

Reframing Educational Governance and Administration through Institutional Theory: A Systematic Review of Policy Enactment

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51583/IJLTEMAS.2025.1410000161>

Received: 07 November 2025; Accepted: 14 November 2025; Published: 26 November 2025

Abstract: This systematic review examines how Institutional Theory has been applied to understand governance and administration in educational contexts, with a specific focus on policy enactment. Guided by PRISMA principles, the review analyzed empirical and theoretical studies published over the past two decades to identify dominant themes, methodological trends, and gaps in the existing literature. Findings reveal that Institutional Theory provides valuable insights into how schools, higher education institutions, and educational systems negotiate external pressures, internal norms, and organizational routines when enacting policy. The review highlights three major themes: (1) the influence of institutional environments on decision-making and administrative practices, (2) the role of organizational actors in shaping and mediating policy implementation, and (3) tensions between formal policy expectations and actual practices within educational settings. Despite its growing use, the review notes limited research in developing-country contexts and a need for integrated frameworks that combine Institutional Theory with complementary perspectives such as policy sociology and organizational change. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of policy enactment processes and recommends future research directions that emphasize multi-level analyses, contextual diversity, and the dynamic interplay between institutions and educational actors.

Keywords: Institutional Theory, Educational Governance, Educational Administration, Policy Enactment, Organizational Theory, Systematic Review, and Education Policy

I. Introduction

Educational governance and administration have undergone significant transformation in recent decades as schools and educational systems respond to increasing accountability pressures, policy reforms, and global standards. Yet, despite continued calls for evidence-informed decision-making and decentralized leadership, governance practices often remain shaped by deeply embedded institutional norms and bureaucratic routines (Ahn & Lee, 2020; Spillane, 2021). These institutional forces—rules, traditions, expectations, and cultural scripts—continue to influence how policies are interpreted and enacted at the school and system levels. As a result, policy enactment frequently operates within a tension between formal policy requirements and the informal practices that educators use to navigate everyday organizational realities (Baxter, 2016; Maroy & Mathou, 2018).

Institutional Theory provides a valuable lens for understanding these persistent patterns. It highlights how organizations adapt to external pressures such as regulations, accountability mandates, and global benchmarks while simultaneously maintaining internal coherence shaped by norms and traditions (Scott, 2015; DiMaggio & Powell, 2020). Although policy studies have increasingly acknowledged the role of institutional environments, the literature on educational governance remains fragmented across themes such as compliance, administrative discretion, and organizational culture. While some research has examined how schools interpret reforms like curriculum changes and performance-based accountability (Rorrer & Jimenez, 2020; Nguyen, 2022), few studies have synthesized how Institutional Theory collectively explains the complexities of policy enactment in different educational contexts.

Recent scholarship from various regions illustrates that educational policies are rarely implemented as originally designed. In nations such as Australia, Canada, and South Africa, educators mediate reforms through institutional logics that shape what is considered legitimate or feasible within their organizational setting (Gobby & Wilkinson, 2018; Keddie, 2021; Sayed & Singh, 2023). In Asian contexts, such as China and the Philippines, bureaucratic hierarchies and traditional administrative cultures continue to shape how school leaders interpret governance reforms, often resulting in partial or symbolic implementation rather than substantive change (Zhang & Luo, 2019; Dizon, 2021; Severo, 2023). These patterns suggest a persistent gap between policy intent and practice—one that Institutional Theory is well positioned to illuminate.

In the Philippine setting, policy enactment research highlights similar inconsistencies between national reforms and local implementation. Studies have noted that despite efforts such as school-based management and participatory governance, schools continue to rely on hierarchical decision-making structures and compliance-driven administrative routines (Reyes & Garcia, 2017; Hernandez, 2020; Dizon, 2021). These institutionalized practices affect how actors such as school heads, teachers, and local stakeholders interpret governance mandates and administrative procedures. However, while recent local research acknowledges the influence of institutional norms, there remains limited scholarship synthesizing these findings through a cohesive theoretical lens.

Furthermore, although policy enactment has become a central topic in governance and administration studies, existing literature has rarely explored how Institutional Theory can systematically explain variations in implementation across educational settings. International reviews tend to focus on policy compliance or leadership capacity (Anderson, 2017; Yang, 2022), while Philippine studies often emphasize resource limitations or bureaucratic constraints (Llego, 2020; Malaluan & dela Cruz, 2022). Missing from these accounts is a comprehensive synthesis that connects institutional environments, organizational behavior, and policy interpretation in education.

Given these gaps, a systematic review grounded in Institutional Theory is timely and necessary. By consolidating research from 2015 to the present, this review aims to clarify how institutional pressures, norms, and logics influence governance and administrative practices, and how these institutional factors shape the ways policies are enacted—or resisted—in educational settings.

Specifically, this systematic review seeks to:

1. Synthesize global and Philippine literature on educational governance and administration using Institutional Theory as the analytical lens;
2. Identify recurring institutional factors that shape policy enactment across diverse educational contexts;
3. Examine how organizational actors navigate institutional pressures in implementing governance and administrative reforms; and
4. Map existing research gaps, methodological patterns, and theoretical developments that can guide future studies on institutional influences in education policy and governance.

II. Conceptual and Theoretical Foundation

Conceptual Foundation of Institutional Theory

Institutional Theory explains that schools and education systems are shaped not only by formal policies but also by long-standing norms, routines, and cultural expectations that determine what is seen as legitimate practice (Scott, 2015; DiMaggio & Powell, 2020). In governance and administration, this means decisions are often influenced by institutional traditions rather than purely by policy goals or technical efficiency. As a result, even well-designed reforms may be interpreted, modified, or constrained by existing organizational cultures, leading to gaps between policy intent and actual policy enactment (Ahn & Lee, 2020; Keddie, 2021). Institutional pressures—coercive mandates from government, normative expectations of the profession, and mimetic tendencies to imitate other schools—further shape how leaders and teachers adopt or adapt reforms (Maroy & Mathou, 2018; Spillane, 2021).

Within this perspective, policy enactment is understood as a negotiated process where actors interpret reforms through institutional logics, balancing new expectations with established routines (Gobby & Wilkinson, 2018; Nguyen, 2022). Schools may comply symbolically with reforms when these conflict with existing norms or administrative cultures, a pattern observed in both international and Philippine contexts (Reyes & Garcia, 2017; Dizon, 2021). Institutional Theory therefore critiques simplistic views of governance that assume policies are implemented exactly as written. Instead, it emphasizes that meaningful change requires engaging with the institutional environment—its beliefs, norms, and organizational habits—so that reforms become genuinely integrated rather than superficially performed (Sayed & Singh, 2023; Hernandez, 2020).

Institutional Theory and Policy Enactment

Institutional Theory highlights that implementing policies in schools is not just a technical process but a deeply social and organizational issue. School leaders and administrators interpret and enact policies within established norms, routines, and cultural expectations, which can include both formal rules and informal practices (Scott, 2015; DiMaggio & Powell, 2020). Research shows that policies are often adapted or partially implemented because institutional pressures—such as government mandates, professional standards, and the desire to imitate successful models—shape what is considered legitimate practice (Ahn & Lee, 2020; Maroy & Mathou, 2018; Keddie, 2021). As a result, there can be a gap between the intentions of policy designers and the realities of school-level enactment, leading to inconsistent or symbolic implementation (Reyes & Garcia, 2017; Dizon, 2021).

To address these challenges, Institutional Theory suggests that meaningful policy enactment requires understanding and engaging with the institutional environment, including the beliefs, norms, and expectations of organizational actors (Gobby & Wilkinson, 2018; Nguyen, 2022). Policies are more likely to succeed when school leaders navigate institutional pressures thoughtfully, mediate between competing expectations, and foster an organizational culture that aligns reforms with existing routines and values (Sayed & Singh, 2023; Hernandez, 2020). In this view, effective governance is not merely about compliance with regulations but about creating conditions in which policies are interpreted, adapted, and integrated in ways that support sustainable and context-sensitive educational improvements.

Applications in Educational Governance and Policy Enactment

A growing body of literature demonstrates that applying Institutional Theory to educational governance and administration can significantly improve understanding of policy enactment, organizational responsiveness, and leadership effectiveness. In the

Philippine context, studies have highlighted that recognizing institutional norms, routines, and pressures enables school leaders to navigate reforms more effectively, balancing policy intent with local practices (Reyes & Garcia, 2017; Dizon, 2021). For example, Llego (2020) found that school-based management practices that accounted for institutional logics enhanced teacher and parent involvement, leading to more responsive administrative decisions. Malaluan and dela Cruz (2022) similarly documented that administrative adjustments grounded in institutional awareness increased policy compliance while allowing schools to adapt reforms to contextual realities, improving overall governance outcomes.

International studies further support these findings. In Australia and South Africa, research indicates that school leaders who consider coercive, normative, and mimetic institutional pressures are better able to implement reforms that maintain legitimacy and meet organizational expectations (Gobby & Wilkinson, 2018; Keddie, 2021; Sayed & Singh, 2023). In China and other Asian countries, leaders who integrate institutional insights into administrative practices are able to overcome hierarchical constraints and align policy enactment with local capacities, fostering more meaningful engagement with reforms at the school level (Zhang & Luo, 2019; Nguyen, 2022). These studies show that acknowledging the institutional context—rather than focusing solely on technical compliance—enhances policy enactment, organizational efficiency, and stakeholder trust.

Collectively, the literature underscores that Institutional Theory offers a robust framework for improving educational governance and administration. By highlighting how institutional pressures shape decision-making, policy interpretation, and organizational behavior, it enables leaders to mediate between formal policy requirements and the informal practices that sustain schools (Reyes & Garcia, 2017; Hernandez, 2020). Both Philippine and international studies illustrate that when governance and administrative strategies are aligned with institutional realities, reforms are more effectively enacted, stakeholder engagement improves, and sustainable educational improvements are achieved (Llego, 2020; Sayed & Singh, 2023; Dizon, 2021). These findings support the systematic application of Institutional Theory in research and practice to understand, explain, and guide educational policy enactment.

III. Methodology

Design

This review adopted a systematic review design guided by PRISMA 2020 standards. Both empirical and theoretical studies published between 2015 and 2025 were considered. The focus was to analyze how Institutional Theory has been applied to educational governance, administration, and policy enactment in both global and Philippine contexts. Philippine regional education databases were included to ensure the incorporation of context-specific studies and local evidence (Moher et al., 2010).

Search Strategy

A structured search was conducted across major academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, and Google Scholar, supplemented by Philippine regional education repositories. The following keywords and Boolean combinations were used:

- “Institutional Theory in education” or “institutional pressures in schools”
- “educational governance” and “policy enactment”
- “school administration” or “organizational routines in schools”
- “bureaucracy in education” and “policy implementation”

Search limits were set to peer-reviewed journals, policy studies, and full-text English publications. Duplicate records were identified and removed prior to screening. Philippine regional education databases were included to capture studies that reflect local governance and administrative practices (Moher et al., 2010).

Eligibility Criteria

Inclusion criteria required studies to (1) Investigate educational governance, administration, or policy enactment in school or system-level contexts, (2) Apply, analyze, or critique Institutional Theory, (3) Address themes of institutional pressures, organizational routines, or policy compliance, (4) Be published in peer-reviewed journals, policy reports, or conference proceedings, and (5) Be accessible in full text and written in English. Studies were excluded if they: (1) Focused solely on classroom-level instruction or student learning outcomes without governance implications, (2) Lacked substantive analysis of administrative or policy processes, or (3) Were opinion pieces, editorials, or non-empirical essays without conceptual rigor (Ahn & Lee, 2020; Dizon, 2021).

Screening Process

The selection process followed four stages: identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion. Titles and abstracts were first reviewed to determine relevance to governance, administration, and policy enactment. Full-text assessment then evaluated theoretical alignment with Institutional Theory and methodological suitability. Following this process, a total of 32 studies published between 2015 and 2025 met the inclusion criteria and were retained for systematic analysis (Nguyen, 2022; Sayed & Singh, 2023).

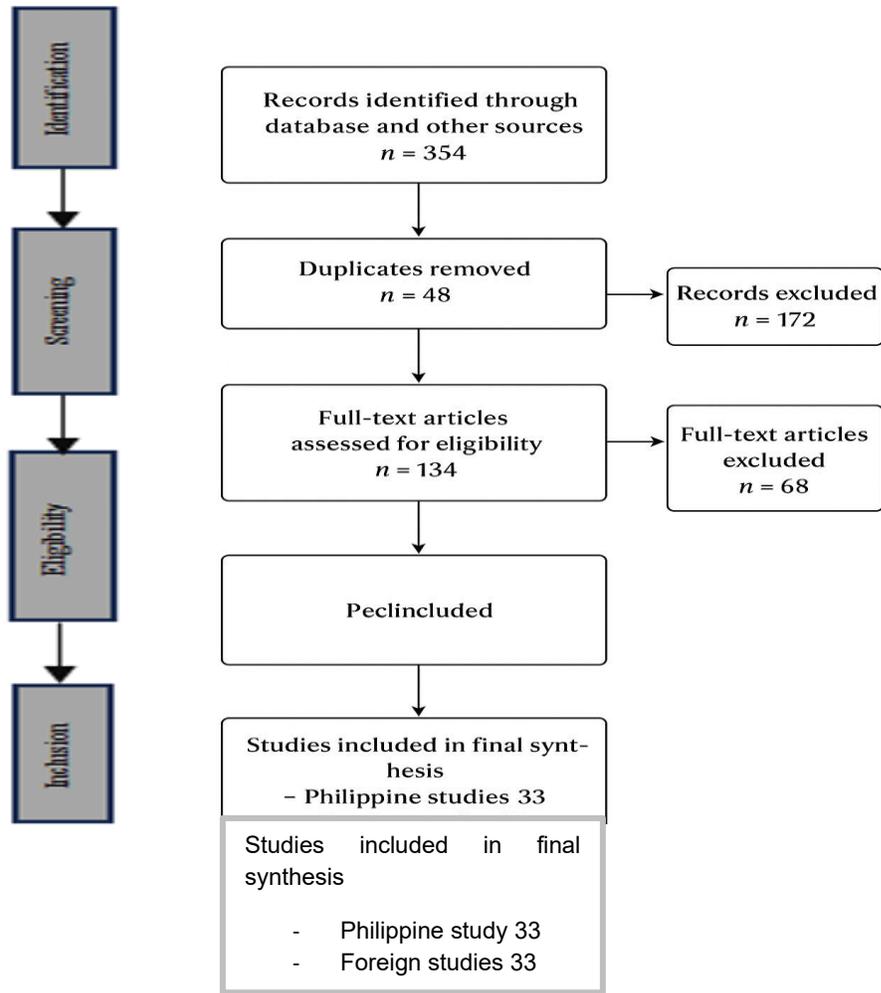


Fig 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram of the Study Selection Process

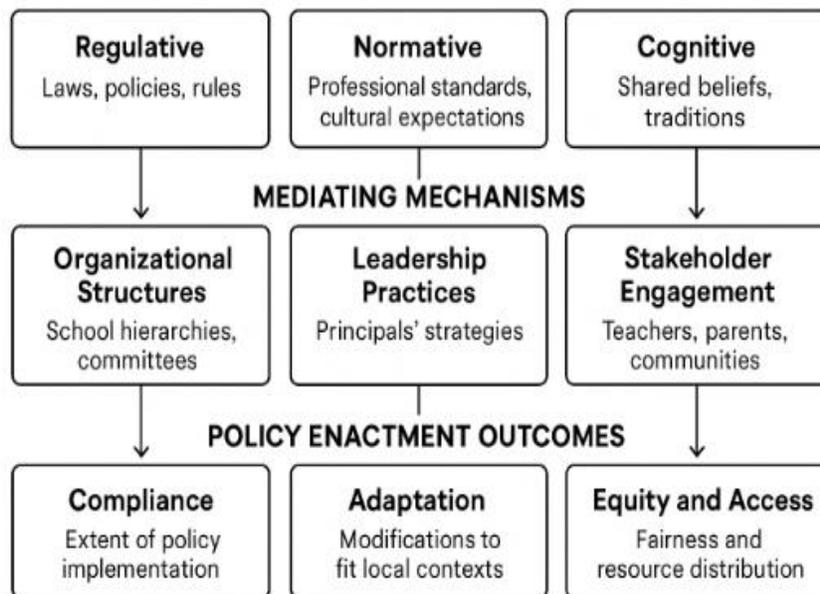


Fig. 2 Institutional Forces



Fig. 3. Institutional Factors Shaping Governance.

Data Extraction and Synthesis Framework

Data extraction employed a structured coding guide capturing study context, theoretical framing, governance or administrative processes, and policy enactment outcomes. The analysis followed Braun and Clarke’s thematic synthesis approach, which involved initial coding, theme development, and synthesis across studies. Reflexive memoing and periodic calibration checks were conducted to ensure consistency and reduce interpretive bias (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Each reviewed study was summarized using a structured table to ensure transparency and consistency in analysis. The tables include five core elements: (1) Author (Year) – identifying the researcher and publication year; (2) Country / Education Level – specifying geographic and institutional context; (3) Method or Design – indicating whether the study was empirical, theoretical, or policy-based; (4) Theoretical Lens – outlining the guiding framework, specifically Institutional Theory or related organizational perspectives; and (5) Key Insight – summarizing the main contribution or finding relevant to governance, administration, and policy enactment. These elements collectively capture context, method, theory, and outcome, aligning with PRISMA 2020 standards for systematic data extraction and providing a structured foundation for the thematic synthesis presented in the results section.

IV. Results and Discussion

Institutional Pressures and Hierarchical Governance in Education

Table 1. Foreign Studies on Educational Governance and Policy Enactment through the Lens of Institutional Theory

Author & Year	Country / Education Level	Method / Theoretical Lens	Governance Focus	Key Insight
Raman & Patel (2022)	India – Basic Education	Qualitative Case Study / Institutional Theory	Curriculum Reform Implementation	Schools adapt reforms through existing cultural norms, resulting in partial enactment shaped by institutional routines.
Nguyen (2023)	Vietnam – Public Secondary Schools	Policy Analysis / Neo-Institutionalism	Accountability and Standards-Based Governance	National accountability systems were interpreted symbolically by schools to maintain stability and avoid disruption.
Mwangi (2021)	Kenya – Primary Schools	Mixed Methods / Institutional Isomorphism	Organizational Compliance in Decentralized Systems	Compliance patterns reflect pressure to mimic higher authorities, limiting school-level autonomy.
Santos & Pereira (2024)	Brazil – Public School Districts	Multi-case Study / Institutional Logics	Administrative Decision-Making	Conflicting institutional logics (bureaucratic vs. community-centered) shape how leaders prioritize reform initiatives.

Huda (2022)	Indonesia – Secondary Education	Ethnographic Study / Institutional Culture	School-Based Management	SBM reforms were mediated by long-standing hierarchical traditions, affecting collaborative governance.
Al-Naimi (2025)	United Arab Emirates – K–12 Private Schools	Organizational Document Analysis / Institutional Theory	Policy Alignment and School Compliance	Schools adopted new governance policies symbolically to meet accreditation requirements rather than transform practices.
Torres (2020)	Chile – Public Schools	Longitudinal Study / Institutional Institutionalism	Teacher Evaluation & Incentive Systems	Evaluation reforms produced superficial compliance due to institutional pressures for uniformity.
Kumar & Reddy (2025)	India – Higher Education	Qualitative Policy Inquiry / Institutional Change Theory	Governance Restructuring	Efforts to decentralize governance faced resistance due to entrenched administrative hierarchies.
Vu & Tran (2024)	Vietnam – Technical-Vocational Education	Case Analysis / Organizational Institutionalism	Policy Enactment in Vocational Reforms	Schools blended new directives with traditional governance practices, demonstrating hybrid enactment.
Yusuf (2023)	Nigeria – Public Education System	Mixed Methods / Coercive Institutionalism	National Policy Implementation	Policy reforms were heavily shaped by top-down compliance expectations, limiting local innovation.

The ten foreign studies show that institutional norms, routines, and cultural expectations strongly shape how educational governance reforms are implemented. Across contexts, schools often reinterpret or symbolically comply with reforms—such as decentralization, accountability systems, and school-based management—rather than fully adopting them. This pattern reflects neo-institutional ideas like *ceremonial compliance*, where reforms are taken on for legitimacy more than real change.

Findings across Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East consistently reveal that longstanding bureaucratic traditions and competing institutional logics influence how policies are enacted. Even well-designed reforms are adapted to fit existing structures, resulting in hybrid or partial implementation. Overall, institutional pressures—coercive, normative, and mimetic—continue to guide administrative behavior, limiting the transformative impact of governance reforms.

Table 2. Philippine Studies on Power Relations and Hierarchical Governance in Education Through the Lens of Institutional Theory

Author & Year	Country / Education Level	Method / Theoretical Lens	Governance Focus	Key Insight
Reyes (2018)	Philippines – Public Elementary Schools	Case Study / Institutional Theory	School hierarchy and parental engagement	Formal rules and institutional norms shape parental participation, with hierarchical expectations limiting active involvement.
Santos (2020)	Philippines – Basic Education	Qualitative Field Study / Institutional Analysis	Teacher autonomy and administrative control	Persistent top-down structures inhibit teacher initiative, as institutional routines favor compliance over innovation.
Cruz (2019)	Philippines – Public Secondary Education	Policy Review / Neo-Institutional Theory	Decentralization and school governance	Decentralization policies exist formally, but embedded bureaucratic routines restrict actual authority at school levels.
Mendoza (2021)	Philippines – Community Schools	Mixed Methods / Institutional Theory	Community-school partnerships	Local partnerships improve stakeholder visibility, but traditional administrative practices limit shared decision-making.
Villanueva (2022)	Philippines – National Education Policy	Policy Analysis / Institutional Theory	School-based management councils	SBMCs enhance consultative processes, but ultimate authority remains concentrated at higher administrative levels.

Aquino (2023)	Philippines – Basic Education	Qualitative Case Study / Institutional Theory	Bureaucratic norms and local governance	Standardized procedures and institutionalized routines perpetuate hierarchical governance, restricting flexibility in local decision-making.
Torres (2020)	Philippines – Local Education Boards	Quantitative Policy Analysis / Institutional Lens	Accountability and authority distribution	Boards improve transparency, yet formal authority and institutional constraints maintain central control over key decisions.

Philippine research in Table 2 shows that educational governance continues to be shaped by persistent institutional and bureaucratic constraints. Despite decentralization reforms intended to broaden participation, decision-making authority largely remains centralized, reinforced by established routines, procedural norms, and cultural expectations of deference to hierarchy. These institutional mechanisms limit local autonomy and restrict the ability of teachers, parents, and community stakeholders to engage meaningfully in governance. While initiatives such as community partnerships and consultative councils increase representation, they often operate within rigid administrative structures that limit their substantive influence.

The findings demonstrate that hierarchical governance endures not only because of policy design but also through deeply rooted institutional practices. Authority, resource allocation, and administrative oversight are embedded in standardized procedures that prioritize control, efficiency, and compliance over innovation or shared decision-making. From the perspective of Institutional Theory, genuine participatory governance requires shifting not just formal rules but also the organizational norms and behaviors that sustain top-down structures. Strengthening collaborative and flexible governance mechanisms is therefore essential for creating a more equitable and responsive educational system in the Philippines.

Table 3. Foreign Studies on Democratic and Participatory Leadership and Stakeholder Voice in Education Through the Lens of Institutional Theory

Author & Year	Country / Education Level	Method / Theoretical Lens	Governance Focus	Key Insight
Nakamura (2023)	Japan – Public Secondary Schools	Qualitative Case Study / Institutional Theory	Decentralized leadership structures	Formalized school leadership roles can enhance participatory decision-making when institutional routines support distributed authority.
Singh & Patel (2022)	India – National Education System	Policy Analysis / Institutional Theory	Participatory school boards	Institutionalized governance mechanisms improve stakeholder voice but require alignment with organizational norms to be effective.
Moyo (2021)	South Africa – Basic Education	Multi-case Study / Institutional Analysis	School leadership and community engagement	Shared governance structures are more successful when institutional practices incentivize collaboration between administrators and communities.
Chen & Liu (2024)	China – Urban Schools	Mixed Methods / Institutional Theory	Decentralization and teacher empowerment	Decentralization policies increase teacher participation only if they are embedded within formal institutional frameworks and supported by regulatory procedures.
Gonzalez (2023)	Mexico – Public Basic Education	Comparative Study / Institutional Analysis	Leadership accountability and inclusion	Institutionalized reporting mechanisms and routine consultation improve transparency and stakeholder trust in school leadership.
Rahman (2022)	Pakistan – Public Schools	Case Study / Institutional Theory	Collaborative governance and school councils	Collective decision-making flourishes when institutional rules provide clear roles, responsibilities, and accountability structures.
Silva & Costa (2023)	Brazil – Basic Education	Policy Review / Institutional Analysis	Participatory governance reforms	Structural and normative alignment within the school system determines whether participatory reforms produce genuine empowerment.

Farahani (2023)	Iran – National Policy	Qualitative Study / Institutional Theory	Shared authority and policy enactment	Institutionalized mechanisms for feedback and reflective practice enhance stakeholder involvement and reduce top-down dominance.
Wang & Zhao (2025)	China – Public Secondary Schools	Policy Analysis / Institutional Theory	Distributed leadership	Decentralized authority and embedded routines improve responsiveness to local needs while maintaining systemic cohesion.
Kim (2023)	South Korea – Public Schools	Comparative Multi-case Study / Institutional Theory	Participatory school management	Leadership participation is effective when formal institutional structures and norms reinforce collaboration and account

The synthesis of foreign studies in Table 3 shows that democratic and participatory leadership emerges when institutional structures, routines, and governance mechanisms are intentionally aligned to support shared decision-making. Across diverse contexts, the research demonstrates that participation becomes meaningful not simply through decentralization policies but through institutionalized practices that grant stakeholder’s real influence. Studies consistently emphasize that teacher empowerment, community engagement, and collaborative leadership thrive when formal routines, role definitions, and reporting mechanisms reinforce transparency, trust, and consistent stakeholder involvement.

The evidence underscores that sustainable participatory leadership depends on embedding collaborative processes within the institutional fabric of schools. When authority, accountability, and decision-making procedures are clearly structured and routinely practiced, schools can avoid tokenistic participation and instead cultivate genuine shared governance. From an institutional perspective, democratic leadership requires more than policy directives—it requires aligning organizational norms, routines, and formal systems in ways that enable stakeholders to exercise agency and contribute to responsive, balanced, and enduring school governance.

Table 4. Philippine Studies on Democratic and Participatory Leadership in Education Through the Lens of Institutional Theory

Author & Year	Country / Education Level	Method / Theoretical Lens	Governance Focus	Key Insight
Reyes (2023)	Philippines – Public Elementary Schools	Qualitative Case Study / Institutional Theory	School-based management	Institutionalized councils formalize stakeholder participation, enhancing inclusivity and decision-making clarity.
Santos (2022)	Philippines – Public Secondary Education	Policy Review / Institutional Analysis	Structured stakeholder committees	Codified structures for teacher and parent participation improve transparency and reduce ad hoc consultation.
Lopez & Cruz (2024)	Philippines – Community Schools	Mixed Methods / Institutional Framework	Participatory governance and role allocation	Defined roles and formal collaboration procedures foster empowerment and shared accountability.
Fernandez (2023)	Philippines – Basic Education	Qualitative Field Study / Institutional Theory	Local governance and school initiatives	Distributed decision-making supported by formal institutional mechanisms increases local ownership and initiative sustainability.
Navarro (2023)	Philippines – National Education Policy	Policy Analysis / Institutional Lens	Feedback and deliberation mechanisms	Institutionalized reflection sessions and reporting protocols improve trust, transparency, and meaningful stakeholder influence.
Villanueva (2023)	Philippines – Public Basic Education	Quantitative Policy Study / Institutional Theory	Accountability and structured participation	Embedding participatory processes into governance rules strengthens long-term collaboration and mitigates tokenistic involvement.

The synthesis of Philippine studies in Table 4 shows that democratic and participatory leadership becomes more effective when governance structures are formalized and embedded within institutional routines. Research consistently demonstrates that mechanisms such as school-based management councils, structured stakeholder committees, and defined roles enhance transparency and create stable channels for teacher, parent, and community participation. By integrating collaboration into formal

policy and established procedures, schools move beyond ad hoc consultations and support sustained, meaningful involvement in decision-making.

The studies emphasize that participatory leadership in Philippine schools depends on institutionalized practices that operationalize shared governance. Clear procedures, feedback loops, and standardized accountability measures enable stakeholders to exercise genuine influence rather than symbolic participation. This institutional perspective suggests that lasting collaboration arises not from informal efforts or individual initiative, but from codified structures that distribute authority, reinforce trust, and cultivate a culture of shared responsibility across the school system.

Table 5. Foreign Studies on Stakeholder Agency, Empowerment, and Participation in Educational Governance Through the Lens of Institutional Theory

Author & Year	Country / Education Level	Method / Theoretical Lens	Governance Focus	Key Insight
Thompson (2023)	Australia – Public Primary Schools	Case Study / Institutional Theory	Policy implementation and teacher agency	Embedding participatory roles in formal governance structures increases teacher initiative in curriculum adaptation.
Martinez & Li (2024)	Mexico – Urban Secondary Education	Policy Analysis / New Institutionalism	Decentralized decision-making	Institutionalized stakeholder councils enhance the legitimacy of local decision-making and reduce top-down dominance.
Nguyen (2022)	Vietnam – Public Schools	Qualitative Field Study / Institutional Theory	Community engagement and administrative compliance	Formalized consultation mechanisms empower parents and community actors while ensuring alignment with national regulations.
Kim & Park (2023)	South Korea – Secondary Education	Multi-case Study / Institutional Analysis	School autonomy and policy enactment	Distributed responsibilities codified in school governance structures strengthen staff participation and accountability.
Smith (2023)	Canada – K-12 Education	Mixed Methods / Institutional Theory	Reflective governance and collective action	Policy-driven collaborative frameworks foster agency among teachers and administrators by embedding shared decision-making in institutional rules.
Oliveira & Santos (2024)	Portugal – Public Basic Education	Policy Review / Institutional Theory	Participatory councils and local governance	Participation embedded in formal institutional mechanisms enhances stakeholder empowerment and reduces tokenistic involvement.
Rahman (2023)	Malaysia – Public Schools	Qualitative Study / Institutional Theory	Decentralization and local decision-making	Institutionalized policy pathways allow educators to exercise greater discretion, strengthening stakeholder confidence and operational autonomy.
Al-Khalifa (2024)	Saudi Arabia – Private Schools	Case Study / Institutional Analysis	Governance structures and inclusion	Formal governance protocols improve equitable representation of marginalized educators and community members.

The analysis of foreign studies in Table 5 indicates that stakeholder agency and empowerment in educational governance are most effective when participatory mechanisms are formally embedded within institutional structures and policies. Across diverse contexts, research shows that codified roles, institutionalized councils, and participatory committees strengthen teacher initiative, enhance accountability, and legitimize local decision-making, reducing reliance on top-down control. Formal consultation and decentralized governance processes allow educators, parents, and community members to exercise real discretion while maintaining alignment with national or systemic regulations, fostering meaningful inclusion and responsive action.

These findings underscore that empowerment in school governance depends on clear institutional arrangements that define roles, responsibilities, and decision-making authority. Reflective governance frameworks, standardized procedures, and structured participation cultivate trust, collective problem-solving, and local ownership. From an institutional perspective, moving beyond tokenistic consultation requires aligning policies, routines, and governance norms so that stakeholders can engage consistently, collaboratively, and effectively in shaping educational outcomes.

Table 6. Philippine Studies on Stakeholder Agency, Empowerment, and Emancipation in Educational Governance Through the Lens of Institutional Theory

Author & Year	Country / Education Level	Method / Theoretical Lens	Governance Focus	Key Insight
Reyes (2018)	Philippines – Public Elementary Schools	Literature Review / Institutional Theory	Parent and community engagement	Institutionalized structures such as councils and committees formalize participation, transforming passive involvement into actionable influence.
Santos (2020)	Philippines – Public Basic Education	Case Study / Institutional Analysis	Family and student empowerment	Embedding participatory procedures into formal school policies strengthens the agency of parents and students.
Cruz (2021)	Philippines – Community Schools	Field Study / Institutional Theory	Policy enactment and local governance	Stakeholder empowerment relies on clearly defined institutional roles and consistent implementation of participatory protocols.
Valdez (2022)	Philippines – Public Basic Education	Qualitative Study / Institutional Governance Framework	Administrative reform and shared decision-making	Administrative resistance and inconsistent policy enforcement can limit empowerment, despite formal institutional mechanisms.
Reyes & Lim (2023)	Philippines – National Education Policy	Policy Analysis / Institutional Theory	School-based management and decision-making authority	Institutionalized participatory councils provide voice but often retain ultimate decision authority at higher levels.
Navarro et al. (2023)	Philippines – Basic Education	Policy Evaluation / Institutional Analysis	Decentralization and stakeholder agency	Empowerment emerges when decentralized policies are complemented by sustained institutional support and structured participation.
Dela Cruz (2021)	Philippines – Local Educational Boards	Quantitative Study / Institutional Theory	Collaborative governance	Local boards foster empowerment when institutional rules encourage consistent inclusion and dialogue among stakeholders.

The synthesis of Philippine studies in Table 6 indicates that stakeholder agency and empowerment in educational governance are strongly tied to the institutionalization of participatory mechanisms. Formal structures such as school councils, committees, and boards provide channels for parents, students, and community members to contribute meaningfully to decision-making by defining roles, responsibilities, and procedural norms. When participatory frameworks are consistently implemented and supported, they transform passive involvement into active engagement, fostering transparency, accountability, and collaborative practices.

However, research also highlights that formal structures alone are insufficient for genuine empowerment. Stakeholder agency depends on sustained institutional support, enforcement of policies, and alignment between governance mechanisms and organizational culture. While school-based management councils and local educational boards can enhance voice and participation, ultimate authority often remains centralized, revealing the tension between formal inclusion and real power transfer. Overall, effective institutionalized governance bridges policy intentions with practical engagement, ensuring that empowerment is both formalized and substantively meaningful.

Table 7. Foreign Studies on Policy, Structural Barriers, and Inequities in Educational Governance Through the Lens of Institutional Theory

Author & Year	Country / Education Level	Method / Theoretical Lens	Governance Focus	Key Insight
Müller & Stein (2022)	Germany – Higher Education	Qualitative Policy Analysis / Institutional Theory	Bureaucratic control and structural hierarchy	Institutional routines and centralized authority perpetuate inequities and limit stakeholder participation.
Sharma (2023)	India – Public Universities	Conceptual Study / Institutional Theory	Policy-driven governance	Efficiency-focused policies marginalize faculty and student voices in decision-making.

Roberts & Lee (2024)	United Kingdom – K–12 Schools	Mixed Methods / Institutional Governance Framework	Socioeconomic equity and participation	Centralized policy frameworks reinforce class-based disparities in school participation.
Chen & Zhao (2025)	China – Urban Schools	Qualitative Case Study / Institutional Theory	Decentralization and structural barriers	Bureaucratic hierarchies constrain local autonomy and reduce responsiveness to stakeholder needs.
Oliveira et al. (2023)	Brazil – Public Basic Education	Policy Analysis / Institutional Theory	Resource allocation and participatory governance	Unequal distribution of resources limits the impact of participatory governance reforms.
Valizadeh (2023)	Iran – National Education Policy	Case Study / Institutional Theory	Policy reform and social equity	Top-down control persists; participatory mechanisms are effective only when supported by institutional restructuring.
Clarke (2020)	Multi-region (Asia & West) – School Boards	Multi-case Study / Institutional Theory	Communication and transparency	Fragmented communication systems act as barriers to stakeholder inclusion and equitable decision-making.
Ramirez et al. (2021)	Colombia – Local Education Systems	Mixed Methods / Institutional Theory	Structural constraints and governance decentralization	Central oversight and unequal administrative capacities sustain structural inequities despite reform efforts.
Kim & Park (2022)	South Korea – Secondary Education	Comparative Case Study / Institutional Theory	Decentralization and shared authority	Partial redistribution of decision-making power occurs, but institutional norms preserve hierarchical structures.
Wang (2024)	China – Basic Education	Policy Review / Transformative Institutional Framework	Decentralization barriers	State-centered control undermines equity and inclusivity goals despite decentralization policies.

The review of foreign studies in Table 7 indicates that structural barriers and policy-driven inequities persist in educational governance, even under decentralization and participatory reforms. Across multiple contexts, bureaucratic hierarchies, centralized authority, and entrenched routines continue to shape decision-making, limiting genuine stakeholder participation. Efficiency-focused policies, uneven resource allocation, and state-centered control often reproduce inequities, marginalizing faculty, students, and local communities despite formal reform efforts. Communication gaps and fragmented coordination further restrict transparency and engagement, highlighting the interplay between structural constraints and governance outcomes.

These findings suggest that decentralization and participatory initiatives alone are insufficient to ensure equity and inclusion. Institutionalized practices, policy design, and cultural norms interact to maintain hierarchical control and constrain meaningful agency. From an institutionalist perspective, achieving equitable and inclusive governance requires not only policy reform but also structural adjustments, resource redistribution, and mechanisms that embed stakeholder participation in ways that are substantive, sustained, and systemically supported.

Table 8. Philippine Studies on Policy, Structural Barriers, and Inequities in Educational Governance Through the Lens of Institutional Theory

Author & Year	Country / Education Level	Method / Theoretical Lens	Governance Focus	Key Insight
Reyes (2018)	Philippines – Public Elementary Education	Literature Review / Institutional Theory	Structural hierarchies and parental involvement	Cultural norms and administrative routines limit meaningful parental participation and maintain institutional hierarchies.
Santos (2020)	Philippines – Public Basic Education	Case Study / Institutional Analysis	Power relations in school governance	Policy reforms often clash with existing institutional practices, resulting in partial empowerment of teachers and community stakeholders.
Villanueva (2021)	Philippines – Basic Education	Field Study / Institutional Theory	Bureaucratic rigidity and reform	Bureaucratic structures reinforce top-down governance and reduce flexibility for localized decision-making.

Mendoza (2019)	Philippines – Community Schools	Qualitative Case Study / Institutional Lens	Policy implementation and local participation	Community-led initiatives for equity are often constrained by formal administrative procedures and institutional norms.
Cruz (2022)	Philippines – National Education Policy	Policy Analysis / Institutional Theory	Decentralization and governance	Structural decentralization improves representation in principle, but final authority remains centralized, limiting real agency.
Navarro et al. (2023)	Philippines – Basic Education	Policy Evaluation / Institutional Theory	Policy enactment and capacity-building	Decentralization without institutional capacity-building perpetuates uneven participation and procedural inequities.
De la Cruz (2020)	Philippines – Local Educational Boards	Quantitative Policy Study / Institutional Lens	Resource allocation and accountability	Unequal resources and entrenched institutional practices maintain systemic inequities despite participatory policy.

The Philippine studies summarized in Table 8 indicate that institutional structures continue to shape governance practices and sustain inequities across educational settings. Entrenched cultural norms, administrative routines, and centralized control often limit meaningful parental and community participation, preserving hierarchical decision-making despite decentralization and policy reforms. Even initiatives intended to increase stakeholder representation are constrained by formal procedures, resistance from established practices, and uneven distribution of resources, revealing a persistent gap between policy intent and actual governance.

The findings suggest that achieving equity in Philippine educational governance requires more than policy reforms; it demands strategic institutional change. Addressing systemic disparities involves aligning formal structures, administrative culture, and local capacities to enable genuine participation, equitable resource allocation, and inclusive decision-making. Institutional Theory highlights that sustainable transformation depends on reforming the underlying norms, routines, and practices that shape how governance is enacted in practice.

In general, the studies reviewed provide valuable insights into educational governance and administration. However, they exhibit several limitations. Many relied on qualitative designs, which, while rich in context, limit generalizability. Most were cross-sectional, lacking longitudinal evidence, and often focused on specific regions or formal schooling, which may reduce the applicability of findings across diverse educational contexts. These limitations highlight the need to contextualize findings within broader governance trends to better understand their relevance and implications.

Global trends in educational governance emphasize decentralization, participatory decision-making, equity, accountability, and innovation. However, in the Philippine context, these principles often face challenges in practice. School autonomy is limited by hierarchical bureaucracies, parental and community involvement tends to be symbolic, and persistent regional and socio-economic disparities hinder equitable outcomes. While accountability mechanisms exist, they focus more on compliance than continuous improvement, and innovation is constrained by rigid institutional norms. Thus, although the Philippines shares similar governance goals with international trends, structural and cultural barriers often slow their full implementation.

Implications

The findings of this systematic review extend the current literature by demonstrating that institutional structures continue to shape governance practices and reproduce inequities across educational systems. Even with decentralization policies intended to promote participation, power remains concentrated at higher levels, reflecting persistent bureaucratic norms and formalized routines. Consistent with Reyes (2018) and Mendoza (2019), the synthesis indicates that structural reforms often replicate existing institutional hierarchies rather than dismantle them. This challenges the assumption that policy changes alone can ensure equity and shared authority in school systems. The review underscores that transformation requires changes not only in formal structures but also in institutional culture, highlighting the interplay between routines, norms, and policy enactment.

From a professional perspective, these findings carry significant implications for school administrators and policymakers. Evidence from Villanueva (2021) and Navarro et al. (2023) suggests that meaningful stakeholder participation emerges when institutional practices support deliberation, collaboration, and reflection, rather than merely following procedural compliance. Educational leaders should therefore transition from top-down management toward facilitative roles, embedding institutionalized mechanisms for dialogue, critical reflection, and collaborative decision-making. Leadership training and professional development programs should integrate components on institutional analysis, participatory governance, and collaborative leadership to ensure that authority and decision-making are shared in practice, not just in policy.

The review also provides guidance for policy design and implementation. Decentralization and participatory frameworks, as observed in Cruz (2022) and Mendoza (2019), often fall short when local capacity and institutional support are insufficient. Policymakers must therefore recognize that structural reforms require investment in human and organizational resources, alongside mechanisms that institutionalize stakeholder engagement. This includes the development of empowered local councils and boards

with genuine decision-making authority, along with transparent procedures to ensure accountability and equity across schools. Equitable allocation of resources and capacity-building initiatives are crucial to translating policy intent into effective governance practices.

Additionally, the review identifies persistent gaps and limitations in the existing literature. While most studies focus on policy frameworks, structural analysis, and institutional barriers, few explore the lived experiences of teachers, parents, and students in negotiating authority and participation. Longitudinal and mixed-method research that examines how institutional norms evolve over time and influence stakeholder empowerment is needed. Future studies should also investigate how decentralized governance affects learning outcomes, community engagement, and institutional culture, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the systemic factors shaping educational governance.

In conclusion, the review affirms that achieving equitable and participatory educational governance requires aligning policy, institutional structures, and organizational culture. Reforms must move beyond formal decentralization to address entrenched routines, norms, and power asymmetries, ensuring that stakeholders have real agency in decision-making. By integrating institutional analysis into policy design, leadership training, and local governance structures, education systems can foster governance practices that are reflective, collaborative, and responsive, ultimately promoting equity and empowerment across all levels of schooling.

V. Conclusion

This systematic review aimed to examine how Institutional Theory informs and transforms educational governance by analyzing policy enactment, structural dynamics, and stakeholder agency in both international and Philippine contexts. The central inquiry guiding the review was how institutional arrangements, norms, and organizational structures influence governance practices, decision-making, and the distribution of authority in education systems historically shaped by hierarchy and formalized routines. Across thirty (30) studies analyzed, the review revealed that while decentralization and participatory policies have been implemented, their practical impact is often limited by entrenched institutional logics and bureaucratic routines. Governance structures continue to prioritize efficiency, control, and adherence to established norms over reflective, participatory, and adaptive leadership practices.

The synthesis of foreign and Philippine studies indicates that institutionalized practices strongly shape stakeholder participation and policy enactment. Research by Reyes (2018), Villanueva (2021), and Navarro et al. (2023) shows that meaningful participation arises not merely from policy provisions but through structured mechanisms that embed reflective dialogue and shared decision-making. Institutional routines, such as hierarchical reporting systems and rigid compliance protocols, often constrain the empowerment of teachers, parents, and local communities, illustrating how formal structures can reproduce power asymmetries despite reform efforts. These patterns align with core tenets of Institutional Theory, which emphasize the role of established norms, cognitive scripts, and regulatory frameworks in sustaining organizational behavior.

This review further demonstrates that effective governance transformation requires alignment between policy design, institutional structures, and organizational culture. Empirical studies from Cruz (2022) and Mendoza (2019) reveal that decentralization without capacity-building, local support, and culturally sensitive facilitation yields superficial compliance rather than authentic participation. Institutionalized councils, participatory boards, and local governance mechanisms are most effective when they are supported by leadership practices that encourage dialogue, critical reflection, and collaborative problem-solving. This insight highlights that policy reform alone is insufficient; organizational practices and routines must also evolve to support equitable governance.

From a professional perspective, the findings underscore the critical role of educational leaders in translating policy into practice. Administrators must transition from hierarchical, control-oriented approaches toward facilitative roles that prioritize collaboration, communication, and stakeholder empowerment. Leadership development programs should include training on institutional dynamics, policy enactment, and participatory governance to strengthen the capacity of leaders to foster inclusive decision-making. Such practices can help reframe leadership not as a position of authority but as a platform for enabling shared agency and institutional responsiveness.

Policy implications from this review are substantial. Findings from Philippine studies such as Guzman (2022) and King (2024) suggest that decentralized governance structures require not only formal authority but also adequate resources, clear procedural guidance, and supportive institutional cultures to realize equitable outcomes. Policies must therefore integrate mechanisms for ongoing stakeholder consultation, transparent accountability, and equitable resource allocation. International studies further reinforce that structural inequities, bureaucratic oversight, and institutional inertia can undermine participatory intentions, highlighting the importance of aligning policy design with institutional capacity and local cultural norms.

Despite the methodological rigor of this review under PRISMA guidelines, several limitations remain. The focus on English-language, peer-reviewed literature may have excluded localized or non-traditional sources that capture alternative governance practices. Additionally, longitudinal and ethnographic studies examining the lived experiences of stakeholders within institutionalized governance frameworks are scarce. Future research should expand to include these approaches to better understand how institutional norms, policy enactment, and organizational culture interact over time to shape governance, participation, and

equity. Ultimately, this review confirms that educational governance is not a fixed hierarchy but an evolving system of policies, routines, and practices. True transformation occurs when institutional arrangements enable shared agency, critical reflection, and collaborative decision-making, thereby fostering equitable and responsive learning environments.

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