Issues and Challenges on the Reinforcement of Good Governance at Malaysia's Public Universities from Administrative Perspective

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	The dilemma of administrators' in fending off issues and challenges to reinforce the good governance of Malaysia's public universities is a critical concern that has significant implications for the overall performance. The main actors of administrative personnel known as registrars, bursars, and librarians are responsible for ensuring the efficiency and transparent management of the university's resources, policies, and operations, which are essential for maintaining and enhancing good governance. Registrars, bursars, and librarians often find themselves at the forefront of navigating complex governance-related problems, such as financial mismanagement, lack of transparency, and conflicts of interest. Thus, this paper aims to analyses the issues and challenges of university administrators to enhance university good governance. This research employed in-depth interviews with ten (10) key informants. The informants included the former Chief Secretary to the Government of Malaysia, the former Vice-Chancellor, the former Director of the Department of Higher Education, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, the former Registrar, the former President of the Association's Council, the former Bursar, and the former Chief Librarian. In addition, this research employed qualitative data analysis through thematic analysis using NVivo software version 14, revealing several issues and challenges, including human factors, rapid policy changes, and financial constraints. Finally, this research provides further insights into the concept of good governance. This investigation illustrates that public universities should implement different methodologies or strategies to increase staff engagement and participation, thereby enhancing their governance.

INTRODUCTION

The idea of "good governance" has been widely discussed in policy and academic circles with different interpretations and viewpoints (Kyere & Ausloos, 2020). At its heart, governance is about making sure that the rule of law is followed, and human rights are protected. It also means encouraging openness, accountability, and efficiency in public administration. In a global setting, this multidimensional idea is

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becoming more important as countries and organizations try to improve their governance and meet the changing needs of their stakeholders. Better participation, where citizens and other important people are actively involved in the decision-making process, is one of the most important parts of good governance. This participatory method not only makes governance structures more legitimate, but it also helps meet the needs and address the concerns of different groups (Kamara, 2021). Transparency is another important part of good governance. This means that the government should be open about making decisions, let people see information, and share relevant data (Shefiu et al., 2019). Governments and organizations can build trust, fight corruption, and show they care about the public's values by promoting transparency.

Good governance has been hard to enforce at Malaysia's public universities, especially for people in key administrative jobs like registrars, bursars, and librarians (Ng et al., 2013). These people are responsible for making sure that their offices work properly and are held accountable. They often must deal with complicated political and bureaucratic systems. (2019, Nafi & Kamaluddin). There are many problems that registrars, bursars, and librarians must deal with to keep good government. Asset management, ethical leadership, and managing financial resources are all important parts of good governance, and these managers must work hard to stick to these principles despite the many challenges and stresses they face. Good governance is necessary for public universities to work well and efficiently. Some of the concepts that make it up are honesty, responsibility, fairness, and ethical leadership. Hence, registrars, bursars, and libraries are very important in making sure that these rules are followed in their own areas. (2019, Nafi & Kamaluddin).

In addition, the increasing demand for greater institutional efficiency and effectiveness has put new requirements for professional management, innovative organizational structures, and creative solutions to emerging institutional problems (Sajadi et al., 2014). Shared governance frameworks in universities, comprising governing councils, senates, and administrations, are under strain as they grapple with competing demands from diverse stakeholders (Omal, 2019). In Malaysia, the dilemma faced by registrars, bursars, and librarians involves navigating these complex governance structures and addressing the challenges that arise from the competing interests of various stakeholders. Registrars, as the university's chief administrative officers, are responsible for ensuring efficient management of student records, admissions, and other administrative functions. Bursars, on the other hand, are responsible for the financial management of the institution, including budgeting, accounting, and resource allocation. Librarians, as the custodians of the university's knowledge resources, play a crucial role in supporting the academic and research activities of the institution (Omal, 2019). These three administrative roles are integral to the good governance of public universities in Malaysia.

Registrars, bursars, and librarians must work collaboratively with the governing council, the senate, and the university administration to address the emerging challenges and ensure the effective and efficient functioning of the institution. (Sajadi et al., 2014). One of the key challenges faced by these administrative managers is the need to balance the competing demands of various stakeholders, such as students, faculty, and external funding agencies. Institutional structures of governance across universities are under strain as they respond to these diverse and often conflicting interests. Registrars, bursars, and librarians must navigate these complex governance frameworks and find innovative solutions to address the myriads of institutional management problems.

Furthermore, the growing focus on university governance has also highlighted the need for these administrative managers to possess a deeper understanding of the broader policy and regulatory environment that governs public universities in Malaysia. Hence, registrars, bursars, and librarians must be able to interpret and apply these policies and regulations in their day-to-day operations, ensuring that the university remains compliant and accountable. In undertaking these increasingly complex functions, administrative managers, such as registrars, bursars, and librarians, play a critical role in linking the academic and executive arms of governance in the university. They must possess the necessary skills, knowledge, and expertise to effectively manage the institution's operations while also aligning their efforts with the strategic goals and objectives of the university (Fancisco, 2020).

Therefore, during the in-depth interview with the respective informants, 16 interview questions were used as tools to obtain answers to issues and challenges related to university administrators to enhance university governance in public universities (UA). Several significant individuals in Malaysian higher education were selected to provide valuable comments. This research included three groups of informants: (1) key persons representing the Ministry of Higher Education; (2) higher education officers (policy makers or policy implementers); and (3) higher education experts. It was critical to acquire opinions and conclusions from this set of informants since they were experts in the field of higher education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Governance

The United Nations (UN) describes the term 'governance' as originating from the Latin verb 'gubernare', or more specifically from the Greek word 'Kubernetes', which translates to 'to steer.' Governance pertains to the method of guiding, managing, and overseeing a collective of individuals or a political entity. Governance is intrinsically linked to politics, as politics is frequently defined as the skill of governing. In addition, politicians consistently establish a connection between governance and many elements such as governments, institutions, power, order, and the principles of justice. Governance encompasses the management of the public sector, the distribution of power, the promotion of fairness, and the principles guiding public administration. Politics and governance are separate from each other, with politics encompassing a greater scope than government (Rose-Ackerman, 2016). The traditional study of politics involves the exploration of the notions of the 'good life' and the 'ideal society', which encompasses various themes and types of administration. On the other hand, the examination of governance primarily focuses on the idea of democracy and how the government and civil society fulfil their requirements (Rose-Ackerman, 2016).

However, during the 1990s, political scientists and economists from the western world proposed a fresh interpretation of governance. Since then, the word has acquired a broader connotation and has undergone a significant transformation from its conventional meaning, making it distinctly different from the original concept of 'government'. Rather than being limited to the English language, it is frequently utilised by users of other prominent European languages. Moreover, it extends beyond being solely a political phrase and is widely employed in social and economic contexts (Keping, 2018).

Good Governance

The World Bank provided their explicit definition of good governance. The term "governance" refers to the way authority is utilized in the administration of a nation's economic and social resources to promote development (Hulshof, 2019). The research indicated that the World Bank's focus on governance stems from its concern for the long-term viability of the projects it funds. The study determined that the achievement of sustainable development is contingent upon the establishment of a consistent and easily understood system of regulations and organizations to govern both private and public transactions. Good governance is characterized by the implementation of predictable, transparent, and informed policies, as well as a bureaucracy that upholds a professional code of conduct. Additionally, the executive branch of government is held responsible for its activities. A robust civil society is characterized by the presence of these components, wherein all individuals within the community engage in public matters and adhere to legal principles. The World Bank made a clear differentiation between the political and economic aspects of governance when conducting their analysis. The World Bank's focus on good governance is solely based on its mission to promote sustainable development. This includes the overall impact of good governance on social and economic development, as well as its specific role in achieving the World Bank's primary goal of reducing poverty in developing countries (Addink, 2019).

In addition, Shattock (2006) provided a definition of university governance as the formal structures and procedures by which universities manage their operations. The governance of the university involves the management and decision-making processes that involve both internal and external stakeholders, with the aim of achieving a balanced and constantly evolving state. From a broader viewpoint, governance refers to the systems, connections, and procedures by which policies for evaluating education are formulated, executed, and assessed at both the national and institutional levels. Governance encompasses an intricate network that encompasses the legislative framework, the attributes of institutions and their relationship to the entire system, the allocation of funds to institutions and their accountability for expenditure, as well as informal structures and relationships that guide and influence behavior (Bratianu & Pinzaru, 2015).

University Administrators

The academic power of the University is vested in the Senate, which meets on a regular basis. The committee is led by the Vice-Chancellor and consists of the Deputy Vice-Chancellors, faculty deans, the Registrar, Bursar, Chief Librarian, and a few chosen professors. The Senate is primarily responsible for establishing regulations pertaining to teaching, learning, examinations, degree conferrals, and the encouragement of research. The Executive Committee, which convenes on a weekly basis, is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the university. This committee, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor and consisting of the three Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Registrar, Bursar, and Chief Librarian, is responsible for managing both academic and administrative affairs. Committees are appointed by the Senate to conduct detailed studies on significant university issues. Chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic & International), these committees consist of elected Senate representatives and provide proposal papers for discussion and decision-making. The committees include Senate Committee on New Courses & Departments, and Students Intake, Senate Committee on Research, Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning, Senate Committee on Graduate Studies, Senate Committee on Library, Senate Committee on Examinations and Results, Senate Committee on Examinations and Results (External & Part-Time Programs), Senate Committee on External Programs, Senate Committee on Council of Professors. Additionally, the university relies on several other key committees to manage various issues, such as Committee on University Financial Management Committee on Franchise Programs Committee on Coordination of Management and Development Committee on Assets and Space. Moreover, the university shall have a Registrar, a Bursar, a Chief Librarian, and a Legal Adviser, all of whom shall be full-time personnel. They shall be granted certain authorities and responsibilities as outlined by Statute. The positions of Registrar, Bursar, Chief Librarian, and Legal Adviser may be referred to by other names as decided by the Board. The Board will appoint the Registrar, Bursar, Chief Librarian, and Legal Adviser based on the recommendations of the Selection Committees. The Board has the authority to define the appointment requirements for the Registrar, Bursar, Chief Librarian, and Legal Adviser, in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution. An individual who is selected as the Registrar, the Bursar, or the Legal Adviser will serve a maximum term of three years, unless they choose to resign, vacate their position, or have their appointment revoked. After this period, the Registrar, the Bursar, and the Legal Adviser may be considered for reappointment. The tenure of the Chief Librarian shall be set by the Board. The appointment of the Registrar, the Bursar, the Chief Librarian, and the Legal Adviser can be withdrawn by the Board at any time, provided that the reason for revocation is stated (as per the Universities and University Colleges Act, 2012). In addition, the term "Registrar" refers to the chief officer of the University's Registry, who is appointed under section 21 of the Universiti Teknologi MARA Act 1976, 2006. The term "Bursar" refers to the chief financial officer of the University, who is appointed under section 22 of the same Act.

Registrar

The university registrar provides leadership and oversight for all aspects of the Office of the Registrar. The university registrar plays a critical role in university and academic operations by effectively managing the maintenance and integrity of all student academic records, the approved curriculum, the creation and

maintenance of course schedules, all areas of student registration, and the recording and reporting of grades, compliance with regulations, and the establishment and maintenance of processes for the equitable and consistent administration of policies and procedures as they relate to registration and academic record keeping. The university registrar must provide strong leadership consistent with the academic goals and mission of the institution and carry out essential functions, which include managing staff and operations of the Office of the Registrar. The office of the registrar supervises the registration of continuing and incoming undergraduate students, transfer of credits, and degree evaluations. The registrar ensures the integrity, accuracy, and security of all academic records of current and former students and facilitates an effective student registration process (Lockwood, 1979).

Bursar

The Bursary plays a vital role in financial aspects and is responsible for the identification, selection, and allocation of student funding, which includes undergraduate and postgraduate bursaries, scholarships, and student loans. The postholder is the lead administrator in respect of donor funds and corporate scholarships, supports and champions these schemes to applicants and current students. The role requires significant technical skill in relation to the administration and continuing development of the University's Fund Manager system as well as other parts of the student records database, in relation to student funding. The ability to liaise professionally with a wide variety of people is also essential, together with the ability to understand and interpret complex legislation and financial award frameworks. The Bursary also works independently and collaboratively as part of the Scholarships and Bursaries Team to ensure outcomes and objectives are met in line with the Access and Participation Plan Act as the lead administrator for philanthropic and corporate scholarship schemes, liaising closely with the Department of Development & Alumni Relations. Besides, other roles include providing statistical and progression data in relation to new applicants and current award recipients; liaising with the student Records and Examinations team to ensure that the academic progression of award recipients is monitored correctly, according to the rules associated with each scholarship agreement (Independent Schools' Bursar Association, 2020).

Librarian

The library, based on The Hall Dictionary, interprets a librarian as a person knowledgeable in library management. A library is defined as a building or place for collecting reading materials. Thus, in an era of globalization where information technology (IT) and communication are readily accessible, questions arise about the relevance of a librarian's career. Is it necessary to maintain conventional libraries when there are numerous digital information sources available such questions have been raised, noted by the President of the Librarians Association Malaysia (PPM), Nor Edzan (2015). Emphasizing that the role of the librarian is not only still relevant but also broader, extending beyond the physical library. "There is no denying that technological advancements have changed how information is accessed. Most information can be accessed electronically, and libraries subscribe to numerous databases accessible from anywhere with a good internet connection," said Nor Edzan (2015), who is the Chief Librarian of the University of Malaya. Still, this does not – in academic writing must write full term diminish the librarian's importance; their duties now encompass much more than book loans and catalogue management.

METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS

The increasing popularity of qualitative methods resulted from the limitations of quantitative methods in providing insights into detailed information about attitudes, beliefs, motives, or behaviors, such as understanding the emotions, perceptions, and actions of individuals. Qualitative methods explored perspectives and meanings of experiences, sought insights, and identified social structures or processes that explained the behavioral meanings of people. Importantly, qualitative research relied on extensive interaction with the participants, often revealing unexpected or unanticipated information not accessible through quantitative methods (Mays & Pope, 2000).

In this research, thematic data analysis was employed. This approach is commonly used in qualitative research when the researcher gathers descriptive data to address their research questions. Once the data was collected, the researcher repeatedly reviewed it to identify emerging patterns, themes, and sub-themes. This iterative process allowed researchers to categorize the data into meaningful parts, which could be time consuming if multiple iterations were necessary to identify the main themes and subthemes. Thematic analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006), involves searching across a dataset to identify, analyze, and report repeated patterns. It is a method for both describing data through the processes of coding and theme construction.

Thematic analysis is flexible and adaptable across various theoretical and epistemological frameworks, making it suitable for diverse research questions, designs, and sample sizes. While some scholars associated thematic analysis with ethnography or phenomenology, Braun and Clarke (2006) argued that it stood alone as an analytic method and could serve as a foundation for other qualitative approaches. The principles of coding data, searching for themes, and reporting findings in thematic analysis were applicable to other qualitative methods such as grounded theory and discourse analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Watling & Lingard, 2012). The process of thematic analysis involved "immersion," where researchers deeply engaged with the data to develop interconnected primary themes for final analysis. This approach ensured that themes were actively linked, providing a coherent framework for the study and facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the researched phenomenon (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In addition, a variety of informants was selected to obtain comprehensive and varied responses that encompass numerous crucial elements and facets that serve as substantiation for the study's findings. Such responses will bolster the research and provide answers to its questions. Hence, to address this research, which is to analyze the issues and challenges of university administrators to enhance university good governance, this study was able to obtain significant input from informants who were interviewed, and the interview data was analyzed using NVivo version-14 software. Furthermore, to present the research findings, pseudonyms were applied to the informants, with the aim to conceal the identity of the informants.

The overall findings of this study yielded three main themes related to the issues and challenges of university administrators' to enhance university governance namely, human factors, rapid policy change, and financial constraints.

Human Factor: Talent Sustainability and shortage of manpower

Talent sustainability and manpower relate to the methods and techniques used by businesses to recruit, develop, and retain talented workers. These approaches include talent acquisition, talent management, and human capital management (Allas et al., 2019). Additionally, according to the informants, the sustainability of personnel and shortage of manpower is an issue and challenges for university administrators' participation and engagement in the decision-making process to enhance good governance. This element is commonly associated with the primary determinant, which is the human factor.

> *[…] insufficient human resources may be attributed to a shortage of personnel. You know, he doesn't have the means for it. A university employs many people, both academic and administrative, thus it should be feasible to assemble this single faculty and designate only one individual as the head of the institution to accommodate the decreasing demands for human resources […]. (L4)*

> *[…] i completely agree since I believe that the fundamental problem has been the availability of labor or human resources from the beginning of employment. That is one of the primary concerns because when we wish to shift anything, such as a library, what efforts or actions are required to establish a new library? As a result, there are fewer human resources available. The current problem is that we do not always have adequate personnel. We work late at night, and so forth. This is one of the concerns that need attention: a shortage of human resources […] (L5)*

[…] there must be proper training and growth. If the university believes that its workforce is excellent and exceptional, the procedure of delegating responsibilities to fresh talent must be undertaken. Don't expect to be able to keep a job for 12 years because the culture isn't correct. When compared to the work culture in the private sector, age is not a factor; talent is valuable and must be developed, and any human resource actions, such as exchanges, will be taken to ensure the development of talent that meets the needs of the organization; however, we in the public-sector sometimes consider tradition beyond legislation or regulation, which eventually leads to many people being so relaxed. That is why I believe that the first step in developing and retaining talent is competence, the second is removing the comfortable atmosphere, and the third is an eliminate attitude of expecting things to go as normal. However, this does occur and is influenced by a variety of external and internal circumstances, and in certain situations, it is impossible or not permitted to be modified […] (L7)

Rapid change in Policy: Changes in education policy since technology advancement

Informants also expressed a clear opinion that the technological boom's effects on the university's instructional environment provide serious issues and challenges that need to be managed carefully.

[…] changes in education brought about by technological advancements have the potential to endure for generations. However, it remains uncertain whether these blueprints remain pertinent in the face of the pressures and developments of technology, even in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. While every initial blueprint was commendable, assessing the efficacy of the technology boom's consequences is challenging. It remains pertinent due to our adherence to flexible study practices; however, in the future, it will be crucial to recognize that the digital realm is advancing rapidly and that teaching and learning in higher education institutions must adapt accordingly. This must be made clear to all. Consequently, it is imperative that we investigate novel concepts, including micro-credentials, and even consider the feasibility of conducting the entire teaching and learning process online, eliminating the need for students to physically attend classes on campus. Small numbers of students may participate in academic pursuits and learning processes on campus, contingent upon the nature of those pursuits, due to the altered market and landscape of higher education, which no longer requires students to be physically present. For instance, OUM's approach is more flexible and responsive to emerging trends in higher education, enabling the institution to generate revenue from students enrolled at OUM. This is particularly advantageous for a progressive and versatile institution that conducts all teaching and learning activities online and does not require mandatory physical education […]. (P2).

[…] quality in service delivery, particularly in the use of technology in education... For example, Universiti Teknologi MARA is a major institution in terms of student and staff population. As a result, technological adaptation is critical, and with good governance, large university demographics, numerous branches, and diverse management, the challenges of operating an increasingly complex and challenging university now and in the future can be effectively managed through technology. Changes or technological booms in management today can be seen as a resource that can be utilized to manage the organization, eventually assisting in the improvement of university services. […] (L4)

Financial Constraints: Financial stability and spending management

Universities are also investigating alternative revenue streams to supplement their funding. Potential revenue streams could consist of revenue-generating initiatives like renting out facilities or establishing online courses, as well as philanthropic donations and partnerships (Deering & Sa, 2014). Hence, financial restrictions were also raised by informants throughout the interviews. The informant's motion on financial delinquency is particularly fascinating and relevant since the informant believes that financial delinquency is a significant difficulty in managing and enhancing good governance.

[…] financial delinquency concerns the bursar's responsibilities; the bursar must consider a variety of criteria while considering distribution, spending, and other financial matters. It's all about money now. Although there is autonomy, in certain aspects universities still rely on the Ministry of Higher Education, this money chapter must now stand on its own since the government is no longer able to grant funding to universities. So, sure, it is possible and should be done, but that is not the main argument. The public university must have a university-wide strategy for raising more funding. Endowment to, this endowment, we are all less successful colleges or are still on a tough road in terms of getting money via endowment methods […] (L4)

[…] this financial delinquency affects not just universities but also the government. I have offered a recommendation to the Ministry of Higher Education about revenue production via endowments, which includes boosting endowments at universities but putting them at universities rather than other agencies. However, the institution was unable to fund the allocation via the endowment due to its substantial financial reliance on the government. But then you must figure out how to get funds, whether via endowments, crowd fundraising, crowd sourcing, or other means. In fact, the bursar's position is becoming more vital to ensuring the university's survival. Because if one day the university cannot continue, I see what is occurring in other nations, which has occurred many times in the higher education industry. […] (L4)

[…] if you ask me what makes a university function, I'll say money. However, once the money is disbursed and the government has given the university instructions on how to manage finances, many things have changed, including academic authority, because IPTA does not function to generate money, and the direction of IPTA management does not generate income; instead, we should all be fully sponsored by the government because IPTA is not a private institution. This implies that the IPTA cannot be completely independent, and many issues must still be brought to the government. However, given the autonomy offered by the institution, it is vital to consider what may and cannot be done. There are things we can do, but we never do them in terms of raising revenue. I consider myself extremely fortunate because I have been able to obtain funding or generate income through post-graduate studies, as well as through the development of solar systems that have saved university expenses by lowering some of the main costs of operating the university, such as electricity and water bills, both of which require significant financial commitments. Like Universiti Teknologi MARA, which has 34 campuses, how to pay high electricity bills will undoubtedly confront university administration in the context of operations […] (P2)

[…] The capacity to sustain the functioning of this university via income generation. First, how can we prevent and limit leakage? Alternatively, handle the purchase. How universities can and must save money rather than just increasing revenue. The university must demonstrate its capacity to regulate and manage funds effectively, correct? That's what we do, and more others effort. Based on my observations, some of the officers I've seen are attempting to learn how to control expenses in finance. It's clear that during the Movement Control Order (MCO), many new things were learned that they never thought they could implement, and it helps in financial management, especially savings or expense control, such as the example of meetings conducted online, which has naturally become a practice now that saves finances and expenses, saves time, and saves physical actions. Especially after the Movement Control Order (MCO), I notice a lot of saves, and this is a new thing that universities and administrators' have learned to develop solid financial management, particularly savings […] (L1)

[…] So, the execution process does not occur; in Malaysia, I am not referring to Universiti Teknologi MARA or anything, but execution does not exist. On that basis, most of the planning remains as a book on a bookshelf, and this situation is recognized by many views in the world where reality does not occur because the person who carries out or is responsible for the execution does not understand how effective execution should or can be carried out […]. (P2)

[…] if you are the number one in the department, for example, become the Bursar as the number one in financial management. Now I say the number one or most important position of most university administrations is Bursar rather than Registrar. The Bursar can make policies that can help with the financial management of the university. We all currently only know and get a salary every month, and our management expenses are salary payments or emoluments. Sometimes problems arise with financial policies, and policies execution especially regarding emoluments or bonus policies. The government only gives the budget for emoluments, and bonuses are subjective. However, in the context of management at the university, especially when the government is to announce any financial aid incentives or bonuses, the management or treasurer of the university will be tangled because the university has to bear the cost of bonus payments to staff with internal resources, and usually all vice chancellors, Bursars, or management of the university get along and will make bonus payments to staff […]. (P2)

[…] policy serves as a catalyst for good governance; consequently, we must also examine these policies, of which there is no doubt that many are correct, including promotion policies, health policies, and numerous other policies that are interconnected. Occasionally, it is necessary to revisit the terms of the appointment because certain conditions may have become obsolete and are no longer applicable. Such is my opinion; I am not implying that it is incorrect. There may be a specific moment and moment when the policy is executed most effectively and appropriately. However, as the years pass, such as three to four years after the policy is executed, it becomes necessary to revisit the policy and its execution to ensure that it remains pertinent. We accomplish this through good governance […] (L1)

DISCUSSION

Human factors, such as talent sustainability and workforce, are not just crucial but urgently pressing for the success and efficacy of any institution, including universities (Sujia et al., 2022). The future of higher education is significantly impacted by the immediate need to sustain a reservoir of competent and motivated personnel. The sustainability of talent and the availability of skilled personnel pose significant concerns and obstacles to university administrators to enhance good governance. University administrators must prioritize establishing a sustained reservoir of highly skilled individuals who can assume leadership roles and make well-informed decisions, such as strategic planning, resource allocation, and policy development. University administrators can formulate strategies to attract, retain, and cultivate skilled individuals for high-level administrative roles, establish career progression and professional growth avenues, and foster a nurturing and inclusive work environment (Oyalabu & Gbadamosi, 2023). Hence, to tackle these issues, university administrators must develop programs and initiatives that promote career advancement, create opportunities for professional growth, and provide competitive remuneration packages.

Moreover, university administrators should not just cooperate, but actively seek out and foster partnerships with business partners and other stakeholders to align academic training with workforce needs. This collaboration ensures that the skills and abilities acquired through higher education meet industry requirements and expectations. Additionally, university administrators must prioritize workforce planning and development, proactively identifying and resolving skill deficiencies and anticipating future needs for talented individuals (Hodgman, 2018). These goals can be accomplished through strategic recruiting efforts, training and development programs, and succession planning activities. Involving university administrators in decision-making processes regarding talent sustainability and personnel can increase their participation and dedication, leading to a more streamlined and productive governance framework and enhancing the institution's overall achievements and long-term viability.

Rapid policy change consists of educational changes since technological advancement and policy execution. Hence, university administrators face the challenging responsibility of negotiating the intricate nature of swift policy changes in the constantly changing realm of higher education. The changes in the

policy environment may have significant consequences for the governance and decision-making processes at academic institutions. A key obstacle university administrators face is the need to strike a careful equilibrium between following established protocols and adjusting to the ever-changing landscape of policy modifications (Downes, 2017).

In addition, considering the rapid progression of technology, university administrators encounter an expanding array of obstacles and concerns as they endeavor to actively and efficiently partake in the decision-making procedures that influence the administration of their establishments (Alonso et al., 2020). Technology has become integral to almost all facets of higher education in the contemporary era, including student learning, administrative procedures, and institutional strategy. University administrators must frequently navigate a dynamic and complex environment shaped by this rapid technological evolution, often with limited resources and competing priorities. Administrators encounter a principal obstacle in the form of the requirement to remain updated on the most recent technological developments and trends while also comprehending the potential ramifications that these may have on the institution's fundamental operations and strategic objectives. Successfully conveying the significance of technology-driven initiatives to a wide range of stakeholders, including faculty, staff, students, and governing boards, also necessitates a substantial fiscal commitment of time and energy towards professional development (Bariu et al., 2022).

Moreover, incorporating novel technologies would frequently disturb established procedures and processes, resulting in internal opposition within the organization. Additionally, university administrators face issues with cybersecurity, data privacy, and the ethical application of technology in higher education. These issues are further complicated by the decentralized character of many universities' decision-making structures, which makes it challenging to coordinate and implement technology-driven initiatives across multiple departments and units. The necessity to engage and collaborate effectively with a variety of stakeholders in the decision-making process is an additional significant obstacle. Hence, university administrators must devise methods to solicit the opinions and concerns of faculty, staff, students, and other vital constituents to address their priorities and concerns. Effective leadership necessitates a harmonious interplay between decentralized authority and grassroots engagement, alongside the capacity to maneuver intricate political and organizational intricacies (Whittaker & Montgomery, 2022).

Financial constraints involved both income generation and spending management. University administrators play a crucial role in ensuring effective university governance by making critical decisions that shape the institution's direction, policies, and budget allocation. However, these administrators often need help with significant concerns and obstacles, particularly budgetary limits, which can restrict their efforts. One major challenge they face is the need for more financial resources. In an era of increasing budget cuts and dwindling public funds, administrators frequently grapple with difficult resource allocation decisions, often having to prioritize specific programs or projects over others.

Hence, budgetary constraints can hinder administrators from fully engaging in decision-making, leading them to focus on short-term cost-cutting measures rather than long-term strategic planning (Bai et al., 2017). Moreover, these financial limitations can restrict their ability to invest in professional development opportunities, such as training programs or conferences, essential for enhancing their decision-making skills and expertise. Another fundamental challenge is the university governance processes' complex and sometimes opaque nature. Decision-making may be fragmented by various stakeholders, including faculty, staff, students, and external governing bodies, exerting different levels of influence and engagement.

Therefore, this complexity can make it difficult for university administrators to navigate the decision-making landscape, address constituent concerns, and resolve issues effectively (Holzweiss et al., 2018). Consequently, a lack of clear communication and transparency within the institution can exacerbate administrators' difficulties. Addressing these concerns requires a comprehensive approach that involves tackling budgetary restrictions, strengthening governance mechanisms, and fostering a collaborative and transparent culture within the institution. One potential solution to financial constraints is exploring

alternative funding sources, such as private partnerships, endowments, or external grants. Diversifying the institution's income streams can enable administrators to make more informed decisions and engage in long-term projects that enhance university governance.

Additionally, universities could implement cost-cutting measures that preserve the quality of education and research, such as reducing administrative overhead, leveraging technology, or seeking resource savings (Risanty & Kesuma, 2019). To enhance governance, institutions should develop more participatory and transparent decision-making processes. It might involve establishing clear communication channels, encouraging cooperation among diverse stakeholder groups, and implementing accountability and feedback mechanisms. By addressing budgetary limitations and refining governance frameworks, university administrators can strategies the effective action plan to improve participation and engagement in decision-making processes, contributing to the institution's overall effectiveness and good governance.

CONCLUSION

The findings and discussion underscore the crucial role of university administrators in promoting good governance in higher education institutions. The dilemma faced by registrars, bursars, and librarians in addressing issues and challenges to enhance the good governance in Malaysian public universities require immediate attention by the responsible parties. Given the university's role in empowering society through the dissemination of knowledge, its structure is unique and complex. Therefore, this research has effectively identified three primary issues and challenges facing all university administrators today namely: human factors, rapid change in policy, and financial constraints. Furthermore, based on the information obtained from the informants during the interview, various strategies could prove effective in addressing the issues and challenges related to participation and engagement. These strategies may include strengthening operational methodologies, consolidating organizational connections, cultivating a constructive environment of leadership and cohesion, augmenting a sense of belonging, establishing a forum for engagement, promoting a culture of transformation, and utilizing technology effectively. Ultimately, viable solutions that align with the requirements and preferences of stakeholders must be formulated to ensure that the efficient execution of the administrator's role within the university, thereby contributing added value to the management and advancement of a public university. This, in turn, plays a crucial role in national and societal development. However, by addressing its shortcomings, future researchers can enhance this work. The primary limitation of this research is that it only included informants from the main group, who had a greater influence on decision-making. To gather more comprehensive perspectives from the decision-making group, future research could include informants from the middle management group. A second limitation is that this research solely focuses on public universities. To gain a comprehensive understanding of higher education in Malaysia, future research could examine findings from private universities in the country.

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