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**What Does “Good Governance” Mean? An Analysis of
Higher Education Reform and Policy Instruments in Taiwan**

Author

**Chuo-Chun Jean Hsieh
Department of Educational Administration and Management
National Dong Hwa University, Taiwan.
hsieh.cc@gms.ndhu.edu.tw**

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Chuo-Chun Jean Hsieh
Department of Educational Administration and Management
National Dong Hwa University, Taiwan.
hsieh.cc@gms.ndhu.edu.tw

ABSTRACT

Higher education institutions in Asia were traditionally under the tight control of governmental regulations and rules. However, the university systems in the region have been witnessed profound transformations in the last twenty years, and the way of governing higher education has gradually changed. The study aims to understand the change of university governance, which occurred when Taiwan began to shift from an authoritative government model to a democratic one in the late 1980s. By analyzing the policy instruments that had been implemented in Taiwan's higher education system, the study is to identify the key features of 'good governance' in the policy context in recent decades.

The study found that owing to the expanding participation, alongside the rising cost of public funding available to universities, Taiwan's government launched a series of programs and alternatives in order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its higher education. Policymakers and university administrators have been searching for approaches to steering the higher education institutions and introduced the instruments implemented to ensure university quality. In the process, the policy instruments that have been introduced to transform the way of delivering higher education reflect the features of new public management and neoliberalism. Market government appears to be the striking feature of Taiwan's higher education system since the 1990s. The government adopted different types of policy tools to achieve good governance, although most of them can be identified as authority tools. The major principles of good governance revealed in the process of Taiwan's higher education reform are related to shared governance, accountability, and meritocratic select. The conclusion includes lessons learnt by Taiwan from the perspective of policy instruments.

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I. Introduction

Governance in higher education has undergone dramatic transformation in the last decades. Associated with an escalation of the scale of university student numbers, an expansion of client groups, and more stakeholders involved in the decision-making process, higher education reform seems to be an outcome of a mix of the development of globalization, the knowledge economy, and the information and technology revolution. Against the backdrop, university governance reform has been a major concern in transforming the higher education systems in the East Asian region.

Unlike other domains in the public sector, higher education has traditionally consisted of the ambitious middle class and the institutions that value creativity and produce new knowledge (Scott & Hood, 2004). Higher education institutions, particularly in the public sectors in Asia, were traditionally functioned as an extension of the state apparatus or part of the bureaucratic machine within the wider governmental system. They were under the tight control of governmental regulations and rules, whereby tertiary education was delivered. The way of governing higher education has gradually changed since the 1990s. A wide range of East Asian countries and societies, such as Japan, Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, began to redefine the relationship between government and university by devolving greater organizational autonomy to the institutional level. ‘Steering at a distance’ was chosen by many governments as a common response to political democratization, economic liberation, and greater social openness. However, governance relationships arising in Asian countries have been exhibited in different types due to their diverse political and culture traditions.

The focus of this paper is on governance in higher education. The study aimed to understand the change of university governance, which occurred when Taiwan began to shift from an authoritative government model to a democratic one in the late 1980s. Document analysis is applied, whereby official documents, laws and policy texts were included as various resources of research data. By analyzing the policy instruments that the government adopted for good university governance, mainly during the years 1990-2010, the study identified the key features of ‘good governance’ in the policy context in recent decades.

II. Theories

Governance can have various definitions and be studied through different approaches, one of which is from the perspective of public policy instruments. Policy instruments, closely linked to policy implementation, are related to the ways through which governance is operationalized. Empirical studies on different policy domains have found that the development of a new mode of governance is associated with the rise of a series of new policy tools (Le Galès, 2011). In the study policy instruments are “defined broadly so as to include a wide range of tools and techniques of governance” (Howlett, 2000, p. 414). Furthermore, Christopher Hood’s classification of government tools was applied to distinguish the differences and similarities related to the relevant policy instruments. Based on the resources that the tools mostly rely upon for their effectiveness in governing practice, this study differentiated four types of government tools: Information-based tools, authoritative tools, financial tools, and organizational tools (Hood & Margetts, 2007).

Higher education as an object of governmental control is different from other public sectors in terms of the various purposes of the state (Hood, James, Peters, & Scott, 2004). Higher education governance refers to the efforts of a government to affect (regulate, steer, coordinate, control) the

behavior of actors and organizations in the higher education sector for which it has been given responsibility (Cloete, Maassen, & Muller, 2005). As a sector of the public domain, higher education institutions must serve the public interest and delivers those benefits that would not be supplied when left to the people with power and the market. In addition, the government must ensure that the higher education providers funded by public money are managed in an economical approach and operate on the basis of transparency. According to those basic roles of the state in relation to higher education, the basic principles that promote good governance include the followings: academic freedom, shared governance, clear rights and responsibilities, meritocratic selection, financial stability, accountability, regular testing of standards, and the importance of close cooperation (Task Force on Higher Education and Society, 2000).

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Regarding the typologies of higher education governance, Burton Clark is among the first to establish relevant theories. Clark's theory of 'triangle of coordination' depicts the interaction of three forces, i.e. the state authority, the academic oligarchy and the market, and how that determines the way in which a higher education system is coordinated (Clark, 1983). Although there are some

doubts about the theory of triangle of coordination due to the increasingly complicated interplay of various actors in the context of internationalization and globalization (Marginson & van der Wende, 2007), his theory has been frequently applied in the analyses of changes or dynamics in higher education systems; for instances, the work of van Vught (1989) on higher education governance. van Vught introduced two models of government steering, i.e. state control and state supervision. The former mode found mostly in continental Europe can be characterized by strong government regulation. Governments own, finance, and operate higher education institutions. The latter mode, state supervision, is derived from Anglo-Saxon tradition shows a light state influence and interference. The state's responsibility is to provide the overall framework in order to protect and promote public interest. The study employed an ideal-typical distinction of governance models derived van Vught's theories for simply indicating the direction of governance change. The change from state control to state supervision shows an improvement as the latter governance would lead to better higher education performance.

Table1 shows the two governance modes comprise two different sets of policy tool preferences, and each set includes four types of policy instruments.

Table 1: Propensity for tool use by governance mode

	State control	State supervision
Organizational tools	Bureaucratic administration; administrative tribunals	Private-public partnerships; special operating agencies
Authority tools	Laws; direct regulations; administrative procedures	Deregulation; self-regulation
Financial tools	Tax expenditures; insurance	User charges; competitive grants; vouchers
Information tools	Censorship; surveys	Data collection and statistics

Sources: Adapted from Howlett (2000, p. 415; 2011, p. 129)

III. Taiwan's Higher Education Reform

Taiwan used to be under authoritarian government, strictly controlling every aspect of the society. Higher education, without exception, was subject to government control especially due to the perception of higher education provision as a crucial means to national security either in terms of ideological control or in relation to economic development. Universities, often with explicitly state-building purposes, were governed by *ex ante* ministerial approval. Not only funding allocation, the establishment of institutions (both public and private) as well as student enrollment quota, the government even implemented universal compulsory course of HE and assumed the power to appoint and dismiss the vice-chancellors. Hiring practices in universities were under the influence of high officials in the president's office or the Ministries of Education, including the examination qualification of university teachers. Almost all institutions and people in the HE sector were subject to tight government control. On top of that, much of operation at the institutional level ran according

to civil service procedures, and staff were employed on civil service contracts. Universities could be almost conceived as state establishments.

Higher education governance in Taiwan however has been under dramatic change after the lifting of martial law in 1987, which rapidly accelerated the pace of Taiwan's democratization afterwards. Deregulation movement that was launched by the civil society caused fierce public debate and discussion on the reform of higher education, and further forced educational authority to untie the highly controlled public sector. In 1994 the Education Reform Committee was established, following the lead of the Executive Yuan. The committee, consisting of high-ranking governmental officials (i.e. a vice president and main ministries) and professional scholars, put forward several significant education reform proposals, advocated the idea "song-bang" (i.e. liberalization or deregulation) and argued that the education sector should be granted more "autonomy" without inappropriate and unnecessary governmental intervention and regulations. This special commission committee had a great impact on Taiwan's educational development. Regarding higher education, the Education Reform Committee, along with the MOE, believed that HEIs appeared to be homogenous in terms of missions and function. As a result, institutional diversity and autonomy became the primary goals of policy reform.

The important higher education changes that had been launched by the government in the following two decades (1990-2010) and the policy tools for achieving these reforms are explained as follows.

1. Delegation to governing councils

Due to expansion and greater diverse participation in the higher education sector, non-professional academic staff, administrative personnel, students and other internal stakeholders

are being given right to participate in governing bodies (Shattock, 2004). As a common approach that will help higher education institutions move closer to the application of shared governance, the government delegates powers to those governing bodies, which have (sole legitimate) responsibility and are thus perceived as the highest authority in university governance at the institutional level (Task Force on Higher Education and Society, 2000).

Governmental influence used to be significant in Taiwan's higher education governance. This is unlike the situation in the United States, where governing boards of universities are strong at the institutional level and the relationship between business and university is evident, nor in European countries, where universities were traditionally perceived as ivory towers and represented a collegial system controlled by the academic community. In order to limit the extent to which universities are run on a top-down basis, the *University Act* was amended in 1994. The new regulation allowed each university to set up a University Affairs Council. According to Articles 13, the University Affairs Council of a national university composed of elected senior academic faculty and the representatives of students and staff to serve as the highest policy-making agency. The president of a national university is the Chief of the University Affairs Council and officially in charge of all university affairs. The changed regulation, which allowed university executives and academics to manage themselves, show a propensity for self-regulation and the use of authority tools, relied on the coercive power of the state to achieve government goals.

2. From appointment to selection

The way of choosing institutional leaders can be simply divided in two types. Election of leaders usually involves all stakeholders and can increase the leader's legitimacy, although this type normally caused a lack of consensus and can make their programs stalled. Appointed leaders, on the other hand, commonly with strong leadership are more likely to push unpopular decisions and fight

against the status quo. However, the process of appointment normally lacks widespread support from the members of the institution and therefore can dilute a sense of shared governance (Task Force on Higher Education and Society, 2000).

In earlier times, institutional autonomy was extremely limited in Taiwan and the presidents of national universities were tightly controlled by the government in relation to appointment and dismissal. After the year 1994 when the *University Act* was revised, universities were allowed to select their own president. The presidential appointment process became a selection system, involving a selection committee organized by the university itself. The committee was allowed to be constituted from among the organization's staff, alumni and unbiased members of society. The new regulation, allowing each university to select its own president, seems to demonstrate the democratizing of institutional administration in national universities. This also reveals a propensity for self-regulation and the use of authority tools, relied on the state's coercive power to pursue specific goals.

3. Delegation to a professional council

Aiming to achieve the balance between accountability and autonomy or to balance the public interest with individual's needs, the government often sets up statutory bodies as a buffer mechanism between higher education institutions and itself. The bodies act independently as, for instance, councils of HE that give the government advice on HE policies and decisions (e.g. funding allocation) or as professional councils that focus on specific HE areas (e.g. quality assurance). In general, those bodies are expected to insulate universities and colleges from excessive governmental interference or political influence by consisting of diverse membership, such as representatives of the government, institutions of higher education, the private sector, and other important stakeholders (Task Force on Higher Education and Society, 2000).

In Taiwan, the Ministry of Education used to hold absolute power to maintain university quality by determining assessment standards and procedures. However, such a conventional monitoring system was lifted. In accordance with the *University Act* amended in 1994, the detailed requirements and arrangements would henceforth be collectively decided by the government, academics and universities. The regulation was further revised in 2005. The Article 5 of the *University Act* mandates the Ministry of Education to delegate the responsibility of implementing quality assurance procedures to a professional evaluation agency. The Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council (HEEACT) was jointly established and endowed by the Ministry of Education and Taiwan's higher education institutions in 2005. HEEACT was placed in charge with periodical institutional evaluations, in which national and private universities participated. The establishment of the quality assurance agency shows a propensity for deregulation. The change was also made through setting up new regulations, representing a use of authority tools.

4. Institutional accreditation

Transparency is crucial to participants to have sufficient information. Accreditation can generate objective information that given an overview of university performance. The public and those to which the university is accountable can use the data to judge the merits of the institution. Those higher education institutions being accredited have great value in attracting students, faculty, and other resources. Accreditation is a tool for monitoring institutional performance and for ensuring decisions that are to be made based on evidence, in a way that is clear and understandable to the outside world (Task Force on Higher Education and Society, 2000).

Taiwan's university evaluations used to be under the control of the Ministry of Education, who is the key policy-maker claiming ownership over national quality assurance systems. This was

dramatically changed in 2005 when the *Regulations for University Evaluation* released. The system adopted an accreditation-oriented approach, consisting of multiple routes for the universities achieving government quality recognition. Institutions and programs have the freedom to decide the approach they take toward earning an accreditation status. More autonomy has been given to the HEIs in order to assist the institutions in the development of their own distinct features and improve the diversity of Taiwan's universities. Despite the fact that the governmental control has gradually become less direct regarding this matter, the results of the institutional accreditation were used as a frame of reference for government decision-making on funding and enrolment approval (Hsieh, 2016). This reform reveals a propensity for data-collection as a kind of information tools, applied to communicating 'knowledge' or 'information' to target groups.

5. Faculty evaluation

Peer review and wide consultation can be helpful in improving faculty quality, which is highly relied on setting appropriate merit standards of making faculty appointments and deciding on promotion. Similarly, assessments, evaluations and periodic reviews provide external and independent evidence of academic performance. They are more likely to be free of conflicts and interest than other approaches. In addition, those quality assurance procedures can contribute to effective performance incentives useful in encouraging faculty to promote the quality of their research and teaching, even be willing to pursue risky or unpopular lines of research (Task Force on Higher Education and Society, 2000).

A teacher evaluation system was set up in Taiwan in 2005, in accordance with the revision to the *University Act*. Article 21 requires universities to establish their own system for reviewing scholar achievements in relation to teaching, research and academic service. This is also an essential reference for academics' upgrading, reappointment, dismissal and encouragement. This change also

reveals a propensity for data-collection as a kind of information tools, applied to communicating 'knowledge' or 'information' to target groups.

6. Flexible salary system

Each university in Taiwan was allowed to set up a teacher review committee to deal with the recruitment, promotion, and dismissal of teachers, according to the 1994 amendment of *University Act*, Article 21. This regulation is to prevent the faculty from being fired by the universities at will, in other words, to promote the security of employment. Although this procedure allows faculty greater academic freedom, it can also undermine performance incentives promoting competition and effectiveness. Focusing on the balance between academic freedom and accountability, in conjunction with the goals of avoiding a further brain drain and facilitating competition among faculty, the Ministry of Education launched a more flexible salary system in 2010. Unlike the traditional fixed salary system according to which faculty's salary depends on their educational degree and seniority, the new salary plan is merit-based and faculty members are to reward based on their academic performance. The change to a flexible salary system represents a propensity for competitive grants as a type of financial tools, which involve in transferring treasure resources to or from other actors in order to encourage them to act in the way the government expects.

7. Budget practices and financial management

Most problems arising from the higher education sector are rooted in a lack of resources. In particular, for those universities highly dependent on the state, their budgets must be approved by government officials and often impossible to be flexible. This normally causes so-called "use-it-or-lose-it environment" (Task Force on Higher Education and Society, 2000, p. 25), as universities are unable to carry over unspent funds for later years or transfer funds from one budgetary category to another. In short, bureaucratic and rigid rules for budgeting and accounting

can cause inefficiency in the operation and performance of higher education institutions. Taiwan's higher education institutions used to be funded almost entirely by the government. Even so-called private universities and colleges often received substantial allocations from the state. When economic and other considerations no longer allowed such luxury, the Ministry of Education started a couple of innovative policy changes.

Firstly, the Ministry of Education launched a limited trial program (involving five universities) in 1996. It aimed to improve university accountability and flexibility in budget practices. The participated universities were required to assume the significant responsibility of their budget management. According to the *National University Endowment Fund Establishment Act*, national universities must pool their resources not only from tuition fees but also from fund-raising and industry cooperation. In general, the reform allows the universities more autonomy in spending their revenue but at a cost of being no longer relied on government budgets. Before 1995, the proportion of financial support that the public universities received from the government was over 80%, and the number had dropped to under 50% in 10 years. This reform shows a propensity for deregulation and the use of authority tools.

Secondly, the Ministry of Education started the *World-Class Research University Project* in 2003. Since Taiwan joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, the government has been under pressure to incorporate globalization and marketization into the higher education system. In an attempt to boost the capacity of national universities, the government launched the *World-Class Research University Project*. After two years, the government launched another program entitled the *Higher Education for Excellence Plan*, so-called five-year-five-billion plan. The government provided NT\$5 billion (approximately US\$1.6 billion) to twelve prestigious institutions over a span from 2005 to 2010, in order to give the national universities with more incentives for pursuing

excellence. The public universities that receive the special funding must achieve substantial progress and fulfill certain performance criteria (e.g. the student-teacher ratio, the percentage of the faculty holding the rank of assistant professors and above, the results of university evaluations, and research citations) in order to remain a part of the plan. These government programs show a propensity for competitive grants as a type of financial tools.

IV. Discussions and Conclusions

The policy reforms and policy instruments that have been introduced in Taiwan's higher education to transform the way of governance are summarized in table 2, including the findings about the principles of good governance that were revealed in the process of higher education reforms. In general, those policy tools adopted by Taiwan's government for delivering higher education reflect the features of new public management and neoliberalism. In other words, those policy reforms completely reshaped the nature of Taiwan's higher education system, which has transformed from the model of state control to state supervision. Relevant discussions are divided into two time periods as follows.

Table2: Tools for achieving good higher education governance in Taiwan (years 1990-2010)

Higher education changes	Types of policy tools applied	Major Principles of Good Governance	Good Governance
1. Delegation to governing councils–	Authority tool (self-regulation)	Shared Governance	Democracy
2. From appointment to selection	Authority tool (self-regulation)	Shared Governance	Democracy
3. Delegation to a professional council	Authority tool (deregulation)	Shared Governance	Democracy
4. Institutional accreditation	Information tool (data collection)	Accountability	Transparency
5. Faculty evaluation	Information tool (data collection)	Meritocratic Selection	Effectiveness
6. Flexible salary system	Financial tool (competitive grants)	Meritocratic Selection	Effectiveness
7. Budget Practices and Financial Management	Authority tool (deregulation); Financial tool (competitive grants)	Accountability	Transparency; Effectiveness

1. The period of aiming at democracy and shared governance: the 1990s

Taiwan's higher education governance appeared to be an authoritarian style. Back to that time, the state controlled every parts of the system. After the lifting of martial law in 1987, the government started to grant the higher education system greater academics freedom and institutional autonomy, aiming to restructure the relationship between the state and the universities. Therefore, the policy reforms during the 1990s focused on decentralization or devolution and the policy changes were twofold: delegation to governing councils and the creating of the procedures of university president selection. Both reforms aimed to restructure the higher education governance through involving universities and relevant stakeholders in the process of decision-making. In Taiwan's case, the government adopted self-regulation as the policy tools for pursuing the goals, and such a policy instrument represented the nature of authority tools, the effect of which mainly relied on the coercive power of the state.

As higher education became a complex domain involving multiple actors with diverse interests and ideas, a lighter touch of regulation has been advocated by many governments. Governmental power need to be devolved to those best qualified to make decisions in order to ensure higher education quality. At the system level, government agencies, universities and the business sector shall be involved in the processes of shaping national higher education policies; and at the institutional level, internal stakeholders (such as faculty, students and administrators) should be given voice in curriculum development and academic appointments. For those reforms, the principle of good governance refers to shared governance, also known as cooperative governance (Task Force on Higher Education and Society, 2000). Shared governance can be related to the spirit of pluralist democracy, with channels for the representation of individual and group interests (UNDP, 1997). In the study, we found that academia and researchers urged Taiwan's government to bring democracy to university campuses after the martial law left. Academic freedom and institutional autonomy thus arose from public opinion and were high on the agenda. Deregulation or decentralization prevailed

among other reform ideas. Therefore, shared governance is identified as the main component of good governance for Taiwan's government to promote participation and representation in the higher education system during the 1990s.

2. The period of aiming at transparency and accountability: the 2000s

It is believed that universities are able to create new knowledge and innovative ideas, including those that may be unpopular, with an absence of official censorship over speech and publication. Academic freedom recognizes the right of scholars to define their own areas of inquiry, to teach, to pursue their research and to publish the truth as they see it, without control or restraint from the state and the institutions that employ them. Despite being of importance, academic freedom has limits and requires accountability. Either the academics or universities have to be accountable to their sponsors by periodically explaining actions and by having successes and failures examined in a transparent fashion. In addition to accountability, meritocratic systems are also essential for good governance. Relevant decisions need to be made based on merit and within in the institution by those closest to the issues. Thus, the selection and promotion of faculty, administrators, and students to be autonomous shall be an crucial step for the system that aims to achieve good governance (Task Force on Higher Education and Society, 2000). For example, in Europe university governance heavily emphasizes mutuality and peer review as control measures (Scott & Hood, 2004).

In the 2000s, Taiwan's higher education system faced another challenge, an oversupply of higher education institutions causing a decrease in unit costs per student. A serious threat to education quality forced educational authority to demand higher accountability for the higher education sector. In addition, the government offered extra financial incentives in order to combat fierce global competition. Apart from value for money, meritocracy became the primary criteria for promoting the performance of universities from a distance. Owing to the expanding participation,

alongside the rising cost of public funding available to universities, Taiwan's government launched a series of programs and alternatives in order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its higher education. In short, the system entered a stage of focusing on competitiveness and meritocracy, and the major principles of good governance emphasized transparency and effectiveness, and accountability. During the decade, the government expanded the scope of the policy tools for achieving good higher education governance. Information tools have been implemented in relation to the quality assurance system, particular in the matters of institutional accreditation and faculty evaluation. Furthermore, financial tools were also included for the flexible salary system and university budget practices.

3. Implications for Good Higher Education Governance in Asia

Most Asia higher education systems were traditionally under tight state control and can be characterized by strong governmental regulations. Ministries and politicians have significant influence on funding allocations, the appointment of university presidents, degree requirements and curricula. However, facing rapid social and economic changes, along with the emergence of the global education market, the governments must adopt new strategies to manage the public sectors and the delivery of higher education service. Against the backdrop of globalization, a growing number of nations in Asia prefer a new form of university governance that involves redesigned agencies, negotiations and collaboration and the practices of decentralization and marketizations. Many higher education policy reforms reflect a new governance ideology based on neoliberalism, emphasizing efficiency and accountability, as the governments realize that they must response to the increasingly limited higher education resources in the growing competitive environment (Mok, 2010). The above description fits with Taiwan's experiences in the last two decades.

Many critiques have served as warnings about the danger of pursuing market-driven higher education reforms that emphasize competition. For example, Holmwood et al (2016) argued that marketization focuses too narrowly on service provision and value for money and fails to acknowledge the public interest that higher education should serve. Hawkins (2010) stated that those higher education transformation derived from neoliberalism are at the expense of other social values and missions, including equality, justice, community, and academic freedom. Apart from economic growth and preparing the young for future employment, higher education should foster social mobility and universities develop cultural and intellectual citizens. Higher education providers must deliver public benefit, creating the knowledge and nurturing capability and values that sustain democracy.

In Taiwan, the higher education system was highly centralized in the hands of a ministry of education. The system seems to completely transform to a state supervision mode, which is believed to be superior to the state control mode as its promotion of representation, transparency and accountability, as well as efficient and effective public management. The policy instruments adopted were developed and implemented closely aligned with the neoliberal ideology and the strategies of new public management. Notions such as accountability, value for money, marketization and corporatization appear extremely popular and are introduced to HE governance. Although the system is experimenting with various components of good governance, the study also found that government still favors those new management and structural changes that can be featured as authoritative tools. As what Salamon (2002) suggested, contextual factors, such as political interests and ideologies, are influential in shaping the selection of policy tools. The transformation of university governance in Taiwan has an implication for its counterparts in Asia, that is: Both politicians and academics who are going to choose policy tools for achieving good higher education governance shall realize the

importance of historical context, which can be an inevitable burden not only difficult but also impossible to discard.

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