Comparative Analysis of Governance Models in ASEAN Higher Education: Balancing Structure and Adaptability

Naseehah Hajido[1], Bambang Budi Wiyono[2], Burhanuddin[3], Ali Imron[4]

[1] Faculty of Education, Malang State University, Malang, East Java, Indonesia

[2] Faculty of Education, Malang State University, Malang, East Java, Indonesia

[3] Faculty of Education, Malang State University, Malang, East Java, Indonesia

[4] Faculty of Education, Malang State University, Malang, East Java, Indonesia

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Introduction: Good governance in higher education is essential for ensuring institutional stability, adaptability, and long-term sustainability. It enhances academic, financial, and administrative efficiency while building public trust and global credibility. However, governance models vary significantly across regions due to differences in regulatory frameworks, cultural values, and economic environments. Understanding these diverse models can provide critical insights for developing more effective and contextually appropriate governance frameworks in the ASEAN region. **Objectives**: This study aims to compare governance models at Rajaphat Yala University (YRU) in Thailand and the State University of Malang (UM) in Indonesia. It specifically explores governance practices in five key areas: education, research, community service, student development, and human resource management. **Methods**: The study employed a qualitative dual case study approach. Data were collected through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation analysis. Informants were selected using a snowball sampling technique to ensure the inclusion of relevant stakeholders with comprehensive insights into governance processes at both institutions. **Results**: The analysis shows that the State University of Malang (UM) implements a structured governance model focused on quality assurance, financial transparency, and academic policy enforcement. UM emphasizes international benchmarking, digital financial systems, and strong participation in research. In contrast, Rajaphat Yala University (YRU) integrates regional cultural values into its governance, prioritizing community-based research and contributing to local economic development. YRU's model exhibits flexibility and strong stakeholder engagement, reflecting a high level of contextual adaptation. **Conclusions**: Both structured and adaptive governance models offer distinct strengths. UM excels in quality assurance and global competitiveness through standardized and technology-driven governance, while YRU demonstrates effective stakeholder involvement and socio-cultural integration. The study suggests that an optimal governance framework should combine standardization with contextual flexibility to ensure compliance, innovation, and institutional relevance. These findings contribute valuable perspectives for ASEAN higher education policymakers, highlighting the importance of digital financial governance, research ethics, and community-centered educational strategies. Future research should investigate hybrid governance models, explore the role of university-industry partnerships, and assess the long-term impacts of socio-cultural integration in higher education governance. **Keywords:** higher education governance; institutional autonomy; quality assurance; digital financial governance; university-industry collaboration

INTRODUCTION

Good governance is a fundamental aspect of higher education institutions, ensuring adaptability to external changes while maintaining institutional stability (Erin Friedman et al., 2023). Effective governance contributes to the long-term sustainability of universities by addressing challenges in academic, financial, and administrative domains (Maisyaroh et al., 2021). Over the past decades, governance models have evolved from rigid administrative approaches to more strategic frameworks, aligning with technological advancements and global trends (Perisic et al., 2023). In higher education, structured governance enhances institutional efficiency, academic output, and teaching professionalism while optimizing resource allocation (Wang & M. Obaidul Hamid, 2024). Moreover, it strengthens public trust, international credibility, and inter-institutional collaborations, thereby expanding universities' global reach (Lünich et al., 2024). The shift towards good governance in universities underscores the importance of transparency, accountability, and responsiveness in institutional management (Niedziałkowski & Piotr Chmielewski, 2023).

The implementation of governance in higher education varies across regions due to differences in regulatory frameworks, cultural contexts, and economic conditions. Western governance models, while widely adopted, may not fully align with the socio-political structures of countries like China, Indonesia, and Thailand (Sekulova & Isabel Ruiz Mallén, 2024). In many Asian universities, financial constraints and centralized decision-making hinder institutional flexibility, affecting academic and operational efficiency (Zhang & Xiaoyue Zhang, 2024). In Indonesia, universities operate under a highly centralized system, which limits their ability to develop independent policies and strategies (Doucet et al., 2024). Although Good University Governance (GUG) principles—such as transparency, independence, accountability, and responsibility—have been widely promoted, their implementation remains inconsistent. A general solution to this issue involves strengthening governance mechanisms by incorporating digital technologies and stakeholder engagement to enhance decision-making and operational efficiency (Astuti et al., 2024).

Several studies suggest that adopting digital governance can improve institutional efficiency and accountability. Web-based governance systems provide accessible services for students, reducing bureaucracy and enhancing operational effectiveness (Astuti et al., 2024). Technological innovations in governance also support continuous evaluation and policy adjustments, ensuring institutions remain competitive in the global education landscape (Suti et al., 2020). Transparent governance practices further contribute to minimizing corruption and enhancing public oversight. Effective public information management allows universities to maintain credibility and strengthen institutional autonomy (Landsbergen et al., 2022). However, in Indonesia, higher education governance is still heavily influenced by state policies, which may limit universities' ability to pursue independent strategic initiatives (Arvate, 2013). The reliance on government funding also raises concerns about long-term financial sustainability and institutional autonomy.

While research on higher education governance is extensive, comparative studies between different governance models in ASEAN countries remain limited (Nguyen & Van Cuong Dang, 2022). Given the variations in governance frameworks across the region, analyzing universities in different national contexts can provide valuable insights into best practices and policy adaptations. This study aims to compare governance models at Rajaphat Yala University in Thailand and State University of Malang in Indonesia, focusing on key aspects of governance, including education, research, community service, student development, and human resource management. By examining these governance dimensions, the research seeks to identify strategies that can enhance governance effectiveness in ASEAN universities (Osabohien et al., 2024). The study addresses several critical research questions: How is governance implemented in education and teaching at Rajaphat Yala University and State University of Malang? How is governance structured in research and scientific development at these institutions? How is community service governance managed to align with institutional goals? Additionally, how do these universities implement governance in student development and human resource management? Answering these questions will contribute to a deeper understanding of governance effectiveness in the region and provide recommendations for policy improvements and institutional reforms.

This research aims to analyze and compare governance practices in higher education institutions in Thailand and Indonesia, focusing on key aspects of institutional management. By identifying effective governance strategies, this study contributes to policy recommendations that can enhance higher education governance across ASEAN universities. The novelty of this study lies in its comparative approach, which explores how governance models in different cultural and political settings influence university operations. Unlike previous studies that focus on

governance within a single country, this research provides a broader perspective on governance challenges and best practices in ASEAN (Holzer & Schwester, 2020). The scope of the study includes governance frameworks, decision-making processes, stakeholder engagement, and the impact of governance on academic and administrative outcomes. The findings will offer insights into how universities can balance autonomy with regulatory compliance while fostering innovation and institutional resilience (Ghosh & Darbar, 2020). By addressing these aspects, this study contributes to the broader discourse on higher education governance and provides practical recommendations for improving governance models in developing and transitioning economies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Governance Structures and Models in Higher Education

Governance structures in higher education are diverse, with variations across countries and institutions. Western universities typically operate under autonomous governance models, prioritizing institutional independence, while universities in Asia, particularly in China and Indonesia, face financial and regulatory constraints that impact governance effectiveness (Sekulova & Isabel Ruiz Mallén, 2024; Zhang & Xiaoyue Zhang, 2024). In Indonesia, centralized decision-making and limited government funding pose significant challenges to policy adaptability and institutional growth (Doucet et al., 2024). Different governance models emphasize various aspects, such as decentralized decision-making, faculty participation, and external stakeholder engagement. For instance, the Anglo-Saxon model, dominant in the United States and the United Kingdom, focuses on university autonomy, board governance, and performance-based funding (Marginson, 2018). Meanwhile, in continental Europe, governance is often influenced by state regulations, with universities required to align their policies with national education frameworks (Williams & Moore, 2021). In many Asian universities, governance is shaped by government oversight, where funding allocation, academic accreditation, and policy implementation are centralized. While this model ensures standardization and accountability, it can also limit institutional flexibility. Research suggests that achieving an optimal balance between autonomy and regulation is critical for effective university governance (Landsbergen et al., 2022).

The Role of Good Governance in Institutional Performance

Good governance plays a significant role in enhancing academic productivity, professional teaching standards, and efficient resource management (Wang & M. Obaidul Hamid, 2024). By ensuring transparency, accountability, and participatory decision-making, universities can optimize their operational efficiency and institutional credibility. These governance principles contribute to stronger international collaborations, improved student experiences, and increased research output (Lünich et al., 2024). Moreover, good governance is essential for preventing corruption and unethical practices in university management. Transparent policies on faculty recruitment, student admissions, and research funding allocation are key factors that uphold institutional integrity (Landsbergen et al., 2022). Studies have shown that universities with robust governance mechanisms tend to perform better in international rankings and attract higher levels of research funding (Ghosh & Darbar, 2020). Technology-driven governance has also emerged as a critical component of modern university management. Digital governance tools facilitate streamlined administrative processes, student services, and faculty evaluation, ensuring greater accountability and efficiency (Astuti et al., 2024). Institutions that integrate technology into governance structures are better equipped to handle complex decision-making and improve stakeholder engagement (Suti et al., 2020).

Challenges and Best Practices in Implementing Good University Governance (GUG)

Despite the benefits of good governance, universities face several challenges in its implementation. These challenges include bureaucratic inefficiencies, financial limitations, resistance to change, and political interference. In many developing countries, universities struggle with inadequate funding and outdated governance frameworks, limiting their ability to implement effective policies (Arvate, 2013). To address these challenges, universities should adopt Good University Governance (GUG) principles, which emphasize transparency, accountability, independence, participation, and responsiveness. Transparency ensures open decision-making processes and access to institutional information, while accountability involves clearly defined roles and responsibilities for administrators and faculty members. Independence protects universities from political and external influences to maintain academic freedom, and participation encourages the inclusion of stakeholders such as faculty, students, and alumni in governance processes. Responsiveness, on the other hand, promotes adaptive policy-making to meet evolving educational and societal needs (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2020). Several case studies highlight best practices in university governance. For

example, the governance model at Rajaphat Yala University in Thailand balances state oversight with institutional independence, allowing for localized policy implementation while maintaining national education standards (Nguyen & Van Cuong Dang, 2022). Similarly, universities in Finland and the Netherlands have adopted participatory governance structures, where faculty and student representatives play an active role in institutional decision-making (Holzer & Schwester, 2020). One emerging trend in governance best practices is the use of performance-based funding models, where universities receive government funding based on their research output, graduate employability rates, and student satisfaction levels (Christy & Mangan, 2021). This approach incentivizes universities to improve academic quality while ensuring financial sustainability. However, its success depends on the fairness of evaluation criteria and institutional capacity to meet performance targets (Lee & Tan, 2022).

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach to explore international collaboration in real-life contexts, using a phenomenological approach to understand intercultural and interpersonal experiences (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015; Schramm, 1971; Tuffour, 2017; Yuksel & Sonel Yildirim, 2015; Alase, 2017). A dual case study design is adopted, allowing for the comparison of similar phenomena in different contexts, thereby providing a broader understanding of governance practices in higher education. The analysis is conducted from both individual and group perspectives, capturing details often missed in quantitative methods. The study aims to understand the interactions, reasons, and impacts of international collaboration, with a focus on data collection, analysis, and validity checks.

Participants

This study employs the snowball sampling technique to select informants, where initial informants assist the researchers in identifying additional relevant sources (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013). This method is particularly beneficial for accessing hard-to-reach individuals or obtaining information that may not be easily accessible (Green, 2009). The key informant in this study is the head of the Educational Management study program, who directs the researcher to other valuable informants. The process continues until all research questions are addressed through interconnected informants, ensuring comprehensive data collection relevant to the study's focus.

Data Collection

This study utilizes three primary data collection methods. First, Observation, where the researcher observes without participation, gathering visible, audible, and measurable behaviors related to governance practices. Second, In-depth Interviews, employing open-ended questions (5W+1H) to extract detailed insights through flexible, unstructured approaches that allow respondents to share their experiences freely (Patton, 2015; Kvale, 2007). Third, Documentation, which includes official documents, notes, images, and audiovisual recordings, providing accurate and verifiable data that complement the observations and interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These methods are integrated to produce comprehensive and in-depth data, ensuring alignment with the research focus (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study follows an interactive and iterative process, comprising three main stages. The first stage is Data Classification, which involves summarizing data from contacts and documents, coding information, and reflecting on records across research locations (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). The second stage is Data Presentation, where data is organized thematically and narratively to identify emerging patterns in governance effectiveness (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The third stage is Drawing Conclusions and Verification, ensuring consistency and validity through data comparison, triangulation, and verification to support the research objectives (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The validity of findings is tested using multiple methods, including prolonged engagement, systematic research diligence, and data triangulation (Denzin, 2012). Triangulation involves comparing data from various sources and seeking feedback from informants, peers, and experts (Patton, 1999). These processes ensure that the research findings are accurate, scientifically valid, and aligned with the study's focus, contributing to a deeper understanding of governance models in higher education institutions (Yin, 2018).

RESULTS

STATE UNIVERSITY OF MALANG (UM)

Quality Assurance at State University of Malang

State University of Malang (UM) has developed a comprehensive quality assurance system regulated by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia. This system aims to enhance the quality of education by ensuring compliance with both national and international standards. The primary focus of UM's quality assurance efforts includes learning outcomes, infrastructure, faculty qualifications, and institutional governance. To implement these standards effectively, UM has established the Quality Assurance Unit (SPM), which conducts routine evaluations involving various stakeholders, such as students, lecturers, and external assessors. One of the key mechanisms of UM's quality assurance process is accreditation, overseen by the National Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (BAN-PT). This rigorous accreditation process evaluates programs based on curriculum quality, research output, and overall academic excellence. As a result of these efforts, most of UM's academic programs have received an 'A' rating, significantly enhancing the competitiveness of its graduates in the job market. The structured approach to accreditation fosters a culture of continuous improvement, pushing the university towards higher academic standards. Faculty development is another essential aspect of UM's quality assurance system. To maintain high educational standards, the university requires all lecturers to possess at least a master's degree (S2) and encourages continuous professional development through workshops, research collaborations, and international conferences. Additionally, UM invests in upgrading its academic facilities, such as state-of-the-art laboratories and well-equipped libraries, to support high-quality research and learning experiences. Another crucial component is UM's academic information system, which enables real-time performance monitoring and ensures transparency in budget allocation. Through these concerted efforts, UM has significantly improved graduate employability, resource management, and institutional reputation.

Morality and Ethics in Academic Policy at State University of Malang (UM)

UM places a strong emphasis on morality and ethics within its academic policies. Ethical integrity is fundamental to maintaining trust in academic institutions, particularly in areas such as lecturer-student relations, research ethics, and academic honesty. To uphold these principles, UM has implemented strict regulations against academic misconduct, requiring the use of plagiarism detection software, such as Turnitin, for all research papers and assignments. This policy helps ensure originality and intellectual honesty in academic writing, fostering a culture of ethical scholarship. The university has also established the Academic Ethics Commission, which is responsible for adjudicating cases of academic misconduct. This commission imposes appropriate sanctions based on the severity of violations, ensuring a fair and consistent approach to upholding academic integrity. Additionally, UM actively promotes ethical conduct among faculty members, encouraging them to maintain professionalism and respect diverse perspectives within the academic community. Research involving human subjects is another area where ethical considerations play a crucial role. UM adheres to global ethical standards, such as the Helsinki Declaration, requiring all research involving human participants to undergo review by the Research Ethics Commission. This process ensures that research projects comply with ethical guidelines related to informed consent, confidentiality, and participant welfare. By enforcing these ethical policies, UM not only safeguards academic integrity but also strengthens its reputation as a credible and responsible institution of higher learning.

Implementation of Transparency in Financial Governance at State University of Malang (UM)

Financial transparency is a fundamental aspect of good governance at UM, ensuring accountability in budget allocations and expenditures. The university utilizes advanced digital platforms, such as SIMAK (Sistem Informasi Manajemen Akuntansi Keuangan) and SIPRAJA (Sistem Informasi Pengelolaan Rencana Anggaran dan Keuangan), to monitor financial transactions in real time. SIMAK provides comprehensive access to financial reports, budget distributions, and expenditure tracking, while SIPRAJA focuses on research and community service funding. UM also promotes transparency in scholarship allocation and student organization funding. By providing clear and accessible procedures for financial aid applications, the university ensures that deserving students receive financial assistance without bias. Moreover, annual financial reports are audited by independent bodies to enhance accountability and public trust. The implementation of these transparency measures has significantly improved UM's operational efficiency, enabling better allocation of resources and enhancing the overall quality of academic services.

Student Participation in Research at State University of Malang (UM)

UM actively encourages student participation in research as part of its commitment to academic excellence and innovation. The university facilitates this through various initiatives, such as the Student Creativity Program (PKM) and research grants. PKM provides students with opportunities to conduct research in diverse fields, including education, entrepreneurship, and community service. Successful projects are presented at national and international conferences, giving students exposure to the global research community. In addition to PKM, UM offers independent and collaborative research grants that enable students to access laboratory facilities and receive mentorship from faculty members. These research initiatives help students develop critical skills in scientific inquiry, data analysis, and academic writing. Furthermore, UM fosters international research collaborations, providing students with opportunities to work alongside scholars from prestigious universities worldwide. Many student-led research projects have received funding for their innovative contributions to technological advancements and societal development. Through these initiatives, UM reinforces its reputation as a leading institution for research and academic excellence.

Dissemination of Research Results at State University of Malang (UM)

To ensure that its research output gains global recognition, UM prioritizes the publication of high-impact journal articles and active participation in academic conferences. The university encourages faculty members and students to publish in Scopus and Web of Science-indexed journals, offering financial incentives to support high-quality research dissemination. In 2023 alone, UM successfully published over 200 articles in Scopus-indexed journals, with significant contributions in areas such as educational technology and social sciences. In addition to journal publications, UM actively participates in international academic forums, such as the Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU) and the International Conference on Educational Research (ICER). These platforms provide opportunities for faculty and students to present their research findings, exchange ideas, and collaborate with scholars worldwide. Furthermore, UM supports open-access publishing to align with global academic transparency initiatives, ensuring that research findings are accessible to a broader audience. By maintaining a strong focus on research dissemination, UM enhances its visibility in the academic community and strengthens its position as a premier research university in Indonesia and beyond. The university's strategic approach to research publication and international collaboration plays a vital role in advancing knowledge and addressing societal challenges through academic inquiry.

YALA RAJABHAT UNIVERSITY (YRU)

Adaptation of Thai Regulations at Yala Rajabhat University

Yala Rajabhat University (YRU) has strategically positioned itself as a higher education institution that not only complies with national regulations on education standards and quality assurance but also tailors its policies to fit the socio-cultural context of the predominantly Malay-speaking region. This approach ensures that the university remains relevant and responsive to the needs of its students, faculty, and the broader community it serves. One of the most significant aspects of YRU's adaptation is its incorporation of specialized courses that focus on Malay-Patani culture and language. By integrating these subjects into the curriculum, the university acknowledges and preserves the cultural heritage of the region while providing students with an education that resonates with their identity and background. These courses not only facilitate cultural preservation but also serve as a bridge for students and faculty to engage with broader discussions on multiculturalism and regional identity within Thailand. Additionally, YRU's vocational programs are aligned with local industry needs, ensuring that graduates are well-prepared for the job market. Through strategic partnerships with local businesses and industries, the university enhances job readiness among its students. This collaboration allows students to gain practical experience through internships, hands-on training, and industry-led workshops. As a result, graduates are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to contribute effectively to the local economy, particularly in sectors such as agriculture, handicrafts, and small business enterprises that are crucial to the region's economic landscape. Beyond local adaptations, YRU integrates research-based education models inspired by European and American universities. These models emphasize critical thinking, innovation, and interdisciplinary collaboration, ensuring that students receive a well-rounded education. However, instead of directly replicating these models, the university tailors them to fit the regional context, ensuring their applicability and effectiveness in addressing local challenges. Collaboration with local government and private enterprises further strengthens YRU's adaptive strategies. Research funding is secured through these partnerships,

particularly for projects that focus on economic and cultural development. These collaborative efforts reinforce the university's role as a key driver of regional progress, balancing national policy compliance with the specific educational priorities of the local community.

Transparency and Accountability at Yala Rajabhat University

Transparency and accountability are foundational principles in the governance of YRU. The university has embraced digital governance tools to enhance administrative efficiency and ensure institutional integrity. One of the primary digital systems in place is the SIMAK academic management system, which allows real-time monitoring of academic progress and administrative functions. This system enables faculty, students, and administrators to access and update academic records, track student performance, and manage course enrollments efficiently. Financial oversight is another crucial aspect of transparency at YRU. The university employs a digital reporting system to monitor budget allocations, scholarship disbursements, and financial transactions. By digitizing financial records, YRU ensures that funds are managed responsibly and that all financial processes remain auditable and transparent. This system also allows stakeholders, including students and faculty, to track how financial resources are allocated, thereby fostering trust in the university's management. To reinforce institutional accountability, YRU conducts regular audits and faculty evaluations. These evaluations assess teaching effectiveness, research contributions, and overall faculty performance, ensuring that academic standards remain high. Additionally, open policy forums are held periodically, allowing students, faculty, and other stakeholders to participate in decision-making processes. By integrating these digital oversight mechanisms, YRU promotes a fair, transparent, and accountable governance system, ensuring that its academic and administrative operations align with the highest standards of integrity.

Application of Rule of Law in Research at Yala Rajabhat University

Research at YRU is governed by a strict adherence to both national and international policies, ensuring ethical standards and academic integrity. The Research Ethics Committee oversees all research activities, providing guidelines and ensuring compliance with ethical regulations. This committee plays a critical role in maintaining research integrity, particularly in studies that involve human subjects, environmental sustainability, and community-based projects. A key focus of research at YRU is community empowerment. Many of the university's research initiatives are designed to support local industries, such as handicrafts and agriculture. Through applied research, faculty and students develop innovative solutions to improve production efficiency, enhance product quality, and promote sustainable business practices. These research projects often involve close collaboration with local artisans, farmers, and business owners, ensuring that the findings and recommendations are directly applicable and beneficial to the community. Moreover, YRU has established collaborative research partnerships with universities in Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia. These cross-border research initiatives facilitate knowledge exchange, promote regional academic collaboration, and contribute to solving shared challenges in Southeast Asia. By engaging in international research collaborations, YRU enhances its academic reputation and provides students and faculty with valuable opportunities for intellectual growth and professional development. Compliance with ethical standards, including those outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, is a fundamental aspect of research at YRU. Ethical considerations are integrated into all stages of the research process, from proposal development to data collection and publication. This commitment to ethical research ensures that studies conducted at YRU contribute positively to society and uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. In addition to ethical considerations, YRU prioritizes research initiatives that support environmental sustainability and rural development. Projects focusing on climate change adaptation, sustainable agriculture, and natural resource management receive institutional support, demonstrating the university's commitment to addressing pressing environmental challenges. These initiatives align with national and global sustainability goals, further strengthening YRU's role as a research-oriented institution dedicated to positive societal impact.

Lecturer and Student Collaboration in Research at Yala Rajabhat University

Collaboration between lecturers and students is a defining feature of YRU's academic culture. Faculty members actively mentor students in research methodologies, data collection, analysis, and scholarly writing. This mentorship fosters an environment of academic excellence and encourages students to engage in meaningful research endeavors. Joint research projects between lecturers and students often result in publications in international journals, enhancing the academic profiles of both students and faculty members. YRU places a strong emphasis on research that addresses regional economic issues. Studies focusing on local business development, trade policies, and

sustainable economic practices have gained international recognition, positioning the university as a key contributor to regional economic research. By involving students in these research projects, YRU equips them with practical experience and critical thinking skills that are essential for their academic and professional success. To further develop research competencies among students, YRU provides specialized training in advanced methodologies. Workshops on statistical analysis, qualitative research techniques, and academic writing are regularly conducted to enhance students' research skills. These training sessions prepare students to undertake rigorous research projects and contribute effectively to their respective fields. Student-led research grants offer additional opportunities for hands-on learning. These grants enable students to manage research projects independently, from conceptualization to execution. By engaging in grant-funded research, students develop project management skills, learn to navigate the research funding process, and gain valuable experience in conducting independent studies. This practical exposure enhances their readiness for future academic or professional pursuits. Overall, YRU's commitment to fostering lecturer-student research collaboration has significantly contributed to its reputation as a research-oriented institution. By emphasizing mentorship, providing research training, and encouraging student-led initiatives, the university ensures that its graduates are well-prepared to contribute to the academic and professional world. In conclusion, Yala Rajabhat University exemplifies a well-balanced approach to higher education governance, research integrity, and academic collaboration. By adapting national regulations to local conditions, maintaining transparency and accountability, upholding ethical research standards, and fostering a strong research culture among lecturers and students, YRU continues to position itself as a leading institution in the region. These efforts not only enhance the university's academic standing but also contribute to the socio-economic development of the local and global community.

COMPARISON OF UM AND YRU

State University of Malang (UM) has a more comprehensive quality assurance system compared to Yala Rajabhat University (YRU). With accreditation from BAN-PT and monitoring through the Quality Assurance Unit (SPM), UM demonstrates stricter academic quality standards, supported by highly qualified faculty members and better infrastructure. In contrast, YRU places greater emphasis on compliance with Thailand's national education standards while allowing for more flexible adaptation to local cultural contexts. In terms of academic ethics and morality, both universities exhibit strong commitments. UM enforces strict academic policies through plagiarism detection and an Academic Ethics Commission, whereas YRU focuses more on adherence to national and international ethical standards, overseen by its Research Ethics Committee.

Table 1. Comparison of UM And YRU

Criteria	State University of Malang (UM)	Yala Rajabhat University (YRU)
Quality Assurance	Comprehensive quality assurance system with accreditation by BAN-PT, quality monitoring through SPM, and a focus on faculty qualifications and infrastructure.	Compliance with national education standards while integrating Malay-Patani cultural elements in its curriculum and industry-aligned vocational training.
Ethics and Morality in Academic Policy	Strict policies on academic integrity, including plagiarism detection, an Academic Ethics Commission, and research ethics adherence.	Strong focus on ethical research standards through a Research Ethics Committee, ensuring compliance with national and international guidelines.
Transparency in Financial Governance	Advanced digital platforms (SIMAK, SIPRAJA) for real-time financial monitoring, transparency in scholarships, and independent audits.	Digital governance tools for transparency in financial transactions and administrative processes, along with periodic audits and faculty evaluations.
Student Participation in Research	Active research participation through the Student Creativity Program (PKM) and independent research grants, fostering scientific inquiry.	Emphasizes community-oriented research, with students engaged in local economic and cultural development projects.
Research Dissemination	Strong emphasis on publishing in Scopus and Web of Science-indexed journals, financial incentives for high-impact research dissemination.	Encourages participation in international academic collaborations and regional research on economic and cultural sustainability.

Criteria	State University of Malang (UM)	Yala Rajabhat University (YRU)
Adaptation to Local Context	Follows national policies strictly with an international benchmarking approach to enhance academic competitiveness.	Tailors national regulations to the socio-cultural context of the Malay-speaking region, integrating cultural studies and local economic strategies.
Lecturer and Student Collaboration in Research	Encourages student participation in faculty-led research, providing funding, mentorship, and access to international collaborations.	Facilitates strong faculty-student research mentorship, offering workshops, research grants, and opportunities for international publication.

Regarding financial transparency, UM stands out for implementing advanced digital systems such as SIMAK and SIPRAJA, which allow real-time financial monitoring. YRU also employs digital tools for financial transparency and conducts periodic audits, but its system is not as comprehensive as UM's. In terms of student participation in research, UM once again demonstrates its superiority through the Student Creativity Program (PKM) and independent research grants, which actively encourage student involvement in scientific research. On the other hand, YRU emphasizes community-based research with a focus on economic and cultural development at the local level. UM is also ahead in research dissemination, as it actively encourages publication in high-impact journals such as Scopus and Web of Science while providing financial incentives to increase the number of quality publications. YRU, in comparison, prioritizes international academic collaboration and regional research that aligns with local challenges. However, in the aspect of adaptation to the local context, YRU excels with its ability to tailor national regulations to the socio-cultural conditions of the region, particularly through the integration of Malay-Patani culture into its curriculum and economic development strategies. UM, on the other hand, is more oriented toward international benchmarking without specific adjustments to local culture. In terms of faculty-student research collaboration, both universities take a balanced approach. UM provides funding and access to international collaborations, while YRU places greater emphasis on intensive mentorship, student research grants, and joint faculty-student publications. Overall, UM is superior in quality assurance, financial transparency, student research participation, and research publication. Meanwhile, YRU demonstrates excellence in adapting to the local context, making it more relevant in addressing the social and cultural needs of its region. Both universities share a strong commitment to maintaining academic ethics and fostering research collaboration between faculty and students. Therefore, UM is more competitive on a national and international scale, whereas YRU stands out in strengthening local identity and cultural integration within its educational system.

DISCUSSION

The study reveals significant differences in governance practices at State University of Malang (UM) in Indonesia and Yala Rajabhat University (YRU) in Thailand. UM demonstrates a more structured and standardized governance model, emphasizing quality assurance, financial transparency, research participation, and publication in high-impact journals. YRU, on the other hand, integrates governance with cultural adaptation, focusing on regional socio-economic development, community-based research, and vocational education aligned with local industry needs. Both universities uphold academic integrity through ethical policies, faculty-student research collaborations, and digital financial governance.

Governance Models: Centralized vs. Decentralized Approaches

Governance models in higher education typically fall within a spectrum ranging from highly centralized to highly decentralized structures. Western universities generally favor decentralized governance, emphasizing institutional autonomy, faculty participation, and performance-based funding. Marginson (2018) notes that higher education institutions in Western countries, particularly in Europe and North America, operate with significant independence from governmental control, allowing for dynamic curriculum development, innovative research agendas, and diversified funding sources. This is evident in UM's structured approach to quality assurance and financial transparency, which aligns with the principles of performance-based funding and institutional autonomy. However, the study also finds that UM remains subject to certain centralized governance mechanisms, particularly in financial and policy adherence, mirroring patterns observed in Asian higher education institutions. Zhang & Xiaoyue Zhang (2024) discuss how Asian universities, particularly those in China and Southeast Asia, operate within more

centralized frameworks that restrict institutional flexibility. UM's governance model demonstrates similar characteristics, as it adheres strictly to national education policies without significant local adaptation. This finding supports the argument that centralized governance, while ensuring national standardization, can limit universities' ability to respond to local and international demands effectively. Conversely, YRU's governance approach reflects a more adaptive model that integrates participatory governance principles, similar to universities in Finland and the Netherlands (Holzer & Schwester, 2020). These European universities emphasize shared governance, where decision-making involves faculty members, students, and stakeholders from the broader community. YRU's model aligns with this approach, particularly in its commitment to integrating regional culture into academic programs and economic initiatives. However, unlike its Western counterparts, YRU's financial and research governance remains underdeveloped, consistent with prior studies on governance limitations in developing economies (Arvate, 2013).

Governance models in higher education serve as fundamental frameworks for ensuring institutional effectiveness and long-term sustainability. The structured governance approach adopted by UM provides a model for universities aiming to strengthen quality assurance, international competitiveness, and financial transparency. Wang & M. Obaidul Hamid (2024) highlight that structured governance models contribute to improved institutional efficiency by standardizing academic policies, accreditation processes, and research funding mechanisms. UM's approach to digital financial transparency and performance-based funding aligns with global best practices in higher education management. The implementation of digital financial systems enhances accountability and reduces financial mismanagement, as noted in studies on governance effectiveness (Jongbloed, 2010). Additionally, UM's emphasis on research incentives fosters a culture of academic excellence, which is crucial for improving global rankings and securing international collaborations. These structured strategies serve as a benchmark for ASEAN universities seeking to enhance their governance models in alignment with international standards.

Institutional Autonomy and Faculty Participation

The degree of institutional autonomy and faculty participation significantly influences governance effectiveness. As noted by Altbach (2016), universities with greater autonomy tend to be more innovative and responsive to societal needs. UM, operating within a structured yet relatively autonomous governance model, ensures a balance between national regulatory compliance and institutional decision-making. Faculty members are actively involved in curriculum design and research initiatives, aligning with Western governance models where faculty governance plays a critical role (Marginson, 2018). In contrast, YRU's governance model presents a more participatory yet less structured approach. Faculty participation is emphasized, particularly in community engagement and regional economic projects. This supports the findings of Sekulova & Isabel Ruiz Mallén (2024), who argue that governance models must adapt to socio-cultural contexts to remain relevant. YRU's approach demonstrates that faculty and community involvement enhances institutional relevance, but it also raises challenges in standardization and quality assurance. The literature suggests that while participatory governance enhances academic freedom and local engagement, it must be coupled with strong administrative mechanisms to ensure effectiveness (Birnbaum, 2004). The lack of structured governance in YRU's research and financial management aligns with previous findings that universities in developing regions struggle with institutional stability when relying heavily on participatory models without centralized oversight (Arvate, 2013).

Financial Governance and Funding Mechanisms

Financial governance is another critical dimension where UM and YRU demonstrate contrasting approaches. Performance-based funding is a key characteristic of Western universities, driving efficiency and accountability in financial management (Jongbloed, 2010). UM's approach to financial transparency and structured funding allocation aligns with this model. The university's governance mechanisms ensure that resources are distributed based on institutional performance, research output, and student success metrics. On the other hand, YRU faces challenges in financial governance, reflecting broader trends in developing economies. As highlighted by Arvate (2013), many universities in emerging economies struggle with financial sustainability due to heavy reliance on government funding and limited external revenue sources. YRU's financial structure exhibits these characteristics, as it depends largely on government subsidies and lacks diversified funding streams. While participatory governance enables YRU to integrate regional socio-economic priorities, its financial model remains fragile due to insufficient private sector collaboration and limited research commercialization. This finding is consistent with the argument that universities in developing contexts must enhance financial autonomy through partnerships with industry and philanthropic organizations (Salmi, 2017).

Research Governance and Innovation Capacity

The ability of universities to drive research and innovation is closely linked to their governance structures. UM's research governance follows a structured model, ensuring alignment with national research priorities while maintaining some level of institutional autonomy. This is in line with the findings of Marginson (2018), who argues that structured research governance enhances academic output and global competitiveness. UM's commitment to quality assurance in research, coupled with performance-based funding, facilitates innovation and knowledge production. Conversely, YRU's research governance remains less structured, which poses challenges for academic output and institutional visibility. The literature suggests that universities with weak research governance struggle to maintain high publication standards and secure external funding (Arvate, 2013). YRU's governance model supports the notion that participatory governance enhances academic engagement but requires stronger institutional policies to ensure research quality and impact. The case of YRU illustrates the broader challenge faced by universities in developing regions, where a lack of structured research governance leads to lower international recognition and limited research funding opportunities (Salmi, 2017).

Socio-Cultural Integration and Regional Adaptability

One of the most significant divergences between UM and YRU lies in their approach to socio-cultural integration. YRU's governance model strongly emphasizes regional culture, aligning with the argument by Sekulova & Isabel Ruiz Mallén (2024) that governance models must be contextually adaptable. Unlike UM, which follows a nationally standardized governance approach, YRU incorporates local traditions and community engagement into its academic and administrative processes. This mirrors the governance practices of certain European universities that emphasize local adaptability while maintaining institutional rigor (Holzer & Schwester, 2020). However, while cultural integration enhances institutional relevance, it also presents governance challenges. Prior research indicates that universities emphasizing socio-cultural engagement must balance regional priorities with global academic standards (Birnbaum, 2004). YRU's case exemplifies this challenge, as its strong focus on local governance and cultural adaptation comes at the expense of structured financial and research management. The findings suggest that universities in culturally diverse regions must develop governance frameworks that integrate local engagement without compromising institutional efficiency and academic rigor.

Conversely, YRU's emphasis on socio-cultural adaptation and community engagement highlights the importance of localized governance approaches. This finding aligns with the argument presented by Landsbergen et al. (2022) that universities must balance regulatory compliance with contextual flexibility to remain relevant in diverse educational landscapes. Higher education institutions play a vital role in shaping local economies and cultures, and YRU's governance model illustrates how universities can integrate regional traditions and economic priorities into their strategic frameworks. The emphasis on participatory governance allows for inclusive decision-making, where faculty members, students, and local stakeholders collaborate to develop curricula and research projects that address regional needs. This model mirrors practices in European universities that prioritize cultural integration while maintaining institutional accountability (Holzer & Schwester, 2020).

Implications for Institutional Effectiveness and Sustainability

The integration of both structured and adaptive governance strategies can significantly enhance institutional effectiveness. The study suggests that ASEAN universities can optimize governance by incorporating elements from both UM's systematic governance approach and YRU's localized adaptation strategies. This hybrid approach allows institutions to maintain regulatory compliance while fostering innovation and inclusivity. Quality assurance is a key determinant of institutional credibility and international recognition. UM's model demonstrates the effectiveness of structured accreditation processes, which align with global higher education standards. Universities in ASEAN can adopt similar frameworks to ensure consistency in curriculum delivery, faculty qualifications, and student assessment methodologies. Accreditation serves as a mechanism for benchmarking institutional performance, which is essential for attracting international partnerships and funding opportunities. Effective financial management is crucial for university sustainability. UM's adoption of digital financial transparency provides a replicable model for institutions seeking to minimize financial inefficiencies and enhance resource allocation. By integrating digital financial systems, universities can improve budgetary oversight, facilitate external audits, and promote financial accountability. This aligns with research indicating that transparency in financial governance positively correlates with institutional trust and stakeholder engagement (Salmi, 2017). A structured research governance framework, as

observed at UM, enhances institutional research output and academic impact. Research incentives, funding mechanisms, and performance evaluations contribute to a culture of knowledge production and dissemination. ASEAN universities can benefit from implementing structured research policies that align with international research funding agencies and academic publishing standards. This approach facilitates cross-border research collaborations and enhances the global visibility of ASEAN higher education institutions. YRU's governance model underscores the significance of community engagement in higher education. Universities that prioritize socio-cultural integration contribute to regional economic development and social cohesion. By involving local industries, government agencies, and civil society organizations in decision-making processes, universities can align educational programs with labor market demands. This ensures that graduates possess the skills and competencies needed for employment and entrepreneurship, ultimately reducing graduate unemployment rates.

Balancing Regulatory Frameworks with Adaptive Strategies

An optimal governance model should integrate both structured regulatory frameworks and adaptive strategies that respond to cultural and economic contexts. The study highlights the potential for ASEAN universities to develop governance structures that balance standardization with flexibility. Universities must adhere to national education policies and accreditation standards to maintain institutional legitimacy; however, rigid compliance should not hinder innovation and contextual adaptability. Governance frameworks should allow institutions to uphold regulatory requirements while fostering a culture of continuous improvement and responsiveness to local and global challenges. Higher education institutions should implement governance structures that support adaptive learning models, enabling curricular flexibility, interdisciplinary research collaborations, and industry partnerships. This adaptability ensures that universities remain responsive to evolving economic and technological trends, equipping students with relevant skills for the job market. By integrating industry needs into curriculum development and fostering collaborative research initiatives, universities can enhance their role as knowledge hubs that drive innovation and economic growth. Moreover, governance strategies should incorporate sustainability principles that address long-term financial stability, environmental responsibility, and social impact. Universities must adopt policies that promote financial transparency, resource efficiency, and ecological stewardship while ensuring that institutional development aligns with broader societal needs. By embedding sustainability-oriented governance practices, ASEAN universities can enhance their global competitiveness and contribute to regional socio-economic progress.

Future Directions for Higher Education Governance

The study's findings provide a foundation for future research on governance innovations in higher education. One key area for further exploration is the comparative study of hybrid governance models, which examines how universities across different ASEAN countries integrate structured regulations with localized adaptations. Understanding the variations in governance implementation can offer insights into best practices for balancing standardization with contextual flexibility. Another crucial area of research is the impact of digital governance on university performance. With the increasing reliance on digital governance tools, further studies should assess how digitalization influences financial management, academic administration, and institutional transparency. Exploring the effectiveness of digital systems in enhancing decision-making, accountability, and operational efficiency can provide universities with strategic guidance for adopting technology-driven governance practices. Additionally, university-industry collaboration models warrant further investigation. Research should explore effective governance mechanisms that foster partnerships between universities and industries to enhance graduate employability and innovation capacity. By identifying best practices for collaboration, higher education institutions can better align their curricula and research agendas with industry demands, ensuring that graduates possess relevant skills for the evolving job market. Finally, sociocultural governance in higher education remains a critical area of inquiry. Understanding how universities can balance global competitiveness with local identity is essential for sustaining cultural relevance while achieving academic excellence on an international scale. Future research should examine strategies for integrating local traditions, languages, and values into university governance while maintaining high academic standards and global engagement.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to analyze and compare higher education governance models at Rajaphat Yala University in Thailand and State University of Malang in Indonesia. The primary focus of the research includes education, research, community service, student management, and human resource administration. By examining the differences and similarities in governance practices between the two institutions, the study seeks to identify more effective governance strategies to enhance the quality of higher education in the ASEAN region.

The findings reveal significant distinctions in governance structures. UM employs a more structured governance system with a strong emphasis on quality assurance, financial transparency, and active participation in research and international publications. In contrast, YRU prioritizes local adaptation by tailoring its academic policies to fit the socio-cultural context of the Patani-Malay region in Thailand. In terms of quality assurance and transparency, UM implements an accreditation-based quality assurance system under BAN-PT, monitored through its Quality Assurance Unit (SPM). Meanwhile, YRU focuses more on compliance with Thailand's national education standards while adjusting to local needs. Academic integrity and ethical policies also differ between the two universities. UM enforces strict academic policies regarding plagiarism and ethical violations through plagiarism detection tools and an Academic Ethics Commission, whereas YRU adopts a research ethics committee approach to ensure adherence to national and international ethical standards. Regarding financial governance, UM integrates digital financial systems (SIMAK and SIPRAJA) for real-time budget monitoring, while YRU also utilizes digital tools for financial management but on a more limited scale. In terms of student involvement in research, UM promotes active participation through the Student Creativity Program (PKM) and independent research grants, fostering scientific inquiry. YRU, on the other hand, emphasizes community-based research with a focus on local economic and cultural development. Additionally, UM excels in academic publication, encouraging faculty and students to publish in high-impact journals such as Scopus and Web of Science, while YRU prioritizes international academic collaborations and sustainability-based research. Finally, YRU demonstrates an advantage in adapting to local contexts by incorporating cultural and economic considerations into its policies, whereas UM is more oriented towards international benchmarking without much adjustment to local contexts.

This study makes several contributions. Theoretically, it enriches the literature on higher education governance by highlighting the contrast between a structured, nationally regulated governance model (UM) and a more flexible, locally adaptive model (YRU). It also reinforces the importance of balancing institutional autonomy with government regulation in higher education governance in developing countries. Practically, the study provides insights for ASEAN higher education policymakers to adopt more flexible, evidence-based governance approaches. Universities can tailor governance models that best suit their specific needs by enhancing digital financial transparency, increasing student engagement in research, and aligning academic policies with local demands while maintaining global academic standards. From a policy perspective, the study proposes higher education governance strategies that can be implemented by ASEAN institutions, including performance-based governance, financial and academic administration digitalization, and strengthening research ethics and academic integrity policies. By implementing these recommendations, universities can enhance operational efficiency, international competitiveness, and societal relevance. This research underscores that there is no universal governance model suitable for all universities. Instead, a combination of structured and adaptive approaches can lead to an effective and sustainable governance framework for higher education institutions in the ASEAN region.

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