

Public Administration Management Innovation in Promoting Transparent and Accountable University Governance

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Abstract: This study examines public administration management innovation at Saint Theresa School of Economics and its impact on open and accountable government. The study uses a qualitative case study design to examine administrative reforms in higher education in the border region. Participants included institutional leaders, administrative personnel, lecturers, and students in in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. The findings show that academic services have been digitalised, information systems have been developed, and administrative procedures have been simplified. Innovations have increased job efficiency and the transparency of information. IT infrastructure issues, limited staff digital literacy, and a lack of accountability-based work culture hinder implementation. To overcome these problems, the report suggests digital literacy training for human resources, integrated information systems, and leadership commitment to a creative and accountable organisational culture. Given the high level of administrative activity from November 2024 to January 2025, this investigation yielded rich observational findings. The study's single-institution emphasis suggests the need for comparative and mixed-methods research to improve generalisability. This work advances higher education governance that meets digital-era difficulties and public transparency demands.

Keywords: Public Administration Innovation; Higher Education Governance; Information Transparency; Information Systems; Higher Education Management; Job Efficiency; Leadership Commitment.

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1. Introduction

In the context of bureaucratic reform and efforts to improve the quality of public services, universities are required to adopt the principles of good governance, namely, good university governance, which include transparency, accountability, participation, and effectiveness. Public administration management is a key instrument in supporting the achievement of these principles [8]. Higher education institutions function not only as academic entities but also as public institutions that must deliver efficient, transparent administrative services [4]. Therefore, innovation in public administration management is crucial, particularly to address the challenges of the digital era and meet the increasing demands of stakeholders for the quality of governance in

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educational institutions [19]. The Saint Theresa School of Economics (STIE ST. Theresa) in Merauke, a university in eastern Indonesia, has strategic potential to develop local human resources in the fields of social and political sciences. However, like many other higher education institutions, STIE. St. Teresa faces several administrative challenges, including limited information technology infrastructure, low service user participation in decision-making, and suboptimal reporting and evaluation systems [5].

These issues affect public trust and the institution's effectiveness in delivering both academic and non-academic services. As such, innovation is needed not only in technical aspects but also in managerial and cultural dimensions to build a public administration system that supports better governance [17]. The primary challenge faced by STIE ST. Theresa lies in the absence of a comprehensive public administration management system to support accountable and transparent institutional governance. The continued reliance on manual administrative processes and limited digitisation has resulted in low service efficiency and increased risks of errors in data collection and academic reporting. These issues not only disrupt the institution's operational flow but also diminish the academic community's trust in the campus's managerial systems. Furthermore, the lack of a data-driven performance monitoring and evaluation mechanism impedes the development of governance practices grounded in evidence-based policy.

Additionally, weak coordination among internal units, such as academic affairs, finance, student services, and information systems, has exacerbated fragmentation in the implementation of campus administrative policies. The lack of data interoperability across departments contributes to inaccurate reporting and limits transparency for both internal and external stakeholders. The lack of an integrated digital platform to support the real-time planning, implementation, and monitoring of institutional policies is a major obstacle to effective governance. Human resource capacity also poses a significant challenge. The low level of digital literacy and limited understanding of public administration innovation among educational staff hinder the process of managerial transformation. Moreover, the absence of institutional policies that promote a work culture rooted in information technology and transparency exacerbates the gap between ideal governance standards and on-the-ground realities. These conditions highlight the urgent need for innovation in public administration management systems to strengthen institutional accountability and respond to the evolving demands of higher education in the digital era.

Several previous studies have emphasised the importance of innovation in public administration management to enhance the quality of governance in higher education institutions. The implementation of digital-based academic management information systems has been shown to improve service efficiency and strengthen transparency in public universities [14]. Innovations in public administration that utilise information technology also contribute positively to reinforcing accountability, particularly in areas such as financial management and academic reporting [20]. Furthermore, active participation from the academic community in administrative processes can accelerate the transformation toward more democratic and transparent governance [6]. However, most of these studies focus on large, urban-based institutions and tend to emphasise the technical aspects of information system innovations. There is a lack of research exploring the managerial dynamics and implementation challenges of public administration innovations in private universities located in 3T (Frontier, Outermost, and Disadvantaged) areas, such as STIE ST. Theresa. In reality, local contextual factors such as limited infrastructure, human resource constraints, and institutional capacity play a critical role in shaping the success of innovation at the institutional level.

This research seeks to address this gap by examining the practices, challenges, and strategies related to public administration management innovation at STIE ST. Theresa, Merauke. The study aims to offer both theoretical and practical contributions in developing an adaptive, transparent, and accountable model of university governance tailored to the local context. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on public administration management innovation within a private university located in a remote border region. This area remains underexplored in existing academic literature. Unlike previous studies that predominantly examine well-established institutions with access to advanced digital infrastructure, this research adopts a contextual approach that considers local challenges, including technological limitations, human resource capacity, and institutional dynamics, in 3T regions. As such, this study presents an original contribution by mapping out realistic and applicable innovation strategies to promote transparent and accountable university governance across diverse geographic and socio-institutional contexts. The specific objective of this research is to analyse the forms of public administration management innovation and evaluate their effectiveness in promoting transparent and accountable governance at STIE St. Teresa.

2. Methods

This research employs a qualitative case study design to explore in depth the phenomenon of innovation in public administration management at STIE ST. Theresa. This approach was selected for its ability to capture the complexity of the social, cultural, and institutional contexts that shape innovation and governance processes within higher education. The case study method enables the researcher to holistically understand the institution's internal dynamics and to examine the interrelationships among actors, policies, and administrative systems. Emphasising the local context is particularly important given the unique geographic challenges and resource limitations characteristic of border areas such as Merauke.

The study was conducted at STIE ST. Theresa, between November 2024 and January 2025. This period was strategically chosen as it coincides with the end of the academic semester, a time marked by heightened administrative activity. This timing provided the researcher with valuable opportunities to directly observe ongoing administrative processes and innovations in practice. Moreover, it enabled comprehensive data triangulation, as academic reporting documents and activities were actively produced and implemented during this time. The research subjects comprised several groups of respondents with direct involvement in the campus administrative system. The primary respondents included members of the institutional leadership, including the Chairperson, the Vice Chairperson for Academic and Administrative Affairs, and the Head of the Administration Unit. In addition, administrative staff from various departments, including finance, academic affairs, and student services, were also involved. Complementary respondents consisted of lecturers and students, who provided critical perspectives as users of administrative services. Respondents were selected purposively based on their active engagement in administrative processes and their ability to provide in-depth insights into the forms of innovation, challenges encountered, and perceptions regarding transparency and accountability in institutional governance.

Data were collected using three main techniques: in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted to explore the respondents' perceptions, experiences, and understanding of public administration practices on campus. Participatory observation allowed the researcher to directly observe administrative processes and interactions between units. Document analysis was used to examine institutional policies, standard operating procedures, and the application of information technology in governance. All data collected were analysed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model of qualitative data analysis, which consists of three concurrent activities: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. To ensure the validity of the findings, the researcher employed triangulation across techniques and data sources by comparing insights from interviews, observations, and documentary evidence to strengthen the credibility and reliability of the research results.

3. Results

Based on the data collection and analysis conducted through interviews, observations, and document analysis at STIE ST. Theresa, this study identified several key findings that reflect the actual conditions surrounding the implementation of innovations in public administration management. These findings reveal the institution's main challenges and potential strategies to strengthen transparent, accountable governance. The following section presents a systematic overview of the research results (Table 1).

Table 1: Identification of public administration management innovations at STIE. St. Teresa Maro, Merauke

Forms of Innovation Applied	Implementation Description	Visible Impact
Digitalisation of the Academic System	Use of simple applications for KRS filling, lecturer assessment, and grade recap	Improve access to academic information and minimise reliance on manual processes.
Financial System Digitalisation	Use of a digital system for tuition payments and financial reports Improve payment recording	transparency and time efficiency
Administrative Delegation of Authority	Delegation of some administrative processes to faculty or study program work units	Accelerate service processes and reduce bureaucratic complexity
Simplification of Service Procedure Flow	Reduction of bureaucratic steps in correspondence and academic licensing services and process efficiency	Improve student satisfaction
Implementation of Google Workspace-Based Information System	Utilisation of the campus email, Google Drive, and Google Form for data Collection efficiency	Ease inter-unit coordination and documentation

The results revealed that STIE ST. Theresa, Merauke has implemented several innovations in public administration management, including the digitisation of academic and financial systems, the delegation of authority to individual work units, and the simplification of service procedures. These initiatives have contributed to streamlining administrative processes, enhancing time efficiency, and promoting greater transparency and accountability. Moreover, the adoption of digital platforms such as Google Workspace has further strengthened coordination and documentation across campus units (Table 2).

Table 2: Effectiveness of innovation on transparency and accountability at STIE. St. Teresa Maro, Merauke

Aspects Analyzed	Research Findings	Additional Information
Academic Information Disclosure	Improved access to information through digital notice boards and online groups.	However, it is not yet comprehensive, especially for financial data and program evaluation.
Speed of Administrative Services	The administration process (KRS, correspondence) becomes faster and more efficient.	Efficiency is achieved through the delegation of authority to units and the use of online forms.
Integrated Digital System	There is no centralised information system that integrates academic and financial data.	It is still done manually or semi-digitally with various separate platforms.
Institutional Policies that Support Innovation	There are no formal regulations and specific SOPs to support administrative innovation.	Innovation is still incidental and based on individual initiatives.
Administrative Process Accountability	A simple reporting system and transparency in the use of activity budgets are being put in place.	Not yet accompanied by a systematic internal audit mechanism.

The findings suggest that innovations in administrative management at STIE ST. Theresa has begun to positively influence institutional transparency and accountability, particularly by enhancing access to academic information and expediting administrative services. Nonetheless, the effectiveness of these innovations remains constrained by the lack of an integrated digital infrastructure and by the absence of comprehensive institutional regulations. Administrative processes continue to operate in a fragmented manner, with innovation efforts largely driven by individual initiatives rather than being institutionalised through standardised procedures and clearly defined Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Although accountability has started to develop through routine activity reporting, it is not yet supported by systematic evaluation mechanisms or internal audit processes (Table 3).

Table 3: Obstacles to the implementation of public administration management innovations at STIE. St. Teresa Maro, Merauke

Types of constraints	Description
IT Infrastructure Limitations	Access to hardware and internet networks has not been evenly distributed across all work units.
Low HR Capacity in IT	Many administrative staff do not have optimal skills in operating the application.
Work Culture is Not Accountable and Transparent	There is still resistance to the change from manual to digital systems, as well as weak internal controls.

This study found that the implementation of innovation in public administration management at STIE ST. Theresa, Merauke, still faces several challenges. The primary obstacle is limited information technology infrastructure, particularly regarding the availability of devices and network stability within work units. Additionally, the limited capacity of human resources to operate digital applications hampers the effectiveness of technology-based administrative services. Furthermore, a work culture that lacks full accountability and transparency presents another challenge, as evidenced by resistance to digital systems and weak internal supervision and accountability in the performance of administrative tasks (Table 4).

Table 4: Strategy for strengthening campus governance innovation

Recommended Strategy	Explanation
Digital Literacy Improvement	Regular training and technical assistance for administrative and academic staff.
Development of an Integrated Information System	Integration of academic, financial, and student data in one digital platform.
Strengthening Leadership Commitment	Proactive leadership in driving innovation and shaping an adaptive work culture.

In response to these constraints, this research recommends several strategies to strengthen innovation. Enhancing digital literacy is a top priority, which can be achieved through training programs and technical assistance to help administrative staff adapt to technology-based systems. Furthermore, the study emphasises the importance of developing an integrated management information system to efficiently coordinate academic, financial, and student administrative services. The final strategy highlights the need to strengthen leadership commitment in fostering an innovative, adaptive, and accountable organisational culture that supports the sustainable transformation of campus governance.

4. Discussion

The transformation of public administration in higher education has become an urgent necessity in addressing the challenges of globalisation, digitalisation, and increasing demands for public accountability [7]; [2]. In the context of STIE ST. Theresa, the managerial innovations that have begun to be implemented, although still at a basic level, reflect institutional awareness of the importance of efficiency and effectiveness in campus public services. The adoption of a simple digital administration system for academic and financial services signals a paradigm shift from manual governance to a system that is more adaptive and responsive to stakeholder needs [9]. These innovations mark the beginning of a managerial transformation aligned with the principles of good governance, particularly transparency and service excellence. For instance, the digitisation of payment processes and academic reporting facilitates student access and enhances data accuracy. It also reduces practices that may compromise accountability. Although gradual, this transformation lays a crucial foundation for developing data- and evidence-based governance, which remains a significant challenge among many private universities in underdeveloped, frontier, and outermost (3T) regions [10].

The implementation of this innovation still faces various structural and cultural challenges. Limited information technology infrastructure and the limited capacity of human resources to manage digital systems are the main barriers to accelerating the transformation process. Additionally, a bureaucratic culture that remains conventional and lacks innovation further hinders adaptation to modern governance practices. Therefore, internal policies are required that are not only technical but also strategic, aimed at fostering a work environment that supports innovation, continuous learning, and the progressive use of technology [18]. Within this framework, the transformation of public administration should not be perceived merely as a procedural update but as a comprehensive change process that demands visionary leadership and the active participation of all campus stakeholders [11]. STIE ST. Theresa, Merauke, must incorporate managerial innovation into its long-term institutional strategy, aligning it with a performance-based monitoring and evaluation system. By establishing a modern administrative foundation, institutional governance will not only become more efficient and transparent but also capable of enhancing the quality of competitive and inclusive higher education services in border regions [3].

Although innovative policies have been formulated in public administration management, this study finds that field-level implementation has not fully reflected the intended objectives [3]. Strategic plans aimed at fostering transparent and accountable governance are often hampered by internal institutional factors, such as the lack of organisational readiness to absorb change [23]. This indicates a gap between policy formulation at the leadership level and the operational capacity of administrative units responsible for implementing those policies on campus. One of the primary challenges identified is the limitation in both the quantity and quality of human resources. Many administrative staff members lack adequate competence in managing information technology or understanding the principles of public accountability. Consequently, many digital-based innovative policies are not optimally implemented due to low levels of digital literacy among support personnel. In this context, innovation requires not only technological tools but also human resources who are prepared to adopt and adapt to systemic change [13].

In addition to human resource constraints, inadequate digital infrastructure poses a significant technical barrier. Unstable internet access, limited hardware availability, and the absence of an integrated management information system impede the comprehensive implementation of administrative digitisation policies. This results in delayed administrative processes, inaccurate data, and restricted access to public information, contradicting the principles of transparent governance. The continued reliance on manual processes further obstructs the practical application of policy innovation. Another critical challenge is the absence of consistent and sustainable internal regulations to serve as a reference point for implementing innovation. Existing regulations tend to be temporary and lack the normative strength needed to foster an innovative work culture on campus [22].

This situation illustrates that the success of administrative policies is not solely determined by the design of the policy itself, but also by the extent to which the organisational structure and implementation mechanisms are capable of internalising the spirit of change. Therefore, a comprehensive approach is needed, one that not only focuses on policy innovation but also on reforming supporting structures and strengthening implementation capacity at the grassroots level. Institutional leadership plays a central role in driving managerial reform and fostering public administration innovation in higher education at STIE ST [2]. The leadership style of campus administrators largely influences Theresa's policy direction and decision-making. Findings indicate that while there were initial efforts toward administrative digitisation, the transformation process remained

unstructured due to its top-down nature and lack of participatory involvement from internal stakeholders. Effective leadership in this context requires not only a visionary approach but also the ability to mobilise resources and cultivate a collaborative work environment [21]

The success of leadership in facilitating change largely depends on the sustainability of long-term commitments. In practice, administrative transformation efforts are often impeded by weak policy continuity and the absence of robust monitoring systems to ensure that implementation stays on track. Commitment must be demonstrated not only through formal policies but also through tangible actions, such as training facilitation, enhancing digital literacy, and strengthening interdepartmental coordination. Without sustained commitment, initiated reforms tend to be sporadic and lack institutional impact [12]. Moreover, the prevailing organisational culture within the campus significantly influences the extent to which innovation can be embraced and internalised by academic and administrative personnel [16]. A work culture that remains bureaucratic and resistant to change is a major barrier to implementing modern administrative systems. Establishing a culture of transparency and data-driven evaluation remains a challenge, particularly in the absence of incentive or reward systems that promote innovative and accountable work practices. Thus, leadership must act not only as decision-makers but also as cultural agents capable of embedding the values of change into the organisation's daily routines.

The limited involvement of administrative and academic support staff in policy formulation and evaluation processes has weakened the institution's responsiveness to innovation. Inclusive policymaking is essential for fostering a sense of ownership and enhancing institutions' adaptive capacity [15]. These findings indicate that innovation cannot succeed without the active participation of all organisational elements. Therefore, to build transparent and accountable governance, leadership must promote open dialogue, enhance internal communication, and foster cross-level collaboration within the campus ecosystem. The urgency of digitisation in higher education administrative governance is increasingly evident, driven by growing demands for transparency, efficiency, and public accountability at STIE ST. Theresa, administrative digitisation remains partial and fragmented [1]. While academic and financial information systems have been introduced, they are not yet integrated into a unified platform that supports comprehensive monitoring and reporting. The absence of such integration means that decision-making still relies on manual reports, which are susceptible to delays, data inaccuracies, and declining public service quality in the higher education sector.

Implementing an integrated management information system not only streamlines campus operations but also serves as a strategic instrument for building data-driven governance and accountability. However, the findings reveal that the success of digitisation is highly dependent on the readiness of the human resources managing these systems. Limited digital competence, insufficient training, and resistance to change are the primary obstacles that must be addressed. As such, enhancing human resource capacity through ongoing training, cultivating a technology-adaptive work culture, and providing technical support are essential prerequisites for optimising public administration innovation on campus. The findings from STIE ST. Theresa, make a significant contribution to the development of higher education governance theory based on public management innovation. In the context of border regions, governance practices cannot be equated with those of institutions located in urban areas. A contextual approach is necessary—one that considers local characteristics such as infrastructural limitations, disparities in technological access, and the socio-cultural background of human resources. Accordingly, successful public administration innovations in this context represent a localised adaptation of good governance principles, particularly transparency and accountability.

This research not only offers practical recommendations for improving campus governance but also contributes to the academic literature on the implementation of public administration innovations in private universities situated in frontier, outermost, and underdeveloped (3T) regions. These findings highlight the importance of tailoring governance models to the specific challenges and opportunities present in such settings, thereby providing a richer understanding of how innovation functions in non-urban institutional contexts. The insights gained through this study may serve as a foundation for adaptive policymaking by stakeholders at both local and national levels. Moreover, the contextual approach employed here can be adopted by other institutions operating under similar conditions, strengthening efforts to build inclusive, transparent, and competitive higher education governance amid the evolving demands of the digital era.

5. Conclusion

The success of administrative digitisation cannot be separated from the broader transformation of institutional governance. Innovation in public sector administration, particularly in higher education institutions in underdeveloped and remote regions, requires a holistic vision that aligns digital reform with institutional values, leadership, and stakeholder engagement, in the context of STIE ST. Theresa, digitisation efforts should not be implemented as isolated technological interventions, but as part of a systemic change toward responsive, efficient, and transparent governance. Moreover, administrative innovation should be accompanied by a transformation in service orientation. The delivery of academic and administrative services must prioritise responsiveness to student needs, data accuracy, and accessibility. A digitised system is not an end in itself, but a means to

ensure better performance, accountability, and user satisfaction. Therefore, digital governance should be evaluated based on its impact on institutional performance indicators, particularly those related to service delivery and stakeholder trust.

Institutional capacity building becomes a critical enabler in this process. This involves not only enhancing individual digital skills but also developing institutional routines, protocols, and standard operating procedures that support innovation. Policy innovation without operational readiness risks generating implementation gaps. As such, universities in remote regions must prioritise investments in digital infrastructure, capacity development, and cross-functional collaboration to ensure that innovations are effectively adopted at all levels. Leadership development is also essential in creating an innovation ecosystem. Leaders must be equipped with digital literacy, strategic management skills, and change management capabilities. In higher education institutions where leadership often shifts due to organisational changes or political cycles, leadership continuity must be supported through institutional frameworks that embed innovation as a collective agenda rather than a personal initiative. This strengthens organisational resilience and protects innovation from leadership transitions or policy discontinuities. In addition, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanisms must be integrated into the digital governance framework. Periodic assessments, feedback loops, and evidence-based reporting are necessary to track progress, identify barriers, and realign strategies.

The lack of M&E systems can lead to blind implementation and policy stagnation. Therefore, STIE ST. Theresa and similar institutions must ensure that innovation efforts are supported by robust data-collection and analysis tools that inform continuous improvement. The broader implication of this study lies in the importance of contextualising public administration reforms within the unique socio-economic and geographic realities of 3T (frontier, outermost, and underdeveloped) regions. National education policies must be flexible enough to allow institutional adaptation, while local institutions must be empowered to design innovations that respond to local constraints and opportunities. The findings emphasise the need for multi-level policy support from local governments, central education authorities, and international partners to collectively strengthen innovation capacity in peripheral higher education institutions. Administrative innovation in higher education, particularly in the 3T (terdepan, terluar, tertinggal) frontier, outermost, underdeveloped) regions require an integrative approach that blends digital transformation, organisational reform, and cultural adaptation. The experience of STIE ST. Theresa serves as a compelling example of how context-sensitive strategies can drive meaningful change and strengthen institutional resilience in the digital era.

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