

Thinking Ahead in Educational Services at Private Universities in Gorontalo Province

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Abstract

Governance as a governance concept continues to evolve into Dynamic Governance, which emphasizes adaptive capacity in responding to environmental changes. In the context of higher education, Private Universities (PTS) in Gorontalo Province face complex challenges in realizing dynamic governance, particularly in the aspect of educational services. This study focuses on thinking ahead capabilities as an integral part of Dynamic Governance with three main indicators: policy reflection, decision evaluation, and readiness to change policies. The study was conducted using a qualitative, descriptive-explanatory case study approach through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The results show that thinking ahead capabilities in PTS in Gorontalo Province are not optimal. In the policy reflection indicator, there is a misalignment between strategic planning and budget support, regulations that tend to focus on PTN, and weak long-term planning. In the decision evaluation indicator, limited human resources and the lack of data-based evaluation mechanisms hinder policy effectiveness, resulting in stagnant decisions. Meanwhile, in the readiness to change policy indicator, despite awareness of the importance of transformation, PTS still face obstacles such as limited finances, technological infrastructure, resistance to organizational culture, lack of human resource training, and slow internal bureaucracy. In conclusion, thinking ahead within the Dynamic Governance framework at Gorontalo's private universities requires strengthening through increased budget allocation, more inclusive regulations, enhanced data-driven evaluation, human resource development, and bureaucratic reform. With these strategies, private universities are expected to be more adaptive to the dynamics of higher education and able to sustainably improve service quality.

Keywords: Dynamic Governance, Thinking Ahead, Private Universities, Educational Governance, Adaptive Policy

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Introduction

In the era of globalization, marked by increasingly fierce competition, every Private Higher Education Institution (PTS) must continually improve and be open to all developments, both related to regulations (legislation) and the public's demand for higher-quality educational services. To realize service-based governance in the organization and management of higher education institutions, the leaders and administrators of higher education institutions must be competent in organizing and managing them (Neumann & Terosky, 2007).

Good governance in Private Higher Education Institutions (PTS) is defined as a power that is not solely owned and the responsibility of the Higher Education Institution's Leadership or Foundation Management, but rather how this function is carried out collaboratively by the

Foundation, the Higher Education Institution, and all components within the higher education institution (Kezar, 2005; Jongbloed et al., 2008; Coombe, 2015).

According to Lockwood (2010), the implementation of the ideals of Good Governance ultimately requires the involvement of community organizations as a balancing force for the state. In the concept of governance, the government is only one actor and not always the decisive one. The implication is that the government's role as a developer and provider of services and infrastructure will shift to being a driving force for creating an environment that facilitates other parties in the community (Koppenja & Enserink, 2009).

Governance demands a redefinition of the role of the state, which in turn means a redefinition of the role of citizens (Chandler, 2001). There are greater demands on citizens, including the need to monitor the accountability of the government itself. In the current context, public administration is no longer merely a state instrument or government agency, but its function is increasingly becoming a medium or tool for implementing good governance in accordance with increasingly complex societal conditions (Nag, 2018).

Governance, more commonly known in public administration as "Governance," is a cutting-edge concept that remains the subject of discourse and research by several groups, including academics. Popęda & Hadasik (2024) stated that the term "Governance" is a new theory that embodies the spirit of prioritizing the principles of synergistic governance, a recent study in public administration. Further developments in the concept of "Governance" demonstrate that governance serves not only as a conceptual basis for implementing good governance under normal conditions but also as a response to environmental changes, thus giving rise to "Dynamic Governance."

Dynamic Governance is a necessity for every government agency to achieve the long-term goal of Indonesian bureaucratic reform (Widowati et al., 2023). It is hoped that the governance process in all government and bureaucratic activities in every government agency will lead to a performance-based bureaucracy by 2019 and dynamic governance. During field observations related to Thinking Ahead capabilities, researchers identified several relevant issues.

Among them, Private Higher Education Institutions (PTS) in Gorontalo Province face complex challenges in realizing adaptive and impactful governance. Although various strategic programs have been designed to improve the quality of higher education services, researchers assessed that various forms of inconsistency in their implementation remain. This inconsistency is evident in the lack of synchronization between strategic program planning and realistic budget availability, as well as weak infrastructure and supporting networks to accommodate policy reflection and human resource competency (Purba, 2025).

Furthermore, there is a gap between the direction of national policy, which tends to be oriented towards State Universities (PTN), and the adaptive conditions and needs of PTS, including in terms of bureaucracy, incentives for collaboration with industry, and supporting regulations. Inconsistencies also emerged in policy evaluation mechanisms and standards, which were not optimally integrated with the decision-making and review processes (Ascough et al., 2008).

Furthermore, according to the researchers' observations, strategic management in private universities in Gorontalo Province was often not effectively connected to the human resource capacity for analyzing and implementing policies. Data-based evaluations, policy research, and the monitoring systems designed were often hampered by limited funding allocations. In facing policy changes and demands for digitalization, private universities in Gorontalo Province also

experienced responsiveness challenges due to limited technological infrastructure and an organizational culture that was not yet fully adaptive.

Methods

This research is conducted in Gorontalo Province, focusing on the capabilities of Dynamic Governance in educational services at Private Higher Education Institutions (PTS). The author is interested in examining Dynamic Governance in educational service delivery because education is a crucial issue, encompassing not only basic paradigms but also practical/technical aspects such as high tuition costs, low student interest, limited physical facilities, and low lecturer welfare. Dynamic Governance itself reflects leaders' efforts to consciously shape the future through a combination of culture and capabilities that are expected to drive positive change. This research is planned to last three months, from problem observation to the preparation of the final research report. The research implementation uses a qualitative approach with case studies, specifically descriptive and explanatory types. This approach was chosen because the research does not aim to test theories, but rather to describe, understand, and analyze the capabilities of Dynamic Governance in educational service delivery. Data collected include words, actions, situations, documentation, and events through in-depth interviews, observations, and recording with the support of a recording device. The research procedure follows qualitative stages which include: (1) the description/orientation stage, where the researcher records initial information from the field; (2) the reduction stage, namely filtering information to focus on the core problem; and (3) the selection stage, namely the detailed breakdown of the focus to an in-depth analysis that produces new themes, knowledge, or theories.

Data Analysis Techniques

In accordance with the research problem and objectives, the study used a qualitative research approach, presenting the findings and conclusions of the analysis in descriptive narrative form. After data collection, data simplification was carried out and then qualitative analysis was conducted. The data analysis technique in this study used the Spiral model, popularized by. The use of the Spiral Model in conducting data analysis techniques is as shown in the following figure:

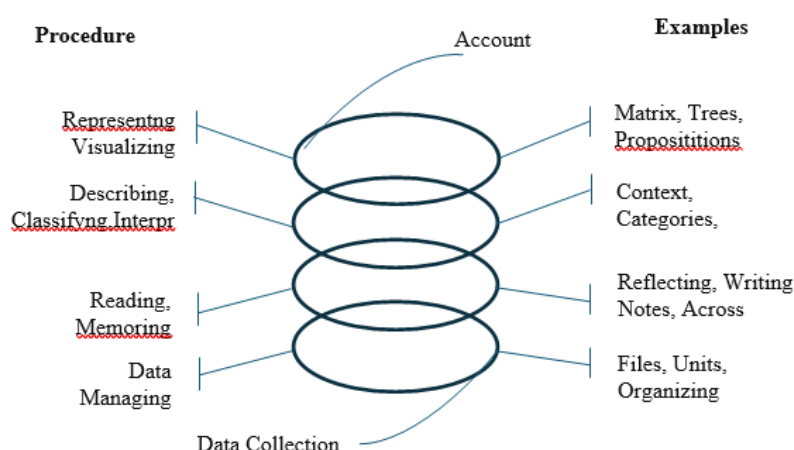


Figure 1. Spiral Model Data Analysis Technique

In the initial stage, data collection was conducted, including primary and secondary data, as well as data in the form of text and images. In the second stage, reading and note-taking were

conducted as a reflection of the answers to the research questions. In the third stage, the recorded data were described, classified, and interpreted based on context and categories. The final stage involved representation and visualization by drawing conclusions in the form of matrices and tree diagrams, and then developing propositions based on the research findings. The data analysis in this study used the Data Analysis Spiral with the following steps: (1) Data Collection, which involves collecting data from interviews in the form of text, participant observation, and other data in the form of images, documents, and so on related to the analysis of dynamic governance in the provision of education services in Gorontalo Province; (2) Data Management, which involves processing data obtained from research results related to the analysis of dynamic governance in the provision of education services in Gorontalo Province, including participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, and transforming this data into text units suitable for analysis; (3) Reading, Memorizing, namely understanding and remembering as a reflection of a number of answers to research questions related to the analysis of dynamic governance of the provision of educational services in Gorontalo Province using a scientific approach; (4) Describing, Classifying, and Interpreting, namely describing, grouping according to the context of the category of analysis of dynamic governance of the provision of educational services in Gorontalo Province using a scientific approach; and (5) Representing, Visualizing, namely presenting and making conclusions that can be made in the form of charts, then compiling propositions from the research results.

Results and Discussion

Thinking Ahead in Transforming Educational Services at Private Universities in Gorontalo Province

The Thinking Ahead indicator refers to the ability of PTS to reflect on policies, evaluate decisions, and develop innovations relevant to the readiness to change policies. Through interviews with parties involved in the management of PTS in Gorontalo Province, coupled with the results of observations at the research location, this study digs deeper into the extent to which the aspect of thinking ahead capability is applied in the daily practice of PTS governance. Research data regarding the aspect of thinking ahead capability in educational services at PTS Gorontalo was collected by researchers based on 3 (three) indicators, namely: (1) Policy reflection; (2) decision evaluation and (3) readiness to change policies

Policy Reflection on Thinking Ahead Capability in Educational Services at Private Universities in Gorontalo Province

Policy Reflection is the process of analyzing decisions taken by PTS Gorontalo Province or policies implemented, and projecting their long-term impacts in the future. Based on the interview results, information regarding the PTS Policy Reflection was obtained as follows, explained by WIM, Vice Rector I at Bina Mandiri University:

"I think UBM always monitors the latest government regulations and quickly adapts, whether it's related to MBKM (Communication, Community Empowerment, and Community Empowerment), we immediately make changes. Of course, we first analyze the existing regulations, and we've made additional PTS regulations to see the future vision. Because PTS must operate with limited resources, we are always innovating here. We must not stagnate because to catch up, we must adapt to government regulations. I think the private sector is more flexible than PTN. PTNs have a hierarchical process for determining something. We can be quicker because the highest level of coordination is only with the foundation. The important thing is that it doesn't

violate the regulations of the ministry, in this case the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, although sometimes we as leaders are faced with limitations such as time, costs, and human resources." (Source: WIM Interview Transcript, March 29, 2023)

Further information regarding Reflection on PTS Decisions and Policies was explained by AGL, the Chancellor of Ichsan University, as follows:

"Yes, universities committed to quality improvement routinely reflect on the decisions and policies they have taken in running their operations and educational programs. This includes adjustments to MBKM learning and curriculum innovations. However, due to numerous limitations, sometimes the decisions or policies taken may not always align with the strategic goals of Ichsan University." (Source: AGL Interview Transcript, May 8, 2023)

Another aspect of Reflection on PTS Decisions and Policies in evaluating and analyzing decisions made or policies implemented can be obtained from A, Vice Rector I of Ichsan University, as follows:

"Of course, Ichsan routinely reflects on decisions and policies, especially in the areas of Internal Evaluation and Performance Assessment. We conduct regular performance assessments of academic programs, faculty, staff, and infrastructure to ensure that institutional goals are achieved. The assessment method is through surveys and feedback, and we can adjust the results, but we still align them with the availability and support of related factors." (Source: Interview Transcript A, May 16, 2023)

The informant further explained that reflection on PTS decisions and policies is still insufficiently accompanied by evaluation, as explained by SP, Vice Rector II of UMGO:

"We consistently implement policy outcomes by conducting periodic internal quality audits to assess compliance with established academic and administrative standards. However, it must be acknowledged that on several occasions, decision-making at UMGO has not been accompanied by adequate reflection. This, of course, can lead to a lack of evaluation of existing policies." Source: SP Interview Transcript, March 27, 2023)

Further information regarding Reflection on PTS Decisions and Policies was obtained from YA, Vice Rector I of Unbita, as follows:

"Yes, the Quality Assurance Team meets periodically to review audit results, feedback, and performance data, and formulate recommendations for improvement. We often see decisions and policies that are not based on adequate data or analysis that are often out of sync with actual conditions or real needs." Source: YA Interview Transcript, April 27, 2023)

Based on the interview results, it can be concluded that policy reflection in Thinking Ahead at several Private Universities (PTS) in Gorontalo Province is not optimal. This is caused by a misalignment between policy planning with budget allocation and available human resource capacity. Budget limitations hamper the implementation of strategic programs, while the lack of competence and the number of teaching staff and support staff reduce the effectiveness of policy implementation. In addition, difficulties in disseminating information, coordinating activities, or obtaining feedback from all PTS can result in misunderstandings or misalignment in policy or program implementation. To improve the quality of educational services,

adjustments are needed between policies, budgets, human resource development, and coordination in information dissemination must be synergistic.

The results of field observations regarding policy reflection at PTS have in principle been implemented, for example, most PTS in Gorontalo Province have evaluated the old curriculum by following and implementing the curriculum launched by the central government, namely the MBKM (Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka)-based curriculum. The Independent Learning-Independent Campus (MBKM) program, launched by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek), aims to provide students with flexibility and freedom to develop competencies aligned with their interests and talents. Private universities in Gorontalo have proactively adopted this program to improve the quality of education and the competitiveness of their graduates. Observational data demonstrates the following examples of MBKM-based curriculum policy reflections:

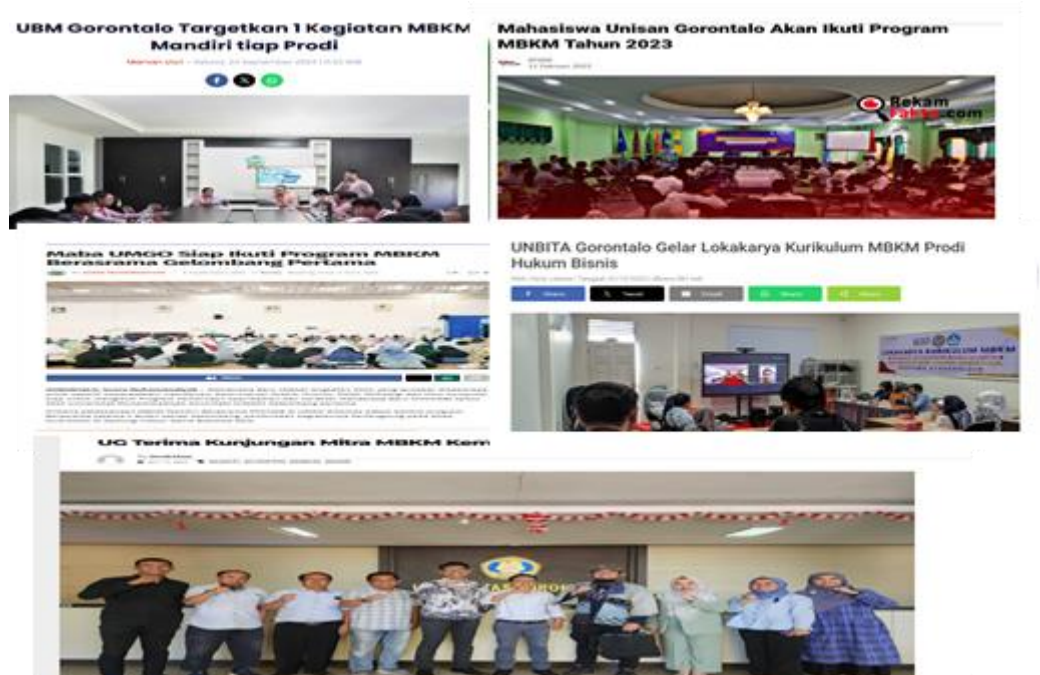


Figure 2. Observation Data on Reflections on MBKM-Based Curriculum Policy

The conclusion of the observation results shows that the implementation of the MBKM Policy by private universities in Gorontalo Province has not always been smooth sailing. PTS experienced many obstacles and challenges. It can be explained that the Independent Learning-Independent Campus (MBKM) Policy is designed to provide flexibility for students in developing competencies through various activities outside of their study programs. This is regulated by Law Number 12 of 2012 concerning Higher Education: Establishing the basic framework for higher education in Indonesia; Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture (Permendikbud) Number 3 of 2020 concerning National Standards for Higher Education: Regulating national standards for higher education, including the right of students to study outside their study program for three semesters; and Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Number 53 of 2023 concerning Quality Assurance for Higher Education: Emphasizes the right of students to study outside their study program for three semesters. Curriculum Development Private universities need to adapt their curriculum to support the implementation of MBKM, including the recognition of credits for

off-campus activities. Private universities in Gorontalo Province face a number of different challenges compared to state universities.

Based on the following observation results, there are several common obstacles faced by PTS in Gorontalo Province in implementing MBKM: (1) Budget Limitations: Of the five PTS in Gorontalo Province that were used as research loci, they have limited budgets to support MBKM programs, such as providing funds for internships, research, or student exchange programs. The costs of building collaborations with external partners or financing student activities outside the campus are also often a burden; (2) Limited Lecturer and Staff Resources, from observations during the research, it was found that PTS in Gorontalo Province often have limited numbers of lecturers and support staff who are able to assist or manage MBKM programs. In addition, lecturer training to understand the concept and implementation of MBKM is sometimes not optimal; (3) Collaboration with External Partners, the results of observations show that PTS efforts to establish partnerships with industry, government, and other relevant institutions have become a challenge for PTS in Gorontalo Province. Limited networks and access to external partners often hinder students' opportunities to undertake MBKM programs; (4) Evaluation and Quality Assurance Mechanisms. During on-site research, it was clear that MBKM activities, which involve various off-campus activities, require a different evaluation and quality assurance system than conventional lectures. Private universities (PTS) need to develop an effective monitoring and evaluation system to ensure the quality of MBKM activities. (5) Student Readiness to Participate in the MBKM Program: Not all students are ready to participate in MBKM activities, such as internships or independent projects. There is a need to prepare students with soft skills and an understanding of the world of work before they enter the MBKM program.

In addition to the MBKM-based curriculum, the policy reflection process at PTS in Gorontalo Province also addresses the Industrial Cooperation program. The Industrial Cooperation Program for Private Universities (PTS) is an initiative to establish partnerships with companies or industrial sectors to increase the relevance of education to the needs of the world of work. These programs aim to enrich student experiences, improve lecturer competency, and accelerate innovation and technology transfer on campus. The following are several types of industrial collaboration programs commonly carried out by private universities in Gorontalo Province, namely: (1) Internships and Work Practices: These programs allow students to work directly in industry, either short-term (3-6 months) or long-term (up to one year). Through internships, students can gain practical skills relevant to their majors and gain firsthand exposure to the dynamics of the working world; (2) Collaborative Research and Product Development. In research collaborations, lecturers and students collaborate with industry to work on research or product development projects. Industry typically provides funding or resources, while private universities in Gorontalo Province provide academic expertise. Research results are often utilized by industry for product innovation or production process improvement; (3) Campus Recruitment and Talent Scouting Programs: Many companies collaborate with private universities to recruit graduates through job fairs, career seminars, or on-campus interview sessions. These programs help students prepare and open up job opportunities, while industry gains direct access to talent that matches their needs; (4) Joint Classes and Curriculums (Industry Classes) These programs involve the development of joint curricula or courses between private universities and industry. Under this scheme, companies may send experts as guest lecturers or provide input on the curriculum to make it more relevant to job market needs. Some private universities in Gorontalo Province also offer special classes led directly by industry practitioners; (5) Community Service Projects with Industry: Industry

and private universities often conduct joint projects in the community, such as village development programs or other social activities. This is an effective way for students to learn while directly applying their knowledge, while simultaneously enhancing the social responsibility of both the company and the private university.



Figure 3. Observation Data on the Implementation of Private University Industrial Cooperation in Gorontalo Province

These programs not only enrich the student experience but also help private universities become more responsive to job market needs. The following field data illustrates the implementation of private university-industry collaboration in Gorontalo Province. Based on observations and interviews, researchers found that the reflection of private university policy in Gorontalo Province regarding the implementation of collaboration with agencies and industry still faces various challenges and obstacles. Limited human resources, infrastructure, and funding make it difficult to optimally implement collaborative programs such as internships, joint research, and industry-based curriculum development. Furthermore, limited networks and access to industry partners, both nationally and internationally, and the gap between the curriculum taught and industry needs exacerbate this situation.

Other inhibiting factors include the lack of flexible policy and regulatory support, complex bureaucracy, and minimal incentives for private universities and industry to collaborate. Internally, lecturers' limited practical experience and industry skills contribute to the effectiveness of collaborative programs. Externally, local industry in Gorontalo tends to lack awareness and interest in collaborating because it is perceived as not providing direct benefits. Overall, the policy reflections implemented by private universities in Gorontalo Province are not yet aligned with the primary objectives of higher education development due to a number of factors that are inconsistent or misaligned with government programs, particularly related to budget constraints, regulations, and policy support.

Evaluation of Decisions in Thinking Ahead Capability in Educational Services at Private Universities in Gorontalo Province

Decision evaluation within the context of "Thinking Ahead" in educational services at Private Higher Education Institutions (PTS) in Gorontalo Province is a proactive effort to plan and anticipate future challenges and opportunities. This approach emphasizes the importance of forward-looking strategic planning, taking into account the ever-evolving dynamics of the educational environment.

Based on the interview results, the following information was obtained regarding Decision Evaluation at PTS: Information regarding Decision Evaluation at UBM was conveyed by Mr. WIM, Vice Rector 1:

"We do conduct evaluations regularly, but we experience obstacles in following up on the evaluation results due to budget constraints, and improvements often lack the momentum and resources to follow up on the evaluation results." (Source: Interview Transcript with WIM, March 29, 2023).

Decision Evaluation related to Thinking Ahead at UMGO was further explained by AAT, Vice Rector 3:

"In my opinion, UMGO requires strict oversight of evaluation results. Inadequate oversight and follow-up can result in recommendations not being implemented properly, and of course, using a limited budget." (Source: AAT Interview Transcript, March 27, 2023).

MI, Vice Rector I of UG, explained another issue regarding decision evaluation as follows:

"I see that the evaluation results at UG are not sustainable because lecturers, staff, or students may feel uncomfortable with the proposed changes. Furthermore, the university's budget is very limited to follow up on the evaluation." (Source: MI Interview Transcript, April 13, 2023).

Another issue is lax oversight. For this aspect, the researcher assessed that the interview results indicated that the lack of oversight in the evaluation process resulted in its implementation being less focused and effective. Furthermore, a problematic aspect regarding decision evaluation in Thinking Ahead is Discomfort with Changes in Evaluation Results: There is discomfort among lecturers and academic support staff regarding changes resulting from the evaluation process, making it difficult to accept when implementing new decisions and policies. Another issue identified in the interviews is Unexpected Technical Incidents. For this aspect, the researcher understands that unanticipated technical issues also hinder the smooth running of the evaluation process. Furthermore, issues regarding varying evaluation systems were identified, illustrating the inconsistency of evaluation systems across institutions or departments, leading to differences in evaluation standards. The final aspect of the interview results can be described regarding the inconsistent evaluation results, which can be described by the researcher as differences in evaluation results from time to time making it difficult to draw stable and reliable conclusions.

These challenges demonstrate the need for a more structured and coordinated approach to ensure optimal, consistent, and sustainable decision evaluation at private universities in Gorontalo Province, with particular attention to key aspects such as competency development, adequate budgeting, and the formulation of clear and implementable action plans. Furthermore, observations at the research sites indicate that nearly all private universities in Gorontalo Province have implemented a Decision Evaluation process. All policy initiatives implemented within private university activities and programs have been implemented by each university, with the goal of, among other things, improving the quality of education. This evaluation is conducted to ensure that private universities meet high educational standards, encompassing curriculum reform, teaching quality, and student academic achievement. Furthermore, the evaluation focuses on the achievement of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) as established by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology.

KPIs encompass graduate quality, study program relevance, innovation, and involvement in research and community service. Another aspect of the evaluation of Governance Improvement and Operational Efficiency is the researcher's observation. This governance evaluation aims to assess the effectiveness of institutional management and governance, including financial,

administrative, and human resource aspects, and to ensure that institutional operations are running according to established standards. Another aspect evaluated by private universities in Gorontalo is accountability and transparency. PTS leaders hope that through this evaluation, PTS can demonstrate accountability to the public and stakeholders, ensuring that decisions are data-based and have a positive impact on all relevant parties.

Another objective of PTS in Gorontalo Province in conducting Decision Evaluations is to Increase the Competitiveness of PTS in Gorontalo Province. The hope is that this evaluation will help PTS in Gorontalo Province identify areas for improvement so they can increase their competitiveness both nationally and internationally, ultimately attracting more students and enhancing the institution's reputation. However, not all evaluation results can be implemented, as outlined in the previous interview results. The following are some activities from the Decision Evaluation indicators obtained from field observation data.

Based on observations and a series of decision evaluations conducted by private universities (PTS) in Gorontalo Province in collaboration with APTISI and LLDIKTI XVI, researchers found various challenges and obstacles in implementing policy evaluations. Limited competent human resources are a major obstacle, with limited experts possessing a thorough understanding of evaluation standards and indicators, impacting the accuracy and credibility of evaluation results. Furthermore, limited funding also limits the scope, coverage, and quality of evaluation methods used. Variations in quality across private universities create difficulties in implementing evaluation standards uniformly, compounded by a lack of understanding among some within the private university regarding the importance of policy evaluation, which has prevented this activity from becoming a priority.

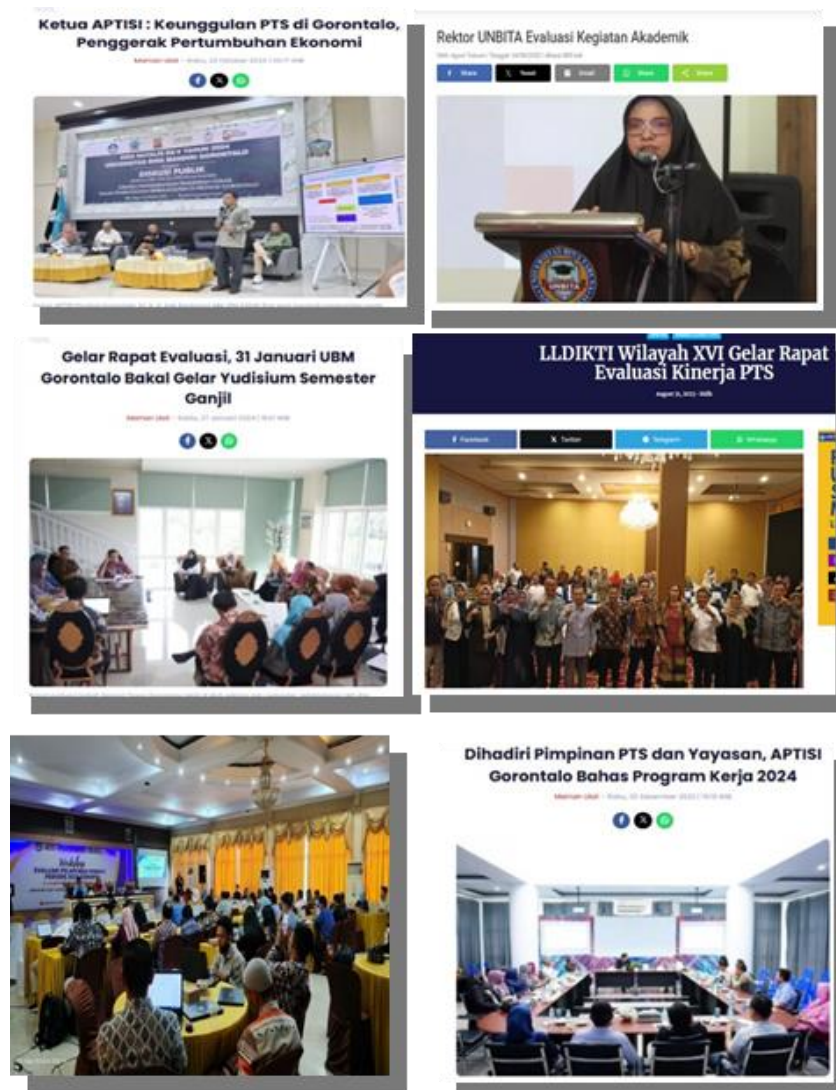


Figure 4. Decision Evaluation Activities

Furthermore, local government policies that are not always in sync with LLDIKTI policies often lead to conflicts of interest, while inconsistencies in evaluation systems, both in methods and standards, compound the problem of maintaining uniform results. Private universities often express discomfort with evaluation results, believing they do not reflect the actual situation and can negatively impact the institution's image. Based on the conclusions of the interviews and observations, the researcher assessed that the decision evaluation aspect in the thinking ahead capability to ensure dynamic governance in the transformation of educational services in private universities in Gorontalo Province still experiences misalignment. This is caused by inconsistencies in the evaluation implementation, limited human resource competencies, and budget constraints. Overall, this study confirms that decision evaluation in private universities in Gorontalo Province still needs to be improved to be more aligned with the thinking ahead principle, because without improvement efforts, the achievement of dynamic governance needed to realize transformation and improve the quality of higher education services in a sustainable manner cannot be realized.

Readiness to Change Ineffective Decisions in Thinking Ahead Capability in Educational Services at Private Universities in Gorontalo Province

The ability to think ahead refers to the ability of an organization, specifically in this context, to flexibly and proactively adjust its policies and decisions based on forward-looking analysis. This capability enables institutions to not only react to changes as they occur but also anticipate potential future developments, enabling them to act preemptively and strategically. Regarding this aspect of readiness to change ineffective decisions, Mr. WIM, Vice Rector I of Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta (UBM), received the following information:

"As a leader at Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta (UBM), I actually hope for support from all levels of management to drive necessary changes. However, we are often constrained by budget constraints in following up on ineffective policies." (Source: Interview Transcript with WIM, March 29, 2023).

Regarding budget constraints on readiness to change ineffective decisions, Rector Ichsan, Mr. AGL, further clarified this:

"University leaders with a long-term vision and a strong commitment to quality improvement will be more willing and able to change ineffective policies. I believe they can, but they must still adjust to the budget capacity of the private university itself. Another factor is the availability of infrastructure and supporting resources." (Source: AGL Interview Transcript, May 8, 2023).

Another opinion was expressed by Mr. A, Vice Rector I of Ichsan:

"Yes, we are trying to address ineffective policies. It requires awareness from all units in private universities that prioritize a culture of quality to be more responsive to evaluations and proactive in implementing improvements, despite being hampered by the academic environment's lack of readiness for change." (Source: Interview Transcript A, May 16, 2023).

Conclusion The interview results indicate that the aspect of readiness to change ineffective policies, which is related to the capability of "thinking ahead" or thinking ahead, in several Private Higher Education Institutions (PTS) in Gorontalo Province faces a number of major obstacles. The following is a detailed conclusion of the obstacles that hinder the optimization of this aspect: Budgetary Limitations in Policy Change, Budget is one of the significant obstacles in efforts to change ineffective policies. Budgetary limitations make it difficult for PTS in Gorontalo Province to implement changes that should be made to improve the quality and effectiveness of their operations. The process of policy change requires financial resources for research, planning, and implementation, which are inadequate in many of these PTS. The interview results also describe the Unpreparedness of the Academic Environment for Change, One of the biggest obstacles is resistance from the academic environment (lecturers, students, and education staff) to policy change. Many parties in the academic environment are still bound by old policies and are not ready to adapt to change.

This is due to a lack of in-depth understanding and socialization regarding the importance of changes made to improve the quality of PTS institutions in Gorontalo Province. Another thing found from the interview results is a Low Quality Culture, the researcher's understanding from the interview results in this aspect is that a low quality culture is an important factor in inhibiting forward-thinking capabilities. Therefore, without a commitment to quality improvement across all elements of the organization, it is difficult for institutions to design policies that can support long-term goals. Several PTS in Gorontalo Province still do not prioritize quality as a primary value in organizational development, so policy changes are often considered not a priority.

Furthermore, based on the interviews, researchers can outline other challenges faced by private universities (PTS) in Gorontalo Province. These include structures and governance that do not support effective governance, and organizational structures in some PTS that remain rigid and do not support flexibility in policy changes. Hierarchical and less adaptive structures slow decision-making and hinder the policy change process. This results in an inability to respond quickly to new needs and challenges. Furthermore, based on the interviews, a misalignment between resources and strategic plans is another obstacle. Policies intended to be implemented are often not accompanied by adequate human resources, facilities, and capabilities. This makes strategic plans difficult to implement and less relevant to real-world conditions.

Overall, these obstacles indicate that achieving forward-thinking capabilities and improving policy effectiveness in PTS requires improvements in funding, readiness for change in the academic environment, an enhanced culture of quality, governance reform, and adjustments, also known as alignment, between existing resources and the strategic plan. Furthermore, direct field observations regarding readiness to change ineffective policies can be explained by the researcher. Several phenomena were found at the research location, such as the Muhammadiyah University of Gorontalo (UMGO). This includes UMGO's relatively prepared efforts to evaluate and change ineffective policies. This process was carried out through the formation of an internal evaluation team involving various stakeholders. For example, changes to the new student admissions policy, such as the manual registration system being converted to a digital one to increase efficiency and reach. Furthermore, efforts to digitize administrative services, such as replacing manual systems in the academic process with digital applications to minimize errors and expedite service delivery, have encountered several obstacles, including a lack of expertise in information technology management and organizational cultural barriers that tend to maintain old work methods.

Another phenomenon, for example, at Bina Taruna University (UNBITA), the rectorate has determined that UNBITA demonstrates its commitment to improving academic and administrative policies. However, this readiness remains sector-specific, particularly in certain areas, such as curriculum revitalization, such as the addition of information technology-based courses to align with job market needs and lecturer rotation. The policy on the division of lecturers' duties is intended to be more transparent and equitable. However, this has encountered obstacles such as a lack of budget for new program development and resistance from some staff to policy changes perceived as reducing work comfort.

Furthermore, the phenomenon at Bina Mandiri University (UBM) regarding readiness to change ineffective policies can be said to be present. UBM is striving to improve readiness by developing human resources (HR) and modernizing work systems. Digital attendance for lecturers, supported by a flexible working hour policy, has been removed and replaced with an app-based attendance system to improve discipline. Other aspects, for example, include internal grant funding for research management supported by special funding to increase lecturer productivity. However, the obstacles encountered by UBM are limited financial resources for comprehensive policy implementation and inadequate technological infrastructure.

Furthermore, at the University of Gorontalo regarding this aspect, it was found that the University of Gorontalo's Readiness demonstrated a participatory approach in evaluating ineffective policies, especially in the aspects of student and academic services, a concrete example of which is the Digitalization of the new student admissions system with the aim of replacing the manual process with online registration to increase efficiency and transparency.

UG also runs a community-based entrepreneurship program, as well as several less relevant courses being replaced with programs that support local economic development, but again, obstacles to inconsistency were found, namely Slow decision-making due to complex bureaucracy. Lack of training for staff in adopting the new system.

Another aspect of readiness to change policies at Ichsan University, based on direct observations, indicates that Ichsan University is quite responsive in changing policies deemed ineffective, particularly in the area of academic services. For example, the offline student complaint application for suggestions and criticism has been replaced with an online application to facilitate student access. Lecturer evaluations are also based on student feedback. This policy is implemented to improve teaching quality. However, like other private universities (PTS), there are misalignments, including the high cost of developing internal applications and minimal student participation in providing regular feedback.

The researcher's conclusion and analysis regarding the aspect of readiness to change policies, including the capability to think ahead to ensure dynamic governance in the transformation of educational services at private universities in Gorontalo Province, shows a lack of alignment, or misalignment. Generally, private universities in Gorontalo Province demonstrate awareness of the importance of changing ineffective policies, but readiness varies from institution to institution. Frequent obstacles include several misalignments, such as limited financial and technological resources, an organizational culture that tends to be resistant to change, a lack of training and expertise to support new policy implementation, and slow internal bureaucracy. In this study of Dynamic Governance in Private Higher Education (PTS) services in Gorontalo Province, the Thinking Ahead capability aspect refers to the ability of an organization or institution to anticipate future changes, formulate a long-term vision, and prepare innovative strategies to address challenges and opportunities. Overall, Thinking Ahead in Dynamic Governance in this study emphasizes the importance of PTS readiness to face change, both in academic aspects, policies, and institutional governance. This ensures that higher education services in Gorontalo Province remain relevant and competitive with current developments. This Thinking Ahead capability aspect has three indicators: a) policy reflection, b) decision evaluation, and c) readiness to change ineffective decisions.

Discussion

Thinking Ahead is essentially the ability to identify environmental developments, understand their future implications, and formulate strategies to capitalize on opportunities and anticipate threats. Within the Dynamic Governance framework, thinking ahead is the foundation that requires institutions to think intelligently and tactically by articulating ideas within organizational governance patterns, including educational services. Bibri (2018) said that, the thinking ahead process includes exploring future trends, evaluating the effectiveness of existing strategies, developing adaptive policy options, and engaging stakeholders in strategic conversations. This study focuses on thinking ahead capabilities in private universities in Gorontalo Province, using three main indicators: policy reflection, decision evaluation, and readiness to change policies.

The results indicate that policy reflection in private universities in Gorontalo is not aligned with government objectives due to budget constraints, regulatory support, and weak long-term planning. Financial limitations hamper infrastructure development, faculty capacity building, and the adoption of educational technology (Kisanga & Ireson, 2025). Meanwhile, regulations that are more oriented toward public universities (PTN) make it difficult for private universities to adapt to the same standards. As a result, many private university policies are suboptimal and

unable to anticipate the dynamics of higher education. The decision evaluation aspect also faces similar obstacles: PTS lack a systematic and sustainable evaluation mechanism, still rely on limited human resources, and are hampered by budget constraints to support policy research (Dizdaroglu, 2017; Li et al., 2024). This creates a misalignment between existing evaluation mechanisms and Dynamic Governance principles, resulting in stagnant and non-adaptive decisions.

Regarding readiness to change policies, most PTS demonstrate awareness of the importance of change, but institutional readiness varies. Key obstacles include limited financial and technological resources, a resistant organizational culture to change, a lack of human resource training, and slow internal bureaucracy. These factors hinder policy transformation, particularly in the adoption of innovation and the digitalization of educational services. Overall, this study confirms that the forward-thinking capability within Dynamic Governance in PTS in Gorontalo Province is suboptimal. To strengthen this capability, increased budget support, more inclusive regulations for PTS, strengthening data-based evaluation mechanisms, developing human resource capacity, and streamlining the bureaucracy are needed. With these strategic steps, PTS can be more adaptive to future challenges and sustainably improve the quality of higher education services.

Conclusion

The Thinking Ahead capability sub-focus is considered suboptimal. This is evident in the policy reflection indicator in Gorontalo Province's private universities, which is still weak and needs to be strengthened through appropriate adjustments such as increased budget support, improved regulations to be more inclusive for private universities, and the development of more adaptive policy evaluation mechanisms. The decision evaluation indicator also appears to be lacking due to a misalignment between the implemented evaluation mechanism and the principles of Dynamic Governance. To address this challenge, improvements are needed in a more structured and data-driven evaluation system, increased human resource capacity in education policy management, and increased budget allocation to support more effective policy research and evaluation. The readiness to change decision indicator, referred to as misalignment, generally indicates that private universities in Gorontalo Province demonstrate an awareness of the importance of changing ineffective policies, but the readiness of each institution varies. Frequently encountered obstacles include several misalignments or inconsistencies in financial and technological resources, organizational cultures that tend to be resistant to change, lack of training and expertise to support the implementation of new policies, and slow internal bureaucracy.

Suggestion

More serious efforts are needed from Private Universities in Gorontalo Province in the process of providing educational services by designing a future that is in harmony with the conditions and capabilities of institutions such as; organizational culture, human resources, budget availability with the needs and demands of the times in the future as an anticipatory step; (a) Having a long-term vision and the ability to formulate future conditions that have an impact on higher education services, (b) Being able to project challenges and opportunities that may arise in the future, (c) Being able to formulate concepts and policy ideas that are relevant to future conditions.

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