Comparative Analysis of Bureaucratic Efficiency in Educational Service Delivery: Lessons from the Philippines and Thailand

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Abstract: *This study examines the impact of decentralization, digital governance, and quality assurance procedures on bureaucratic efficiency in the educational services of the Philippines and Thailand. It employs qualitative comparative case-study research and document analysis, drawing on policy reports, peer-reviewed journals, and government reports and publications, to determine if administrative systems and reform efforts improve or hinder service delivery in each country. The results show that the Philippine bureaucratic system is extremely centralized, which makes it uniform but lowers flexibility and responsiveness because there is less autonomy, and school-level resource allocation is delayed. Thailand has formalized its Local Administrative Organizations (LAOs) to provide a more locally focused governance system; however, there is an unequal application and no unifying accountability framework, particularly in provinces with limited administrative capacity. Both countries argue that decentralization alone cannot improve results without money, training, and institutional transparency. Digital governance tools, such as the Philippines' Learner Information System (LIS) and Thailand's localized monitoring systems, have improved only specific administrative tasks; however, infrastructure constraints and imbalanced decision-making reduce overall efficiency. Quality assurance systems are often onerous and compliance-driven, lacking developmental value and feedback mechanisms that could enhance institutional learning and improvement. Finally, the study found that bureaucracy efficiency in educational services requires a logical strategy that combines governance design, digital innovation, and accountability models. Improving local capacity, streamlining government administrative tasks, consolidating digital infrastructure investments, and creating quality-assurance mechanisms that focus on continual improvement will strengthen the policy. Southeast Asian policymakers seeking eco-friendly and context-sensitive education reforms can draw lessons from these experiences.*

Keywords: *Development administration, bureaucratic efficiency, decentralization, digital governance, quality assurance, comparative analysis, Philippines, Thailand*

Introduction

One of the most significant factors affecting the quality, accessibility, and sustainability of education services provided in Southeast Asia is bureaucratic efficiency. In the Philippines and Thailand, the reforms have been hindered by a legacy of inefficiencies rooted in centralized forms of organization, divided accountability, and disproportionate resource allocation (Macas & Morris, 2020; Unger & Mahakanjana, 2020). In the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) is also struggling with the existence of overlapping administrative duties, high turnover among leaders, and a lack of infrastructure at both the school and district levels (Second Congressional Commission on Education [EDCOM II], 2024, 2025). Thailand faces similar issues, including the

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unwieldiness of policy management, a lack of autonomy in schools, and inefficiencies in centralized decision-making policies (Sivaraks, 2021; Cameron, 2022). It is, hence, the comparison of the bureaucratic mechanisms of the two countries that helps in understanding how development administration frameworks make a difference in educational outcomes. This paper examines how decentralization and digital governance interact with quality assurance systems to ensure efficiency in the bureaucracy of basic education in the two regions.

Decentralization has become a fundamental pillar in the governance of public education in both countries; however, the practice has shown significant differences. In Thailand, constitutional amendments in 1997 and the establishment of Local Administrative Organizations (LAOs) aimed to decentralize power, along with administrative and financial authority, to the local level of government (Sivaraks, 2021; Unger & Mahakanjana, 2020). The later political processes, however, led to partial recentralization, causing misalignments in local control and confusion in roles (Chomprang-Wongrusmeeduan, 2021). The Philippines has a very high level of bureaucratic hierarchy, with central offices, regional directorates, division levels, and school district levels that usually slow down the process of policy execution and undermine local decision-making (EDCOM II, 2024; Wikipedia, 2024a). Despite these problems in these two countries, digital innovations have been implemented to overcome the challenges of bureaucratic inertia. The Learners Information System (LIS) in the Philippines aims to simplify enrollment and record-keeping procedures, thereby unloading them from school administrations (Wikipedia, 2023a). This paper thus assesses the complexity of these systems in achieving centralization ambitions through functional digital governmental instruments to enhance the efficiency of the administrative process.

There is another level of complication in the form of quality assurance and accountability mechanisms. Thailand, particularly in higher education, as well as in other aspects of life, becomes hindered by bureaucratic control when multiple layers of bureaucracy are imposed, resulting in duplicate norms and disjointed reviews (Rattanuntapat, 2022; Kaewkumkong, 2022). Differences in the distribution of budgets between provinces also have a direct impact on the work of schools and the results of students (Chomprang-Wongrusmeeduan, 2021). Public-private partnerships (PPPs), such as the Education Service Contracting (ESC) program, have increased availability and alleviated pressure on the public system in the Philippines (Tan, 2021). However, the latest EDCOM II reports highlight the persistent ineffectiveness of the public bureaucracy, including the presence of unqualified administrators, strict financial management, and inadequate control systems (EDCOM II, 2024, 2025). The comparison of these forms of governance aims to evaluate the most successful strategies for ensuring smooth operations while protecting educational quality and equity.

The COVID-19 pandemic proved to be a pivotal event in the field of administrative innovation, showcasing bureaucratic resilience. In Thailand, the crisis has led to significant changes, including the implementation of the coding curriculum pilot, sandbox, and blended learning programs (Thai Ministry of Education, 2021). Such interventions demonstrated the state's flexibility in offering localized, personalized learning options. The action plan that was taken in the Philippines is the Department of Education (DepEd) implemented emergency digital tools, such as the Enhanced Basic Education Enrollment Form and monitoring platforms that were based on LIS and continued the delivery of service in situations when lockdown was in place (EDCOM II, 2025). Although these tools

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bridged the access gap, they also revealed the digital divide more so in rural settings (Macas & Morris, 2020).

The paper examines the response of bureaucratic systems of each of the countries to the pandemic and the possibility of institutionalizing the introduced innovations to promote long-lasting enhancement. This comparative analysis offers evidence-based insights into practices that could be considered bureaucratic and would enhance the provision of educational services, particularly in settings faced with resource-constrained policy environments undergoing rapid shifts.

Objectives of the Study

The current research aimed to assess and compare the bureaucratic effectiveness of the two educational service delivery systems in the Philippines and Thailand. This has been a building on three interconnected goals:

1. To compare and contrast the bureaucracies and administration processes operating in the delivery of basic education services within the Philippines and Thailand;

2. To evaluate how decentralization, digital governance, and quality assurance systems serve or hinder bureaucratic efficiency in the two nations.

3. To draw policy implications and practical suggestions from the comparative analysis that can later be used to improve the governance of education and the efficiency of the public administration in Southeast Asia.

Methodology

In this study, a qualitative comparative case study design was employed to assess the level of bureaucratic efficiency in education service delivery mechanisms in the Philippines and Thailand. Given that the methodology examines policy implementation in detail and the work of institutions in real-life governance situations, the case study methodology was particularly suitable (Yin, 2018). The focus on analysis was on the bureaucratic configuration of the two education sectors in each country, how administrative procedures influence policy enforcement, and how bureaucratic performance is enhanced or hindered by reforms such as decentralization, digital governance, and quality assurance. In its attempt to bring in nuanced and contextual findings that would be valuable both to theoretical pursuits and the development of administrative practice, the study restricted its comparative scope to the basic education bureaucracies of the two countries.

The main method of data collection was the analysis of documents. This methodical process involves an overview and assessment of printed or online resources directly applicable to the research question (Bowen, 2009). The reasons why this kind of analysis is important, especially in research on governance, are that it provides detailed empirical data based on official reports, policy documents, evaluation studies, and institutional publications. In this research, the writings of the government of the Philippines under the Department of Education (DepEd) and the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) in Thailand; reports of the Congress, specifically the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II); annual reports of education performance; peace laws; internal audit reports; and peer-reviewed publications and institutionally validated papers in the year 2020 to 2024 were used. All the documents were selected based on their relevance, authenticity, and ability to shed light on bureaucratic practices and the evolution of reform directions.

Data analysis was conducted using a thematic content analysis pattern modeled by Braun and Clarke (2006), a six-step process that includes familiarization with the material,

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generation of initial codes, emergence of themes, refinement of the themes, definition of each theme, and preparation of the final report. Identical trends emerged regarding bureaucratic arrogance, the impact of decentralization, quality assurance measures, digitalization projects, and the means to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic. A comparative stance was then employed to identify congruencies and differences between the two case contexts. Through the analytic portion, qualitative rigor-based quality standards have been adhered to, i.e., credibility, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). When possible, the triangulation process supported these standards by introducing numerous and varied sources of documents into the thematic concerns analysis, thus eliminating a degree of bias and improving reliability.

Multiple options were taken to ensure the credibility of the findings. To start with, an audit trail was evident where the date, source, and relevance of every document consulted were registered. Second, verification of emergent themes and interpretations was made possible through debriefing sessions with education policy experts. Third, the study incorporated the component of reflexivity, which enabled the researchers to be aware of possible cultural or methodological biases that could interfere with policy interpretation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). By basing the analysis on publicly available documents, the study aimed to ensure the ethical nature of the research and develop a replicable methodology that could be further used to examine the phenomenon of bureaucratic efficiency in a publicly funded system of education.

Results and Discussions

1. The bureaucratic structures and administrative processes governing basic education service delivery in the Philippines and Thailand

1.1 Bureaucratic Structure of Basic Education. Elementary and secondary school governance in the Philippines is the responsibility of the Department of Education (DepEd), which has a very centralized bureaucratic structure. The Department of Education (DepEd) has four administrative levels: the Central Office, Regional Offices, School Division Offices, and individual schools (EDCOM II, 2024). Despite the constant demands of reformers for decentralization, blanket policymaking, such as allocating budgets, staffing, and designing curricula, is still largely conducted at the national level (Tan, 2021; SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2022). The result of such concentration is bureaucratic congestion, slower realization of local solutions, and a reduction in school capacity to respond to local needs (EDCOM II, 2025).

The Thai education system is overseen by the Ministry of Education (MoE), which is supported by the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) for primary and secondary schooling. In compliance with the 1999 National Education Act and the 1997 Constitution, Thailand has introduced the aspects of decentralization to transfer the role of education to Local Administrative Organizations (LAOs) (Sivaraks, 2021). However, it has been introduced in a piecemeal manner; most LAOs are ill-equipped, in terms of power or capacity, to handle school operations efficiently (Chomprang-Wongrusmeeduan, 2021). Despite increased local input into the structure, centralized governance institutions led by OBEC remain in place for essential decisions, such as staffing, curriculum policy, and substantial funding, as noted by Unger and Mahakanjana (2020).

1.2 Administrative Processes in Basic Education. The administrative setup of basic education in the Philippines is largely top-down and policy-based, as authority flows through multiple levels of bureaucracy between the Central Office and individual schools. Such an arrangement often breeds possible delays in implementation and disparities in

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accountability situations, particularly in the distribution and provision of school resources and learning materials (EDCOM II, 2024). Such shortcomings were further revealed during the COVID-19 pandemic, as a set of failures in the timely supply of modular materials was registered, along with varying degrees of local response (ADB, 2021). However, the digitalization of information, specifically the Learner Information System (LIS) and Basic Education Information System (BEIS) programs, has become increasingly important for data collection and tracking of student enrollment, as well as the targeting of resources, at the Department of Education Planning Service (DepEd Planning Service, 2022). These inventions have also eased administrative activities at the school level and lessened the burden on teaching staff.

In contrast, the administrative structures of Thai education are shaped by a compound governance system that places the Office of the Budget alongside Local Administrative Organisations (LAOs). Local Authorities (LAOs) in municipalities, which possess significant fiscal capacities, have been participating in procurement, infrastructure development, and school improvement programs, which have proven to be rather efficient (Kaewkumkong, 2022). Nevertheless, differences in levels of administrative capacity among provinces are high (inter-province), and variance has remained high, especially between urban and less resourceful rural districts (Chomprang-Wongrusmeeduan, 2021). To further complicate matters, overlapping responsibilities between LAOs and regional education offices create ambiguities in accountabilities and reporting relationships (Rattananuntapat, 2022). Despite such hindrances, there are instances of LAOs implementing decentralized or school-based administration regimes and digital monitoring tools, particularly during the pandemic (Thai Ministry of Education, 2021).

1.3 Comparative Insights. When compared to each other, the structure of bureaucracy and administration in the Philippines and Thailand has various comprehensive issues, as well as different traces of development. Both countries also support decentralization but practice has delivered different results where the Philippines maintains a severely centralized structure with minimal local discretion and thus makes it slow to respond and expand local autonomy (Tan, 2021; SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2022), and Thailand is experiencing semi-decentralized design with more local involvement but with poorer accountability and local administrative capacity (Sivaraks, 2021; EDCOM II, 2025). However, regardless of structural differences, these two systems face similar mandatory requirements, inadequate monitoring systems, and underutilization of digital tools, especially in rural areas (DepEd Planning Service, 2022; Chomprang-Wongrusmeeduan, 2021). Examples such as the Learner Information System in the Philippines or localized e-governance pilots in Thailand suit the purposes of digital governance initiatives; however, their capabilities are not fully exploited due to the associated limitations of infrastructure and capacity (Thai Ministry of Education, 2021). The results highlight that the key factors contributing to bureaucratic efficiency in education lie in the design of institutions, coherence in policy enactment, and alignment of digital and human resources. A comparative dimension, therefore, helps in learning across countries and the application of best practices in adapting them to the administration of public education.

The literature is therefore greatly enriched by the study because it explains the relevance of structural design, administrative capacity, and the facilitation of reforms to the delivery of educational services in different governance contexts. The comparison of a centralized bureaucracy in the Philippines with a semi-decentralized one in Thailand helps to understand the interrelation between administrative organization and service delivery

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efficiency, as it is evident that decentralization alone does not and cannot lead to better performance without a thorough supporting institutional system and a principal accountability scheme. Alongside this, the paper has highlighted the strategic value of digital governance in mitigating the effects of bureaucratic inefficiencies, warning that the future of administrative work must incorporate technology beyond operational efficiency to promote the concepts of transparency, responsiveness, and equity. Therefore, it is proposed that development managers and policymakers should adopt context-sensitive, capacity-based approaches that strike a balance between the structural design and operational realities within cross-national education governance.

2. The extent to which decentralization, digital governance, and quality assurance mechanisms contribute to or hinder bureaucratic efficiency in the two countries

2.1 Decentralization and Bureaucratic Efficiency. Nevertheless, the Philippine educational system remains highly centralized, despite ongoing reform efforts. Budgetary, personnel, and resource purchasing powers are geographically centralized in the Central Office of the Department of Education (DepEd), which reduces the ability of local schools to implement policies tailored to regional needs (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2022; EDCOM II, 2025). Despite the regional and division offices implemented by DepEd, these institutions are inclined to serve as pipelines for policies that lack distinction as autonomous sovereign organizations, and as a result, other problems negatively affect bureaucratic efficiency and discourage timeliness (Brillantes & Fernandez, 2023). Policies like School-Based Management (SBM) aim to empower schools; however, schools have not yet enjoyed full fiscal and operational autonomy, particularly in resource-limited localities (DepEd Planning Service, 2022).

In Thailand, however, the influence of more vigorous efforts at decentralization has been evident, especially among the more robust Local Administrative Organizations (LAOs) that the 1999 National Education Act strengthened. Some Local Administrative Officers (LAOs) have the mandate to hire employees, design budgets, and control schools (Sivaraks, 2021). However, it is not balanced in its application: policies cannot be easily implemented in local governments with limited technical and financial resources, resulting in unequal educational performance outcomes across provinces (Chomprang-Wongrusmeeduan, 2021; Unger & Mahakanjana, 2020). Practically, high recentralization persists, and the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) continues to formulate policy and distribute funds, thereby facing duplication and accountability issues.

2.2 Digital Governance and Administrative Modernization. As a partial response, digital governance has turned out to be an antidote to bureaucratic delays in the Philippine education system. The Learner Information System (LIS) and Basic Education Information System (BEIS), among others, have enabled the collection of more accurate and real-time data on areas such as enrollment and teacher deployment information on school profiles (DepEd Planning Service, 2022). The platforms have eliminated the time-consuming paperwork processes and increased clarity in performance-monitoring initiatives among school administrators. However, barriers still exist, particularly regarding the low proliferation of infrastructure, especially in geographically remote and underprivileged zones (GIDAs), where the internet remains sparse and ICT skills are scarce (ADB, 2021; EDCOM II, 2024). Furthermore, the utilization of digital tools in planning and resource allocation is not yet fully incorporated, which can diminish their potential impact on the system's efficiency.

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Similar trends have been observed in the Ministry of Education in Thailand. New motechnologies they have piloted include an electronic budgeting platform and electronic report cards at a national and local level, as well as e-learning modules that are locally contextualized (examples include the use of electronic budgeting systems, school report card systems, and locally defined e-learning modules by the Office for Basic Education Commission (OBEC) and the Local Administration Organizations (LAOs) (Thai Ministry of Education, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic also intensified these moves, with certain provinces undertaking real-time tracking of school attendance and delivery of learning materials through the use of digital media. However, digital governance remains unintegrated, with poor interoperability between core and peripheral databases, as well as a lopsided ICT infrastructure that extends beyond main cities (Kaewkumkong, 2022). Although some LAOs have adopted a digital workflow to simplify procurement and resource-tracking processes, the rest of the education bureaucracy still relies on paper-based processes.

2.3 Quality Assurance Mechanisms and Accountability. The Philippines' system of education incorporates a mixture of both internal quality assurance tools, including school report cards and performance budgeting, and external assessments, most notably the National Achievement Tests and evaluations by the Quality Assurance Division of the Department of Education. Despite the presence of these mechanisms, they are often characterized by more compliance-based approaches, as opposed to improvement-oriented work that produces excessive bureaucratic requirements without corresponding growth in teaching and learning (Brillantes & Fernandez, 2023). Additionally, they are not implemented cohesively and with sufficient strength at regional and division levels, as they do not support accountability and administrative responsiveness (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2022; EDCOM II, 2025).

By contrast, the Thai quality assurance system is a mix of internal and external appraisals that are a requirement of the Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA). Schools must conduct their assessments and periodically undergo external assessment (Rattananuntapat, 2022). Although these practices offer an orderly approach to monitoring performance, bureaucracy's tediousness and limited scope have narrowed down the effects of these practices. The problem is that Local schools and Local Area Offices (LAOs) often have difficulties aligning national indicators with locally appropriate priorities, leading to the inappropriateness of the alignment between evaluation tools and administrative capacity (Sivaraks, 2021; Chomprang-Wongrusmeeduan, 2021). However, some LAOs have customized the national design to include participatory evaluation and a community school improvement plan.

2.4 Comparative Insights. This comparative approach means that, despite both the Philippines and Thailand having made significant strides towards decentralization of governance, improvement in digital governance, and demonstrating quality assurance, the results have been uneven, partly due to their institutional limitations and contextual conditions. Formal decentralization in the Philippines has not led to actual decentralization in the decision-making process, leaving school heads trapped in inflexible hierarchies and with limited freedom in fiscal decisions (EDCOM II, 2025; SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2022). The more devolved framework can implement localized innovation, although its design is unevenly applied to varying local capacities, resulting in inconsistent implementation (Sivaraks, 2021; Unger and Mahakanjana, 2020). Both LIS in the Philippines and ICT tools at the school level in Thailand are examples of digital governance initiatives that smooth

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out some administrative tasks in both countries, yet the use of these tools is minimal due to infrastructural weaknesses and lack of integration on a larger scale (DepEd Planning Service, 2022; Thai Ministry of Education, 2021).

On the same note, the systems of quality assurance in both countries appear to be compliance-based rather than development-oriented. As a result, although they add some administrative salutations, they do not ensure the positive development of educational results (Brillantes and Fernandez, 2023; Rattananuntapat, 2022). On the whole, these findings suggest that high-quality reforms need to be reinforced with capacity building, the alignment of institutions, and the institution of processes that are both centrally led and locally flexible.

The study's implications for comparative development administration are significant. Structural measures, such as decentralization or digitalization, will not necessarily improve the efficiency of bureaucracy; however, they must be supplemented by institutional capacity, an easily understandable accountability system, and flexible local governance. The case of the Philippines demonstrates that responsiveness can be hindered by centralization, even in formally decentralized systems, and lead to administrative blockages. Conversely, the experience of Thailand reveals that decentralization without proper support frameworks may lead to the disintegration of service delivery and the generation of unequal performance (Sivaraks, 2021; EDCOM II, 2025). For development administrators, these lessons demonstrate the importance of context-sensitive reforms, which extend beyond policymaking to encompass implementation relations, intergovernmental links, and equitable resource allocation.

In addition, the partially successful nature of digital governance and quality assurance systems in both countries highlights the importance of reconciling technological and assessment devices with the national context, as the processes of administrative modernization should not only strengthen but also not overload their effectiveness. The lessons are considered to be of great value to policymakers and international organizations engaged in reforming the public sector of developing countries.

3. *The policy insights and practical recommendations from the comparative analysis that may inform improvements in educational governance and public administration efficiency in Southeast Asia*

The comparison between the Philippine and Thai educational systems demonstrates that there are a series of policy lessons that may be generalized not only by all educational systems in Southeast Asia but also in regions where centralized control, financial constraints, and divided accountability are still some of the most predominant challenges to the success of educational governance. Top among these lessons are strong managerial accountability structures, decentralized decision-making that is evidence-based, and a fresh approach to equity within service delivery.

3.1 Decentralization Must Be Accompanied by Capacity-Building and Clear Role Delineation. Empirical evidence from Thailand suggests that decentralized governance or autonomy may not be sufficient when not complemented by investment in local institutional capacities. The ratio of Local Administrative Organizations (LAOs) that are not endowed adequately financially, technically, and humanly to manage schools is reported to be large (Sivaraks, 2021; Chomprang-Wongrusmeeduan, 2021). Information on the Philippines indicates a similar trend, in that decentralisation efforts, including School-Based Management (SBM), have been undertaken; however, their enforcement has been hampered by a lack of autonomy, limited options for budgetary control, and an

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unclear reporting structure (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2022; EDCOM II, 2025). To tackle decentralization, the authors advise jurisdictions to consider decentralization with a focus on the professional development of local education officials, the allocation of discretionary budgets to school leaders, and the formalization of the roles of central and subnational actors to reduce overlapping and clarify roles.

3.2 Digital Governance Should Be Scaled Up, Localized, and Institutionalized. Indeed, despite the adoption of the practices of digital platforms in both countries, e.g., the Learning Information System (LIS) in the Philippines and school-based monitoring systems in Thailand, the use of such applications is often insufficient due to digital divides, the disintegration of data collections, and a lack of staff training (DepEd Planning Service, 2022; Thai Ministry of Education, 2021). Digital governance, however, can significantly improve the situation, reducing bureaucratic loads, enabling real-time decision-making, and facilitating data-driven planning. The authors, thus, suggest that in order to achieve successful implementation of the digital strategy, the Ministries of Education in the region should consider implementing an integrated digital approach that would combine the functions of planning, budgeting, and monitoring and provide enough infrastructure support and support the development of digital literacy among the rural population and underserved communities.

3.3 Strengthen Accountability Through Integrated and Developmental Quality Assurance Systems. Thailand and the Philippines are already in a situation where they primarily use compliance-based quality assurance (QA) systems that result in extensive reporting but do not lead to visible improvements in teaching (Brillantes and Fernandez, 2023; Rattananuntapat, 2022). The external reviews in Thailand and the internal performance indicators in the Philippines operate in two distinct spheres, and little feedback is utilized to manage adaptive governance. A recommendation emerges: governments should adopt integrated quality assurance (QA) models that combine self-assessment with external evaluations, encourage the use of data to enhance school performance, and incorporate community and stakeholder assessments of school performance.

3.4 Promote Intergovernmental Coordination and Policy Coherence. Empirical studies have consistently shown that power is divided between national departments and local providers, resulting in the ineffective delivery of services and the waste of resources on redundant activities. This dynamics is especially relevant in Thailand, where the work of the Office of Basic Education Commission (OBEC) and Local Administrative Organizations (LAOs) overlaps, and in the Philippines, where various tiers of administrative approval are carried out. Southeast Asian governments should, in response, establish intergovernmental coordination organs for education policy, facilitate vertical policy interaction, and set up cross-purpose accountability mechanisms that ensure coherence from the national to the school levels.

3.5 Institutionalize Context-Sensitive and Inclusive Policy Design. The examples of the Philippines and Thailand demonstrate that reform models should be tailored to local contexts. A one-size-fits-all approach is more likely to overlook the social, economic, and cultural realities of specific communities (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2022; Kaewkumkong, 2022). This discussion suggests that policymakers should consider implementing context-specific planning systems that incorporate needs analyses, stakeholder consultations, and locally produced resources in their policy formulation

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process. At the same time, the implementation agencies are expected to be flexible while assuring national standards that guarantee equitable coverage across regions.

3.6 Ensure Equity in Resource Distribution and Access to Public Services. The given research adopts a comparative approach to analyzing the disparities in education between provinces and regions within the country, with a particular focus on rural and marginalized populations. There is evidence that shows that those inequities are magnified by bureaucratic inefficiencies and poor planning (ADB, 2021; Chomprang-Wongrusmeeduan, 2021). The paper thus recommends that education ministries should revisit equity-based budgetary frameworks that focus on schools with greater needs and introduce financial transparency systems to guide the distribution and use of funds.

3.7 Leverage Regional Platforms for Peer Learning and Reform Support. Various educational experiences in Southeast Asia not only provide a field of comparative studies but also offer potential for cross-sector learning. The successful examples of innovations — such as participatory school improvement planning in Thailand or digital enrollment tracking in the Philippines — can serve as models to be adapted for other contexts.

It is thus recommended that ASEAN and SEAMEO increase their contributions in terms of knowledge sharing, technical support, and capacity-building training to ensure cross-border cooperation in educational governance reforms. As reflected in the policy implications based on the comparative analysis, contextualization, integration, and participation have been referred to as important aspects in the conduct of reforms. In the case of Southeast Asia, where bureaucratic systems and development tasks have a much larger range and diversity, reforms need to proceed more comprehensively than with structural realignments to those systems that create institutional resilience, encourage local application of power, and deliver equitable results. Concisely speaking, development administration in education must be people-oriented, technology-facilitated, and performance-restrained to cater well to the emerging demands of the region.

Conclusion and Future Research

The current comparative study on the education systems of the Philippines and Thailand has revealed that bureaucratic efficiency in educational service delivery depends on the interaction of policy formulation, institutional capacity, and the implementation process, rather than administrative structure alone. Despite the Philippines having a highly centralized system that fosters conformity, it is often described as inefficient due to its frequent delays, low responsiveness, and limited autonomy in schools. Thailand, on the other hand, faces a highly semi-decentralized system that enables decisions to be made locally, but proves to be fragmented and uneven between local administrative organizations. These two situations illustrate how competing principles of centralized control and local empowerment cannot coexist or be implemented side by side within the context of certain limited governance reforms that lack a technical and fiscal assistance apparatus.

In the analysis, the digital governance tools and quality-assurance mechanisms that could enable both countries to improve various aspects of governance are underutilized, despite their potential, and are hindered by infrastructural weaknesses, fragmented utilization, and bureaucratic bottlenecks. The Learner Information System in the Philippines (LIS) and the localized e-governance programs in Thailand have brought improvements in data management and service monitoring, although they remain at a relatively low level of integration into broader planning and accounting systems. Similarly,

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quality assurance is primarily compliance-based and generates excessive amounts of paperwork without significant improvements in educational performance. Such findings justify the development of uniformity and context-responsive systems capable of delivering actual service in decision-making, innovation, and equity.

They should, therefore, taking into consideration that education development administration should be context-sensitive, capacity-building, and system-aligned, the study further insists. For the countries of the Southeast Asia region as they embark on their journey towards national reforms within a decentralised governance framework, the case studies of the Philippines and Thailand provide persuasive arguments in favour of embracing holistic reforms. Policies should be based on empirical realities, supported by investments in digital and human capital, and shaped by an orientation toward equity and institutional learning. Such comparative research can serve as a basis for cross-national cooperation, flexible policymaking, and long-term growth in efficiency and educational governance within the public sector.

The research, however, has limitations in that it is based on secondary research, relying on document analysis, which may lack lived experiences, informal practices, and on-the-ground challenges. The lack of primary data (such as interviews and surveys) prevents learning about the views of stakeholders, particularly at the local implementation level. The limited number of countries included in the comparative analysis, therefore, makes the applicability of results to the broader Southeast Asian scenario challenging, as governance systems and institutional strength differ drastically.

Further research should investigate the impact of political commitment, institutional culture, and community participation on decentralization and digital governance reform in education in Southeast Asia. Even though the analysis was based on the countries with administrative traditions that were very close to each other (bureaucratic efficiency in the Philippines and Thailand), comparative analysis between the countries with different administrative traditions, like Vietnam, Indonesia, and Malaysia, could provide even more information about the interrelation between the governance models and the outcomes of educational model. Additionally, longitudinal mixed-methods measurements are necessary to assess the long-term effects of digital and quality-assurance interventions on school performance and equity. There is more enlightenment to be had, including the views of the people who have to put them into effect, such as principals, individual teachers, and local education officers. These questions would guide more responsive, accommodating and evidence-based responses towards enhancing the administration of affairs in education.

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