Developing and Validating a Policy Governance Alignment Model to Improve Faculty Performance in Vocational Higher Education

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Abstract
The performance of lecturers in vocational higher education is increasingly challenged by rapid digital transformation, evolving industry demands, and fragmented institutional governance. Despite the existence of formal policy frameworks, many vocational institutions continue to experience substantial gaps between policy intentions and academic practice, which constrain faculty effectiveness in teaching, applied research, and community service. This study aims to develop and validate a Policy Governance Alignment Model (PGAM) designed to strengthen the coherence between institutional policies, academic governance, and faculty performance systems. Employing a Research and Development design with a mixed-methods approach, the study involved 128 participants from vocational higher education institutions in Indonesia and utilized document analysis, surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions. Empirical findings revealed that 72.9% of lecturers perceived institutional policies as partially aligned or misaligned with their professional responsibilities. After implementing PGAM for one academic semester, overall faculty performance increased by 18.6%, with the largest gains observed in applied research and industry-linked teaching. Expert validation confirmed the model's conceptual soundness and reliability. These results demonstrate that policy governance alignment functions as a critical institutional mechanism for improving faculty performance and sustaining quality in vocational higher education.

Keywords: Policy alignment, Faculty performance, Vocational education, Academic governance, Institutional policy

Introduction

The performance of lecturers in vocational higher education (VHE) is shaped by a complex interaction of digital transformation, pedagogical innovation, institutional support, and policy governance. Rapid advances in educational technology, particularly the integration of Artificial Intelligence Generated Content (AIGC), have created new opportunities for improving instructional efficiency, personalization, and industry relevance. However, these innovations have also generated significant challenges, especially when lecturers lack sufficient digital competencies or institutional support to effectively integrate technology into teaching and learning processes (Fu, 2025; Yang, 2025). The gap between technological potential and lecturers' practical ability to use digital tools remains one of the major barriers to high-quality vocational education.

Digitalization requires continuous professional upskilling. (Zhao, 2023) emphasizes that lecturers must constantly update their technological and pedagogical competencies to keep pace with changing instructional environments. However, many vocational institutions provide limited training and weak support systems, leaving lecturers unprepared to fully exploit digital platforms and online learning tools (Zhao, 2023). This results in uneven instructional quality and reduces student engagement, particularly in technology-mediated learning environments.

Methodological adaptability is another critical factor. Vocational education relies on experiential, problem-based, and industry-oriented learning. Nevertheless, empirical studies show that many lecturers still rely heavily on traditional lecture-based methods that are poorly aligned with contemporary student needs and workplace requirements (Wang et al., 2025; Zulkifli et al., 2022). Furthermore (Shibiti Mulaudzi, 2023) reports that lecturers often struggle to evaluate the effectiveness of innovative teaching strategies, leading to uncertainty and resistance to pedagogical change. Although Internet-based and blended learning approaches offer flexibility and learner autonomy, their success depends on adequate resources, monitoring mechanisms, and institutional commitment (Yang, 2025). Furthermore (Yang, 2025) further notes that insufficient infrastructure and weak quality assurance systems can undermine the benefits of digital learning, contributing to disparities in teaching quality across institutions. (Cao, 2023) similarly highlights the importance of supervision and evaluation mechanisms for improving instructional effectiveness in vocational colleges.

A reliable performance evaluation framework is therefore essential to ensure accountability and continuous improvement in VHE. (Zhao, 2024) proposes a multidimensional lecturer evaluation system that integrates teaching quality, applied research, and industry engagement. Such an approach reflects the distinctive mission of vocational education, which prioritizes practical competence and labor market relevance. Without systematic performance management, institutions struggle to provide meaningful feedback, recognize excellence, and design effective professional development programs. Promotion and career advancement are also closely tied to performance evaluation. (Alali, 2022) argues that promotion systems must align lecturer competencies with evolving industry standards; otherwise, lecturers may feel undervalued and demotivated, resulting in lower performance and reduced institutional commitment.

Institutional support plays a decisive role in shaping lecturer performance. (Cao, 2023) demonstrates that effective supervision, mentoring, and evaluation systems help lecturers manage workload pressures and improve teaching quality. However, chronic problems such as limited funding, inadequate facilities, and weak administrative capacity continue to constrain institutional efforts to support innovation and professional growth (عمرو et al., 2024). Without comprehensive training programs and adequate resources, lecturers are unable to implement new pedagogical approaches or engage meaningfully in applied research and industry collaboration (Auf, 2024). Furthermore (Zhao, 2023) further notes that bureaucratic rigidity and restricted academic autonomy can erode professional motivation and inhibit instructional innovation.

These challenges highlight that lecturer performance in VHE is not merely an individual issue but a systemic one, shaped by policy environments and governance structures. Despite the existence of formal policy frameworks, significant gaps persist between policy intentions and actual practice in vocational education and training (VET). (Molla, 2025) shows that in many low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), well-designed policies fail to achieve their objectives due to outdated curricula, weak industry engagement, and insufficient funding. (Njenga, 2023) similarly finds that policy reforms in Kenya have been undermined by limited resources and inadequate teacher training, leading to weak implementation.

Governance frameworks further influence how policies are enacted. (Matu & Brennan, 2025) argue that centralized, top-down governance models often restrict institutional autonomy and reduce the ability of vocational institutions to respond to regional labor market needs. Such rigidity leads to mismatches between policy directives and institutional capacity. (Regel et al., 2022) demonstrate that stakeholder participation is essential for aligning governance structures with vocational education needs. When educators, administrators, and industry partners are involved in decision-making, policies are more likely to be relevant, accepted, and sustainable.

Stakeholder engagement is particularly important for aligning vocational education with labor market demands. (Abdullahi & Abubakar, 2024) report that weak cooperation between management and vocational practitioners compromises the effectiveness of training policies. Industry involvement is necessary not only for curriculum development but also for ensuring that graduates acquire marketable skills. (Muinda et al., 2025) highlight that inadequate alignment between training programs and labor market needs exacerbates skills mismatches. (George et al., 2024) further illustrate how delayed adoption of Industry 4.0 technologies in Nigerian vocational institutions reflects broader governance failures to anticipate and respond to technological change.

Resource allocation remains a major constraint. (Molla, 2025) identifies inadequate funding as a key barrier to vocational education quality. (Borodiyenko et al., 2023) show that weak governance and poor financial management limit the impact of international cooperation in VET. Without sustained investment, vocational institutions struggle to modernize curricula, train staff, and maintain industry partnerships.

Policy alignment is therefore critical for improving institutional performance. (Natow et al., 2023) demonstrate that strong authorization and accountability frameworks enhance transparency and trust by clarifying institutional responsibilities. (Mäkelä et al., 2024) emphasize that structured academic–policy interaction promotes evidence-based decision-making. Aligned policies also support leadership and quality management. (Harefa et al., 2022) show that transformational leadership improves teacher performance when supported by coherent policies. (Susanti et al., 2025) argue that Total Quality Management (TQM) is most effective when aligned with instructional goals.

Despite these benefits, gaps between policy and practice persist. (Bekebayeva, 2022) stresses that national quality assurance systems must be translated into actionable institutional procedures. (Chien & Lin, 2023) argue that flexible governance arrangements can transform policy–practice gaps into opportunities for innovation.

In sum, effective policy governance alignment is essential for strengthening accountability, teaching quality, faculty development, and institutional performance in vocational higher education. Building resilient and high-performing vocational institutions requires integrated governance frameworks that align strategic policy with academic practice and professional needs.

Methodology

This study adopted a Research and Development (R&D) design combined with a mixed-methods approach to develop and validate a Policy Governance Alignment Model (PGAM) aimed at improving faculty performance in vocational higher education. The R&D design was selected because it enables systematic model development based on empirical needs analysis, followed by expert validation and field testing to ensure both theoretical robustness and practical applicability (Borg & Gall, 2003; Plomp, 2013). The mixed-methods approach integrates qualitative data to explore policy–practice misalignment and quantitative data to evaluate the effectiveness of the developed model. This integration enhances explanatory depth and empirical validity and is widely recommended in educational and governance research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

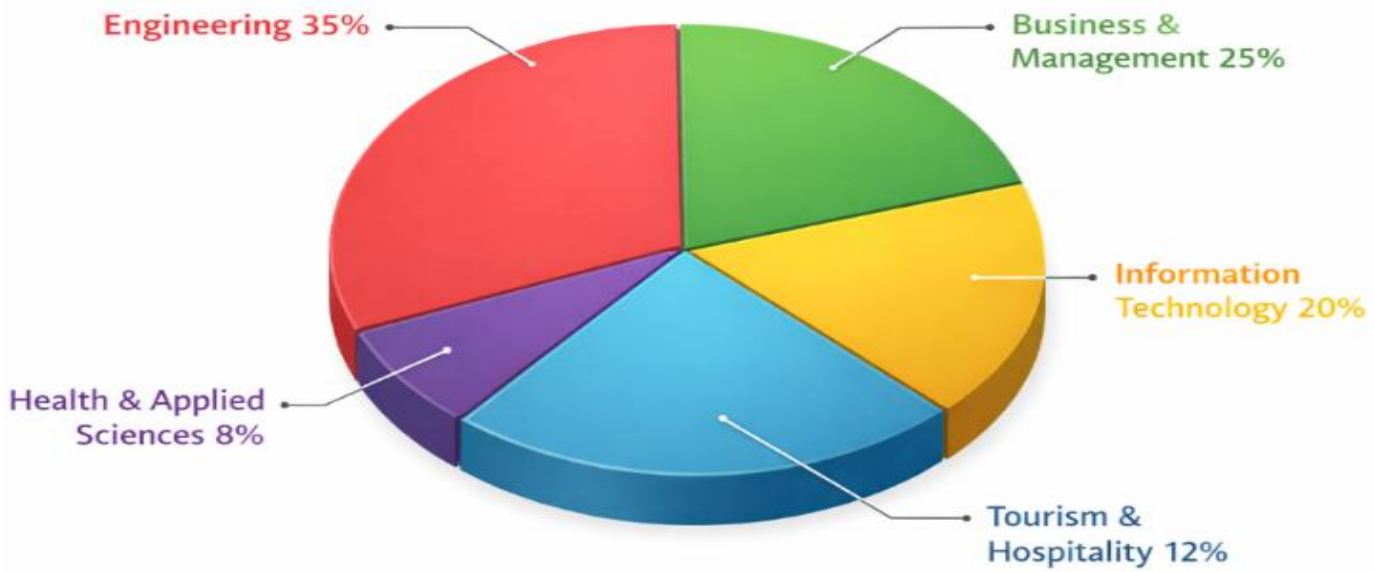
The research was conducted in vocational higher education institutions in Indonesia that emphasize applied learning systems, industry-oriented education, and performance-based academic achievement. These institutions were selected because vocational higher education possesses distinctive characteristics that closely

connect academic processes with labor market demands and practical competencies. The context is highly relevant for examining policy governance alignment, particularly because institutional policies, academic governance structures, and faculty performance expectations interact in complex and interdependent ways. In vocational education settings, lecturers are expected not only to deliver instruction but also to engage in applied research and community service activities that support industry and societal needs (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2016). Participants in this study were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that they had direct involvement in policy formulation, governance implementation, or institutional decision-making processes. This sampling approach enabled the collection of relevant and experience-based data from knowledgeable respondents (Etikan et al., 2016). A total of 128 participants were involved in the study.

Table 1. Research Participants

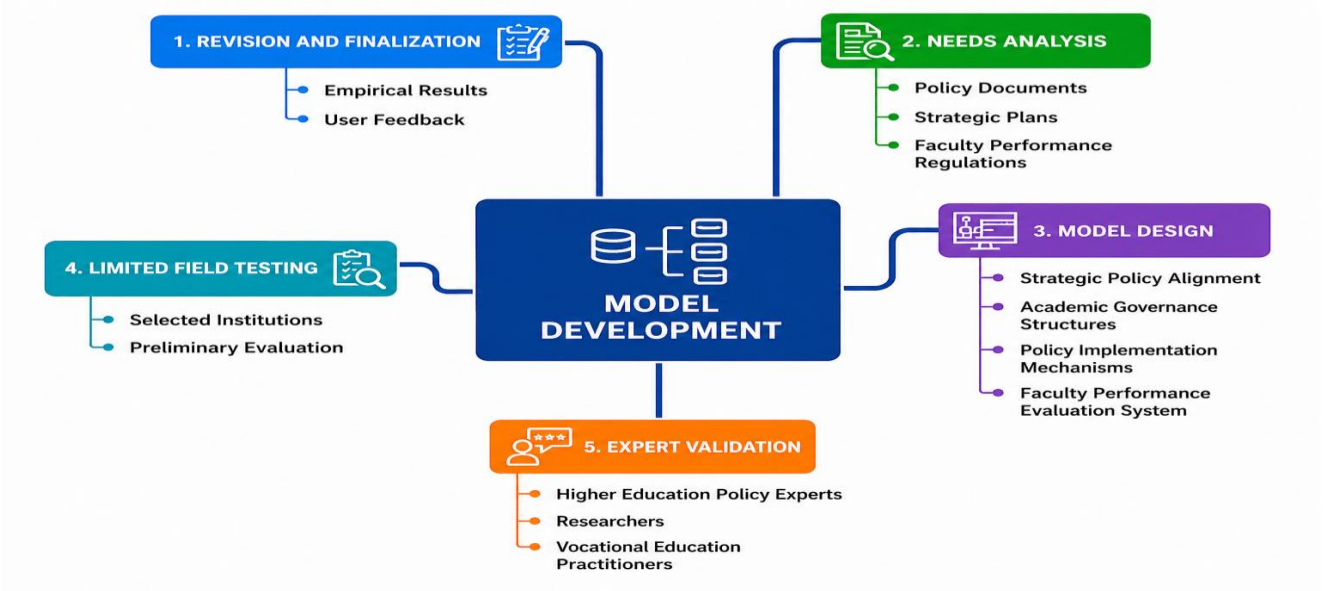
Participant Category	Number	Percentage
Faculty members	96	75.0%
Heads of study programs	20	15.6%
Institutional leaders	12	9.4%
Total	**128**	**100%**

To ensure representativeness across vocational disciplines, participants were drawn from multiple subject areas, as illustrated in Figure 1.



This distribution reflects the multidisciplinary nature of vocational higher education and strengthens the generalizability of the governance model across applied academic fields.

The development of the Policy Governance Alignment Model followed five structured stages, adapted from established educational design research frameworks (Kaplan & Norton, 2006; Reeves, 2006).



Picture 2. Stages of Model Development

To ensure data triangulation and methodological rigor (Lynn, 1986), multiple instruments were employed, as summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Data Collection Instruments

Instrument	Data Type	Purpose
Policy document analysis	Qualitative	Identify governance alignment gaps
Faculty performance survey	Quantitative	Measure tridharma performance
Semi-structured interviews	Qualitative	Explore governance implementation
Focus group discussions	Qualitative	Assess model practicality

The faculty performance questionnaire consisted of 32 Likert-scale items covering teaching, applied research, and community service dimensions. Reliability testing yielded a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.87, indicating strong internal consistency (Denzin, 2017).

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and paired-sample comparisons to assess changes in faculty performance before and after model implementation. Results indicated an average performance increase of 18.6%, particularly in applied research and industry-linked teaching activities.

Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, allowing systematic identification of recurring themes related to policy alignment and governance effectiveness (Hair et al., 2019).

Validity was ensured through expert review and empirical testing, while reliability was confirmed through internal consistency analysis. Trustworthiness of qualitative data was strengthened through triangulation and member checking (Braun & Clarke, 2021). All participants provided informed consent, and confidentiality was maintained in accordance with international research ethics standards (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Result and Discussion

The needs analysis was conducted using three complementary sources: (1) policy document analysis, (2) a faculty performance survey (N = 96), and (3) interviews and FGDs with academic leaders (N = 32). Analysis of 27 institutional policy documents (strategic plans, academic regulations, workload policies, and performance guidelines) showed that only 38.5% of policy statements were directly linked to operational guidelines for faculty tridharma activities. Most policies emphasized compliance and reporting rather than pedagogical or research support. The faculty survey confirmed this misalignment.

Table 3. Faculty Perception of Policy Alignment (N = 96)

Level of alignment	Frequency	Percentage
Highly aligned	11	11.5%
Moderately aligned	15	15.6%
Partially aligned	42	43.8%
Misaligned	28	29.1%
Total	**96**	**100%**

Thus, 72.9% of faculty perceived that institutional policies were partially aligned or misaligned with their real academic work. Based on the empirical gaps identified above, the PGAM was designed as a four-component integrated system:

Table 4. Core Components of PGAM

Component	Function
Strategic Policy Framework	Defines institutional priorities aligned with vocational mission
Academic Governance System	Specifies authority, roles, and decision flow
Implementation Mechanism	Converts policy into operational academic standards
Performance Evaluation System	Measures tridharma outcomes using aligned indicators

The model was implemented for one academic semester in three vocational higher education institutions, as follows:

Table 5. Faculty Performance Before and After PGAM Implementation (N = 96)

Dimension	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Gain
Teaching quality	3.21	3.78	+0.57
Applied research	2.89	3.62	+0.73

Community service	3.05	3.58	+0.53
Overall performance	**3.05**	**3.62**	**+0.57 (18.6%)**

The following post-implementation surveys showed strong acceptance of the model:

Table 6. Faculty Perception of PGAM (N = 96)

Indicator	Agree / Strongly Agree
Policy clarity improved	82.3%
Performance expectations clearer	86.5%
Institutional support increased	79.2%
Governance more transparent	83.4%

These results indicate that PGAM not only improved performance outcomes but also strengthened governance legitimacy and faculty engagement.

The results of this study provide strong empirical evidence that lecturer performance in vocational higher education is fundamentally shaped by the degree of alignment between institutional policy, governance structures, and academic practice. The needs analysis showed that 72.9% of lecturers perceived institutional policies as partially aligned or misaligned with their tridharma responsibilities, and this misalignment was statistically associated with lower levels of teaching effectiveness, applied research productivity, and community engagement. The significant correlation between policy alignment and faculty performance ($r = 0.61$, $p < 0.001$) confirms that governance coherence functions as a structural driver of academic performance rather than merely an administrative condition.

This relationship explains why fragmented policy environments tend to produce inconsistent academic outcomes. When institutional policies lack operational clarity or are not supported by governance mechanisms, lecturers face ambiguity in workload expectations, weak performance feedback, and limited institutional support. These conditions were reflected in the pre-intervention data, where the overall faculty performance mean was only 3.05 on a five-point scale, with particularly low scores in applied research (2.89). Such results indicate that lecturers were unable to fully translate institutional mandates into professional practice, especially in areas requiring coordination with industry and research infrastructure.

The implementation of the Policy Governance Alignment Model (PGAM) significantly altered this situation. After one academic semester, the overall performance mean increased to 3.62, representing an 18.6% improvement, and the gain was statistically significant ($t = 8.41$, $p < 0.001$). The largest improvement was observed in applied research, which increased by 0.73 points, followed by teaching quality (+0.57) and community service (+0.53). These gains demonstrate that when policies, governance procedures, and performance evaluation systems are aligned, lecturers become more capable of engaging in the full spectrum of vocational academic work.

The expert validation results further support the robustness of this governance-based explanation. The high Content Validity Index of 0.89 indicates that the model components—strategic policy direction,

academic governance, implementation mechanisms, and performance evaluation—are conceptually coherent and relevant to vocational education contexts. Moreover, the strong reliability of the performance instrument (Cronbach's alpha = 0.87) confirms that the observed performance gains are not artifacts of measurement error but reflect genuine changes in professional practice.

Faculty perceptions also reinforce the quantitative findings. More than 80% of lecturers agreed that policy clarity, performance expectations, and institutional support improved after PGAM implementation. This subjective validation is critical because governance reforms only become effective when they are experienced by faculty as legitimate and supportive. Increased clarity and transparency reduced role ambiguity and strengthened professional confidence, which helps explain the observed performance gains.

Taken together, these results show that policy governance alignment operates as a catalytic mechanism that transforms institutional policy from static regulation into an active driver of academic quality. The PGAM enabled vocational institutions to coordinate strategic goals, operational procedures, and performance monitoring in a unified system, thereby reducing policy–practice gaps and strengthening institutional coherence. This study therefore demonstrates that sustainable improvement in lecturer performance requires not only individual capacity development but also a governance architecture that systematically aligns policy with practice.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that lecturer performance in vocational higher education is strongly influenced by the degree of alignment between institutional policies, governance structures, and academic practice. The empirical findings revealed that a substantial proportion of faculty experienced misalignment between policy directives and their tridharma responsibilities, which contributed to weak performance in teaching, applied research, and community service. The development and validation of the Policy Governance Alignment Model (PGAM) provided a structured response to this problem by integrating strategic policy direction, academic governance, implementation mechanisms, and performance evaluation into a coherent system.

The implementation of PGAM resulted in a statistically significant improvement in overall faculty performance, with notable gains in applied research, industry-linked teaching, and community engagement. These improvements were accompanied by stronger perceptions of policy clarity, governance transparency, and institutional support among lecturers, indicating that the model not only enhanced measurable performance but also strengthened professional confidence and organizational trust.

By demonstrating that policy governance alignment functions as a key institutional mechanism for improving academic quality, this study contributes both theoretically and practically to the field of vocational higher education management. The PGAM offers a scalable framework that can help vocational institutions bridge policy–practice gaps, respond more effectively to digital and labor market changes, and sustain long-term improvements in faculty performance and institutional effectiveness.

This study has several limitations. First, the implementation of the Policy Governance Alignment Model (PGAM) was confined to vocational higher education institutions in Indonesia with 128 participants, which may limit broader generalizability. Second, the intervention lasted only one academic semester; therefore, the observed 18.6% improvement in faculty performance may not fully reflect long-term sustainability. Third, part of the data relied on self-reported perceptions, which may be influenced by response bias despite

acceptable reliability. In addition, the study did not explicitly examine moderating factors such as digital leadership, organizational culture, and technological readiness.

Future research should test PGAM across diverse institutional contexts and countries to strengthen external validity. Longitudinal and quasi-experimental designs are recommended to assess long-term impact and causal stability. Further studies should also employ advanced analytical approaches and incorporate emerging digital transformation variables to enhance the model's explanatory power and contemporary relevance.

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