

Research on the model of university autonomy in the direction of corporate governance

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ABSTRACT

Recently, the trend of university autonomy is seen as a solution to promote the development of universities, improve the quality of education and contribute to the training of high-quality human resources for the country. So how should university autonomy be recognized, evaluated, and development-oriented? Is university autonomy aimed at promoting corporate governance towards corporate governance as a solution to today's problems? This article aims to assess the current state of university governance in Vietnam and the world. Studies related to the university governance model, which is in the direction of corporate governance – are also analyzed and discussed. This article proposes a model to help standardize modern governance activities according to corporate governance, limit unnecessary overlap between unrelated departments in university activities, thereby promoting the development of universities in the future.

1. Introduction

The dramatic changes of the modern world, especially in the robotic as well as the explosion of the Internet of everything and 4.0 technologies, have increased the needs of highly qualified employees in all majors. However, the current training rate of universities has not been able to fulfill the demands on a well-trained workforce of society. This issue can be explained by the gaps between of the educational institutions' training and the employers' requirements. Although the continuously modifying and modernizing, the higher education policies over 20 years has brought a lot of advantages for governing university in Vietnam; for example, more freedom in the sovereignty, this country's education system still confront many barriers such as the centralized operations and inappropriate financial policies (Do, 2018; H. D. Nguyen, 2013; P. T. L. Pham, 2015). Thus, based on the current needs of society and the global trends of university governance, Vietnam universities should be given more rights on their autonomy at multiple levels, not only in managerial but also on searching financial supports for transforming from academic institutions to corporate universities, which will be operated based on the market mechanism. This study will research and propose a method to innovate the current Vietnamese institution governance policy based on corporate administration to catch up with the worldwide school governing's trend and, therefore, fulfill the needs of the workforce market in particular.

2. Autonomy in University Governance and Corporate University Model

2.1. Autonomy in University Governance

The autonomy in university governance can be divided into four categories: management,

finance, human resources, and academic, where the sovereignty level will have relied on the government policies and the current status of the social needs (Chiang, 2004; Parakhina, Godina, Boris, & Ushvitsky, 2017; Rayevnyeva & Stryzhychenko, 2017). The study of Song (2020) on 46 different countries has shown solid and negative impacts between the government's financial supports and the marketization of training institutions, while there is no relationship between the prior factor towards the academic capitalist knowledge. Meanwhile, he found the government subsidies will positively affect public-related benefits. In contrast, the market mechanism will help to enhance the training academies benefits or the academic capitalist knowledge regime through the collaborations between the university and industries. After all, both of them contribute to the steady improvements of the higher education quality. This result has strengthened the work of Wise and Carrasco (2018), who found that the increase in self-government level in academies will allow them to contribute to the local communities' benefits. Also, the relationship between the local academies and industry sectors is believed to bring stable financial supports for the activities that enhance the institutions' education quality in the long term. In other words, gaining universities more rights in self-functioning and operating them as corporations is necessary since this will both help to deliver more benefits to the local societies as well as let the institutions work more efficiently and effectively (Flórez-Parra, López-Pérez, & López-Hernández, 2019).

Although many policies have been proposed by the Vietnam Ministry of Education in the higher education sector for suiting the country's developments, universities in this country still dealing with a lot of barriers in self-governing acts and not until the 2012 Education Law, the autonomy in Vietnamese training institutions has reached its peak and is governed by the schools' representatives which is "School Council" (Do, 2018; P. T. L. Pham, 2016; Trinh, 2017). However, the foundation of "School Council" in the Vietnamese Education System has not been concerned right at its level, bringing with it a high complexity, overlap, and formalism in managerial activities and not contribute much to the university developments' guidance as well as the education system in general (H. T. T. Pham, Nguyen, Vu, & Hoang, 2019; Trinh, 2017). In addition to this, the financial source for innovations in higher education sectors mainly comes from the student's tuition fees. Still, the differences in tuition fee policies between the private institution and public schools have caused significant gaps and barriers for applying innovative ideas to the operations of the public academy (L. T. Nguyen & Nguyen, 2019; T. Q. Nguyen, 2017; P. T. L. Pham, 2016). This proves that the majority of universities in Vietnam have not reached the self-governing state or slowly switching to this state in both management and funding supports for various reasons (T T. H. Pham, 2016; Trinh, 2017; Vu, 2017).

2.2. Scholars' role in Governing University

In the corporations, medium and large enterprises, and private universities that are operated under the advice of specialized sectors, two of the most important apparatuses are: market research faculty and product/service development faculty, which are usually led by experts with high contributions and experiences in research (D'Agostino, Laursen, & Santangelo, 2013; Kang & Park, 2012; Lim, 2015). However, there are very few schools in Vietnam public university system forming this type of faculty. Usually, the institutions' future direction will be mainly decided by the school councils, rectors, or school administrators under the policies provided by the local People's Committee, the country's Ministries, or a group of specific corporations who are invited to evaluate the teachings' curriculums as well as the schools' future development paths (H. T. T. Pham et al., 2019).

The work of T. Q. Nguyen, Le, Nguyen, and Vu (2019), concluded the effective rate

when lecturers help governing universities in both management and finance control will increase from local institutions, national schools, self-governing education academies, and private institutions in order. Even though they (the lecturers) will generally be the ones who carry out the works related to teaching and research more than experts, experts are individuals who will implement policies, techniques, and aspects of the techniques better than these instructors. Therefore, when it comes to validating the feasibility of a policy, regulation, or development orientation, lecturers and the scientific communities usually have a broader view than experts. From that, they can adjust as well as propose better policies while experts have more advantages in implementing those recommendations.

In the management perspective, P. T. L. Pham (2016) states that many correlations in the works' common characteristics require expertise such as health, law, and education and often handled by scientists and experts groups. As a result, when these groups get involved with the university development-oriented governance, they can help to provide specific and unique policies for educational administration. However, some points make them unsuitable for governing schools, namely "academic loyalty conflicts with assigned responsibilities," opposing with "organizational expectations," and the freely pursue academic ideas desire (P. T. L. Pham, 2016). Because the scientific community is the knowledge pursuer not only at the domestic level but also at the international level, the acceptance of new philosophies, policies, and proposals of existing research in the scientific field in this group will be better than professionals who are trained to become managers. Therefore, when these scholars evaluate the schools' development-oriented policies, they will provide better views that are more suitable to the social and global needs than experts who only work with aspects related to the future developments of the institutions (T. H. Pham, 2016). In fact, the main task of scientific councils in universities is giving evaluations and approvals to the feasibility of projects and academic research as well as providing funding for implementing those proposed works instead of constructing improvements for the school (M. D. Nguyen, 2018). Also, the academic research and sharing seminars on higher education training methods in many Vietnamese academies keep being significantly formalism. They do not have many practical effects on how the schools should change in the future. Moreover, instead of solving the current needs of society as well as contributing to the developments and innovations in the academic environment, many Vietnamese academic studies focus on extending the existing works, which seem to be unrealistic (M. D. Nguyen, 2018; P. T. L. Pham, 2015). Therefore, the establishment of a scientific community group that participates in the management and enhancing the university's operations is necessary, not only for the purpose of reducing the workload of specialized administrators in the school but also help draw the paths for later improvements of it. As a result, the institutions' outcomes will be the qualified applied scientific research, which creates stable funding sources for the universities' improvements through technology transferring or practical applications. Meanwhile, this scientific community can boost the quality of academic personnel through the assessment, analysis, and support of faculty members in multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary scientific research, as well as proposing specific curriculums for enhancing the professional capability of lecturers in specific sectors.

Currently, most studies view lecturers as scholars in the academic governance field. Despite the fact that they are the ones who deal with the inadequacies in the school's administrative activities most, these educators do not spend much attention in participating in non-professional activities, especially in constructing the development of their academies and reluctantly do it when being assigned. Currently, in addition to teaching, lecturers are involved with academic research as well as enhancing training programs in addition to supporting enrollment tasks, participating in multiple training courses, or public activities proposed by the

school labor union. Thus, thanks to the evolvement with multitasking, lecturers can become groups that can strongly propose policies for later university improvements besides students (M. D. Nguyen, 2018; T. Q. Nguyen et al., 2019).

Moreover, because educators are the ones who have direct contact with the learners, they will know the actual status of the learning outcomes from their pupils. Thus, they can evaluate the feasibility of the current training programs towards the future development policies of the university, as well as analyze the requirements and desires derived from the market labors. From there, these can adjust the training programs to suit the accessibility and responsiveness of their learners. For academic research activities, they are also the main person who directly involve with the research tasks despite the status of the studies or their roles in the works. Currently, many lecturers have graduated with overseas programs that delve into the field of research rather than participating in coursework programs. Thus, they are the connectors between scholars as well as other qualified Ph.D. students and the institution's development-oriented governance tasks through the cooperation in teaching or participation in administrating the school's operation (T. Q. Nguyen et al., 2019).

For the university-industry cooperation to create a products or workforce supply-demand relationship, lecturers usually have the company information by asking their graduated graduates and current pupils who are advised by these educators during their learning path. Therefore, it cannot be denied that lecturers are one of the groups providing excellent supports for forming a well institution governance system by recognizing and assessing the inappropriate in the institutions' operation through their working progress as well as interactions with other departments, learners, senior managers in school, and business owners. Although they have a high advantage to contribute to the upgrading education system, the majority of educators usually refuse to propose their ideas about the modifications in proposed school improve-oriented policies by giving cursory answers for avoiding offends the group of school councils and vice-reactors in the university but they will discuss it through private off-campus talks for many sensitive reasons.

2.3. The relationships between Corporates and University Governance

The business community involvement in guiding the development of the university has been recognized and proven in many studies (Dinh, 2020a; D. K. Nguyen & Pham, 2017; P. T. L. Pham, 2015). Although the business community is involved with administrative supports on the improvements of Vietnamese universities in many different forms, drawing out a common voice between academic scholars who are lecturers and business owners representing the business community is a complicated issue. While business owners' suggestions for the institutions developments often focus on the question "Are the graduates good enough for handling the works offering by company?" which is a combination of multiple unique and non-related set of skill, lecturers usually wonder "What kind of knowledge that students should learn to reduce the unemployment rate or achieve a correlated job – trained major pair?" In other words, if the approach of the higher education sector is to cultivate the current human resources, then the business representatives' approaches are "workforce exploitation" and "head-hunting" (D. K. Nguyen & Pham, 2017, p. 37). Thus, it can be seen that the gap in the relationship between the graduates and the headhunters' demands is huge, where the employers will search for "non-professional workers," which is the product of "University 2.0," while the aims of the current education system are the product of "University 3.0" - the workers who have "multidisciplinary knowledge" and can "create new knowledge" (Dinh, 2020b). This is shown in

the cooperation between domestic enterprises and domestic universities, mainly in the following aspects: creating conditions for learners to practice; recruiting learners with high achievements and effectively working rate during the internship period; organizing tours to introduce the firm; providing cross-teaching sessions between business managers and university educators; offering some project-based courses for a cross-checking and cross-evaluating between the training program outcomes and the firms' requirements (D. K. Nguyen & Pham, 2017). The above conflict is believed to come from the fact that companies' owners do not have confidence in the learning process or learning outcomes of pupils-lecturers in the institution because of following reasons: the short-term training periods for recent graduates, the passive interactions between business owners and heads of universities, the distance in bonds between the subordinates and superiors in corporations' environments, the limitations, complexity, and regulatory barriers in school and corporate governance mechanisms, the lack of information between parties when the needs of business-university relationships arise (T. T. Nguyen & Bui, 2017).

In foreign countries, the bonds between universities and businesses are not limited to the cooperation in improving the current programs' curriculums and training the future workforce. In fact, these connections are boosted by multiple ways through the cooperate contracts, for example, the corporations will conduct their projects using the research teams from the academies, academic products and applications created by students and educators can be commercialized through business channels, companies owners will propose the strategies which suits the social needs instead of the demands from specific firms or corporations, exchanging and providing services suggested by experts from both parties (Dinh, 2016, 2019b; T. T. Nguyen & Bui, 2017). Hence, the qualified workforce that is trained, managed, and developed by the university system will be maximized utilized, resulting in the limitation of human capital flight from the youth community. As a result, institutions can guarantee the quality of their current offered programs, thus, create a premise on continuous upgrading the training curriculums for incoming learners, improving the reputation of the universities, be able to regularly evaluate and enhance the qualifications and professional competence of the lecturers, bridging the gap between academic works and practical applications. At the same time, this also gives them steady financial sources from technology transfers and selling research outcomes to corporations while maintaining the identity of a research academy that focuses on intensive training compared to teaching skills in vocational education (Dinh, 2016; T. T. Nguyen & Bui, 2017). Therefore, maximizing the utilization of the relationship between businesses and universities will bring significant benefits to both parties; however, this is still a sore problem in Vietnam since there are limited institutions that can be forming this symbiosis which are universities that have their firms such as Vietnam National University – University of Technology, FPT Polytechnic University, and Hoa Sen University. After all, it is necessary to enhance, connect, and expand the relationship between enterprises and academies in governing universities for further improvements from that, the gap between the knowledge offered at these institutions and the actual needs of the society can be closed in the future.

3. Governing University: The Entrepreneurial University Model

The entrepreneurial university governance model is inherently not new in the world, but its popularity in the university market in Vietnam is still limited. Until 2017, only 43 out of 120 higher education institutions across Vietnam responded to the survey of Dinh (2019a), showing that nearly 26% of the respondents owning a private limited liability company. His work also points out the difficulties these enterprises deal with, mostly the juridical barriers, especially the Enterprise Law, to their business activities and management systems in these corporations. For

the universities that operate as a corporation, Yokoyama (2006) categorizes them into five groups: “prototype university,” “entrepreneurial-oriented university,” “fledgling entrepreneurial university,” “adaptive entrepreneurial university,” and “ideal type university” (Dinh, 2019a). Although the development orientations of each institutions group are different, the ultimate goals of these enterprises are not far from the social demands and gradually switch from social funding to self-funding or self-reliant universities model for the schools’ main activities, including teaching and research, which are the basis of the second educational revolution (Etzkowitz, 2008). In this perspective, Kwiek (2016) proposed three methods for boundaries removal between the top level of universities governors and the managers at faculties and departments unit in European entrepreneurial university governance, which is shown as follow:

Table 1

Methods for removing the boundaries and complexities in entrepreneurial university governance in Europe (p. 59) (Kwiek, 2016)

Method	Examples
Forming a “flat structure” in institute governance in addition to the removal of faculties units in schools’ governance system and limiting the boundaries between the university governance board of directors and the schools’ departments	In University of Warwick and many institutions in Poland, the governance system is circle around “the rectors, his collaborators, strategic management team, and departments” only without the intervene of faculties, which are considered as “the intermediary level”
“Keeping three level arrangements” beside enhancing the “authority and responsibility” of members in the university governance groups include the central board of directors, schools’ departments, and faculties	This method is applied at the Netherlands Twente University and the Sweden Chalmers University of Technology. However, granting too many authorities to the department level has raised the concerns about the risks of straying from the schools’ original purpose, thus dissolving the university’s operation due to mainly focusing on economic activities instead of academia
Increase the “professionalization of administration” in governance activities of the university governance board of directors	This method is applied in most European universities. In this method, non – academic works are carried out by experts instead of inexperienced personnel recruited from within the university. More specifically, these activities include: “finances, student affairs, fundraising, and connecting with alumni”

Source: Authors

It can be seen that the majority of universities in Europe have specialized in operations in the schools’ governance by eliminating interference of institutes’ departments to the relationship between the academic community and the university governance board of directors or grant the authority for managing departments to experts with extensive experiences before putting these experts to the central board. As a result, these universities’ governance activities and operations become more apparent and transparent (Kwiek, 2016). In this field, Middlehurst (2004) proposed effective entrepreneurial university governance as follow:

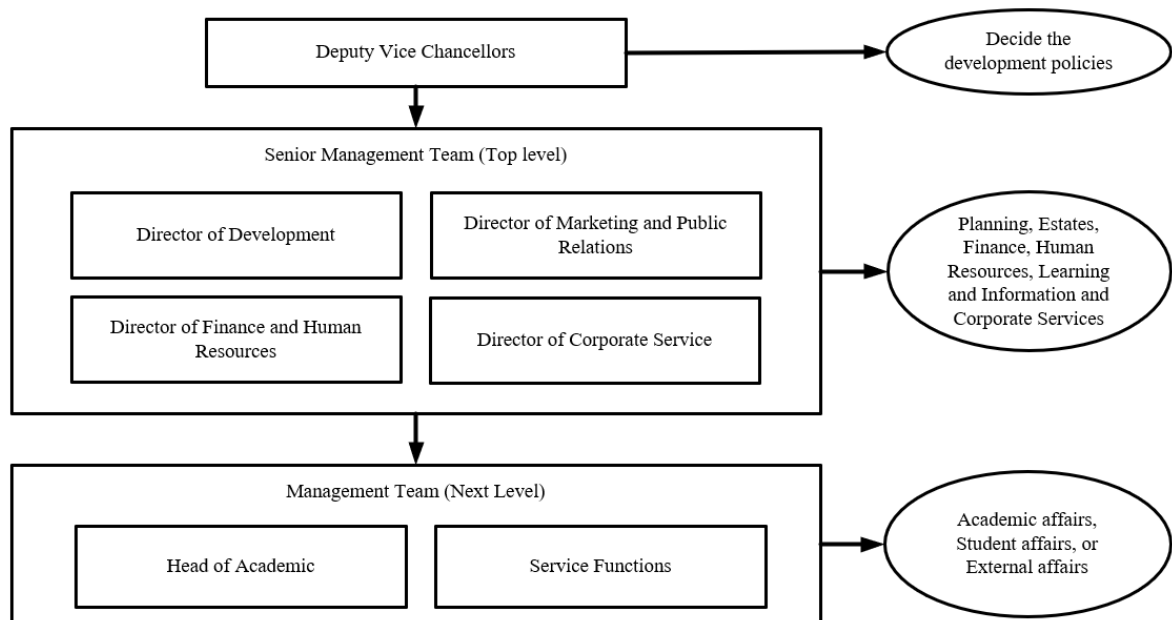


Figure 1. Entrepreneurial university governance model of Middlehurst (2004)

However, in Vietnam, servile imitating this model is considered inappropriate because of the Vietnamese political constitutions as well as the governance structure in this country, which is shown in the work of H. T. T. Pham et al. (2019), where the university governance can not be separated from the involvements of government's representatives thus causing the overlap and complexities in the schools' governance operations. Moreover, the number of departments and divisions in Vietnamese universities is significantly large, and many of them will take care of the same functions but are detached due to different types of studies, for example, the undergraduate and graduate studies, or too specific functions in details thus bringing the complications and confusions in handling the administrative tasks. Therefore, based on existing literature, we propose a university governance model as follow:

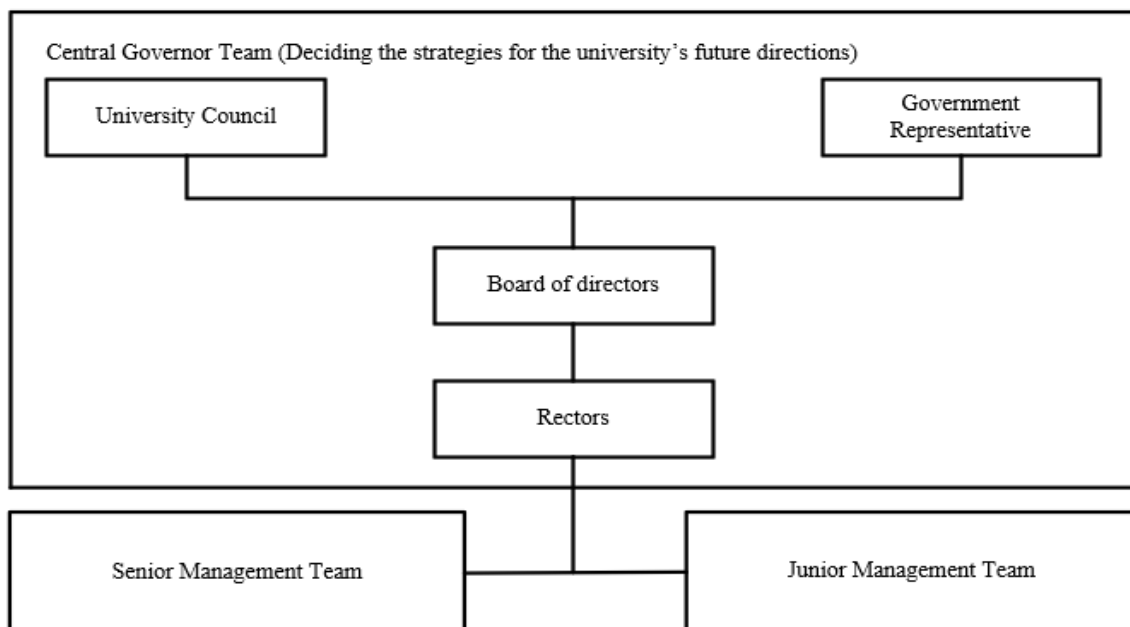


Figure 2. Proposed University Governance Model (Administration Level)

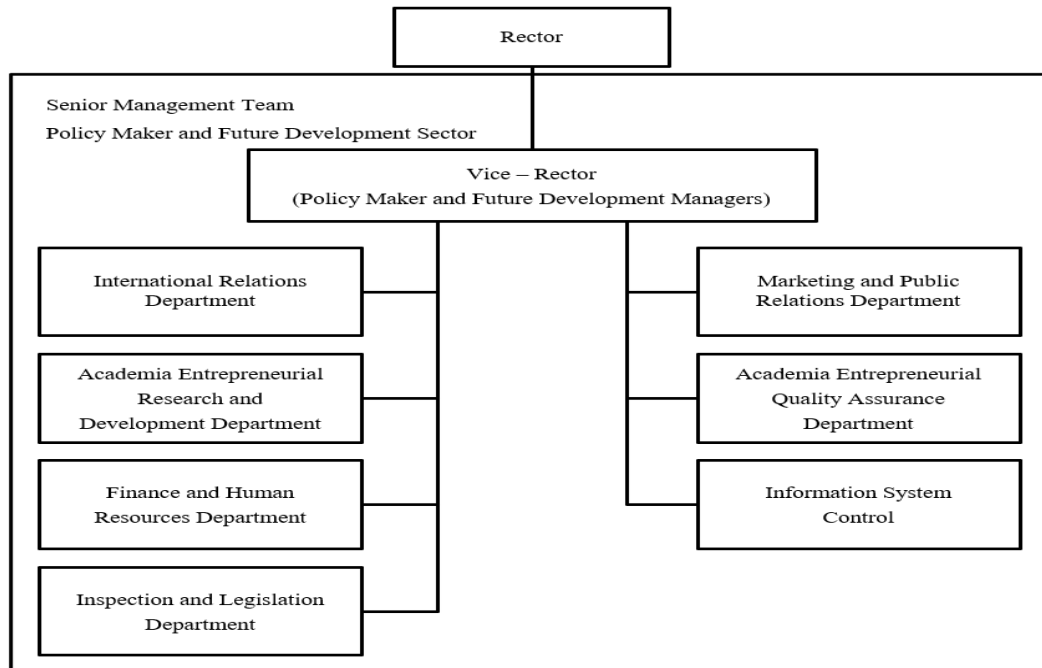


Figure 3. Proposed University Governance Model (Senior Management Level - Policy Maker and Future Development)

Basically, the proposed model does not change much compared to the current operating university governance model in Vietnam; however, the departments are grouped into specific departments, with the least overlaps in handling administration tasks. In addition, our proposed work utilizes the term ‘development periphery’ proposed by Clark (2004). Our study will categorize this term as “senior management teams” and “junior management teams”; a vice-rector will manage each. In this context, the team in the Makers and Future Development Sector will deal with the works related to future improvements of the academy as well as connecting with foreign-affiliated organizations, enterprises, and activities not related to academic activities. Different from the prior team, the Academic Research and Training Sector will contribute more on tasks related to academic researches, curriculum provisions, and developing policies on enhancing the learning outcomes as well as the academic quality control. Finally, the junior management team will handle the students’ or the university’s services, such as the library, healthcare, and other related fields.

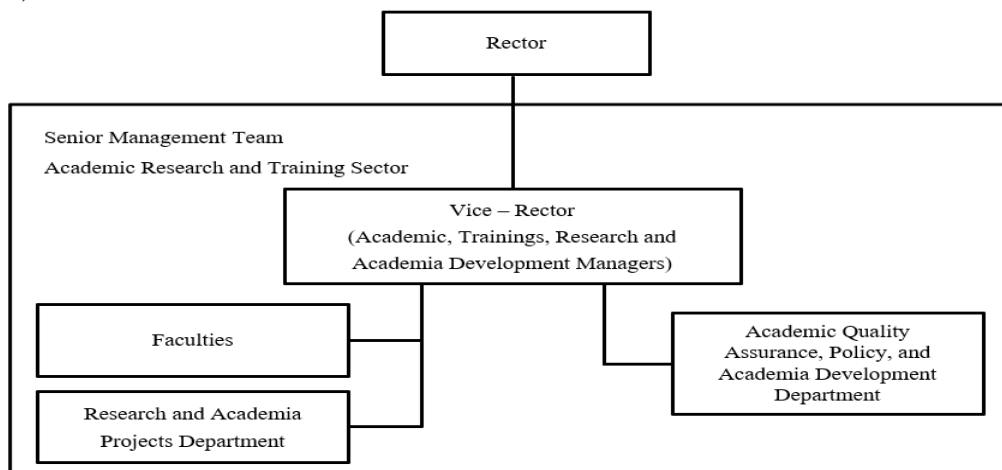


Figure 4. Proposed University Governance Model (Senior Management Level - Academic Research and Training)

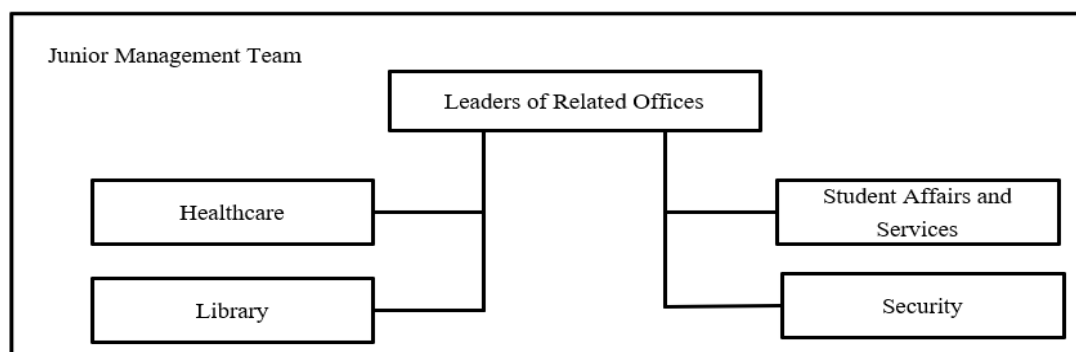


Figure 5. Proposed University Governance Model (Junior Management Level)

4. Conclusions

This study proposes a model of autonomy university governance based on the entrepreneurial university model. The shifting from the traditional institute model to entrepreneurial university will help standardize, streamline, and enhancing the university's operation, thus limiting overlaps and unnecessary interferences from unrelated parties toward the schools' governance task. As a result, the institute's performance will be significantly improved and later catches the worldwide academia trend.

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