerns about meat safety and animal welfare. *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, 12, 141- 151.
- Vo, D.-Q., & Ton-That, H. L. (2020). Free vibration of simply supported steel I-girders with trapezoidal web corrugations. *Reports in Mechanical Engineering*, 1(1), 141-150.
- Wiersma, W. (2009). Research methods in education: An introduction. (*No Title*).
- Yamada, N. (2018). Legitimation of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party: Socialism, chintanakan mai (new thinking) and reform. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 48(5), 717-738.