



LGU-HEI PARTNERSHIP, GOVERNANCE IMPACT, AND OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY IN CABUYAO CITY

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship among LGU-HEI partnership, governance impact, and operational efficiency in Cabuyao City. Using a quantitative descriptive-correlational design, data were gathered from 120 purposively selected respondents composed of LGU representatives, HEI representatives, and program beneficiaries. Weighted mean and standard deviation were used to describe the levels of partnership, governance impact, and operational efficiency, while simple linear regression was used to test predictive influence. The findings showed that LGU-HEI partnership was rated very high in resource sharing and community development and high in education and training. Governance impact was rated very high in accountability and high in transparency and stakeholder participation. Operational efficiency was rated very high in cost effectiveness and timeliness of service delivery and high in optimal use of resources. Regression results further showed that LGU-HEI partnership was not a significant predictor of operational efficiency ($\beta = .040$, $p = .664$), whereas governance impact significantly predicted operational efficiency ($\beta = .246$, $p = .007$; $R^2 = .060$). These findings suggest that the existence of partnership alone does not guarantee efficient operations; instead, efficiency improves when collaboration is supported by transparency, accountability, and stakeholder participation. The study highlights the need to strengthen governance mechanisms so that LGU-HEI partnerships can yield more consistent operational gains.

KEYWORDS: collaborative governance, LGU-HEI partnership, governance impact, operational efficiency, Cabuyao City

INTRODUCTION

Local government units (LGUs) are key in meeting the increasing and evolving needs of their communities. As urban areas grow and evolve, demands placed on government are growing. Citizens want local government services to be transparent, accountable, responsive and efficient. The expectations are even stronger in areas with high population growth like Cabuyao City, Laguna, because of the need for evidence-based governance practices, particularly in the face of growing development activities and population growth (UNDP Philippines, 2022; OECD, 2023).

To effectively address these challenges, numerous local governments have started developing more partnerships with higher education institutions (HEIs). These partnerships enable the sharing of the experience and expertise of local government bodies with the research capacity, technical expertise, extension and training capacity of HEIs. By collaborating over a longer period, both institutions can serve to strengthen public service delivery, governance and planning processes (Ansell & Torfing, 2021; Bianchi et al., 2021).

The importance of LGU-HEI partnership as an emerging strategy has recently been noted but little empirical evidence exists on the effects of these partnerships with respect to governance and operational efficiency in the local context of Cabuyao City. Existing research has focused on collaborative governance in more general contexts, and has largely ignored the dynamics of partnerships between local government and academic institutions and the impact on governance and organizational performance at the city-level. In response to this, this study aims to investigate the relationship between LGU-HEI partnership, governance impact and operational efficiency.

Such partnerships are also significant in the context of the Philippines' overall policy landscape. Decentralization policies have devolved many of the responsibilities to the local government units and accounts for a number of development programs and public services. But transfer of power is not sufficient for effective governance. It is also reliant on institutional capacity, coordination amongst stakeholders, availability of technical knowledge, and governance standards (UNDP Philippines, 2022; Distor & Khaltar, 2022).

The study also builds on the principles of collaborative governance, which state that addressing complex public issues is difficult to achieve with the efforts of a single government agency. Inter-institutional cooperation is essential to modern governance, and institutional actors have a range of different types of expertise and resources to cooperate. Ansell and Torfing (2021) noted that collaborative governance can leverage shared knowledge and joint problem-solving by public institutions, and Bianchi, Nasi, and Rivenbark (2021) have highlighted the need for institutional design, coordination, and role clarity to ensure the successful implementation of collaborative governance.

In a Philippine context, these viewpoints are particularly applicable because local governments are expected to undertake the devolved functions and at the same time, meet the increasing needs of the people. Distor and Khaltar (2022) found that institutional capacity, service experience, technological capability, and regulatory compliance are important factors that contribute to local



government efficiency. The results indicate that partnerships can be more powerful if they enhance the organizational capabilities that are essential to participate in effective governance and service provision.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK/THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is informed by two theories: Collaborative Governance and Co-Creation Theory additionally supported by the Double Helix Perspective. Theories are essential to explain how (local) government institutions and higher education institutions can achieve governance outcomes and how they can perform their tasks. Collaborative Governance and Co-Creation Theory focus on the idea that public institutions can produce better results with the help of others, those that have complementary resources, expertise and capabilities. Collaborative governance not only builds on the traditional bureaucratic approach, but also promotes shared decision making, problem solving, and shared responsibility among stakeholders. The theory, in the set-up of this study, offers an understanding of how LGUs and HEIs can build on their strengths to better respond to local development issues. Local government units serve as the primary institutions responsible for responding to the needs of their communities. They formulate policies, implement development programs, and ensure that public services reach residents. Because of these responsibilities, LGUs often require access to reliable information, technical expertise, and professional support to address increasingly complex governance challenges. Higher education institutions can contribute to these needs through research activities, technical assistance, training programs, and community extension initiatives. By working together, both institutions can combine their respective strengths and resources in ways that support local development goals and improve the delivery of public services.

This collaborative relationship is further explained by the Double Helix Perspective, which emphasizes the importance of interaction between government and academic institutions in generating knowledge, innovation, and sustainable development. Through continuous cooperation, local governments can benefit from evidence-based recommendations, while higher education institutions can apply their knowledge and expertise to real community concerns. Such partnerships may also contribute to stronger institutional capacity, improved planning processes, and more effective responses to local issues.

Taken together, these theoretical perspectives suggest that the success of local development initiatives depends not only on the existence of partnerships but also on the quality of collaboration between participating institutions. Clear communication, transparency in decision-making, accountability mechanisms, and meaningful stakeholder involvement are important factors that can influence partnership outcomes. When these conditions are present, collaborative efforts are more likely to contribute to effective governance and long-term community development.

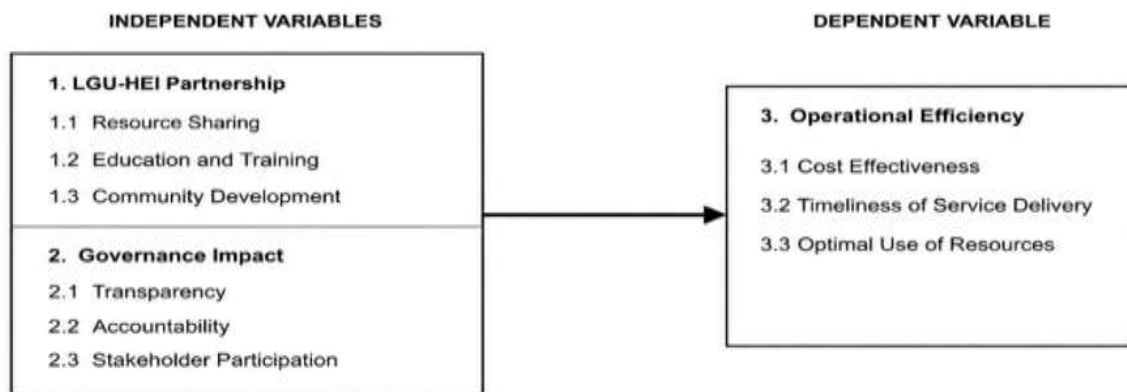


Figure 1. Research Paradigm

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a descriptive-causal research design to examine the level of LGU–HEI partnership, governance impact, and operational efficiency in Cabuyao City, as well as to determine whether LGU–HEI partnership and governance impact significantly influence operational efficiency. The descriptive component of the study focused on determining the current status of the identified variables. Specifically, it examined LGU–HEI partnership in terms of resource sharing, education and training, and community development; governance impact in terms of transparency, accountability, and stakeholder participation; and operational efficiency in terms of cost effectiveness, timeliness of service delivery, and optimal use of resources. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the responses and provide a general description of the study setting.

To explore the predictive relationship between the independent and dependent variables, the causal component was employed. By this strategy, this study aimed at finding out if the differences in operational efficiency are related to the variations in LGU-HEI partnership and governance impact. In this framework, the impact of LGU-HEI partnership and governance served as independent variables, while the operational efficiency served as the dependent variable. A descriptive-causal design was deemed appropriate as it



enabled the researcher to describe the conditions that exist and investigate how the operational outcomes of collaboration and governance practices may be affected. The results will offer actionable knowledge that can help local government and higher education institutions with their collaborative efforts, and help increase organizational efficiency.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

1 Level of LGU-HEI Partnership

Table 1.1

Descriptives on level of LGU-HEI partnership in terms of resource sharing

Item Statements	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. The LGU and HEI regularly share facilities (e.g., classrooms, auditoriums, laboratories) for joint activities	3.76	0.45	Strongly Agree
2. There is an established mechanism for sharing financial resources to support collaborative projects	3.56	0.50	Strongly Agree
3. The LGU provides logistical support (e.g., venues, equipment, manpower) for HEI-led initiatives.	3.48	0.50	Agree
4. The HEI contributes technical expertise and research outputs to strengthen LGU programs.	3.38	0.49	Agree
5. Resource-sharing agreements between LGU and HEI are documented and implemented consistently	3.38	0.51	Agree
Grand Mean	3.51	0.49	Very High

Legend: (4) 3.50-4.00 Very High/Strongly Agree; (3) 2.50-3.49 High/ Agree; (2) 1.50-2.49 Low/Disagree; (1) 1.00-1.49 Very Low/Strongly Disagree

The results presented in Table 1.1 indicate that the LGU-HEI partnership in Cabuyao City exhibited a Very High level of resource sharing (Grand Mean = 3.51, SD = 0.49). The highest-rated indicator was the regular sharing of facilities such as classrooms, auditoriums, and laboratories (WM = 3.76, SD = 0.45), followed by financial resource-sharing mechanisms (WM = 3.56, SD = 0.50). These results suggest that both institutions actively engage in sharing tangible resources to support joint initiatives. On the other hand, the provision of technical expertise (WM = 3.38, SD = 0.49) and the consistent documentation of agreements (WM = 3.38, SD = 0.51) received comparatively lower ratings, indicating that while material support remains strong, knowledge-based contributions and formalized agreements may still require further strengthening.

These findings underscore the role of resource mobilization in collaborative governance. The high ratings for facility and financial sharing reflect a strong institutional commitment to collaboration, supporting the view of Ansell and Torfing (2021) that collaborative governance enables organizations to mobilize resources beyond what traditional bureaucratic systems can achieve. However, the relatively lower ratings for technical expertise and documentation indicate that effective partnerships involve more than the sharing of physical resources. This observation is consistent with the findings of Bianchi, Nasi, and Rivenbark (2021), who emphasized that successful collaboration also relies on clear role alignment and the capacity to manage organizational complexity.

The findings likewise have important implications for governance and operational efficiency. The Very High level of resource sharing suggests that LGU-HEI partnerships in Cabuyao City function as effective governance arrangements that contribute to strengthening service delivery capacity. To further maximize their impact, HEIs may be encouraged to provide more research outputs and technical expertise, while LGUs may ensure that partnership agreements are consistently documented and implemented. Strengthening these areas can help sustain existing gains and support long-term improvements in governance and public service delivery. This supports the perspective of Zia ud din et al. (2023), who found that collaborative local governance contributes positively to service delivery when supported by strong institutional capacity.

**2. Level of Governance Impact****Table 2.1***Descriptives on level of governance impact in terms of transparency*

Item Statements	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. Information about LGU–HEI partnership projects are openly shared with the public.	3.56	0.53	Strongly Agree
2. Financial reports and resource allocations related to joint initiatives are accessible and clear.	3.46	0.53	Agree
3. Decision-making processes in partnership activities are communicated to stakeholders.	3.33	0.56	Agree
4. The LGU and HEI provide timely updates on the progress and outcomes of collaborative programs.	3.35	0.53	Agree
5. Transparency mechanisms (e.g., public consultations, published reports) are consistently implemented.	3.56	0.52	Strongly Agree
Grand Mean	3.45	0.53	High

Legend: (4) 3.50–4.00 Very High/Strongly Agree; (3) 2.50–3.49 High/ Agree; (2) 1.50–2.49 Low/Disagree; (1) 1.00–1.49 Very Low/Strongly Disagree

The results in Table 2.1 reveal that the governance impact of LGU-HEI partnership in terms of transparency was rated High overall (Grand Mean = 3.45, SD = 0.53). The strongest indicators were the open sharing of information about partnership projects (WM = 3.56, SD = 0.53, Strongly Agree) and the consistent implementation of transparency mechanisms such as public consultations and published reports (WM = 3.56, SD = 0.52, Strongly Agree). Meanwhile, financial reports and resource allocations (WM = 3.46, SD = 0.53), communication of decision-making processes (WM = 3.33, SD = 0.56), and timely updates on program outcomes (WM = 3.35, SD = 0.53) were rated Agree, showing that while transparency practices are evident, there is still room to strengthen stakeholder communication and accessibility of information.

Furthermore, these findings highlight the important role of transparency in legitimizing collaborative governance. The very high ratings for information sharing and transparency mechanisms reflect strong accountability practices, consistent with Lee and Esteve (2023), who argued that collaborative governance gains legitimacy when stakeholders perceive processes as open and inclusive. However, the relatively lower scores for communication in decision-making and the provision of timely updates suggest that transparency has not yet been fully maximized. This observation is consistent with the findings of Lægreid and Rykkja (2022), who noted that inter-organizational arrangements may create challenges in accountability when communication and responsibility-sharing mechanisms are not clearly established. Thus, although transparency remains generally strong, there is still a need to further institutionalize practices that ensure stakeholders are regularly informed and engaged.

These findings also have important implications for governance impact and operational efficiency. Strengthening transparency mechanisms can further promote trust, accountability, and stakeholder participation in LGU-HEI partnerships. As Perez, Ng, and Tiglaio (2022) demonstrated, co-design and participatory approaches enhance policy capacity by making processes more visible and inclusive. Therefore, expanding communication channels, providing timely updates, and improving access to financial and decision-making information can help sustain the gains that have already been achieved. This will not only reinforce transparency but also support more responsive and efficient governance practices in Cabuyao City.

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