

# **Metrics, Control, and the Erosion of Dialogue: A Critical Study of Research Governance in a Philippine Higher Education Institution**

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**Abstract:** University officials implement monitoring and accountability measures to sustain high levels of research productivity among their faculty, as this enhances the reputation of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), which in turn translates into stronger performance in global rankings, increased enrollment, and more funding. This paper takes a closer look at how a market-oriented form of research governance—driven by metrics, competition, and audits—impacts the research experiences of faculty researchers at one private Philippine university. Drawing on Freire and Habermas, we show how these systems frame research governance as neutral and technical and constrain opportunities for genuine dialogue. Interviews and a review of university research governance documents reveal the governing characteristics of this higher education institution regarding research among its faculty researchers. Five issues

emerged: minimal faculty role in research policymaking, pressure to publish, uneven funding and workloads, bureaucratic barriers, and the absence of a long-term research direction. Together, these conditions weaken collegial dialogue, reinforce hierarchies, create ethical tensions, and diminish the faculty's collective voice.

**Keywords:** Freire, Habermas, erosion of dialogue, research metrics

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## INTRODUCTION

Research is vital to the mission of higher education, where teaching and research are commonly treated as core institutional functions.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the status and prestige of higher educational institutions are strongly shaped by faculty research productivity, given the central role that research indicators play in reputation and international ranking systems.<sup>2</sup> Evidence also suggests a modest but positive association between research productivity and teaching quality.<sup>3</sup>

Accordingly, as higher education faculty, we are expected to engage in research and disseminate our work through peer-reviewed publications, as institutional research productivity is most commonly operationalized through publication counts and related bibliometric indicators.<sup>4</sup> For practical reasons, higher education institutions are concerned with the amount of research conducted within their institutions. But since ranking positions are strongly associated with scientometric performance, increasing research output and visibility becomes very strategic for strengthening competitive advantage and influencing stakeholder choices (e.g., prospective students and parents).<sup>5</sup> Research productivity also supports resource acquisition, as evidence from competitive grant contexts shows that applicants' bibliometric track records align with peer-review

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<sup>1</sup> Rosa Rodríguez and Gonzalo Rubio, "Teaching Quality and Academic Research," in *IRÉE*, 23 (2016), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen R. Porter and Robert K. Toutkoushian, "Institutional Research Productivity and the Connection to Average Student Quality and Overall Reputation," in *Economics of Education Review*, 25:6 (2006), 607, 612; Péter Szluka, "Relationship between Bibliometric Indicators and University Ranking Positions," in *Scientific Reports*, 13:14193 (2023), 23.

<sup>3</sup> Rodríguez and Rubio, "Teaching Quality and Academic Research," 2.

<sup>4</sup> Robert K. Toutkoushian et al., "Using Publications Counts To Measure an Institution's Research Productivity," in *Annual Forum for the Association for Institutional Research* (Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2002), 1,9; Giovanni Abramo and Ciriaco Andrea D'Angelo, "How Do You Define and Measure Research Productivity?," in *Scientometrics*, 101:2 (2014), 1131-1134.

<sup>5</sup> Szluka, "Relationship between Bibliometric Indicators and University Ranking Positions," 1, 39.

outcomes—making productivity an effective instrument for improving funding competitiveness and research income.<sup>6</sup>

Viewed through a neoliberal lens, the research-governance approach we have described aligns closely with a shift toward “governing by numbers,” in which research is rendered auditable, comparable, and strategically optimizable. In “aggressively neo-liberalized” higher-education environments, these assessment systems can become culturally dominant—shaping day-to-day research organization and reinforcing performance values—so that governance capacity is not just an administrative function, but also as an instrument for managing competition and compliance.

Constant exposure to conditions of competition and monitoring, however, makes the faculty’s working conditions more burdensome and stressful. Time is diverted into proposal production, internal selection exercises, and repeated proof-of-worth. At the same time, success and survival become anchored to metrics and gatekeeping processes that researchers could only partly control. Recent work also frames evaluation itself as an “affective” way of doing things, generating sustained unhappiness even where “responsible research assessment” reforms are underway. Key tensions are embedded in assessment simply because people see it differently.<sup>7</sup> Finally, the critique is often described as a values problem as much as a workload problem: we may value openness, responsibility, mentorship, and “research citizenship,” yet experience institutions as prioritizing prestige signals and rewardable outputs, producing corrosive “value dissonance” and moral tension in everyday

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<sup>6</sup> Alvaro Cabezas-Clavijo and Daniel Torres-Salinas, “Bibliometric Reports for Institutions: Best Practices in a Responsible Metrics Scenario,” in *Frontiers in Research Metrics and Analytics*, 6:696470 (2021), 1, 7.

<sup>7</sup> Reetta Muhonen and Laura Himanen, “Evaluation as a Source of Unhappiness in Academia—Unpacking the Boundaries of Responsible Research Assessment,” in *Research Evaluation*, 34 (2025), 1–10.

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academic decision-making.<sup>8</sup> Taken together, these studies portray neoliberal research governance as reorganizing academic labor around competitive accountability, with predictable consequences for well-being, professional identity, and value alignment.<sup>9</sup>

In this paper, we examine how neoliberal research governance—through metrics, competition, and audit accountability—restructures faculty research work by intensifying workload and stress, limiting autonomy, and creating ethical tensions between community-relevant inquiry and institutional demands for prestige and measurable outputs.<sup>10</sup> In the Philippines, these metric-driven pressures are increasingly tied to rankings, funding, and performance systems, yet too little is known about how faculty—especially in private universities outside the State university (SUC) system—experience, interpret, and resist them. In this paper, we ask (1) How do faculty researchers describe the research governance environment? (2) What conditions shape their opportunities and constraints? And (3) How do they interpret its effects on research practice, ethical life, and academic work?

We employed a qualitative case study design to examine how faculty researchers experience and interpret research governance in one private Philippine Higher Education Institution which we will be referring to hereafter as HEIM. We purposively selected seven faculty researchers from HEIM to reflect various disciplines and levels of research experience (5–25 years); all had at least one Scopus or Web of Science indexed publication,

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<sup>8</sup> Tony Ross-hellauer et al., “Value Dissonance in Research ( Er ) Assessment: Individual and Perceived Institutional Priorities in Review, Promotion, and Tenure,” in *Science and Public Policy*, 51:4 (2024), 337–351.

<sup>9</sup> Stephanie Meirmans, “How Competition for Funding Impacts Scientific Practice: Building Pre-Fab Houses but No Cathedrals,” in *Science and Engineering Ethics*, 30:6 (2024), 1–20; Richard Watermeyer, Gemma Elizabeth Derrick, and Mar Borrás Batalla, “Affective Auditing,” in *Research Evaluation*, 31 (2022); Reetta Muhonen and Laura Himanen, “Evaluation as a Source of Unhappiness in Academia”; Ross-hellauer et al., “Value Dissonance in Research ( Er ) Assessment.”

<sup>10</sup> Stephanie Meirmans, “How Competition for Funding Impacts Scientific Practice,” 11–14; Watermeyer, Derrick, and Batalla, “Affective Auditing,” 549–500; Ross-hellauer et al., “Value Dissonance in Research ( Er ) Assessment,” 339, 342, 343, 348.

indicating sustained engagement with formal productivity regimes. We collected data through semi-structured interviews (30–45 minutes) and document analysis of HEIM’s research governance and productivity documents.<sup>11</sup> After the audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed, we analyzed the transcripts through iterative thematic coding. At the same time, we contextualize and triangulate our findings by analyzing documents alongside interview data. We employed concepts of Freire and Habermas to interpret the emerging themes from the coded texts.

Since this research involved human subjects, we sought ethical approval from one of HEIM’s accredited ethics boards. We also obtained from the participants a duly signed informed consent form, including their attestation that they participated voluntarily. We also told participants that their anonymity would be protected and that their interview data would be securely stored, thereby assuring them that their participation would not affect their employment.

We begin the paper by expounding the conceptual framework of our study: Freire’s concepts of banking education, conscientization, and praxis, as well as his notion of the culture of silence. We situate Freire’s concepts alongside Habermas’s distinctions: between system and lifeworld, between communicative and strategic action, and between administrative power, normative reflection, and democratic will-formation. We also discuss Habermas’s views on the colonization of the lifeworld by administrative power and his notion of systematically distorted communication. In the next section, we discuss neoliberal governance in the global North and South; how it figures in the Philippines, more specifically in the metric-centered research governance of CHED, the regulatory agency of all HEIs in the country; and, in response, how HEIM internally structures priorities, internal policies, and faculty responsibilities. In the next section, we present the findings of our qualitative study, based on interviews and

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<sup>11</sup> We triangulate the interviews of our participants with internal documents of HEIM, but for the anonymity of the Higher educational institution we are studying, we shall not supply the bibliographical information of the documents.

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relevant documents from HEIM, and analyze and interpret them using the previously mentioned concepts of Freire and Habermas as complementary lenses. In the last section, we offer a synthesis of faculty accounts on the impact of neoliberal research governance on their own scholarly activities. We conclude by outlining the reforms needed to make research governance inclusive, fair, and enabling for faculty researchers, and by acknowledging the limitations of our study.

### **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: FREIRE, HABERMAS, AND NEOLIBERAL RESEARCH GOVERNANCE**

In this study, we draw on Paulo Freire and Jürgen Habermas to examine how neoliberal research governance reshapes faculty work in HEIM driven by ranking incentives. We treat research governance not as impartial administration but as a contested field where power and value are organized through metrics, reviews, and performance incentives. Freire and Habermas offer two viewpoints that work well together in examining how faculty internalize, negotiate, and resist demands for productivity, or even seek recognition, thereby creating ethical tension. Morrow and Torres<sup>12</sup> support this pairing, arguing that Habermas helps systematize Freire within broader critical social theory, while Freire makes Habermas concrete through communicative action and democratization in practice. As we use them here, Freire foregrounds epistemic hierarchy, silence, and ethical struggle,<sup>13</sup> while Habermas clarifies how instrumental rationality and technocratic systems colonize academic lifeworlds.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Raymond A. Morrow and Carlos Alberto Torres, *Reading Freire and Habermas: Critical Pedagogy and Transformative Social Change* (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University Press, 2002), 3, 14.

<sup>13</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed 50th Anniversary Edition* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017).

<sup>14</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984); Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 2: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987).

Freire's critique of "banking education."<sup>15</sup> could be used by way of analogy to his notion of "knowledge deposit"<sup>16</sup> as a form of critique of "Scopus-centrism"<sup>17</sup>—the tendency of research managers to view research output as "externally valued deposits" that are standardized in the form of publications and citations indexed in data platforms such as Scopus, where the performance of the faculty is measured internally, and at the same time, the output serves as one of the bases of external ranking agencies in ranking HEIs against each other. Freire's "culture of silence" helps us explain how such a practice is sustained when compliance is internalized in the absence of internal critique of this system.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, his concepts of conscientization and praxis frame the possibility for faculty to create change or, through strategic adaptation, still work toward a socially engaged scholarship.

Habermas's theories can help us understand the intricacies of research governance. There is an interplay or tension between system and lifeworld. Decisions and actions are influenced by mechanisms of money,

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<sup>15</sup> See Chapter 2, Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 76-85.

<sup>16</sup> See Stephen Cowden, "The Moment of Critical Pedagogy," in *Why Critical Pedagogy and Popular Education Matter Today*, ed. by Sarah Amsler et al. (Birmingham: C-SAP: Higher Education Academy Subject Network for Sociology, Anthropology, Politics, 2010), 24-27; Lori Riley, "Praxis and True Dialogue: A Freirean Approach to Equity-Minded Data Work," in *A Journal at the Intersection of Assessment and Learning*, 5:2 (2024), 69-75; Cristina Costa et al., "Digital Education Colonized by Design : Curriculum Reimagined," in *Educ. Sci.* 13:895 (2023), 1-13; Yi-huang Shih, "The Transformation of Higher Education in the Context of Globalization : Implications from Paulo Freire's Critical Pedagogy," in *Frontiers in Education*, 10:1714343 (2026), 1-5.

<sup>17</sup> "Bunsod ng nabanggit na realidad, kapansin-pansin ang pag-iral ng Scopus-sentrismo—ang pagkiling sa Scopus bilang isa sa mga pangunahing batayan ng de-kalidad na saliksik—sa mga polisiya ng mga unibersidad sa bansa at ng mga ahensiyang pang-edukasyon at/o pampananaliksik." See Michael David San Juan, "Bakit Dapat Manaliksik Sa Filipino Ang Mga Pilipino?: Kritik Sa Scopus-Sentrismo Ng Mga Unibersidad at Ahensiyang Pang- Edukasyon at/o Pampananaliksik Sa Pilipinas/Why Filipinos Should Write Researches in Filipino ?: A Critique of Scopus-Centrism In," in *MALAY*, 34:1 (2021), 47-64.

<sup>18</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 56.

power, and administration (system)<sup>19</sup> and by communicative action and common understanding of what is right and fair (lifeworld) in research.<sup>20</sup> For example, when neoliberal research frames and spreads in the governance of academic life, it shapes and reinforces research norms and priorities that depart from the lifeworld's expectations—Habermas refers to the lifeworld being colonized by administrative power.<sup>21</sup> This raises the question of whether a research administrator is simply coordinating research or fundamentally reshaping its meanings and directions, which explains perturbations such as increased workload stress and value conflicts among faculty researchers. Meanwhile, his distinction between communicative and strategic action<sup>22</sup> helps us determine whether research policymaking arises from a sincere desire to create a space for genuine dialogue (communicative action) or from processes devised to ensure that people follow rules (strategic action). In addition, Habermas's concept of systematically distorted communication<sup>23</sup> can help us see whether HEIM procedures allow authentic dialogue or just the appearance of it. Finally, his focus on the separation of administrative power from normative reflection and democratic will-formation offers a way to evaluate

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<sup>19</sup> See Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 2*, 113-198; Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 1*, 285-286, 342.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>21</sup> "This dependency, resulting from the mediatization of the lifeworld by system imperatives, assumes the sociopathological form of an internal colonization when critical disequilibria in material reproduction—that is, systemic crises amenable to systems-theoretical analysis—can be avoided only at the cost of disturbances in the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld—that is, of 'subjectively' experienced, identity-threatening crises or pathologies." *Ibid.*, 305.

<sup>22</sup> "We call an action oriented to success strategic when we consider it under the aspect of following rules of rational choice and assess the efficacy of influencing the decisions of a rational opponent ... By contrast, I shall speak of communicative action whenever the actions of the agents involved are coordinated not through egocentric calculations of success but through acts of reaching understanding." *Ibid.*, 285.

<sup>23</sup> "The interpreter can, furthermore, uncover the systematically distorted character of processes of understanding by showing how the participants express themselves in a subjectively truthful manner and yet objectively say something other than what they (also) mean (unbeknownst to themselves)." *Ibid.*, 107.

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legitimacy:<sup>24</sup> Are policies created through collective reasoning among those involved, or is there a democratic deficit, with faculty treated merely as subjects rather than co-creators of research directions and standards?

## NEOLIBERAL RESEARCH GOVERNANCE, METRICS AND INSTITUTIONAL

In much of the Global North, we see neoliberal research governance criticized for pushing Higher educational institutions toward a “performance-based” model in which strategy and academic identity are organized around competitive funding, evaluative cycles, and audited narratives of excellence. In the UK, what counts as “high-quality research environment” is tailored to what is recognized, consistent, and rewardable within a given standardized assessment framework set by funders.<sup>25</sup> We can see how this results in the normalization of “audit” and “project” logics, the addition of more bureaucracy, and the intensification of internal review and selection.<sup>26</sup>

Research arrangements such as these, however, are criticized as distorting the purpose of research as they equate research excellence with the quantity of published articles;<sup>27</sup> emphasize institutional image, encouraging gaming instead of professionalism and real scholarship;<sup>28</sup> conform to international standards of research over local and broad

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<sup>24</sup> “A communicatively rationalized lifeworld would have to develop institutions out of itself through which to set limits to the inner dynamic of media-steered subsystems and to subordinate them to decisions arrived at in unconstrained communication. Central among these institutions are those that secure an effectively functioning public sphere, in which practical questions of general interest can be submitted to public discussion and decided on the basis of discursively achieved agreement.” *Ibid.*, xxxix.

<sup>25</sup> Matthew Inglis, Elizabeth Gadd, and Elizabeth Stokoe, “What Is a High-Quality Research Environment? Evidence from the UK’s Research Excellence Framework,” in *Research Evaluation*, 00:0 (2024), 10.

<sup>26</sup> Watermeyer, Derrick, and Batalla, “Affective Auditing,” 498, 500.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

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scientific activity;<sup>29</sup> and redirect research activities to predictable trendy, easy, and short-sighted research projects with anticipatory impact claims;<sup>30</sup> and even discourage risk-taking, curiosity-driven research initiatives.<sup>31</sup> Evidence from grant-competition contexts also links these pressures to questionable framing practices as predictable adaptations to regimes that reward “winning” as much as careful knowledge-building.<sup>32</sup> The overall effect is “epistemic narrowing”: research that travels well through evaluation devices is favored, while work whose value is harder to pre-specify or monetize is marginalized.<sup>33</sup>

We also recognize that the situation goes beyond the Global North. Across much of the Global South, research governance increasingly follows global “excellence” scripts in which index visibility, bibliometrics, and how well researchers compete function as proxies for legitimacy and advancement. In Egypt, scientometric promotion criteria incentivize publishing in WoS/Scopus-indexed, high-quartile journals, harmonizing their outputs with international norms, standards, or expectations.<sup>34</sup> In South Africa, output-linked incentives are criticized for commodifying publication and creating “perverse incentives” that distort priorities and strain the publishing system.<sup>35</sup> In many African contexts, we see “publish or perish” regimes described as importing standards misaligned with local constraints and disregarding socially relevant and responsive scholarship

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Meirmans, “How Competition for Funding Impacts Scientific Practice,” 12.

<sup>31</sup> Jerry Z. Muller, *The Tyranny of Metrics* (Princeton University Press, 2018), 171.

<sup>32</sup> Conix Stijn et al., “Questionable Research Practices in Competitive Grant Funding: A Survey,” in *PLOS ONE*, 18:11 (2023), 1–17.

<sup>33</sup> Meirmans, “How Competition for Funding Impacts Scientific Practice,” 14; Stijn et al., “Questionable Research Practices in Competitive Grant Funding,” 11, 49.

<sup>34</sup> Mona Farouk Ali, “Investigating Shifts in Publication Patterns after Launching Scientometric Evaluation at Egyptian Universities: An Analysis of Submitted Research for Promotion,” in *Scientometrics*, 130 (2025), 1751–87.

<sup>35</sup> Keyan G. Tomaselli, “Perverse Incentives and the Political Economy of South African Academic Journal Publishing,” in *South African Journal of Science*, 114:11 (2018), 1.

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that does not translate into ranking metrics.<sup>36</sup> Some critics also say that APC-driven open access can operate as an exclusionary filter that reproduces epistemic injustice.<sup>37</sup>

In the Philippines, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) oversees the higher education sector.<sup>38</sup> The agency sets standards and links incentives to measurable research outputs. Research governance tends to follow the numbers—such as the number of indexed publications and citations, especially in State Universities and Colleges (SUCs).<sup>39</sup> Thus, it can be said that, in general, research governance in the Philippines is metric-centered, where “performance” is tied to indexed publications, citations, and output targets linked to reputation and, in SUCs, to formal performance requirements.<sup>40</sup> As a result, CHED has faced criticism for concentrating research incentives on seven institutions designated as

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<sup>36</sup> Tibelius Amutuhaire, “The Reality of the ‘Publish or Perish’ Concept, Perspectives from the Global South,” in *Publishing Research Quarterly*, 38:2 (2022), 282, 284, 285.

<sup>37</sup> Emily Cox, “Research Outputs as Testimony & the APC as Testimonial Injustice in the Global South,” in *College & Research Libraries*, 84:4 (2023), 520, 523.

<sup>38</sup> See Department of Budget and Management and Commission on Higher Education, “Levelling Instrument for SUCS and Guidelines for the Implementation Thereof,” Joint Circular No. 1, Series of 2016 (13 April 2016), <<https://legacy.ched.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/DBM-CHED-Joint-Circular-No.-1-2016-FY-2016-Levelling-Instrument-for-sues-and-Guidelines-for-the-Implementation-Thereof.pdf>>; Second Congressional Commission on Education, *Miseducation: The Failed System of Philippine Education, EDCOM II Year One Report* (Pasay City: Second Congressional Commission on Education, 2024), 198, <<https://edcom2.gov.ph/media/2024/02/EDCOM-II-Year-One-Report-PDF-022924.pdf>>.

<sup>39</sup> See DBM and CHED, Joint Circular No. 1, Series of 2016; Second Congressional Commission on Education, “Miseducation,” 198.

<sup>40</sup> Jupeth T. Pentang and Jaynelle G Domingo, “Research Self-Efficacy and Productivity of Select Faculty Members: Inferences for Faculty Development Plan,” in *European Journal of Educational Research*, 13:4 (2024), 1694–1703; Danilo V. Rogayan and Luz N. Corpuz, “Evaluating the Research Productivity of a State University in Central Luzon, Philippines: Basis for Policy Recommendations,” in *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education (IJERE)*, 11:1 (2022), 130–133; Cheryll Casiwan Launio et al., “Motivating Factors and Challenges of Faculty Members in a State University in the Philippines in Publishing Journal Articles,” in *Journal of Scientometric Research*, 13:3 (2024), 867, 870; Januard D. Dagdag and Judith E. Daracan, “Faculty Perspectives on the Impact of World Rankings on Academic Practices,” in *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 24:6 (2025), 524, 532–533.

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Centers of Excellence/Development, primarily based on publication output.<sup>41</sup> While grant-based programs encourage the “culture of competition,”<sup>42</sup> overall research productivity remains low, with private institutions hindered by heavy teaching loads, insufficient resources, and limited government backing. Additional concerns include CHED’s “one-size-fits-all” policies for all HEIs, reduced COE/COD funding since 2018, and persistent delays in service delivery.<sup>43</sup>

This study describes HEIM governance challenges. HEIM promotes itself as a top private research university in the Philippines, but campus discussions note inconsistent research achievements. According to the student press, officials blame low global rankings on limited faculty research, heavy teaching loads, and few Scopus/WoS publications. University administrators purportedly plan to address these by prioritizing research and reducing faculty teaching duties. Notably, the current HEIM policy on research incentivizes faculty with adjusted workloads, rewards, funding, travel support, and publication-based awards. However, tension in research governance in HEIM remains. Between 2004 and 2024, the university’s research policies were revised 9 times, expanding coverage of issues related to ethical conduct, structure, research integrity, intellectual property, incentives, and workload. However, records show limited consultation with faculty and external partners and communities the University works with.

We also observe that research is further embedded through HEIM’s collective bargaining agreement with its faculty union. The deal provides free graduate education to tenured faculty and a points-based

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<sup>41</sup> Second Congressional Commission on Education, “Miseducation,” 138.

<sup>42</sup> Allan B. De Guzman, “Reforms in Philippine Basic Education Viewed from Key Elements of Successful School-Based Management (SBM) Schools,” in *Educational Research for Policy and Practice*, 5 (2006), 55-71; Mark Cleeford, Layugan Quitoras, and Julian E. Abuso, “Best Practices of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) for the Development of Research Culture in the Philippines,” in *Pedagogical Research*, 6:1 (2021), 4.

<sup>43</sup> Second Congressional Commission on Education, “Miseducation,” 165–166, 253–254.

promotion/reclassification system that puts more weight on internationally refereed/indexed publications and citation impact, alongside other outputs (books, patents, grants, conferences). Fellowships are selective and output-driven (regular appointment, doctoral qualification, exclusive service, with exemptions) and require agreements specifying tasks and deadlines; failure to publish—especially within two years—can reduce research load or future support. Overall, we find that HEIM mirrors CHED’s output-focused, indexing-oriented accountability agenda, but does so through more codified, metric-intensive internal rules designed to boost global visibility. A January 2026 campus news report highlights increased 2025 output, suggesting modest gains consistent with this incentive-driven approach.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this section, we return to the central purpose of our study: to examine how faculty researchers navigate and understand the university’s research governance environment, and how institutional policies, practices, and conditions shape participation, outputs, and the freedom of faculty researchers to shape such work. Rather than treating research performance as an individual faculty matter, we foreground the institutional arrangements that enable or constrain research work in everyday practice.

### *Theme 1: Faculty Exclusion from Research Policy Making*

We heard faculty researchers describe research policymaking in HEIM as largely top-down, with limited involvement for meaningful participation. Two respondents noted that policies are developed and revised by senior administrators and designated committees, with minimal consultation of faculty directly engaged in research practice: “*Ang problema ‘rin sa sistema ng \_\_\_\_\_ ... hindi tayo kinakausap ng mga administrador ... hindi tayo sinasama sa conversation*” (The problem with

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the \_\_\_\_ system is that ... the administrators don't talk to us; we're not included in the conversation).<sup>44</sup> This perception of exclusion contributes to a diminished sense of ownership over policies among faculty researchers, who may view these measures as imposed rather than collaborative. Consequently, they advocate for greater participation in policy formulation to ensure that the resulting guidelines more accurately reflect their circumstances and address their specific needs: "*Hindi naman po puwedeng one-size-fits-all po tayo, kasi iba po ang \_\_\_\_ ... \_\_\_\_, iba po ang \_\_\_\_, so we should have different tools*" (We can't have a one-size-fits-all approach, because \_\_\_\_ is different ... \_\_\_\_ is different, \_\_\_\_ is different, so we should have different tools).<sup>45</sup>

We examine the current document containing the HEIM's research guidelines. It corroborates and is consistent with the accounts. The document underwent nine rounds of changes since 2004, without clear evidence of when and how the researchers' needs and conditions were assessed and their views integrated across the various iterations, up to the most recent one. The document does not provide the basis and processes for the guidelines for future reviews and amendments, nor the actors who should participate in the review. Given the lack of participation, it is not surprising that faculty members did not develop a sense of ownership of the policies.<sup>46</sup>

Read through the combined lens of Habermas and Freire, excluding faculty researchers from policy-making is not just a process problem but a governance problem, as it weakens collective authorship and a jointly owned research agenda.

In HEIM, we see the demands of system mechanisms in policymaking dominating the needs of the academic lifeworld. The absence of participation reflects bureaucratic or managerial control. The reason is

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<sup>44</sup> From here on, Faculty Researchers 1 to 7 refer to specific faculty researchers who participated in the interview sessions.

<sup>45</sup> Faculty Researcher 7.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

strategic: it could be the most efficient way to respond to external pressures or to ensure administrative convenience (e.g., a policy that measures research productivity using performance metrics rather than more qualitative measures is straightforward to follow). In this case, communicative deliberation is not the goal. At best, the needed deliberation in the lifeworld is reduced to mere sharing of policy guidelines for compliance, thereby becoming merely procedural rather than creating a space for genuine and sincere consultation.

This undermines the legitimacy of the policies because, for Habermas, they become legitimate only when people affected can shape them. For that reason, the sense of ownership cannot be obtained; the policy becomes a mere imposition arising from power, while compliance is possible, commitment will be hard to come by.

Freire's culture of silence arising from oppression helps us see the results of the absence of democratic participation described by Habermas. Culture of silence reshapes faculty agency, such as getting used to authorities or gatekeepers deciding for them, problems are discussed privately but not publicly, feeling a sense of resignation, lack of critical dialogue, that is, avoidance of questions related to power or structures. It is therefore understandable why individual concerns are expressed about research policies, including the lack of faculty involvement in policymaking. Still, these have not surfaced as more formal department-wide or university-wide concerns.

### *Theme 2: Metrics, the Pressure to Publish, and Ethical Concerns*

Theme 2 highlights how a performance-driven system shifts academic work from generating knowledge to focusing on measurable results, creating ethical tensions.

Participants described a research environment that is centered on quantifiable measurements: It is “not about the research itself anymore; it's about how many publications researchers can produce in indexed

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journals.”<sup>47</sup> In this environment, the legitimacy of research, arising from its contribution to knowledge or the public good, is given less importance than the satisfaction of quantifiable indicators that meet research targets: “Citations are being gamed. We now live in a numbers game rather than valuing real research quality.”<sup>48</sup>

Ethical tension also arises from the pursuit of monetary rewards, and from accommodating those who control resources or fare at the top of the hierarchy, for one to be able to do research:

*Yes, po. Gift authorship, (salami) publication... ‘yon po, for the sake of the incentive ....’*

(Yes, sir, Gift authorship, (salami) publication ... ” that’s it, for the sake of the incentive.)<sup>49</sup>

There are cases of questionable authorship practices. Some faculty add co-authors who barely contributed. I end up writing and editing the entire thing. And ... they just become part of the project because at that time, based on experience, they were the seniors ... I had to stay in their laboratory, and so they become ... they become co-authors even without contributing anything.<sup>50</sup>

The ethical tension is best captured in this remark:

Because of this obsession with metrics, we think that we become a research university when we hit the numbers, but at the same time we sacrifice honesty, we sacrifice dignity,

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<sup>47</sup> Faculty Researcher 1.

<sup>48</sup> Faculty Researcher 7.

<sup>49</sup> Faculty Researcher 1.

<sup>50</sup> Faculty Researcher 3.

research ... academic integrity ... we're looking at the numbers, the metrics."<sup>51</sup>

However, while a metrics-driven culture distorts research and encourages performative, unethical behavior among researchers, HEIM's research environment has become a seedbed for a value-performance metric-oriented system to grow and flourish because it is highly valued, as shown by the following initiatives: Faculty annual recognition awards at the university-wide or departmental level for those who publish, including monetary incentives for every publication indexed in Scopus or WoS, as well as the opportunity to be covered by campus news and to receive congratulatory messages on the official University website, Facebook account, and social media. Thus, an orientation toward performance metrics, as it is tied to the image and reputation of HEIM and individual faculty researchers, serves as a source of public recognition, including bragging rights.

From a Habermasian perspective, these initiatives are part of the "steering media" that condition and normalize specific behaviors (e.g., an audit-driven approach to scholarship) without requiring agreement on what genuine scholarship is. This is consistent with the system or instrumental rationality, in which market imperatives encroach on the university (colonization of the lifeworld). Habermas classifies formal education as a lifeworld institution that serves as a vehicle for cultural transmission, a core reproduction process alongside social integration and socialization discourse.<sup>52</sup> In this context, the marketization of the university would shape scholars' ability to engage in critical, open-ended inquiry. Freire's perspective would further explain how a metric-driven culture is internalized. As reported, researchers involved in gift authorship to appease senior faculty and secure the resources needed for their research. While these exemplify the ethical erosion arising from the

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<sup>51</sup> Faculty Researcher 7.

<sup>52</sup> Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 2*, 146.

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marketization of research, the faculty's behaviors could also be viewed as survival strategies that are gradually normalized, even when research integrity is compromised. As noted earlier, the environment is quite conducive because the system rewards outputs measured by the number of publications and citations, which serve as proxies for scholarly value.

### *Theme 3: Inequitable Funding Distribution*

We heard participants describe research support as favoring senior faculty over junior faculty. While statements encouraging research are common, they are not matched by the resources to support them. “*So, ‘yun lang po yung nakaka-frustrate. Kung gagawa talaga ng early researchers, medyo less ang support po talaga*” (That’s really the frustrating part. When early-career researchers are the ones doing the work, the support is really quite limited),<sup>53</sup> and that capable early researchers are discouraged when “*wala pong funding*” (There’s no funding).<sup>54</sup> Taken together, these accounts suggest that access is shaped less by the potential to research than by a pecking order determined mainly by position and years on the job.

We also find that institutional texts reflect this stratification. According to the current University Collective Bargaining Agreement, tenured and senior faculty members are given priority in workload assignments. Further, the current document containing the research policies and guidelines of the university defines Tier 1 “First Stage Researchers” as those who “can carry out research under supervision,” reinforcing a dependent status. Entry rules also require prior publication and recent WoS/Scopus-indexed output. By definition, most junior faculty who wish to pursue research do not yet have the necessary credentials, and these very requirements often prevent them from accessing research-load opportunities. Beyond funding, participants emphasized the lack of

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<sup>53</sup> Faculty Researcher 1.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

administrative support: “*Wala po talagang support ... bahala kayo*” (There is really no support ... you’re on your own)—and the burden falls on the researcher<sup>55</sup> who will end up self-funding research costs.<sup>56</sup> They also described fragmented procedures (“*iba-ibang opisina*” [different offices])<sup>57</sup> and information gaps (“not aware ... don’t know how to ask for money”) that advantage those with networks or institutional savvy,<sup>58</sup> while departments with stronger access can request larger amounts.<sup>59</sup>

For these reasons, participants called for reform, including rebalancing research and teaching loads (“*pababain si teaching load, pataasin si research load*” [reduce teaching load, increase research load])<sup>60</sup> and updating support systems seen as “*na-stuck ... 20 years ago*” (stuck ... 20 years ago).<sup>61</sup> We also note that policy thresholds further sustain inequality: Tier 4 eligibility requires high WoS/Scopus publication counts and, in some cases, large external grants.

Theme 3 thus shows us how funding, research-load entitlements, administrative support, and access pathways operate as governance processes that structure who can “actually” participate as a “researcher.”

From Habermas’s perspective, these situations reveal how power and money shape opportunity structures. Access to research load is coordinated through performance and seniority criteria that, over time, favor those who already have the resources. Funding and workload policies operate as resource steering mechanisms, narrowing developmental logics (mentoring, early-career capacity building, field-sensitive timelines) and shifting the HEIM’s research life toward performance-conditioned inclusion—an instance of colonization through resource steering. Following Habermas, we can raise a legitimacy question: Is it fair to

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Faculty Researcher 7.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Faculty Researcher 1.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

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recognize early-career status while limiting support through rules that create circular constraints, such as heavy teaching loads that result in fewer publications, which, in turn, reduce eligibility for relief? In addition, the junior research faculty, who are primarily affected, have little influence over the criteria applied to them; the rules were even formulated without their participation. Furthermore, the technocratic criteria (tiers, counts, grant thresholds) depoliticize them by presenting them as neutral indicators of merit rather than as contestable decisions about how to structure equitable academic development to support academic researchers.

Freire also helps us understand how daily interactions and awareness perpetuate inequity. Steering and gatekeeping pathways create dependencies, giving support access to people with insider knowledge or connections. Unequal access to information enables divide-and-rule dynamics, differentiating “insiders” and “outsiders” and encouraging lateral rivalry (e.g. hiding information from each other) rather than collective critique. Complex, fragmented procedures promote focalization, so faculty interpret disadvantage as personal limitations, misfortune or departmental bad luck rather than as a systemic design that ties workload, eligibility rules, and seniority to inequitable results. To illustrate this Freirean point: a Department Head might secure research load for a junior colleague simply because he knows the informal work-arounds—an advantage that a junior faculty member in another department may not have. Over time, such uneven practices can foster a culture of silence, normalize resignation, and weaken collective efforts to call out injustice, especially among early-career faculty in more vulnerable positions.

#### *Theme 4: Bureaucratic Barriers to Research Engagement*

Theme 4 shows that research activities at the University are constrained less by a lack of ideas than by an institutional ecology of bureaucracy and teaching-heavy norms that erode faculty researchers' time

for research and their control over how they conduct it. We heard that university and external funding systems are patterned forces that slow projects, shift scholarly labor into clerical work, and narrow collaboration and productivity.

We learned that long delays in funding disbursement pose a serious problem for researchers. Even after funds are cleared by a government agency, using them to cover salaries, equipment, and reagents can still encounter delays.<sup>62</sup> Despite completing Year 2 work, one participant complained that the funds could not be released (“*hindi ma-release release*” [it couldn’t be released]).<sup>63</sup> Liquidation hurdles delay the research project, leaving researchers stuck with government agencies’ “stringent,” extensive, and shifting documentary requirements, which turn research management into document management.<sup>64</sup>

Within the university, researchers are also confronted with layers of approvals that can delay even a routine request, leaving them in an embarrassing situation where suppliers even chase them down for them to pay:

*Ang dami nilang gustong documents na ipasa sa amin, kaya hindi pa kami ma-liquidate, and because of that, hindi ma-release yung Year 2. So natapos na yung Year 2 project namin, although ... nagtrabaho kami, yung mga RA ko hindi pa nasu-swelduhan, tapos yung mga reagents na ginamit namin for that year na nabigay sa amin in advance, so nagamit namin lahat ng ‘yon, and now, hinahabol na ako ngayon. Sinisingil na ako ng mga... ito, yung mga suppliers.*

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<sup>62</sup> Faculty Researcher 3.

<sup>63</sup> Faculty Researcher 2.

<sup>64</sup> Faculty Researchers 1, 3.

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(They're asking for so many documents from us, so we still can't liquidate, and because of that, Year 2 can't be released. So our Year 2 project is already finished—we did the work—but my RAs still haven't been paid. And the reagents we used that year, which were given to us in advance, we already used them all. Now I'm being chased for payment. The suppliers are already billing me.)<sup>65</sup>

Bureaucracy was identified as the primary problem, requiring multiple checkpoints before one is even allowed to do research, including a long chain of endorsements (noted by, endorsed by) across different offices, and the need to write similar letters to multiple offices for funding.<sup>66</sup>

Moreover, we heard from some participants that challenges are not resolved at the higher level and are passed back to the faculty researchers. Instead of playing their role as researchers, they must play the role of accountants, bookkeepers, and clerks: "*hindi po kami mga accountant at bookkeeper ... they put the burden on us*" (we are not accountants and bookkeepers ... they put the burden on us);<sup>67</sup> "we are like clerks," our only function "is to do the research, to write."<sup>68</sup>

Notably, these accounts align with the external evaluation of HEIs in the Philippines, where EDCOM II describes Philippine HEIs as teaching-oriented, with a weak research culture, and calls for rationalizing workload to improve output.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> Faculty Researcher 1.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> Faculty Researcher 2.

<sup>69</sup> Second Congressional Commission on Education, *Fixing the Foundations: A matter of national survival, EDCOM II year two report* (Pasay City: Second Congressional Commission on Education, 2025), 200, <<https://edcom2.gov.ph/media/2025/01/EDCOM-2-Year-2-Report-Fixing-the-Foundations-2025.pdf>>; Second Congressional Commission on Education, "Miseducation," 50.

From a Habermasian lens, we can view the experience of faculty researchers as a manifestation of juridification,<sup>70</sup> wherein legalistic and procedural forms, such as checklists, liquidations, and chains of endorsement, have expanded into the lifeworld of researchers.

This expansion of administrative requirements leads to administrative colonization. Research activities are controlled in compliance with administrative requirements and format. The research budget will not move if researchers lack the savvy to understand and follow the rules. For example, even if the funds are already available, they do not necessarily mean they can be dispensed immediately. Indeed, this affects how research is conducted. In this situation, researchers must engage in strategic action, with success measured by their ability to overcome administrative barriers such as documentary requirements, access resources, and handle paperwork and procedures. This is far from meaningful scholarly activities. The skill set needed here is the scholar's ability to navigate and negotiate the bureaucratic processes.

Furthermore, in these conditions, learning and development within the research institution are distorted. Instead of spending time on sustained research activities, including reflection consistent with scholarly pursuits, clerical work becomes the core research activity. These conditions align with Habermas's description of unlearning processes when an institution has abandoned its core focus and purpose in favor of a narrower goal, such as satisfying bureaucratic demands.<sup>71</sup>

Lastly, in this environment, researchers must meet the bureaucracy's requirements to proceed with their research. Researchers, as

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<sup>70</sup> Habermas defines juridification as "the tendency toward an increase in formal (or positive, written) law that can be observed in modern society; he further adds that it refers to two distinct but related processes: "expansion of law, that is the legal regulation of new, hitherto informally regulated social matters," and the "increasing density of law, that is, the specialized breakdown of global statements of the legally relevant facts [Rechtstatbestände] into more detailed statements." *Habermas, The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 2*, 357.

<sup>71</sup> Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 1*, 391.

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it were, are now confined to a restrictive environment in which permission to proceed is always required, rather than being autonomous scholars. This is the consequence of when procedural requirements dominate scholarly activities. This is expressed succinctly in one of the remarks of one participant: “*naka-box*” (it’s boxed).<sup>72</sup>

Freire’s concept of “anti-dialogical steering.”<sup>73</sup> complements Habermas’s structural analysis. In this contained environment among researchers, the primary directive is compliance with the guideline, leaving no room for critical dialogue about how research can be timely and responsible at the same time.

The concept of support here could be characterized as paternalistic, in line with Freire’s observation of the oppressor-oppressed relationship. While the grants are made available, they remain under the control and disposition of the bureaucracy. Thus, the availability of funds and resources remains uncertain, forcing the scholar to either shoulder the cost of research or delay his research activities, given his inability to provide them in the meantime.

Consistent with earlier discussion of Freire’s notion of how the culture of silence is sustained, repeated experiences of encountering delays and bureaucratic gatekeeping cultivate a sense of fatalism among faculty researchers. Consequently, individuals must cope with the difficulties on their own, focusing on how to survive within the system rather than challenging it collectively.

For this reason, the ability of faculty researchers to challenge the system is eroded. They have no choice but to engage in clerical activities, addressing problems within the confines of the administrative system. This undermines their praxis, i.e., their capacity to act and reflect, and to

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<sup>72</sup> Faculty Researcher 3.

<sup>73</sup> “Antidialogical cultural action ... aims at mythicizing [the social structure’s] contradictions, thereby hoping to avoid ... the radical transformation of reality.” Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 182.

critically address and transform the structures that impose such a heavy burden on their scholarly work.

*Theme 5: Absence of a Long-Term Research Strategy, Fragmentation, and Lack of Vision*

In Theme 5, we hear faculty express the sense that research proceeds without a coherent roadmap, experienced as dispersed and improvised rather than growing out from a common direction. One participant captured this lack of direction bluntly: *“hindi ko alam kung saan tayo patungo”* (I don’t know where we are going).<sup>74</sup>

We also heard the apparent gap between what is claimed and what is real: *“Mapupukpok ko po sampung daliri ko ... we are not yet a research university”* (I will count on my ten fingers ... we’re not yet a research university).<sup>75</sup> He points out that it has not yet established a solid research foundation despite its long history as a university.<sup>76</sup> Another faculty researcher agrees and emphasizes that HEIM is “more of a teaching”<sup>77</sup> institution. He further expresses a word of caution: *“Mukhang nakakatakot yung—if we are the ones calling ourselves leading, that’s probably misleading”* (It seems scary—if we are the ones calling ourselves ‘leading,’ that’s probably misleading).<sup>78</sup> For another senior faculty researcher, HEIM’s inability to be a research university is an issue of governance: while upper management is “hands off”<sup>79</sup> and “out of touch,”<sup>80</sup> middle managers are driving the institution’s obsession with metrics: *“So, kung gano’n, pinaubaya mo sa middle managers, and these middle managers are obsessed with the metrics, and so on, ‘yun ang mangyayari*

<sup>74</sup> Faculty Researcher 5.

<sup>75</sup> Faculty Researcher 1.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> Faculty Researcher 4.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> Faculty Researcher 7.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

*sa atin*” (So if that’s the case, you’re leaving it to the middle managers—and these middle managers are obsessed with metrics and so on—that’s what will happen to us).<sup>81</sup>

Lacking a central steering mechanism leads to weaker collaboration and dispersed, siloed research activities. While there are calls for collaboration, it does not materialize:

*I know there are some ... alam ko ‘to, sinasabi ko ‘to talaga na kailangan makipag-collaborate, pero ... hindi pa rin nangyayari, kasi minsan naka-focus lang tayo sa iisa lang din na grupo.*

(I know there are some ... I really do say this—that we need to collaborate—but it still isn’t happening, because sometimes we end up focusing on just one group.)<sup>82</sup>

One participant noted that there are no spaces where interdisciplinary dialogue can occur, *“instead na may culture of cooperation ... nagkakaroon ng competition”* (Instead of having a culture of cooperation ... it turns into competition).<sup>83</sup> As a result, without a unified institutional direction, one research faculty raises a broader critique: *“Because of this, I mean, we try our best, diverse young researchers. To a point na yung vision natin is very vague, very blurred”* (Because of this—I mean, we try our best, we’re diverse young researchers—but it reaches a point where our vision becomes very vague, very blurred).<sup>84</sup>

The critique, interestingly, raised by EDCOM II against CHED shows how HEIM mirrors this same lack of research direction internally, reproducing the very gaps that the national agency is supposed to address.

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> Faculty Researcher 2.

<sup>83</sup> Faculty Researcher 5.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

EDCOM II observes CHED's "missed opportunities ... due to the lack of focused support for strategic research in universities."<sup>85</sup>

From Habermas's perspective, the absence of a shared research culture that could offer a unified sense of purpose for research endeavors in the university resulted in fragmented research initiatives, fostered competition rather than collaboration, and weakened interdisciplinary collaboration.

What is missing in HEIM, appropriating Habermas's key concept, is the existence of an "internal" public sphere.<sup>86</sup> that could ensure the cohesion and overall effectiveness of scholarship activities within HEIM. In this setup, faculty researchers can engage in a meaningful dialogue and discuss what they think should be the research direction and priorities of HEIM. They should also be allowed to justify their views and to hear and interact with other researchers. This space also serves as a platform for coordinating their individual research agendas.

The absence of an "internal" public sphere affects HEIM's effort to present itself as a research university. HEIM needs substantive engagement and validation from the academic community; otherwise, its desire to brand itself as a research university would seem hollow and aspirational, lacking genuine consensus.

Freire's framework allows us to understand the internal dynamics that shape HEIM's research culture. The internal public sphere lacking in the university parallels the importance of Freire's concept of thematic universe, which Freire defines as: "the complex of interacting themes of an epoch constitutes its *'thematic universe'*."<sup>87</sup> The thematic universe is found in human world relationships composed of "the complex of ideas, concepts, hopes, doubts, values, and challenges in dialectical interaction with their

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<sup>85</sup> Second Congressional Commission on Education, "Miseducation," 165.

<sup>86</sup> "The institutional core of the public sphere comprises communicative networks amplified by a cultural complex, a press and, later, mass media; they make it possible ... for a public of citizens of the state to participate in the social integration mediated by public opinion." Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 1*, 319.

<sup>87</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 101.

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opposites”<sup>88</sup> confronting HEIM as an academic community. This is the locus we need to interrogate and reflect through a dialogical process, and where the collective definition and responsible guidance of research direction must be rooted.

Thus, the weak social integration on the part of HEIM, as revealed by the Habermasian analysis, becomes more evident when the institution is shown to be inadequate in engaging in what Freire calls dialogical action as cultural synthesis. Without meaningful dialogical practices, HEIM will struggle to develop an integrated research culture coming from its various disciplines and colleges. This insufficient dialogical engagement prevents the formation of a unified research direction, hindering both collaboration and the synthesis of diverse academic perspectives within the institution.

## CONCLUSION

We heard that research governance in HEIM is administratively driven. Their approach lacks sustained deliberation and meaningful participation from faculty researchers. Its emphasis on impact rankings pushes researchers to produce quick, countable output, not so much mindful of contribution to knowledge. The environment also raises ethical concerns where researchers act contrary to their personal values. Research governance is often seen as gatekeeping filled with administrative and bureaucratic burdens, keeping researchers from what are supposedly meaningful scholarship activities. This condition also creates inequity, especially for early-career researchers. Furthermore, research in HEIM is moving away from collaborative knowledge work towards performance management. Due to administrative burdens, hierarchical structures are reinforced, and a collective or organized way to challenge the governance system is undermined. Finally, there is also a more profound sense of frustration among the faculty because they see themselves as managed

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<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

employees instead of research partners, and, confronted with administrative burdens and the need to comply, they feel they lack control over their scholarly pursuits.

### *Reclaiming Dialogue in the Governance of Research*

Our study highlights that the challenges faced by faculty researchers are systemic rather than personal. The problem lies in a hierarchical institutional framework that shies away from genuine dialogue. If research administrators focus solely on measurable performance outputs, as shown in the study, the efforts of faculty researchers and their attempts to engage in research will be hampered by bureaucratic obstacles that prevent them from collaborating with fellow researchers and conducting meaningful research.

We believe fostering critical dialogue in research governance will ensure that research governance is viewed not as a set of technical or management systems, but as a framework that generates and promotes meaning-making. Notably, while accountability measures are necessary, they cannot be divorced from inclusive and democratic conversations responsive to the authentic (lifeworld) needs of faculty researchers.

Therefore, we advocate the following: enhancing internal dialogue within the university (creation of an internal public sphere) to address scholarly practices that reflect genuine scholarly values; ensuring the participation of researchers in the formulation of policies; and reforming administrative structures to support the research activities of the faculty. We assert that the vitality of HEIM is not solely measured by its research outputs but by its capacity to build communities dedicated to shared learning and collective scholarship.

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### *Implications of the Findings*

Our analysis indicates that reform of HEIM research governance is needed. There is a need to focus on how policies are formulated and communicated.

Enhancing the democratic process in policy development is vital. It follows that the affected sector, faculty researchers, must meaningfully participate in key policy decisions. The involvement of faculty researchers is critical to building a strong foundation for legitimacy and trust in research governance.

Currently, research is evaluated using metrics such as methodological rigor, the number of publications in journals indexed in Scopus or WoS, and citation counts. While these are important, they could distort research priorities. Thus, we recommend evaluating and rewarding research activities that influence policy, provide public service, enable social transformation, and respond to community needs.

To promote equity, it is necessary to review and redesign opportunity structures in HEIM. Thus, the following need to be reviewed: publication thresholds and seniority-based workloads that disadvantage early-career academics; protected time for research unimpeded by other assignments, and how they can access funding; and current mentoring initiatives that enable beginning researchers to thrive alongside more experienced faculty.

We further propose reducing bureaucratic layers to provide more opportunities for scholars to team up, expedite processes, and improve support. And finally, from the perspectives of Freire and Habermas, governance involves both system legitimacy and the individual's ability to make their own decisions; thus, effective change must integrate processes that generate greater participation and address the lifeworld needs of faculty researchers.

*Limitations*

Our study is limited to HEIM and presents findings more clearly rather than offering statistical generalizations. We recognize that the findings are highly context-dependent, shaped by the institution's history, the way decisions are made and carried out within the institution, and the national policy environment, which affect how rules are implemented, experienced, and even reproduced within this institution. Our analysis primarily draws on interviews and documents, capturing faculty interpretations rather than relying on firsthand evidence; other stakeholders may therefore interpret the same arrangements differently. Accordingly, we offer a context-specific interpretive account intended to inform dialogue, guide further inquiry, and support institutional reflection.

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