



THE DELICATE BALANCE OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE TOWARDS AN ENHANCED INSTITUTIONAL AUTONOMY IN CAVITE'S LOCALLY-GOVERNED HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

Christopher Gapuz

Cavite State University, Indang, Cavite, Philippines

ABSTRACT

This study, completed in May 2026, examined the influence of political dynamics on the institutional autonomy of locally governed higher education institutions (HEIs) in Cavite, particularly in terms of strategic decision-making, governance structures, financial independence, and academic freedom. It also investigated whether political interventions constrain or empower institutional autonomy and how these dynamics influence educational quality and the long-term sustainability of HEIs. The study employed a mixed-methods approach involving student and faculty respondents and selected HEI administrators and local government officials from three locally governed HEIs in Cavite. Quantitative data were analyzed using weighted mean and a two-sample Z-test, while qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis. Findings showed that political leadership, political party affiliations, government funding, and local government policy interventions influence institutional decision-making and operations. Respondents also identified political pressure, regulatory constraints, financial dependence on local government allocations, and leadership instability as challenges to institutional autonomy. However, the findings showed that the selected HEIs employ strategic leadership, governance mechanisms, transparent decision-making, and academic freedom safeguards to manage political influences. The Z-test yielded a computed value of -0.47 , which was within the critical value of ± 1.96 , indicating no statistically significant difference between the perceptions of students and faculty regarding the effects of political dynamics on institutional autonomy. The study is important to the field because it provides context-specific evidence on the balance between local governance and institutional autonomy in locally governed HEIs, an area with limited empirical research in the Philippine context. The findings provide a basis for strengthening governance mechanisms, financial resilience, academic freedom, and productive HEI-LGU collaboration.

Keywords: *Academic Freedom, Educational Policy, Higher Education Governance, Political Dynamics, Strategic Decision-Making, Transparency*

INTRODUCTION

Academic excellence and institutional independence should never be influenced by external political pressures. Since higher education institutions (HEIs) serve as pillars of innovation and knowledge, their autonomy is crucial to ensuring sound governance, academic freedom, and sustainable development. In the Philippine context, however, locally governed HEIs such as in Cavite, face a need to balance between upholding academic independence and navigating the influence of leadership dynamics and local government policies.

Political factors, which include political affiliations, government funding, policy interventions, and political leadership, have been observed to affect the governance and decision-making processes of HEIs. Said factors often shape priorities of HEIs in ways that challenges institutional autonomy. Such issue is especially relevant for three locally governed HEIs in Cavite namely, City College of Tagaytay, Kolehiyo ng Lungsod ng Dasmariñas, and Trece Martires City College, where LGUs play a significant role in funding allocation and governance. Recognizing the rise of political engagement in educational institutions, this study aimed to investigate the delicate balance between local governance and institutional autonomy in locally governed higher education institutions (HEIs) in Cavite, specifically City College of Tagaytay, Kolehiyo ng Lungsod ng Dasmariñas, and Trece Martires City College. The study examined how political affiliations and dynamics shape strategic decision-making governance structures, financial independence, and academic freedom within these institutions. Moreover, the study sought to determine whether political interventions constrain or empower institutional autonomy, ultimately influencing the quality of education as well as the long-term sustainability of HEIs.

Higher education institutions (HEIs) serve as pillars of academic freedom, knowledge production, and societal development. Such institutions typically operate with a level of autonomy that ensures academic integrity, strategic flexibility, and independent governance. However, institutional autonomy is reportedly often challenged by external pressures, especially political influences. In several countries around the globe, government policies, funding dependencies, and leadership transitions create a complex interplay between academic governance and politics (Hao, 2025).

In the context of the Philippines, higher education governance is said to be shaped by both national and local policies. The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) is reportedly mandated by Republic Act No. 7722 (Higher Education Act of 1994) to promote institutional autonomy while maintaining quality standards. However, locally governed HEIs, municipal and city colleges, are established under Republic Act No. 7160 (Local Government Code of 1991), which grants Local Government Units (LGUs) substantial control over their operations, funding, and leadership. This creates a dual governance

system, where locally governed HEIs must navigate both LGU interventions and CHED oversight.

A highly urbanized and politically active province in the Philippines like Cavite provides a relevant case study for investigating this governance-autonomy tension. Institutions such as the City College of Tagaytay, Kolehiyo ng Lungsod ng Dasmariñas, and Trece Martires City College operate under LGU governance, making them vulnerable to policy changes, political leadership shifts, and financial dependencies. Studies have shown that local politicians exert influence over institutional policies, faculty hiring, and budget allocations, aligning these decisions with political cycles instead of long-term academic objectives (Mateo & Gonzales, 2024). This raises concerns about whether said institutions can maintain their overall institutional integrity, governance stability, and academic independence while getting government support.

Although research around the globe has comprehensively examined political interference in higher education governance, there is a dearth of literature focusing on the Philippine context, especially on locally governed HEIs. Relevant literature commonly focus on state universities and private HEIs, overlooking the unique challenges faced by city and municipal colleges. Although RA 7722 grants autonomy to HEIs, RA 7160 gives LGUs considerable authority over their administration and funding that potentially leads to political influence in institutional decision-making as well as governance conflicts (Tavares, 2021). There are limited empirical studies that analyze how policy interventions, political leadership, party affiliations, and government funding affect the autonomy of locally governed HEIs in Cavite.

This study aimed to bridge this research gap by examining the delicate balance between local governance and institutional autonomy in Cavite's locally governed HEIs. By investigating the influence of political dynamics on these institutions' academic freedom, governance structures, and financial independence, the study shared insights into the strategies HEIs use to navigate political pressures. The study offered data-driven recommendations to reinforce institutional autonomy while ensuring effective collaboration between HEIs and LGUs. The findings were valuable for HEI administrators, educators, policymakers, and researchers in crafting policies that uphold institutional independence and academic freedom while ensuring productive engagements with local governments.

Research Questions

The study sought to analyze the fragile balance between local governance and institutional autonomy in locally governed higher education institutions (HEIs) in Cavite, Philippines, particularly the City College of Tagaytay, Koleheyo ng Lungsod ng Dasmariñas, and Trece Martires City College.

Specifically, the study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. How do political dynamics affect the autonomy of locally governed HEIs in Cavite?
2. How do locally governed HEIs in Cavite manage to balance political influences while protecting institutional autonomy?
3. What are the main challenges faced by locally governed HEIs in Cavite with regard to institutional autonomy?
4. What are the effects of political dynamics on the educational quality and overall mission of locally governed HEIs in Cavite?
5. What policy recommendations can be provided to strengthen the institutional autonomy of locally governed HEIs in Cavite while building a constructive relationship with local government authorities?
6. Do political affiliation and dynamics significantly influence the autonomy of locally governed higher education institutions (HEIs) in Cavite?

Null Hypotheses:

1. Political affiliation and dynamics do not significantly influence the institutional autonomy of locally governed HEIs in Cavite.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study used a mixed-methods descriptive research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate fully the effect of political dynamics on institutional autonomy in locally governed HEIs in Cavite. The quantitative element included gathering structured, numerical data from students and faculty members through survey questionnaires to assess their perceptions of governance structures, political interference, governance structures, and financial dependence. The qualitative element, on the one hand, involved conducting in-depth interviews with HEI deans, administrators, and local government unit (LGU) officials to explore their perspectives and experiences on governance challenges and political influences.

The mixed-methods approach was suitable for the study as it enabled triangulation whereby numerical data was integrated with narrative and contextual insights offering a more nuanced understanding of how political dynamics influence academic freedom and institutional decision-making. Quantitative data allowed statistical analysis of relationships, trends, and common themes, while qualitative data offered depth, enabling respondents to express the complexities of institutional governance and political engagement.

The study used structured surveys during the quantitative phase, making sure there is consistency in collecting data. Meanwhile, semi-structured interviews were employed during their qualitative phase to enable flexibility when exploring emergent themes. Such design made sure that the study gleaned both detailed insights and broad

patterns into how locally governed HEIs went through political pressures. Results from the study offered empirical evidence that informed institutional strategies and policy recommendations to strengthen autonomy while promoting positive engagement with local government authorities.

Locale of the Study

This study covered locally governed higher education institutions (HEIs) in Cavite, particularly the City College of Tagaytay, Kolehiyo ng Lungsod ng Dasmariñas, and Trece Martires City College. Said institutions functioned within the scope of local government units (LGUs), which made them ideal for studying the intersection of institutional autonomy and political dynamics.

The study specifically focused on these three locally governed HEIs because they operate under LGU governance and are subject to local government involvement in areas such as funding allocation, governance, policy interventions, leadership, and institutional decision-making. The dissertation identifies these institutions as the setting for examining the balance between local governance and institutional autonomy.

Respondents and Sampling Method

The respondents of the study were grouped in terms of their roles within the chosen HEIs and their significance to the study's objectives.

In terms of its quantitative phase, respondents involved students and faculty members who offered insights into how political factors affected their institutional policies, governance structures, and academic experiences. Including students allowed the study to glean perspectives regarding institutional autonomy from those directly affected by policy decisions. Faculty members, on the one hand, shared their points of view on political interventions, administrative governance, and academic freedom.

Selection Criteria for Students:

Students

1. Should be a third-year or fourth-year student – Such students had spent enough time spent in the institution to know academic policies, governance structures as well as the possible influence of political dynamics.
2. Should be enrolled in either governance or administration-related programs in the chosen HEIs:
 - City College of Tagaytay (School of Business and Management)
 - Kolehiyo ng Lungsod ng Dasmariñas (Institute of Governance and Development Studies)
 - Trece Martires City College (School of Governance and Administration)

This criteria ensured that student-participants were sufficiently exposed to strategic decision-making processes and institutional governance.

3. Should voluntarily agree to participate – Student participation is voluntary for ethical compliance and to enable respondents to freely share their insights, experiences, or perspectives.

Selection Criteria for Faculty Members:

1. Should be a full-time or part-time faculty member – Including faculty with differing workloads gave diverse perspectives on academic autonomy, governance, and political influences.
2. Should have teaching experience within the HEI for at least two years of – Members of the faculty who have said teaching experience were more likely to be more knowledgeable of external political dynamics, governance structures, and institutional policies.
3. Preferably affiliated with administration-, management-, or governance-related departments or schools – Including faculty coming from said programs provided informed ideas, perspectives, or insights on institutional governance.
4. Should voluntarily agree to participate – Participation from faculty was voluntary to meet ethical standards and to obtain candid responses.

In terms of the qualitative stage, LGU officials and HEI administrators became main informants. Administrators such as department heads, deans, and presidents were included owing to their direct involvement in governance, decision-making processes, and financial management. LGU officials, specifically those handling funding allocations and education policies, shared insights into how political structures affected or shaped HEI autonomy. The criteria for selecting administrators required they have a minimum of two years of experience in their roles to make sure they had enough exposure to political interactions impacting institutional governance.

By choosing informants who had direct experience in policy implementation and institutional governance, the study assured a balanced analysis of the impact political dynamics had on HEI autonomy in Cavite.

Quantitative Component (Survey)

Faculty Members: 52

Students: 292

Total: 344 respondents

The study respondents included 152 faculty members and 1,083 students from CCT, KLD, and TMCC. To ensure sufficient representation across the three chosen HEIs, 52 faculty members and 292 students were representatively sampled and proportionally distributed with the use of Slovin's formula.

Table 1. Population and Sample Distribution of Student and Faculty Respondents

Students			Faculty		
HEI	Population	Sample	HEI	Population	Sample
TMCC	143	38	TMCC	45	13
KLD	580	155	KLD	59	24
CCT	360	99	CCT	48	15
Total	1083	292	Total	152	52
Sample	292		Sample	52	

Qualitative Component (Interviews)

LGU Officials (Local governance representatives, education-related policymakers): 6 (2 per institution)

HEI Administrators (Directors, Vice Presidents, Presidents): 3 (1 per institution), Department Heads and Deans: 6 (2 per HEI)

Total: 15 key informants

Research Instruments

This study used semi-structured interviews and a survey questionnaire to gather both qualitative and quantitative data from respondents affiliated with the City College of Tagaytay, Kolehiyo ng Lungsod ng Dasmariñas, and Trece Martires City College. The research tools were aligned with the study's objectives, ensuring data was collected comprehensively on the effect of political dynamics on institutional autonomy.

In terms of the quantitative element of the study, a structured survey questionnaire was administered to students and faculty members of the chosen HEIs. The questionnaire was developed based on the statement of the problem in the study as well as a comprehensive review of related literature. It was composed of four main sections:

1. Political Dynamics and Institutional Autonomy – Said section looked at the main political factors which affected HEIs, including policy interventions, party affiliations, political leadership, and government funding.
2. Challenges to Institutional Autonomy – Barriers such as political pressures, regulatory constraints, leadership challenges, and financial dependence were the focus of this section.
3. Balancing Political Influences with Institutional Autonomy – This section investigated institutional strategies for conserving autonomy, such as academic freedom, decision-making frameworks, governance structures, and partnerships with government entities.
4. Implications for Educational Quality and Institutional Mission – The perceived effect of political influences on institutional reputation, program quality, student outcomes, and research opportunities were assessed in this section.

Every survey item was measured through a Likert scale, enabling respondents to share their degree of agreement or perceived effect on a structured scale. Such approach afforded consistency while facilitating statistical analysis to identify patterns or trends.

In terms of the qualitative element of the study, semi-structured interviews were done with LGU officials and HEI administrators who were involved in higher education governance. The interview guide included the following topics: experiences with political interventions, decision-making processes, funding challenges, and strategies to balance institutional autonomy with government expectations. Using semi-structured interviews enabled an in-depth exploration of issues which were insufficiently captured during the survey.

To guarantee reliability and validity, the research tools were subjected to pilot testing and expert validation. Education governance experts reviewed the questionnaire and interview guide, after which they were tested on a small group of respondents prior to full implementation. Such process improved the effectiveness, clarity, and relevance of the research tools to capture meaningful data.

By using a mixed-methods approach, the study assured a thorough and data-driven analysis of how political dynamics impacts the independence of locally governed HEIs in Cavite.

Validity and Reliability

To guarantee the reliability and validity of the research tools, the study used a rigorous multi-stage validation process that involved validation from experts, pilot testing, and statistical validation.

Both the semi-structured interview guide and survey questionnaire were initially validated by three (3) professionals who were experts in political dynamics, higher education governance, and research methodologies. Said experts evaluated the research tools in terms of relevance, clarity, comprehensiveness, and alignment with research objectives. Their feedback was taken into account during revisions to improve the appropriateness and precision of the said research tools.

After being validated by experts, the survey questionnaire was pilot tested with a small group of students and faculty members from the chosen HEIs who were not involved in the actual study. Pilot testing the questionnaire helped determine possible inconsistencies, ambiguities, and difficulties in understanding its items. Results were analyzed with statistical methods such as Cronbach's alpha to assess its internal reliability and consistency. Survey items with low reliability were either removed or revised to make sure that the final questionnaire accurately gathered the intended variables.

In the same vein, the semi-structured interview guide was also tested with a small sample of LGU officials and HEI administrators to evaluate its effectiveness in gathering

meaningful responses. Based on their feedback, the needed adjustments were also made to enhance question coherence and clarity.

Lastly, the revised interview guide and survey questionnaire were carefully reviewed then approved by research advisers and a defense panel to make sure they met methodological, academic, and ethical standards. This comprehensive validation process ensured that the instruments were robust, credible, and effective in gathering the data necessary for this study.

Data Gathering Procedure

The process for collecting data in the study employed a structured approach to guarantee ethical accuracy, reliability, and compliance in collecting both qualitative and quantitative data. The following steps were involved in said approach:

Securing Approval from Research Advisers and Defense Panel. Prior to collecting data, the research tools and overall methodology were reviewed and approved by both the research advisers and defense panel. The step made sure that the study met ethical, academic, and methodological standards.

Requesting Permission from Selected HEIs and LGUs. Letters of request were sent to the administration of the three chosen HEIs namely, City College of Tagaytay, Kolehiyo ng Lungsod ng Dasmariñas, and Trece Martires City College, in addition to relevant local government units (LGUs). Said letters explained the objectives of the study, its relevance, and process for collecting data. Moreover, the letters sought official approval and assistance in reaching participants.

Obtaining Consent from Respondents. After obtaining institutional approval, a consent letter was given to the target students, faculty members, HEI administrators, and LGU officials. The letter explained the study's objectives, confidentiality measures for data, and participants' rights, which included the option to withdraw at any time and voluntary nature of the study.

Pilot Testing of Research Instruments. Both the semi-structured interview guide and the survey questionnaire were pilot tested through a small number of respondents who met the same criteria for target respondents but were not part of the study. The step assured the relevance, clarity, and reliability of said research instruments. In order to ensure internal consistency, the survey questionnaire was tested using Cronbach's alpha, and modifications were made based on feedback.

Distribution of Survey Questionnaires (Quantitative Data Collection). The survey questionnaire was given to target students and faculty members of the chosen HEIs. Depending on their convenience or accessibility, the survey was administered either physically or online. Directions that were clearly written accompanied the survey questionnaires regarding completion, and a deadline was provided for submission.

Conducting Key Informant Interviews (Qualitative Data Collection). Semi-structured interviews were done with HEI deans, administrators, and LGU officials to obtain in-depth insights into political dynamics affecting the autonomy of the chosen HEIs. Said interviews were scheduled at mutually agreed times and were audio recorded with consent for transcription and thematic analysis.

Follow-Up and Retrieval of Data. To ensure that surveys had high response rates and were completed timely, regular follow-ups were made. For surveys that were submitted online, respondents were reminded via email or messaging platforms, while physical surveys were gathered directly from respondents. To ensure clarity and completeness, interviews were also reviewed.

Data Organization and Analysis. Quantitative data were organized, coded, and analyzed through descriptive statistics, frequency distributions, and correlation analysis to determine relationships and patterns between political factors and institutional autonomy. Meanwhile, qualitative data from semi-structured interviews went through thematic analysis, providing perspectives and recurring themes that supplemented the quantitative findings.

Data Analysis

To analyze the relationships and patterns in the quantitative data from the questionnaires retrieved from students and faculty members, the study used various statistical methods:

Descriptive Statistics. Mean, standard deviation, and frequency distribution were used to provide a summary of respondents' perceptions about governance challenges, institutional autonomy, political dynamics, and their perceived effect. Specific responses around various survey items were also shown using frequency distributions.

Weighted Mean Analysis. The degree of agreement or perceived effect of political factors on institutional autonomy was measured through a Likert scale. The scale determined and ranked the most impactful political dynamics which affected HEIs, such as policy interventions, government funding, and leadership involvement.

Z-Test for Hypothesis Testing. To determine if political affiliation and political dynamics considerably influenced institutional autonomy in locally governed HEIs in Cavite, a Z-test was used. The test enabled comparison of mean responses of various groups (e.g., different HEIs, faculty vs. students) to evaluate if observed differences were statistically significant. A significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$) was set to decide whether to reject or accept the null hypothesis (H_0):

H_0 (Null Hypothesis): Political affiliation and political dynamics did not significantly affect the institutional autonomy of the three chosen HEIs in Cavite.

The results of the Z-test offered empirical evidence on whether political factors had a statistically significant relationship with HEI autonomy.

Thematic Analysis

In terms of qualitative data gathered from key informant interviews with HEI deans, administrators, and LGU officials, the study used Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis to uncover, analyze, and explain recurring patterns in interview responses. Such methodology gave a flexible but structured approach to getting nuanced insights into political effects on institutional autonomy. The following steps were involved in the process:

1. Transcription and Familiarization – Every interview response was transcribed verbatim. The proponent of the study fully reviewed the transcripts to gain a deeper understanding of the data.
2. Initial Coding – Codes were assigned to key statements based on recurring themes related to governance strategies, political pressures, policy interventions, and financial dependencies. This phase made sure that meaningful parts or portions of the data were well-categorized.
3. Thematic Categorization – Codes that were similar were also put together into broader themes, enabling patterns that showed how political dynamics influenced HEI autonomy to be identified.
4. Reviewing Themes – Themes that were identified were further refined by cross-examining the data to guarantee consistency and coherence. Themes that were either overlapping or redundant were merged, while sub-themes were further added for more complex ideas.
5. Defining and Naming Themes – Every theme was defined clearly to distill its essence through supporting data excerpts used to show important findings.
6. Narrative Analysis and Interpretation – Interview responses were examined comparatively to contrast or validate insights from the quantitative data. Some responses were included as direct quotes in the study to show important themes and to provide a richer context for the findings.

Scope and Limitations

The study focused on the relationship between institutional autonomy and political dynamics in locally governed higher education institutions (HEIs) in Cavite, particularly the City College of Tagaytay, Koleheyo ng Lungsod ng Dasmariñas, and Trece Martires City College. It analyzed how policy interventions, political leadership, government funding, and political affiliations affect the academic freedom, governance, decision-making processes of the said institutions. The study also examined the challenges such HEIs face, including political pressures, regulatory constraints, leadership complexities, and financial dependence as well as how they navigated those influences while safeguarding their institutional autonomy.

Geographically limited to Cavite, the study zeroed in only on the three mentioned HEIs which operate under local government insight. Although the study focused on the role of political forces at the local levels, it did not extend analysis to national political factors, although the latter may have indirect effects. The study employed a mixed-methods descriptive research design, which combined quantitative surveys with qualitative semi-structured key informant interviews to triangulate data. The research population strictly covered an aggregate of 152 faculty members and 1,083 students across the three chosen HEIs. Using Slovin's formula at a five percent significance level $\alpha = 0.05$ provided a precise quantitative sample size of 52 faculty members and 292 students who served as the primary survey respondents. Consequently, the qualitative phase used purposive sampling to obtain narrative accounts from 15 key informants, who consisted of academic deans, department heads, high-level HEI administrators, and education-related LGU policymakers. The study did not include perspectives from external civic organizations, alumni, or private sector partners. Moreover, the study is only applied to locally governed HEIs in Cavite, and does not include K-12 schools, state universities, and technical-vocational institutions.

Owing to its localized scope, the results of the study may not be fully generalizable to other regional areas or HEIs with different governance structures. The insights gained, however, contributed to a broader understanding of political influences on higher education governance, which also provided valuable recommendations for institutional strategies and policy development that are adaptable to similar settings in the Philippines and elsewhere.

RESULTS

Faculty Respondents

This section discusses the perceptions of faculty respondents, looking at their insights and points of view. Their responses share important perspectives that aid in understanding the results presented in the chapter.

Research Question 1 How do political dynamics affect the autonomy of locally governed HEIs in Cavite?

Table 2. Faculty perceptions on the effect of political dynamics on institutional autonomy of the selected HEIs

Sections	HEI=1		HEI=2		HEI-3	
Section 1. Political Dynamics and Institutional Autonomy						
	WM	D	WM	D	WM	D
1. Political leadership at the local level influences key decisions in our institution.	3.83	A	4.4	SA	3.7	A

2. The political party affiliations of LGU officials affect how our institution operates.	3.67	A	4.0	A	3.8	A
3. Our institution's funding is influenced by political dynamics rather than academic priorities.	3.53	A	4.0	A	3.3	A
4. LGU policy interventions shape the development and implementation of institutional policies.	3.65	A	4.4	A	3.6	A
5. Local politicians play a role in appointing institutional leaders.	3.53	A	4.15	A	3.67	A
General Weighted Mean	3.64	A	4.19	A	3.61	A

Legend:

5.00- 4.2 Strongly Agree
4.1 -3.4 Agree
3.3-2.6 Neutral

2.5 -1.8 Disagree
1.7- 1.0 Strongly Disagree

Table 2 shows how faculty members from the three chosen HEIs in Cavite perceive the effect of political influence on institutional autonomy, particularly in terms of policy interventions, political party affiliation, political leadership, and government funding.

Findings reveal that faculty members from the three chosen institutions generally concede that political dynamics affect institutional autonomy. All weighted mean scores for each of the HEIs land within the descriptive rating of Agree with 3.64 for HEI 1, 4.19 for HEI 2, and 3.61 for HEI 3. HEI 2 indicated the highest level of agreement among the three institutions, showing a higher perceived effect of political dynamics on institutional operations.

Members of the faculty agreed that political leadership at the local level impacts major decisions by the HEIs with weighted means that range from 3.70 to 4.40. On a similar vein, the political party affiliation of LGU officials was also perceived to have an effect on institutional operations, suggesting that governance decisions may be influenced by existing political alignments. These findings support the study of Samuel et al. (2024), which emphasized that political influence and political interference often affect governance and decision-making processes within public institutions. Similarly, Gao (2023) stressed that ideological governance frameworks and political structures significantly influence administrative direction and institutional policies in HEIs.

Members of the faculty also concurred that institutional funding is affected by political dynamics instead of solely just academic priorities, stressing the dependence of locally governed HEIs on local government allocations for financial resources. Such results are also affirmed by Najibi and Shahsavari (2024), who explained that overdependence on funding by the government makes HEIs vulnerable and limits their ability to independently prioritize long-term academic goals. On a similar vein, Nayan and Aggarwal (2022) highlighted that financial overreliance on government support may restrict strategic flexibility and institutional autonomy. Scott and Guan (2022) also

observed that financial instability associated with government funding pressures may impact operational independence and institutional quality.

Moreover, policy interventions by the LGU were seen to influence the development and implementation of institutional policy, which strengthens the role of political structures in institutional governance. Such finding agrees with that of Bohlens (2024), who stressed that excessive governance control and regulatory intervention may restrict independent decision-making and institutional flexibility. In the same way, Yaacob et al. (2024) highlighted that governance policies and regulatory constraints imposed on HEIs by external authorities may hamper their sustainability and institutional agility.

Finally, respondents concur that local politicians play an important role in designating institutional leaders, showing a direct link between administrative leadership and political authority. Such finding agrees with that of Christian (2024), who posited that interference by the government may influence effective management of HEIs, specifically in leadership and governance processes. Doner (2024) also stressed that leadership in HEIs is usually challenged by external pressures and political environments, which necessitates strategic and adaptive governance methods.

Results suggest that members of the faculty across the chosen HEIs acknowledge political dynamics as significantly affecting institutional autonomy, especially when it comes to leadership, funding, and policy-related decisions. Moreover, such results align with the work of Hao (2025), which stressed that political structures and government actors play an important role in influencing academic governance and institutional autonomy in HEIs.

Research Question 2. How do the three selected HEIs in Cavite manage political influences while protecting their institutional autonomy?

Table 3. Faculty perceptions on effects of political influences on HEI autonomy protection

Sections	HEI=1		HEI=2		HEI-3	
Balancing Political Influences with Institutional Autonomy	WM	D	WM	D	WM	D
1. Our institution has effective governance structures that help protect autonomy.	3.7	A	3.77	A	3.33	N
2. Strategic decisions regarding the institution's direction are made through a transparent and inclusive process, minimizing external political interference	3.5	A	3.69	A	3.4	A
3. Academic freedom is upheld regardless of political changes.	3.48	A	3.61	A	3.53	A

4. Collaboration between the institution and the LGU is productive and balanced	3.49	A	3.90	A	3.6	A
General Weighted Mean	3.54	A	4.00	A	3.74	A

Legend:

5.00- 4.2 Strongly Agree

4.1 -3.4 Agree

3.3-2.6 Neutral

2.5 -1.8 Disagree

1.7- 1.0 Strongly Disagree

Table 3 presents the perceptions of faculty members on how their HEIs manage political influences while safeguarding institutional autonomy. All general weighted mean scores for the HEIs provide an overall Agree response with 3.54 for HEI 1, 4.00 for HEI 2, and 3.74 for HEI 3.

Members of the faculty concurred that their HEIs possess effective governance structures which help safeguard its autonomy, although HEI 3 shared a neutral response for the indicator, pointing to how the effectiveness of governance among the three HEIs remains variable. The result agrees with work by Bohlens (2024), who highlighted that leadership and governance structures are crucial mechanisms to safeguard institutional autonomy and ensure organizational stability in HEIs. Likewise, Estanislao (2024) discussed that effective governance frameworks help HEIs prioritize long-term academic goals without giving in to excessive political pressures.

The three chosen HEIs all perceived that strategic decision-making processes were inclusive and transparent, which reduced external political interference. Such result agrees with the work of Cheah (2023), who stressed that strategic governance and educational leadership are needed to balance institutional autonomy with external political dynamics. Similarly, Jain et al. (2024) highlighted that agile and adaptive approaches for leadership help HEIs become effective when responding to political challenges while safeguarding institutional goals and academic integrity.

Furthermore, members of the faculty concurred that academic freedom is exercised in spite of political changes, positing that scholarly and teaching activities are generally safeguarded from political pressures. Academic freedom in this research refers to an HEIs ability to safeguard the three core aspects to academic freedom: freedom in research, freedom in teaching as well as freedom in scholarly expression and academic discourse. This signifies that members of the faculty can teach based on academic standards, do independent research, and participate in intellectual discourse without too much political interference.

Such finding is aligned with Ahmad (2024), who highlighted that academic freedom is closely associated with institutional autonomy and also protects from external political influence. Likewise, Sejan (2024) stressed that over politicization puts academic freedom at risk by restricting scholarly inquiry, intellectual independence, and crucial academic discourse within HEIs.

Respondents of the study also concurred that the partnership between their HEI and LGUs is balanced and productive, suggesting that engaging cooperatively with LGUs

does not automatically compromise institutional autonomy. Such finding agrees with Zhang et al. (2023), who stressed that government-school partnerships can be positive when HEIs maintain their academic autonomy while working through collaborative projects or initiatives. Bekebayeva et al. (2022) also noted that institutional partnerships or collaborations can reinforce innovation and development if HEIs maintain their academic mission and autonomy.

Such results indicate that irrespective of political influences, locally governed HEIs can use collaborative strategies, governance mechanisms, and decision-making processes that help protect institutional independence while preserving working relationships with LGUs. The finding also supports work by Hao (2025), who highlighted that institutional independence can be continually practiced via transparent leadership practices, balanced governance structures, and well-managed relationships with government personnel.

Research Question 3. What are the major challenges locally governed HEIs in Cavite face when it comes to maintaining institutional independence?

Table 4. Faculty perceptions on major challenges faced by chosen HEIs in Cavite concerning institutional independence on Political Pressure, Financial Dependence, and Regulatory Constraints

Sections	HEI=1		HEI=2		HEI-3	
Challenges to Institutional Autonomy	WM	D	WM	D	WM	D
1. Regulatory constraints from the LGU or other authorities limit our institution's independence.	3.44	A	3.9	A	3.3	N
2. Our institution is financially dependent on local government allocations.	3.68	A	4.5	SA	3.3	N
3. Political pressure interferes with our institution's strategic decisions.	3.35	N	3.6	A	3.2	N
4. Leadership changes driven by political reasons create instability in the institution	3.62	A	3.8	A	3,5	A
General Weighted Mean	3.52	A	3.95	A	3.33	N

Legend:
5.00- 4.2 Strongly Agree 2.5 -1.8 Disagree
4.1 -3.4 Agree 1.7- 1.0 Strongly Disagree
3.3-2.6 Neutral

Table 4 reveals how members of the faculty perceive major challenges experienced by the chosen HEIs in relation to institutional independence, particularly when it comes to political pressure, leadership challenges, financial dependence, and regulatory constraints.

There is agreement that such challenges are present based on the general weighted mean scores of 3.52 for HEI 1 and 3.95 for HEI 2, while HEI 3 showed a more

neutral rating of 3.33, indicating how institutional constraints were more subtly perceived across indicators.

Members of the faculty agreed that regulatory constraints by the LGUs and other authorities restrict institutional independence, especially for HEI 2. Such supports literature on HEI governance that stresses excessive regulation can limit decision-making capacity and institutional flexibility, particularly when requirements to comply override academic goals. This also agrees with the results of Yaacob et al. (2024), who observed that excessive bureaucratic control in HEIs hampers innovation and restricts operational independence.

Being financially dependent on local government allocations was also indicated as a key challenge as HEI 2 showed strong agreement. Such observation agrees with Shi et al. (2024) and Najibi and Shahsavari (2024), who highlight that relying heavily on government funding creates an imbalanced power dynamic where HEIs become vulnerable to policy-driven conditions or political influence. This reliance may retriect the ability of HEIs to prioritize long-term strategic and academic goals independently.

Meanwhile, responses for political pressure interfering with strategic decision-making ranged from neutral to agree, suggesting differing institutional experiences. Such difference aligns with the work of Samuel et al. (2024) and Christian (2024), who obsrved that political interference in HEI governance usually depends on the context where local political dynamics and the strength of institutional safeguards play a key role. In circumstances where political influence is stronger, autonomy in decision-making becomes more limited.

Changes in leadership owing to political reasons were also seen as a challenge with respondents concurring that said changes create institutional instability. Such result aligns with that of Bohlens (2024), who highlighted that politically influenced leadership transitions interfere with strategic institutional development as well as weaken governance. The same finding also reaffirms work by Gao (2023), who stresses the need for clear governance boundaries to avoid political actors from directly influencing academic leadership structures.

Such results also reveal that political pressure, regulatory control, financial dependence, and politically influenced leadership transitions all create major challenges to the institutional autonomy of locally governed HEIs. Such challenges directly impact strategic planning, institutional independence, and governance stability.

Research Question 4. What are the implications of political dynamics on the educational quality and overall mission of locally governed HEIs in Cavite?

Table 5. Faculty perceptions on implications of political dynamics on the quality of educational programs, research opportunities, institutional reputation, student outcomes, and overall mission of locally governed HEIs in Cavite

Sections	HEI=1		HEI=2		HEI=3	
	WM	D	WM	D	WM	D
Section 4: Implications for Educational Quality and Institutional Mission						
1. Political dynamics negatively affect the quality of academic programs.	3.15	N	2.7	N	3.45	A
2. Access to research opportunities is influenced by political decisions or funding.	3.53	A	3.2	N	2.7	N
3. The institution's reputation is affected by its political affiliations or perceived biases.	3.48	A	3.08	N	2.87	N
4. Political dynamics have a noticeable impact on student academic and career outcomes	3.49	A	3.16	N	2.87	N
General Weighted Mean	3.41	A	4.0	A	2.97	N

Legend:

5.00- 4.2 Strongly Agree

4.1 -3.4 Agree

3.3-2.6 Neutral

2.5 -1.8 Disagree

1.7- 1.0 Strongly Disagree

Table 5 shows perceptions of the faculty on implications of political dynamics on educational quality and overall mission of the three chosen HEIs in Cavite, particularly on their research opportunities, educational programs, institutional reputation, and student outcomes. The chosen HEIs shared different levels of agreement, with HEI 1 and HEI 2 having general weighted mean scores of 3.41 and 4.00, respectively, indicating agreement. Meanwhile, HEI 3 shared a more neutral stance with a general weighted mean score of just 2.97.

When it comes to the quality of educational programs, faculty respondents from both HEI 1 and HEI 3 perceived that political dynamics may negatively influence academic program quality, while HEI 2 was more neutral. Such finding agrees with work by Decena (2023), who stressed that politicization in HEIs can skew institutional priorities and cause academic programs to be more aligned with political agendas instead of solely academic standards. Likewise, Scott and Guan (2022) observed that unstable funding and institutional governance can impact affect educational quality indirectly by restricting resource allocation and institutional flexibility.

In terms of research opportunities, HEI 1 respondents concurred that funding allocations and political decisions impact access to research opportunities, while HEI 2 and HEI 3 shared neutral responses. This finding aligns with Najibi and Shahsavari (2024), who stated that financial dependence on funding by the government may create spillover effects that restrict institutional autonomy when defining research priorities.

Moreover, Zhang et al. (2023) stressed that while partnerships by the government and university can raise talent development and innovation, such collaborations may also influence research direction based on policy or political priorities that potentially hampers academic independence.

When it comes to institutional reputation, HEI 1 respondents perceived that political affiliations or perceived biases impact how the HEI is seen externally, while HEI 2 and HEI 3 were neutral. Such results align with Rubab et al. (2024), who explained that institutional reputation considerably affects stakeholder and public perception of educational credibility and quality. Similarly, Mendoza Villafaina and López-Mosquera (2024) stressed that student satisfaction and institutional reputation are closely interconnected, positing that political involvement may either weaken or enhance public trust depending on how it influences perceived institutional performance and educational quality.

Looking at student outcomes, HEI 1 respondents concurred that political dynamics have a noticeable effect on students' career and academic outcomes, while HEI 2 and HEI 3 remained neutral. Such result aligns with that of Luz et al. (2024), Manzoor et al. (2024), and Al-Azad et al. (2024), who all stress that institutional and political changes in HEI can considerably affect student satisfaction, performance, retention, and long-term outcomes. Such studies point to the observation that perceived political influence or institutional instability may indirectly influences student opportunities and experiences.

Generally, the results show that the implications of political dynamics on institutional mission and educational quality are dependent on context, which agrees with Neugebauer and Vokoun (2024), who observed that political and economic dynamics affect HEI systems differently depending on their institutional resilience and governance structures. HEIs with stronger governance mechanisms are able to better weather political influence, while those with more political exposure may experience stronger perceived impacts on research opportunities, academic quality, student outcomes, and reputation.

Student Respondents

This section shares the perceptions of the student respondents, emphasizing their insights and points of view. Their responses offer important perspectives that supplement those of the members of the faculty and help illuminate the results presented in this chapter.

Table 6. Student perception on the influence of Political dynamics and Institutional autonomy of locally governed HEI's on leadership; parties and affiliation; government funding; and policy interventions.

Sections	HEI=1		HEI=2		HEI=3	
	WM	D	WM	D	WM	D
Political Dynamics and Institutional Autonomy						
1. Political leadership at the local level influences key decisions in our institution.	3.84	A	4.21	SA	4.11	SA
2. The political party affiliations of LGU officials affect how our institution operates.	4.57	SA	3.97	A	4.04	A
3. Our institution's funding is influenced by political dynamics rather than academic priorities.	3.67	A	3.76	A	3.70	A
4. LGU policy interventions shape the development and implementation of institutional policies.	3.65	A	3.87	A	3.84	A
5. Local politicians play a role in appointing institutional leaders.	3.53	A	3.76	A	3.95	A
General Weighted Mean	3.85	A	3.91	A	3.93	A

Legend:

5.00- 4.2 Strongly Agree

4.1 -3.4 Agree

3.3-2.6 Neutral

2.5 -1.8 Disagree

1.7- 1.0 Strongly Disagree

Table 7. Students' perception on political influences on safeguarding institutional autonomy, focusing on Strategic Decision-Making, Institutional Governance Structures, Academic Freedom and Collaborations with Government

Sections	HEI=1		HEI=2		HEI=3	
	WM	D	WM	D	WM	D
Balancing Political Influences with Institutional Autonomy						
1. Our institution has effective governance structures that help protect autonomy.	3.7	A	3.74	A	3.48	A
2. Strategic decisions regarding the institution's direction are made through a transparent and inclusive process, minimizing external political interference	3.5	A	3.92	A	3.37	N
3. Academic freedom is upheld regardless of political changes.	3.6	A	3.92	A	3.46	A
4. Collaboration between the institution and the LGU is productive and balanced	3.5	A	3.50	A	3.68	A
General Weighted Mean	3.58	A	3.77	A	3.50	A

Table 8. Students' perception on key challenges faced by locally governed HEIs in Cavite concerning institutional autonomy, on Regulatory Constraints, Financial Dependence and Political Pressure

Sections	HEI=1		HEI=2		HEI=3	
Challenges to Institutional Autonomy	WM	D	WM	D	WM	D
1. Regulatory constraints from the LGU or other authorities limit our institution's independence.	3.44	A	3.68	A	3.89	A
2. Our institution is financially dependent on local government allocations.	3.68	A	3.68	A	3.78	A
3. Political pressure interferes with our institution's strategic decisions.	3.35	N	3.61	A	3.8	A
4. Leadership changes driven by political reasons create instability in the institution	3.62	A	3.74	A	3.92	A
General Weighted Mean	3.52	A	3.68	A	3.85	A

Legend:
5.00- 4.2 Strongly Agree 2.5 -1.8 Disagree
4.1 -3.4 Agree 1.7- 1.0 Strongly Disagree
3.3-2.6 Neutral

Table 9. Students' perception on implications of political dynamics on the quality of education and the overall mission of locally governed HEIs in Cavite, particularly on Quality of Educational Programs. Research Opportunities, Institutional Reputation and Student Outcomes

Sections	HEI=1		HEI=2		HEI=3	
Implications for Educational Quality and Institutional Mission	WM	D	WM	D	WM	D
1. Political dynamics negatively affect the quality of academic programs. .	3.15	N	3.42	A	3.45	A
2. Access to research opportunities is influenced by political decisions or funding.	3.53	A	3.29	N	3.44	A
3. The institution's reputation is affected by its political affiliations or perceived biases.	3.38	N	2.71	N	3.72	A
4. Political dynamics have a noticeable impact on student academic and career outcomes	3.48	A	3.63	A	3.84	A
General Weighted Mean	3.47	A	3.26	N	3.63	A

Legend:
5.00- 4.2 Strongly Agree 2.5 -1.8 Disagree
4.1 -3.4 Agree 1.7- 1.0 Strongly Disagree
3.3-2.6 Neutral

Tables 6 to 9 Presents the students perception with Parallel interpretation to faculty results.

Across all four tables, student respondents generally agreed that political dynamics influence institutional autonomy, particularly in terms of political leadership, political affiliations, funding structures, and policy interventions. This indicates that students, similar to faculty respondents, perceive the presence of political influence in institutional operations, although in some indicators, students reported slightly higher levels of agreement.

In terms of **governance and autonomy (Tables 6 and 7)**, students agreed that political leadership and LGU affiliations influence institutional decision-making processes. They also acknowledged that governance structures, strategic decision-making, and collaboration with local government units contribute to balancing political influence and institutional autonomy. Notably, students also perceived that academic freedom is generally upheld despite political changes, which aligns with the concept of academic freedom as involving the protection of teaching, research, and academic expression from undue external interference.

When it comes to **institutional challenges (Table 8)**, student respondents concurred that political pressure, regulatory constraints, financial dependence on LGUs, and leadership instability exist in their HEIs. Such finding shows how locally governed HEIs continued to rely on external governance structures and strengthens the belief that institutional autonomy is shaped by both political and financial conditions.

Looking at **implications on institutional mission and educational quality (Table 9)**, students perceived that political dynamics noticeably affected research opportunities, academic programs, student outcomes, and institutional reputation. Such findings point to the observation that students observe and experience the indirect impacts of political dynamics through institutional policies, academic structures, and available opportunities.

When explained alongside responses from faculty, results show a **strong parallel pattern of agreement**, suggesting there is consistency among the stakeholder groups in their perceptions. Such reinforces the validity of the study's quantitative results as both students and faculty acknowledge political dynamics as an important factor affecting educational outcomes and institutional autonomy in locally governed HEIs.

Moreover, the findings agree with literature highlighting that political dynamics can influence HEI systems via funding mechanisms, governance structures, and institutional reputation (Rubab et al., 2024; Najibi & Shahsavari, 2024; Decena, 2023). On the one hand, however, results also suggest that HEIs try to reduce such influences through LGU collaborations, governance mechanisms, and internal policies supporting institutional stability and academic continuity.

Generally, the responses of the students supplement faculty data by supporting the conclusion that political dynamics are both acknowledged and experienced within locally governed HEIs, impacting governance processes, autonomy, and institutional outcomes.

Test of Hypothesis

A Z-test for difference between means was used to see whether political affiliation and political dynamics significantly affected the institutional autonomy of locally governed HEIs in Cavite. The test compared both the perceptions of students and faculty members on institutional autonomy and political dynamics. The statistical method was in line with the descriptive–comparative design of the study and the statistical treatment.

The null hypothesis indicated that political affiliation and political dynamics did not considerably affect the institutional independence of locally governed HEIs in Cavite. The significance level was set at $\alpha = 0.05$.

The analysis employed the general weighted mean scores gathered from student and faculty respondents across the three chosen HEIs. For members of the faculty, the computed mean perception score was 3.81, while for students it was 3.90. Such values showed overall agreement from the respondents in terms of the relevance and presence of political dynamics vis-à-vis institutional autonomy.

Employing the two-sample Z-test formula, a Z-value of -0.47 was computed. A critical value of ± 1.96 was obtained for a two-tailed test at the 0.05 level of significance. Owing to the absolute value of the computed z-value (0.47) being less than the critical value (1.96), the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Such finding revealed that there was no statistically significant difference between the perceptions of students and members of the faculty on the effects of political affiliation and political dynamics on the institutional autonomy of locally governed HEIs in Cavite. The two groups generally held a consistent view on how policy interventions, political leadership, government funding, and party affiliation influenced institutional autonomy.

Table 10. Summary of Hypothesis Testing Result

Comparison Group	Mean	Z-value	Critical Value	Decision
Faculty vs Students	3.81 vs 3.90	-0.47	± 1.96	Fail to Reject H_0

Qualitative Findings (Thematic Analysis)

This section shows the qualitative findings obtained from semi-structured interviews done with HEI deans, department heads, administrators, and LGU officials from the three chosen locally governed HEIs in Cavite, namely City College of Tagaytay, Kolehiyo ng Lungsod ng Dasmariñas, and Trece Martires City College. The qualitative

data were analyzed by employing Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis, which involved several steps: familiarizing with data, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and report writing.

The qualitative analysis sought to explore how political dynamics impact institutional independence, how HEIs deal with political influences while protecting their autonomy, the challenges experienced by locally governed HEIs as well as the implications of political engagement on educational quality and institutional mission.

Results of the study showed four key themes that directly align with the Statement of the Problem of the study. The themes reveal that although locally governed HEIs benefit from partnerships and support with LGUs, political dynamics continue to affect institutional operations, governance structures, financial decisions, and leadership processes. In spite of such, HEIs try to safeguard their autonomy via strategic leadership, governance mechanisms as well as protecting academic freedom.

The following themes appeared from the qualitative analysis:

1. Political Influence in Institutional Governance and Leadership
2. Strategies for Safeguarding Institutional Autonomy
3. Persistent Challenges to Institutional Autonomy
4. Implications of Political Dynamics on Institutional Mission and Educational Quality

The qualitative findings further reinforce and enrich the quantitative results of the study by offering detailed narratives as well as lived experiences of institutional leaders and local government officials concerning the realities of institutional autonomy and political influence in the three chosen HEIs.

Theme 1: Political Influence in Institutional Governance and Leadership

The first key theme that was revealed from analyzing the data was Political Impact in Institutional Governance and Leadership. Study participants consistently recognized that policy interventions, political leadership, funding allocation, and local government priorities considerably affect governance processes and institutional operations within the three chosen HEIs.

Since the HEIs were established and funded by LGUs, political actors inevitably shape strategic and administrative decisions according to many of the participants. They stressed that LGU officials and local chief executives play major roles in policy implementation, leadership appointments, institutional expansion, and budget approval.

One participant stated:

"There are cases where important decisions and institutional priorities are aligned with the programs and direction of the local administration since the HEI is financially supported by the LGU." (HEI P-03)

Similarly, another participant explained:

“Political leadership impacts institutional planning since the college needs to make certain projects and programs aligned with the priorities of the city government.” (HEI P-05)

Other participants also discussed how leadership appointments are sometimes linked with political confidence and trust from local officials. Even though administrators stressed competence and qualifications, they recognized that political leadership continues to influence how institutional leadership positions are determined.

As one participant also expressed:

“Leadership appointments may still be affected by the trust and confidence of local political leaders, especially since the HEI operates under the local government unit.” (LGU P-02)

Another participant added:

“Changes in political administration sometimes affect continuity in leadership and institutional priorities.” (HEI P-07)

Participants likewise highlighted the influence of government funding on institutional autonomy. Because locally governed HEIs rely heavily on LGU allocations, financial dependence may affect institutional flexibility in implementing long-term academic and developmental plans.

One administrator explained:

“Budget allocation is one of the biggest realities for locally governed colleges because financial support depends largely on the priorities and capacity of the local government.” (HEI P-01)

These findings strongly support the quantitative results where both faculty and student respondents agreed that political leadership, political affiliations, government funding, and policy interventions significantly influence institutional autonomy.

The findings also align with Resource Dependence Theory (Pfeffer & Salancik), which explains that organizations dependent on external resources become vulnerable to external influence and control. Since locally governed HEIs rely on LGU funding and support, political actors inevitably shape governance and decision-making processes.

Furthermore, the findings support the studies of Samuel et al. (2024) and Gao (2023), which emphasized that political structures and governance systems significantly influence higher education leadership, institutional policies, and administrative direction. Similarly, Najibi and Shahsavari (2024) argued that financial dependence on government support limits institutional flexibility and autonomy.

Such results show that political dynamics are deeply ingrained in the governance structures of locally governed HEIs, specifically when it comes to funding mechanisms, leadership appointments, and policy implementation.

Theme 2: Strategies for Safeguarding Institutional Autonomy

The second key theme that was revealed from the analysis was Strategies to Protecting Institutional Autonomy. In spite of political influences, participants stressed that their HEIs implement leadership strategies and governance mechanisms continuously to safeguard institutional integrity, independent decision-making, and academic freedom.

Participants emphasized how important collaborative leadership, transparency, policy-based decision-making, and governance structures were in balancing political relationships while safeguarding institutional autonomy.

One participant shared:

"We make sure that decisions by the HEI are guided by academic objectives, policies, and strategic plans instead of just purely political considerations." (HEI P-04)

Another participant stressed the role of collective governance:

"The administration involves various stakeholders, academic councils, and offices in decision-making processes to maintain balance and transparency." (HEI P-06)

Participants also highlighted the significance of sustaining academic freedom in spite of political transitions. Faculty leaders and administrators shared that research, teaching, and academic activities are generally shielded from political interference.

As one of the participants explained:

"Academic freedom continues to be safeguarded since members of the faculty can still express academic ideas, teach, and conduct research based on academic and professional standards." (HEI P-08)

Likewise, a different participant stated:

"The HEI still tries to maintain its academic independence and educational mission even if political leadership changes." (HEI P-09)

Partnership with the LGUs was also seen to be positive when managed properly. The participants shared that positive partnerships with the LGUs can reinforce institutional development while still respecting academic independence.

A local government official observed:

"The aim of the local government unit is not to meddle with academics but to reinforce the institution via community programs, funding, and infrastructure." (LGU P-03)

A different participant also stated:

"Healthy partnership between the LGU and the college becomes constructive when both sides respect shared goals and institutional boundaries." (HEI P-02)

Such results support those obtained quantitatively where students and faculty agreed that strategic decision-making, academic freedom, governance structures, and collaborative relationships with the LGUs help safeguard institutional independence.

Such findings find support in Institutional Theory by Meyer & Rowan (1977) as well as DiMaggio & Powell (1983), which discuss how HEIs are able to establish legitimacy by being able to balance external expectations with governance practices and internal organizational aims.

The said findings also give support to work by Cheah (2023), who stressed that governance structures and educational leadership are important to manage political realities while maintaining institutional integrity. Similarly, Ahmad (2024) emphasized that academic freedom protects against from too much political interference.

Overall, the findings suggest that the three chosen HEIs actively use strategic partnerships, governance mechanisms, and participatory leadership to balance political engagement while protecting institutional independence.

Theme 3: Persistent Challenges to Institutional Autonomy

The third key theme that emerged from the data was Persistent Challenges to Institutional Autonomy. Participants recognized that despite institutional efforts to maintain independence, the three chosen HEIs continue to face challenges linked with regulatory constraints, political pressure, leadership instability, and financial dependence.

Most participants shared that financial dependence continues to be one of the most considerable institutional weaknesses since operational sustainability heavily relies on financial support from LGUs.

One participant explained:

“Financial dependence is not easy to do away with since the HEI depends on financial allocations from the LGU for programs, operations, and infrastructure.” (HEI P-10)

A different participant also stated:

“When budget limits happen at the LGU level, academic initiatives and institutional projects also get impacted.” (HEI P-11)

Participants also shared how political pressure had possible impacts on decision-making and institutional planning. Although some administrators observed that there is limited direct interference, they acknowledged that political considerations can still affect institutional priorities.

As one participant noted:

“There are circumstances where HEIs need to take political realities into account first prior to implementing key initiatives.” (HEI P-12)

Leadership instability that is linked to political transitions also appeared as a recurring concern. Participants expressed that changes in local political administration can also impact the continuity of an HEIs strategic direction as well as its institutional leadership.

One participant observed:

“Changes in leadership caused by political transitions sometimes interfere with long-term institutional plans and continuity.” (HEI P-05)

Another participant shared:

“Institutional adjustments usually occur when a new political administration sets in.” (LGU P-01)

Participants similarly identified bureaucratic and regulatory processes as challenges impacting institutional responsiveness and flexibility.

As explained by one administrator:

“Certain approval processes and regulatory requirements sometimes slow down decision-making and institutional initiatives.” (HEI P-13)

Such findings strongly reinforce the quantitative results where students and faculty agreed that political pressure, financial dependence, regulatory constraints, and politically influenced leadership changes pose challenges to institutional independence.

The said results also align with Principal-Agent Theory (Jensen & Meckling, 1976), which observes the tension between agents (HEI administrators) and principals (government authorities), specifically when political expectations and institutional objectives differ.

Moreover, such finding also finds support in the work of Yaacob et al. (2024), who highlighted that bureaucratic control and too much regulation may reduce innovation and institutional flexibility. Likewise, Doner (2024) and Bohlens (2024) stressed that political leadership transitions can weaken institutional stability and governance continuity.

In summary, results show that locally governed HEIs continuously thread through complicated structural and political challenges that directly impact institutional autonomy, governance stability, and long-term strategic planning.

Theme 4: Implications of Political Dynamics on Institutional Mission and Educational Quality

The fourth key theme that appeared from the analysis was Implications of Political Dynamics on Institutional Mission and Educational Quality. Participants shared that political dynamics may affect student outcomes, educational programs, research opportunities, and institutional reputation depending on the breadth of institutional resilience and political involvement.

Many participants expressed that too much political influence may indirectly impact academic quality and educational priorities.

One participant explained:

“There are times when institutional priorities change depending on what the priorities of the local administration are.” (HEI P-06)

Another participant shared:

“Political changes sometimes impact the continuity of projects and programs, particularly those which require long-term support.” (HEI P-09)

Research opportunities were similarly seen to be linked to institutional support and availability of funding.

As one participant observed:

“Research initiatives often rely on available funding from the HEI as well as external support from the LGU.” (HEI P-04)

Another participant added:

“Limited financial resources can affect the HEIs ability to broaden its academic initiatives and research programs.” (HEI P-10)

Participants also recognized that perceptions of the public and political affiliations can affect the reputation of the institution.

As one participant explained:

“Public perception of the HEI may sometimes be associated with the political image of the governing LGU.” (HEI P-08)

When it comes to student outcomes, participants stressed that academic continuity, institutional stability, and funding support directly impact student opportunities and experiences.

One participant shared:

“Students get affected whenever delays happen to academic programs, facilities, or projects owing to political or administrative transitions.” (HEI P-07)

Despite such concerns, many participants highlighted that HEIs continue endeavoring to uphold the institutional mission and educational quality irrespective of political dynamics.

One administrator expressed:

“Student development and quality education continues to be prioritized by the HEI in spite of political realities and external pressures.” (HEI P-03)

Such findings support the quantitative results of the study where students and faculty recognized that political dynamics may impact student outcomes, research opportunities, academic programs, and institutional reputation.

The said results also further reinforce the studies of Rubab et al. (2024), Mendoza Villafaina and López-Mosquera (2024), and Decena (2023), which stressed that governance instability and political involvement may influence student experiences, public perception, institutional credibility, and educational quality.

Furthermore, the results align with Institutional Theory, which discusses how HEIs continuously change according to external political environments while trying to maintain educational quality, legitimacy, and organizational stability.

In summary, the results show that political dynamics result in both direct and indirect implications on educational quality and institutional mission, specifically in connection to governance continuity, research support, funding, and institutional reputation.

DISCUSSION

This section combines the qualitative thematic findings together with the quantitative survey results to provide an extensive overview of the effect of political dynamics on the institutional independence of locally governed HEIs in Cavite.

Integrating qualitative and quantitative findings showed strong congruence between the perceptions of students, faculty members, HEI administrators, and LGU officials concerning the effect of political dynamics on institutional independence.

Quantitative results showed that both student and faculty respondents agreed that policy interventions, political pressures, regulatory constraints, government funding, political affiliations, and political leadership affect institutional autonomy in locally governed HEIs. Likewise, the qualitative findings gave detailed narratives which confirmed that governance structures and political actors considerably influence financial decisions, institutional priorities, leadership processes, and institutional operations.

Both qualitative and quantitative findings also showed that the chosen HEIs actively implement collaborative leadership mechanisms, governance strategies, and policies that aid in protecting academic freedom and institutional independence in spite of political realities.

Moreover, both sets of results consistently pinpoint regulatory constraints, financial dependence, leadership instability, and political pressure as pervasive challenges that impact institutional independence and long-term governance stability.

Such results collectively indicate that while political dynamics are inevitable within the chosen HEIs, institutional independence can still be maintained through participatory decision-making, transparent governance structures, academic freedom protections, strategic leadership, and balanced partnership with the LGUs.

Combining the results further reinforces application of Resource Dependence Theory, Institutional Theory, and Principal-Agent Theory in shedding light on the complex relationship between institutional autonomy and political governance within the chosen HEIs in Cavite.

Conclusions

The study analyzed the effects of political dynamics on the institutional independence of locally governed HEIs in Cavite, particularly the City College of Tagaytay, Kolehiyo ng Lungsod ng Dasmariñas, and Trece Martires City College. Supplemented with qualitative insights from HEI administrators and LGU officials, perceptions from both students and faculty were examined to address the research problems on challenges, and implications on educational quality, autonomy management as well as political influence.

Based on gathered and presented data, the study's major findings included the following:

1. Influence of Political Dynamics on Institutional Autonomy

- Students and members of the faculty agreed that policy interventions, government funding, political leadership, and party affiliations considerably affect institutional independence.
- HEI 2 demonstrated the highest perceived political influence, whereas HEI 3 indicated slightly lower agreement, suggesting variable results across HEIs.
- Quantitative results were strongly complemented by the qualitative findings, which showed that local politicians and LGU officials usually participate in policy approvals, budget allocations, and leadership appointments.

Such results suggest that institutional independence in the chosen HEIs is structurally created by relying on LGUs, where policy approval and funding access form inherent political linkages that shape institutional decision-making.

2. Management of Political Impacts while Protecting Autonomy

- HEIs use transparent decision-making processes, governance structures, academic councils, and LGU collaborations to safeguard their independence.
- Internal policies and strategic planning help reduce political interference.
- Formal mechanisms such as institutional guidelines and oversight from a Board of Trustees make HEIs more resilient.

Such results reflect Institutional Theory, where HEIs are said to maintain legitimacy by making governance systems aligned with external political expectations while

preserving internal academic independence through structured decision-making processes.

3. Challenges to Institutional Autonomy

- Main challenges include political pressure, regulatory constraints, financial dependence on LGU allocations, and politically motivated leadership changes.
- Responses for faculty members were more variable from HEI 3, while students generally indicated higher agreement on said challenges.
- HEI administrators in interviews confirmed pervading issues such as policy constraints, funding delays, and leadership instability affecting operations.

Said challenges reflect a Principal-Agent tension between HEI administrators (agents) and LGUs (principals), where institutional independence is reportedly negotiated on a continuous basis within politically influenced governance structures.

4. Implications on Educational Quality and Institutional Mission

- Political dynamics were seen to impact student outcomes, academic programs, research opportunities, and institutional reputation though the extent differed across HEIs.
- HEI 1 revealed greater direct negative implications, while HEI 2 and HEI 3 revealed neutral or mixed perceptions.
- Qualitative findings indicate that political engagement may provide infrastructure support and resources but may also affect institutional priorities and perception.

Political dynamics reportedly operate as a dual force, supporting HEI development by allocating resources while at the same time limiting academic priorities depending on the strength of institutional independence and governance safeguards.

5. Consistency in Stakeholder Perceptions

- The Z-test showed no statistically significant difference between student and faculty perceptions.
- Both groups revealed a similar understanding of political influence in HEIs.
- Qualitative findings supported convergence of perspectives across the study's participants.

The confluence of perceptions reinforces how the findings are valid and supports the view that political influence is reportedly a systemic institutional condition instead of a group-specific or an isolated perception.

Based on the results of the study, the following conclusions are made:

1. Impact of Political Dynamics on Institutional Independence

Political dynamics considerably influence institutional independence in locally governed HEIs in Cavite through policy interventions, funding allocations, and leadership appointments.

This suggests that institutional independence structurally depends on external governance and political systems instead of being fully autonomous.

2. Management of Political Impacts while Protecting Autonomy

HEIs use collaborative strategies and governance mechanisms to protect independence and manage political influence.

This implies that institutional independence is actively maintained via structured governance systems instead of existing as a fixed condition.

3. Challenges to Institutional Autonomy

Institutional independence is restrained by political interference, leadership instability, regulatory pressures, and financial dependency.

This validates that autonomy is continuously influenced by structural dependencies inside local governance systems.

4. Implications on Educational Quality and Institutional Mission

Political dynamics have both restraining and encouraging impacts on institutional mission and educational quality.

To be more specific, political influence provides support for resources but may also impact program integrity, academic priorities, and institutional reputation depending on the strength of governance.

5. Consistency in Stakeholder Perceptions

Stakeholders possess a unified perception of political dynamics that affect HEIs. This validates that political influence is reportedly a shared institutional reality experienced across student and faculty groups.

In summary, the study concludes that institutional independence in the three chosen HEIs in Cavite is a **dynamic and negotiated condition**, influenced by continuous interaction between institutional leadership and political authorities. While independence is repressed by regulatory and financial dependence, HEIs reportedly show adaptive governance mechanisms that enable them to maintain institutional continuity and academic integrity.

Recommendations

Based on the results and conclusions, the recommendations below are proposed to strengthen institutional independence while enabling a positive relationship with local government officials:

1. Strengthening Autonomy Safeguards

HEIs may establish policies that clearly define and also limit political involvement in administrative and academic decision-making.

2. Enhancing Financial Sustainability

HEIs may create diverse funding approaches such as income-generating projects, grants, and partnerships to limit depending on funding from LGUs.

3. Institutionalizing Merit-Based Systems for HEI Leadership

To reduce political influence, selection processes for leadership may be strengthened through mechanisms that are transparent and competency-based.

4. Strengthening Governance Structures

To ensure that institutional decisions continue to be transparent and academically driven, HEIs may improve their participatory governance systems.

5. Proposed Output: Institutional Autonomy and Governance Enhancement Plan For Locally Governed Higher Education Institutions in Cavite.

For its final output, the study presents a Proposed Institutional Autonomy and Governance Enhancement Plan. The said plan offers a structured framework to strengthen participatory decision-making, governance independence, financial resilience, and protection from political interference in the identified HEIs in Cavite.

The said HEIs in Cavite function in a complex political environment that both challenges and supports institutional independence. While the dynamics of politics can affect funding, governance, and leadership, the study shows that HEIs can strategically protect their independence through balanced collaboration, effective governance, and transparent decision-making with local authorities. Translating the recommended strategies into action will not only support institutional resilience but also ensure that student outcomes, academic quality, and research opportunities continue to be core to the mission of the said institutions.

PROPOSED INSTITUTIONAL AUTONOMY AND GOVERNANCE ENHANCEMENT PLAN

For Locally Governed Higher Education Institutions in Cavite

Rationale

Higher education institutions (HEIs) play a crucial role in promoting academic excellence, research development, and community service. However, locally governed HEIs often face challenges arising from political dynamics that influence institutional governance, leadership decisions, financial resources, and policy implementation. These political dynamics may affect institutional autonomy, academic freedom, and the overall effectiveness of higher education institutions.

The findings of the study revealed that political leadership, party affiliations, government funding, and policy interventions significantly influence the autonomy of locally governed HEIs. In addition, institutions encounter challenges such as regulatory constraints, financial dependence on local government units (LGUs), political pressures, and leadership transitions. These factors may impact governance structures, decision-making processes, research opportunities, institutional reputation, and student outcomes.

In response to these challenges, this Institutional Autonomy and Governance Enhancement Plan was developed to strengthen governance mechanisms, enhance institutional independence, improve collaboration with government stakeholders, and ensure the continuous delivery of quality education.

Objectives

Generally, this plan aims to strengthen institutional autonomy and governance capacity of locally governed higher education institutions.

Specifically, it aims to:

1. Strengthen governance structures and decision-making mechanisms in HEIs.
2. Reduce financial dependence on local government units through diversified funding sources.
3. Protect academic freedom and promote independent research and academic programs.
4. Enhance transparency and participatory governance among institutional stakeholders.
5. Improve collaboration between HEIs and government institutions while maintaining institutional autonomy.
6. Strengthen leadership stability and institutional policy frameworks.
7. Improve educational quality, research productivity, and student outcomes.

Implementation Authority and Directive Structure

This Institutional Autonomy and Governance Enhancement Plan shall be implemented as a completed staff work document, ensuring full operational readiness and enforceability.

1. Policy Authority

The **Governing Board and Local Government Units (LGUs)** shall serve as the highest policy-making and approving authorities. They shall issue formal directives, resolutions, and policy approvals necessary for the implementation of all programs contained in this plan.

2. Executive Accountability

The **HEI Administration (President/Administrator)** shall be the primary accountable body responsible for overall supervision, coordination, and enforcement of the implementation of all programs and interventions.

3. Operational Implementation

The **respective institutional offices and units** (including Academic Affairs, Finance Office, Research Office, Quality Assurance Office, Student Affairs, HR, and related offices) shall serve as the implementing units responsible for executing specific activities outlined in the Action Matrix.

4. Implementation Mechanism

All programs, policies, and interventions shall be implemented through official institutional instruments such as:

- Board Resolutions
- Administrative Orders
- Office Memoranda
- Institutional Policy Guidelines

122

5. Monitoring and Compliance

A centralized monitoring system led by the HEI Administration and Quality Assurance Office shall ensure compliance, evaluate progress, and recommend adjustments as necessary.

General Implementation Guidelines

The implementation of this plan shall follow a standardized institutional process to ensure uniform execution across all participating units. The following guidelines shall be observed:

1. All programs under this plan shall be formally adopted through a **Board Resolution or Administrative Order** prior to implementation.
2. Each implementing office shall prepare a **detailed work plan** aligned with the Action Matrix before execution begins.
3. Program implementation shall follow a **phased approach**, including planning, execution, monitoring, and evaluation stages.
4. All activities shall be coordinated through the **HEI Administration**, which shall ensure alignment with institutional policies and LGU directives.
5. Budget allocation shall be released in accordance with **approved institutional financial procedures** and subject to existing auditing rules.
6. Monitoring and evaluation shall be conducted **quarterly and annually** using performance indicators identified in the Action Matrix.
7. Adjustments to implementation shall require approval from the **Governing Board and HEI Administration** to ensure policy consistency.

To ensure systematic and structured implementation, the Institutional **Autonomy and Governance Enhancement Plan** is operationalized through the **Action Matrix** below, which provides the specific programs, objectives, activities, responsible offices, monitoring mechanisms, and implementation timelines.

ACTION MATRIX

SPECIFIC PROBLEM	PROPOSED POLICY / PROGRAM	OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	PERSON/GROUP RESPONSIBLE	EXPECTED RESULT / OUTCOME	MONITORING AND EVALUATION	PROBABLE OBSTACLE	CONTINGENCY ACTION	ESTIMATED BUDGET	TIMELINE
Political influence affecting institutional decision-making	Institutional Governance Strengthening Program	Strengthen governance policies and institutional independence	Develop governance policy manual; conduct governance training workshops	HEI Administration, Board of Trustees	Improved governance transparency and autonomy	Annual governance review	Political interference	Reinforce institutional policies and legal safeguards	₱150,000	1 year
Financial dependence on LGU funding	Financial Sustainability and Resource Diversification Program	Reduce dependence on local government financial support	Establish industry partnerships; expand research grants; alumni fundraising	HEI Finance Office, External Affairs Office	Increased alternative funding sources	Quarterly financial monitoring	Limited funding sources	Strengthen external partnerships	₱200,000	1–2 years
Lack of participatory decision-making	Participatory Governance Enhancement Program	Improve stakeholder participation in institutional governance	Establish faculty and student representation in committees	HEI Administration, Faculty Association, Student Council	Inclusive decision-making processes	Stakeholder feedback surveys	Limited participation	Awareness and consultation programs	₱80,000	6 months
Political pressure affecting academic freedom	Academic Freedom Protection Policy	Safeguard academic independence and curriculum integrity	Formulate academic freedom policy; strengthen academic council authority	Academic Council, HEI Administration	Protected academic programs and research	Academic program evaluation	Policy resistance	Institutional policy reinforcement	₱100,000	1 year
Leadership instability due to political transitions	Leadership Continuity and Succession Planning Program	Ensure continuity of institutional leadership	Develop leadership succession plan; leadership training	Governing Board, HR Department	Stable institutional leadership	Annual leadership assessment	Political transitions	Institutional governance policy reinforcement	₱120,000	1 year
Regulatory constraints affecting institutional flexibility	Policy Dialogue and Advocacy Program	Improve coordination between HEIs and government agencies	Conduct policy dialogues with LGUs and CHED	HEI Administration, LGU Officials	Balanced governance relationships	Annual policy review meetings	Conflicting regulations	Policy negotiation mechanisms	₱70,000	6 months

Limited research opportunities	Research Capability Enhancement Program	Strengthen research productivity and independence	Establish research grants; research training programs	Research Office, Faculty Researchers	Increased research outputs	Research performance evaluation	Limited research funds	External research collaborations	₱150,000	1 year
Institutional reputation affected by political issues	Institutional Branding and Quality Assurance Program	Strengthen institutional credibility and public trust	Implement quality assurance programs; promote academic achievements	Quality Assurance Office, HEI Administration	Improved institutional reputation	Accreditation review	Negative perception	Strategic communication initiatives	₱90,000	1 year
Student outcomes affected by governance challenges	Student Academic Development Program	Improve student learning outcomes and academic performance	Implement academic support programs and career development activities	Academic Affairs Office, Faculty	Improved student performance and satisfaction	Student performance monitoring	Limited resources	External support programs	₱120,000	1 year

Compliance with Ethical Standards

The study complied with established ethical principles to ensure that participants' confidentiality, rights, and well-being throughout the research process were protected. As such, the following ethical considerations were followed:

1. **Informed Consent.** All participants which included students, faculty members, HEI deans, administrators, and LGU officials, were given a detailed informed consent form before participating in the study. The form explained the study's purpose, procedures, benefits, potential risks, and the voluntary nature of participation. Those who participated were allowed to seek clarifications, ask questions, or withdraw at any stage of the study without consequences.
2. **Confidentiality and Anonymity.** Interview responses together with personal information were kept strictly confidential and used exclusively for research purposes. Names, institutional affiliations, and job positions were not disclosed in any publications or reports. To ensure responses were kept completely anonymous, unique identification codes were used rather than real names during processing of data.
3. **Voluntary Participation and Right to Withdraw.** Participation in the study was completely voluntary, and respondents were given the choice to withdraw at any time or to decline to answer any question without penalty. No participant was also forced into providing information.
4. **Minimization of Risk and Harm.** No physical, psychological, or social risks were posed to participants. Potentially sensitive questions on institutional autonomy and political dynamics were framed professionally and neutrally to avoid discomfort. If participants felt uncomfortable, they were allowed to skip questions or discontinue participation altogether.
5. **Data Protection and Security.** Data gathered were stored safely in password-protected digital files, whereas physical files were hidden in a locked cabinet. Only authorized personnel such as the research adviser together with the proponent of the study had access to the raw data. After completion of the study, all data were disposed of properly in keeping with ethical research guidelines.
6. **Approval from Institutional Review Board (IRB) or Ethics Committee.** Before data collection, the research was subjected to ethical review and was approved by the appropriate ethics committee or institutional research board, as needed.

Integrity and Objectivity.

The research was implemented with transparency, honesty, and academic integrity. Results were reported accurately, without misrepresenting or manipulating data. All references were properly acknowledged and cited to ensure plagiarism was avoided.

Acknowledgments

The researcher extends sincere appreciation to Dr. Ulysses A. Brito and Dr. Sarlito S. Ferraren, Jr., the research advisers, for their valuable advice and insights; Dr. Herman

A. Catapang for his input and recommendations; and Dr. Raul C. Trinidad, Dr. Ely F. Lumbao, Dr. Ernest R. Vera Cruz, and Dr. Celio C. Francia for their time, effort, expertise, and constructive recommendations in reviewing the study.

Gratitude is also extended to the Local Government Units of Dasmariñas City, Trece Martires City, and Tagaytay City for their support, assistance, and cooperation in the conduct of the study and for facilitating access to the participating higher education institutions.

The researcher likewise acknowledges the administrators, faculty members, and student respondents of Kolehiyo ng Lungsod ng Dasmariñas, City College of Tagaytay, and Trece Martires City College for their time, openness, and willingness to participate in the study. Their responses, insights, and experiences provided the data necessary for this research.

Above all, heartfelt thanks are offered to Almighty God for guidance and strength throughout the completion of this work.

REFERENCES

- Ahmad, W. (2024). Investigating the relationship between academic freedom and institutional autonomy in Pakistani universities. *Remittances Review*, 9, 458–484.
- Al-Azad, N., Yong, F. L., & Tan, N. (2024). Servant, democratic, and transformational leadership styles: Implications on higher educational institutions (HEIs) in Malaysia, 10–16.
- Bekebayeva, M., Kalykulov, K., & Kelesbayev, D. (2022). Impact of strategic industry-university partnerships on economy growth. *Vestnik Kazakhstogo Universiteta Ekonomiki, Finansov i Mezhdunarodnoy Torgovli*. [https://doi.org/10.52260/2304-7216.2022.1\(46\).14](https://doi.org/10.52260/2304-7216.2022.1(46).14)
- Bohlens, C. (2024). Governance and leadership: Driving change in higher education. <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-6967-8.ch010>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Cheah, K. (2023). System leadership in educational context. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-8494-7_9
- Christian, I. V. (2024). Government interference and effective management of universities in Rivers State. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.25184.08963>
- Decena III, J. (2023). Politicized education consequences. *International Education Conference Proceedings*, 2023, 1–8.
- DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. (1983). The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American Sociological Review*, 48(2), 147–160.
- Doner, E. (2024). The compassionate leadership in chaotic environments. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-64265-4_5
- Estanislao, J. (2024). University governance and its link to national development. *International Forum on Higher Education Governance*, 2024.
- Gao, P. (2023). On the legal construction of ideological and political education in colleges and universities from the perspective of university governance. *Curriculum Learning and Exploration*, 1. <https://doi.org/10.18686/cle.v1i1.3451>
- Hao, Z. (2025). Institutional autonomy in relation to academic freedom, the role of the government and the need for higher education as a federation. *European Review*, 33(S1), S70–S85. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1062798725000146>

- Jain, A., Kamat, S., Saini, V., Singh, A., & Whig, P. (2024). Agile leadership: Navigating challenges and maximizing success. <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-3318-1.ch003>
- Jensen, M. C., & Meckling, W. H. (1976). Theory of the firm: Managerial behavior, agency costs and ownership structure. *Journal of Financial Economics*, 3(4), 305–360. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0304-405X\(76\)90026-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/0304-405X(76)90026-X)
- Luz, A. R., Antunes, M., Sá, C., & Tavares, O. (2024). Exploring dropout and retention trends in Portuguese HEIs during transformative periods. <https://doi.org/10.21125/inted.2024.0188>
- Manzoor Tania, S., Chong, S., Mahmud, A.-A., & Asmawi, A. (2024). The impacts of a redefined HEI image model on postgraduate international students' satisfaction in Malaysia. *International Journal of Service Science, Management, Engineering, and Technology*, 15, 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.4018/IJSSMET.339885>
- Mateo, J., & Gonzales, M. (2024). Political influence in local higher education institutions: Implications for governance and autonomy in the Philippines. *Philippine Institute for Development Studies*.
- Mendoza Villafaina, J., & López-Mosquera, N. (2024). Educational experience, university satisfaction and institutional reputation: Implications for university sustainability. *The International Journal of Management Education*, 22, 101013. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2024.101013>
- Najibi, S. S., & Shahsavari, A. (2024). Financial unsustainability spillover from government to university: Challenges and policy implications for sustainable higher education.
- Nayan, R., & Aggarwal, S. (2022). Financial and administrative autonomy in higher educational institutions as per National Educational Policy in India, 112–119.
- Neugebauer, J., & Vokoun, M. (2024). Economic and political dynamics of globalization: A review of continuity and change in research focus. *International Journal of Economic Sciences*, 13, 30–57. <https://doi.org/10.52950/ES.2024.13.1.003>
- Pfeffer, J., & Salancik, G. R. (1978). The external control of organizations: A resource dependence perspective. Harper & Row.
- Republic Act No. 7160. (1991). Local Government Code of 1991. Republic of the Philippines.
- Republic Act No. 7722. (1994). Higher Education Act of 1994. Republic of the Philippines.
- Rubab, A., Aneela, & Tricárico, L. (2024). The moderating effect of university reputation on the relationship between website quality and destination selection by prospective international students. *International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews*, 5, 2420–2432. <https://doi.org/10.55248/gengpi.5.1024.2826>
- Samuel, O., Njanubok, I. C., Kem, N. A., & Akpoabowei, N. (2024). Residents' perception of political godfatherism and interference in governance in Rivers State. *Rivers State Journal of Management, Communication and Information Technology*, 10, 86–96. <https://doi.org/10.56201/rjmcit.v10.no2.2024.pg86.96>
- Scott, T., & Guan, W. (2022). Challenges facing Thai higher education institutions' financial stability and perceived institutional education quality. *Power and Education*, 15, 175774382211400. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17577438221140014>
- Sejan, S. S. (2024). Excessive politicization of universities: Threats toward academic freedom. *Kathmandu School of Law Review*, 12(1), 98–112. <https://doi.org/10.46985/kslr.v12i1.2224>
- Shi, H., Dai, Y., Zhao, J., Jiao, L., & Xu, Y. (2024). Dependency-oriented versus autonomy-oriented help: Inferred motivations and intergroup perceptions. *Behavioral Sciences*, 14, 1000. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs14111000>
- Tavares, O. (2021). The principal-agent theory and the reform of higher education governance. *European Journal of Higher Education*, 11(2), 119–134. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568235.2020.1819565>

- Yaacob, H., Norzehan, S., & Mohamed, I. (2024). Investigating contemporary issues and challenges in higher education waqf management and governance for sustainability: The case of Malaysian public universities.
- Zhang, S., Sun, Z., Fan, Z., & Weng, S. (2023). Transforming talent development: A reflective analysis of the innovative government-school cooperation model under the paradigm of knowledge innovation. *Journal of the Knowledge Economy*, 15, 15176–15201. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13132-023-01677-z>

APA Citation:

Gapuz, C. (2026). THE DELICATE BALANCE OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE TOWARDS AN ENHANCED INSTITUTIONAL AUTONOMY IN CAVITE'S LOCALLY-GOVERNED HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION. *Ignatian International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, 4(9), 1848–1890. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23037586>

christopher.gapuz@cvsu.edu.ph