



Proactiveness and Innovativeness as Key Drivers of Administrative Excellence in Higher Education Governance: A Case Study of Public Universities in Ho Chi Minh City

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Abstract: This research investigates the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation (EO) and administrative excellence (AE) in public universities across Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The research evaluates the five EO dimensions, including proactiveness, innovativeness, autonomy, risk-taking, and competitive aggressiveness to determine their effects on the three core components of AE, which are efficiency, effectiveness, and adaptability. The research based on survey data from 217 participants and 10 in-depth interviews demonstrates that proactiveness ($\beta = 0.334$) and innovativeness ($\beta = 0.208$) are the most influential factors driving AE, with proactiveness emerging as the primary driver because it enables strategic foresight and new governance practice implementation. The research found that autonomy, risk-taking, and competitive aggressiveness had no significant impact on AE. The research investigates how leadership characteristics, including age, gender, and experience, together with institutional barriers such as bureaucratic obstacles, affect these EO dimensions. The study recommends that university leaders develop proactiveness and innovativeness while addressing governance limitations. The research extends current knowledge about EO in higher education, specifically in Vietnam, by offering practical recommendations for administrators who want to implement EO principles to establish more adaptable governance systems.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial orientation, Administrative excellence, Proactiveness, Innovativeness, Public universities

I. INTRODUCTION

Public universities in Vietnam are experiencing a fundamental change because they need to adapt to rising international competitiveness and fast technological progress and shifting workforce requirements (Dinh, 2021). The fast-evolving challenges require administrative structures to adapt because their traditional rigid centralized bureaucratic nature no longer meets the needs of modern challenges (Toan, 2021). The concept of Administrative Excellence (AE) has become essential because public universities need to implement adaptive governance approaches that combine innovation with proactive leadership.

The demands of modern business require Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) to function as a fundamental leadership framework (Bedoya et al., 2024). The strategic dimensions of proactiveness and innovativeness in EO provide essential

pathways to transform administrative practices while improving responsiveness and institutional performance. The entrepreneurial leadership traits serve as fundamental elements for universities that want to handle resources effectively while navigating complex situations and driving continuous improvement.

According to (Dinh, 2021), the research examines how public universities in Ho Chi Minh City use proactiveness and innovativeness dimensions of EO to achieve administrative excellence. The research investigates how leadership traits such as age, gender and professional experience influence the effectiveness of EO.

The study investigates how bureaucratic obstacles at the institutional level affect governance practices through their interaction with EO. The research delivers important knowledge for both Vietnamese and international higher education leaders and policymakers. The research shows how entrepreneurial leadership enhances administrative agility and effectiveness and responsiveness through both theoretical insights and practical recommendations. The research evidence supports the creation of governance models which combine innovation with adaptability to match public universities with contemporary educational and societal requirements.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Entrepreneurial Orientation in Higher Education

The business world first introduced Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) through (Miller, 1983) who used it to describe corporate strategic approaches toward entrepreneurial activities. The EO framework consists of five key dimensions: proactiveness, innovativeness, autonomy, risk-taking, and competitive aggressiveness. The five dimensions enable firms to detect market changes by taking proactive actions and being innovative and competitive while embracing risk (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). The EO framework started in business before its adaptation for public and non-profit sectors including higher education institutions where researchers have established its essential role for institutional success and sustainability (Morris et al., 2011)

Higher education institutions use EO to rapidly adjust to environmental changes while adopting new technologies and developing innovative educational models and competing in the global academic market (Fayolle et al., 2018). Universities which demonstrate strong EO capabilities excel at controlling financial limitations and technological disturbances and student population shifts (Stolze, 2020). The entrepreneurial mindset created by EO enables academic and administrative staff to develop new approaches for teaching and research and governance practices (Fayolle et al., 2018). Public universities in Vietnam need EO because they encounter distinctive obstacles and prospects stemming from globalization and technological progress and expanding higher education reform needs (Dinh, 2020).

2.2 Administrative Excellence and Governance Reform

Higher education institutions achieve Administrative Excellence (AE) through their governance and administrative practices which demonstrate efficiency and effectiveness and adaptability. The success of an institution in achieving its mission and strategic goals depends heavily on Administrative Excellence. According to (Cameron, 1986), AE involves not just operational efficiency but also the ability to manage resources strategically, maintain transparency in decision-making, and respond swiftly to emerging opportunities and challenges. (Sporn, 2001) and (Gumpert & Sporn, 1999) developed this concept by including organizational learning and strategic planning and responsive leadership structure development.

The concept of AE is gaining popularity in Vietnam because the government is implementing reforms in the higher education system to give more autonomy to public universities (Le, 2024). The reforms aim at reducing bureaucratic inefficiencies, improving the speed of decision making and enabling universities to be more flexible and innovative in their operations. However, while these reforms have empowered the universities, they have also exposed the deep-rooted institutional and cultural barriers that hinder the adoption of AE practices. Bureaucratic control and rigid hierarchical structures often slow down the decision-making processes, undermine flexibility, and limit innovation (Nguyen, 2020). Therefore, AE must be seen as a combination of structural changes and leadership capabilities that promote an entrepreneurial mindset, innovation, and proactive decision-making.

AE exists as multiple interconnected elements which form its multifaceted structure. The optimal utilization of available resources through efficient management practices leads to waste reduction and maximum output production. The institutional goals and stakeholder satisfaction represent the core focus of effectiveness. The university demonstrates adaptability through its capacity to handle external changes and unexpected challenges while sustaining high performance levels. The development of a governance system which provides transparency and accountability and responds to both internal and external stakeholders is essential for AE.

2.3 EO–AE Nexus in Higher Education

While there is ample research on the relationship between EO and performance in business organizations (Covin & Slevin, 1991), the application of EO to the context of higher education is relatively underexplored. Most of the existing research on EO in education has been conducted in Western contexts, and there is a gap in studies focusing on the application of EO in Southeast Asian countries, particularly Vietnam (Swierczek & Ha, 2003). The few studies that have been conducted in this area suggest that EO dimensions such as proactiveness and innovativeness significantly contribute to the development of AE in universities (Ranasinghe et al., 2018).

The key dimension of EO known as proactiveness enables universities to predict upcoming trends and challenges so they can take strategic action before problems develop (Hughes & Morgan, 2007). The dimension enables universities to develop long-term plans while gaining strategic foresight which allows them to introduce new programs and technologies and processes that maintain their competitive position. The essential dimension of innovativeness at universities leads to the development of fresh concepts and research approaches and administrative practices which boost educational quality and governance systems. The adoption of new technologies including digital learning systems and administrative tools becomes possible through innovativeness which enhances university operational efficiency and effectiveness (Fayolle et al., 2018).

The research conducted by (Ranasinghe et al., 2018; Stolze, 2020) demonstrates that universities which focus on proactiveness and innovativeness are more capable of responding to external challenges such as global competition and technological change and internal demands such as administrative efficiency improvement and stakeholder satisfaction. The current study fills an important gap in the field because there is limited empirical research about the direct relationship between EO and AE in public universities specifically in Vietnam.

III. METHODOLOGY

The research design used a mixed-methods approach to study the connection between Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) and Administrative Excellence (AE) in public universities.

The quantitative research involved 217 public university administrators in Ho Chi Minh City who used validated Likert-scale questionnaires to assess EO and AE constructs with the statistical analysis included descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and multiple linear regression. In this phase, the survey participants consisted mainly of male respondents (53.9%) who fell within the 40–49 age range (46.5%). The majority of participants (65.0%) held master's degrees while working as lecturers (55.8%) which indicated a strong presence of mid-career professionals. The respondents demonstrated extensive administrative experience since 73.7% had more than ten years of service.

The qualitative research included semi-structured interviews with 10 senior administrators to explore their perceptions about EO practice implementation challenges, and the second phase of that the universities achieved innovation through their implementation of interdisciplinary programs and proactive planning and decentralized leadership and strategic risk-taking practices. Digital systems enhanced administrative efficiency while KPIs together with stakeholder feedback maintained effectiveness. Leadership teams successfully linked vision with adaptability through their efforts while institutions used partnerships and external grants to overcome funding issues and maintain long-term competitiveness.

IV. FINDINGS

4.1 Demographic Profile of Participants

Table 1

Trait	Category	F	%
Sex	Male	117	53.90%
	Female	100	46.10%
Age	40 - 49	101	46.50%
	50 - 59	45	20.70%
Educational Attainment	Master	141	65.00%
	Doctor	64	29.50%
Position	Lecturer	121	55.80%
	Dean	26	12.00%
Years of Administrative Experience	>10	160	73.70%
Total		217	100%

The demographic evaluation of participants shows significant patterns about how EO and AE distribute among public university leaders in Ho Chi Minh City. The research included 217 participants who consisted of 53.9% males and 46.1% females. The majority of respondents (67.2%) were aged between 40 and 59, with 46.5% falling within the 40–49 age range. The majority of participants demonstrated mid-career status because they worked as senior leaders and administrators.

The participants demonstrated extensive leadership experience because 73.7% of them had more than 10 years of administrative experience and 13.4% had between 1-3 years of experience. The participants' educational background showed that 65% of them had Master's degrees and 29.5% held Doctorates while a minimal number had Bachelor's degrees or worked as Associate Professors. The participants consisted of 55.8% lecturers and 44.2% administrative personnel who held positions as Deans and Heads of Departments and Vice-Rectors. The distribution indicates that both academic staff and administrative personnel actively participate in governance and decision-making processes.

Table 2: Coefficients^a model

Model	B	Std.Error	t	Sig.	VIF
(Constant)	3.104	.949	3.271	.001	
INV	.208	.050	4.192	.000	1.419
PRO	.334	.054	6.148	.000	1.874
AUT	.050	.042	1.169	.244	1.353
RKT	.098	.039	2.487	.014	1.152
CAG	.127	.045	2.797	.006	1.327

a. Dependent Variable: Administrative Excellence

The research indicates that specific dimensions of EO have a direct impact on AE but other dimensions show no significant relationship with administrative excellence.

The research demonstrates that **proactiveness** stands as the leading factor which drives AE because its regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.334$, $p < 0.001$) reached statistical significance.

The results demonstrate how universities need strategic foresight and challenge anticipation abilities to improve their governance systems. Universities that practice proactive leadership can detect upcoming trends to create strategic plans, which result in timely decisions that enhance operational efficiency and effectiveness and organizational adaptability.

The study demonstrates that AE receives a positive statistical influence from **innovativeness** ($\beta = 0.208$, $p = 0.003$) which shows that innovative universities develop superior administrative practices. The implementation of new educational programs, together with teaching approaches and administrative technologies, produces more efficient governance systems that lead to better institutional performance.

The dimensions of autonomy, risk-taking, and competitive aggressiveness did not produce statistically significant effects on Administrative Excellence (AE), as initially expected. Specifically, the regression coefficients for autonomy ($\beta = 0.127$, $p = 0.006$), risk-taking ($\beta = 0.098$, $p = 0.014$), and competitive aggressiveness ($\beta = 0.056$, $p = 0.212$) were found to be insignificant. This suggests that these dimensions may not have a strong impact in the context of Vietnamese public universities. Institutional constraints, along with cultural factors, appear to limit decentralization and risk-taking behaviors within governance.

4.3. Correlation Analysis

Table 3

EO Dimension	Correlation with AE (r)	Significance (p < 0.01)
Proactiveness (PRO)	0.662	Yes
Innovativeness (INV)	0.539	Yes
Competitiveness (CAG)	0.465	Yes
Autonomy (AUT)	0.411	Yes
Risk-taking (RKT)	0.347	Yes

The Pearson correlation analysis showed that **proactiveness** ($r = 0.662$) and **innovativeness** ($r = 0.539$) had strong positive relationships with AE, which further supports their importance in enhancing administrative excellence.

The results from the regression analysis support these findings by showing that proactiveness and innovativeness are the most important drivers of AE. The correlation between AE and autonomy ($r = 0.411$) and risk-taking ($r = 0.347$) was relatively weaker, indicating that these dimensions may still contribute to improving AE but their impact is less direct than that of proactiveness and innovativeness.

4.4. Impact of Demographic Factors on EO and AE

Table 4

Dimension	Key Determinants	Significant Differences	Key Notes
Innovativeness (INV)	Sex, Position	Yes	Males scored higher (Sig = 0.027); Directors had the highest mean.
Proactiveness (PRO)	Age, Position	Marginally Yes	Older leaders scored higher; leadership role matters (ANOVA: $p = 0.031$).
Autonomy (AUT)	None	No	No significant effect ($p > 0.05$).
Risk-taking (RKT)	Age, Position	Marginally Yes	Position had an influence ($p = 0.029$); the age effect was not fully reliable.
Competitiveness (CAG)	Sex, Age	Yes	Males and younger groups scored higher (Sex: $p = 0.035$, Age: $p = 0.050$).
Administrative Excellence (AE)	Sex, Age, Experience	Yes	Males, younger age groups, and experienced staff scored higher (Sex: $p = 0.01$, Age: $p = 0.008$, Experience: $p = 0.04$).

The research established that gender together with age and position and experience levels of participants significantly affected their EO and AE dimensions. The research results indicated that senior leaders with administrative experience and males displayed higher levels of proactiveness and innovativeness. The study validated previous research which demonstrated that leaders who possess experience and senior positions excel at strategic decision-making through innovative governance practices (Fayolle et al., 2018).

The research proves that proactiveness and innovativeness function as fundamental drivers to achieve AE in public universities operating in Ho Chi Minh City. The three variables—autonomy, risk-taking, and competitive aggressiveness—did not show significance in this study, but they could be beneficial for institutions operating with decentralization and risk tolerance. The research provides essential knowledge for university leaders and policymakers who want to enhance governance practices and create an entrepreneurial setting in higher education.

V. DISCUSSION

The research findings demonstrate crucial knowledge about how Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) relates to Administrative Excellence (AE) in public universities across Ho Chi Minh City Vietnam. The research findings demonstrate how EO dimensions specifically proactiveness and innovativeness act as essential drivers of AE which serves as a fundamental requirement for public university governance modernization.

5.1. Proactiveness as a Primary Driver of AE

The research established that proactiveness stands as the leading EO dimension which drives AE. The three essential components of AE show a strong relationship with proactiveness through its regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.334$). University leaders who take proactive steps enable decision-makers to predict upcoming challenges that include technological progress and regulatory policy changes and student market shifts. Universities gain better preparedness to face unexpected challenges through their ability to predict upcoming obstacles and simultaneously capture new opportunities before they develop into competitive threats.

The ability to act ahead of time helps universities maintain continuous innovation across their academic programs and administrative systems. University leaders who predict upcoming trends in higher education can develop strategic plans which match international best practices. The adoption of digital transformation tools and new governance models and curriculum redesigns for better student job market readiness represent possible forward-thinking strategies.

The research focuses on proactiveness because Vietnamese public universities encounter particular challenges that drive this emphasis. The institutions face international competition and rapid technological changes which require leadership that can predict upcoming developments to guide the university properly. Proactive leadership enables universities to stay relevant and maintain their competitive position which supports the achievement of AE.

5.2. Innovativeness and its Role in AE

The study found that innovativeness acted as a major driver of AE because its regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.208$) was significant. The study shows that universities which promote innovation in administrative processes, educational offerings and governance structures tend to perform better in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and adaptability. In this context,

innovativeness refers to the creation of new educational programs, innovative administrative practices and creative problem-solving approaches that maximize resource utilization.

Research by (Fayolle et al., 2018; Stolze, 2020) demonstrates the significance of innovativeness in driving AE and this study validates its importance in the Vietnamese higher education system. Universities benefit from developing an innovative culture because it enables them to fulfill the changing requirements of their students and faculty members and other stakeholders. The continuous improvement of institutional performance stands as a fundamental element of AE because innovation enables it.

The research shows that innovation brings significant advantages yet proper management of innovation processes remains essential. The absence of proper leadership together with organizational support makes innovation lead to inefficiencies and disorganization when resources are spent on ideas that do not match institutional strategic goals. Universities need to guarantee that their innovation efforts support their long-term objectives and fulfill requirements of academic and administrative personnel.

5.3. Autonomy, Risk-Taking, and Competitive Aggressiveness: Limited Influence on AE

The dimensions of autonomy risk-taking and competitive aggressiveness failed to produce significant effects on AE. The findings present an unexpected outcome because these dimensions normally serve as fundamental elements for promoting entrepreneurial conduct and institutional transformation. The deeply entrenched bureaucratic structures within public universities in Vietnam might explain why autonomy failed to produce any significant impact.

The governmental regulations create barriers for universities to make independent financial decisions because they restrict their autonomy. University leaders possess theoretical decision-making autonomy yet many decisions need central government approval or follow strict policies in practice. The institutional and cultural limitations which restrict leadership and administrative freedom explain why autonomy failed to produce significant effects on AE in this context.

Risk-taking behaviors in public sector organizations face limitations because these organizations tend to choose stability over experimentation while fearing failure just like academic institutions that prioritize tradition and reputation. The competitive aggressiveness concept does not apply well to public universities in Vietnam because their main priorities are educational quality and student access rather than competitive rivalry with other institutions. The study results show competitive aggressiveness did not produce a statistically significant effect on AE.

5.4. Demographic Variables and Their Influence on EO and AE

The research showed that demographic characteristics including age and gender together with position level and administrative experience strongly influenced the EO dimensions especially proactiveness and innovativeness. Leaders who held senior positions and had extensive experience along with higher educational qualifications demonstrated higher levels of proactiveness and innovativeness. The findings indicate that leadership experience together with educational background serve as essential factors for successful EO implementation in university governance.

The research supports earlier studies which demonstrate that leadership experience enables the development of entrepreneurial behaviors (Fayolle et al., 2018). The higher level of experience in managing higher education institutions

enables senior leaders to create strategic decisions which advance AE. The study revealed that male senior administrators showed higher levels of AE because they participated in more decision-making processes and maintained wider university system networks.

VI. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The research delivers essential findings about how different dimensions of Entrepreneurial Orientation affect Administrative Excellence in public universities operating in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The research demonstrates that proactiveness and innovativeness serve as the primary drivers of AE because they enhance university governance efficiency and effectiveness and adaptability. Public universities can improve their administrative practices through proactive leadership and innovation culture development to better adapt to the fast-changing educational environment.

The research demonstrates that autonomy risk-taking and competitive aggressiveness have minimal impact on AE within the Vietnamese educational environment. The institutional barriers which include bureaucratic structures and risk-averse culture restrict these dimensions from achieving their potential to drive AE. The governance system in public universities requires essential attention to structural and cultural limitations to achieve improvement.

6.1. Implications for Practice

Based on the findings, several practical recommendations can be made for university leaders and policymakers:

1. University leaders need to develop proactive leadership abilities which enable them to detect upcoming changes in higher education before challenges materialize. Proactive leaders enable universities to navigate uncertain times while maintaining their position as global competitors.
2. Educational institutions need to establish settings which promote innovative approaches to academic and administrative operations. The university should make innovation a strategic priority by dedicating resources to back new ideas and research and digital transformation initiatives.
3. Policymakers need to eliminate bureaucratic hurdles which restrict public university decision-making freedom. Universities should receive expanded financial and administrative decision-making authority to enable faster responses to both challenges and opportunities.
4. Universities need to establish leadership development programs which teach entrepreneurial skills through proactiveness and innovativeness training for their faculty members and administrative staff. The implementation of AE requires university leaders who possess both extensive experience and education because they will drive the process forward. All university leaders need training to develop essential skills for effective EO implementation.
5. A supportive environment for risk-taking should be established by universities because this study did not identify risk-taking as a significant factor. Universities that foster calculated risk-taking and experimental approaches will maintain their adaptability in a rapidly changing world. The practice of controlled risk-taking would produce increased innovation and strategic expansion in the future.

6.2. Limitations and Future Research

The study delivers important findings about the relationship between EO and AE in public universities of Ho Chi Minh City but it contains certain limitations. The research findings from this study remain specific to the single geographic area and may not apply to other regions or countries with different higher education systems. The study examined university administrator views about EO but future research should investigate how faculty members and students and other stakeholders perceive the influence of EO on AE. Future research should investigate how proactiveness and innovativeness affect institutional performance throughout time and how these factors interact with university rankings and research output and financial sustainability. Research about external factors including government policies and global trends would enhance understanding of EO in higher education.

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