



DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52714/dthu.ajes.10.1947>

## Assessing the Impact of Factors Governing Private General Education Schools: A Case Study of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

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### Article Info.

*Received: March 16, 2026*

*Revised: May 01, 2026*

*Accepted: May 15, 2026*

### Keywords

*External factors, Ho Chi Minh City, internal factors, private general education schools, school governance.*

### Cite

Tran, Q. G. (2026). Assessing the Impact of Factors Governing Private General Education Schools: A Case Study of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. *Asian Journal of Educational Sciences*, 1(1), 47-63. <https://doi.org/10.52714/dthu.ajes.10.1947>

### Abstract

*This study examines the internal and external factors influencing governance effectiveness in private schools in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam under educational reform and increasing school autonomy. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected from 599 respondents among administrators, teachers, and staff members, through a structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale. Six groups of factors were examined: the legal environment and policies, socio-economic context, technology and digital transformation, financial resources and infrastructure, organizational culture, and leadership capacity. Data were analyzed using SPSS through techniques such as Cronbach's alpha, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), descriptive statistics, ANOVA, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis. The results indicate that all six factors significantly affect school governance, with financial resources and infrastructure exerting the strongest influence. Legal frameworks and accountability mechanisms play a crucial role in ensuring transparency, while technology and digital transformation have emerged as important yet unevenly implemented drivers of governance effectiveness. Differences in perceptions among stakeholder groups were also identified, particularly regarding financial and socio-economic factors. The findings highlight the interrelated nature of governance factors and underscore the need for integrated and sustainable management strategies in private education.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the globalization context, rapid technological advancement, and the expansion of the knowledge-based economy, education systems worldwide are undergoing profound transformations. In Vietnam, these changes have become increasingly evident as the country accelerates its integration into the global economy and seeks to develop high-quality human resources to sustain long-term socio-economic growth. Thereby, private (non-public) education has evolved from a supplementary component into a strategic pillar of the national education system, contributing significantly to the diversification of educational provision and alleviating pressure on public institutions (Politburo, 2025; National Assembly, 2019).

The growing role of private general education schools in Vietnam reflects not only the increasing societal demand for diverse and high-quality educational services but also the government's policy orientation toward educational socialization and institutional autonomy. Recent legal frameworks, including the Law on Education (2019), Decree No. 125/2024/NĐ-CP, and related guiding circulars (Ministry of Education and Training, 2020, 2021), have expanded private school autonomy in key areas such as financial management, personnel recruitment, and curriculum development (Government, 2024). While these reforms have created favorable conditions for institutional innovation and flexibility, they have also imposed greater accountability requirements, thereby increasing the complexity of school governance (Pham, 2025).

In this context, governance has emerged as a critical determinant of effectiveness and sustainability in private general education institutions. Unlike public schools, which often operate within relatively stable state-funded systems, private schools function in a quasi-market environment in which they must balance educational objectives with financial viability. This dual nature requires governance systems that are not only compliant with regulatory standards but also adaptive, strategic, and responsive to rapidly changing external conditions (Arar & Abu Nasra, 2020; Alajmi, 2022; Rowan et al., 2024). Consequently, understanding the factors influencing governance effectiveness in private schools has become an increasingly important research priority.

Ho Chi Minh City represents an ideal context for such an investigation. As Vietnam's largest economic and educational hub, the city hosts a dense and diverse network of private general education schools, ranging from small-scale institutions to large, internationally oriented systems. These schools operate under intense competitive pressure, driven by factors such as parental expectations, enrollment dynamics, teacher retention challenges, and the need for continuous innovation in both pedagogy and management (Chu, 2003; Le, 2019; Truong & Tran, 2025). In addition, rapid digital transformation and increasing exposure to international educational standards further complicate governance practices in this setting (Do & Le, 2024).

Existing literature on school governance has provided valuable insights into decentralization, school-based management, and leadership effectiveness (Mohrman & Wohlstetter, 1994; Cheng & Chan, 2000; Santibáñez et al., 2014). However, most previous studies have primarily focused on public education systems or examined governance at the macro-policy level (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2019). Research specifically addressing private general education schools remains limited, particularly in developing-country contexts such as Vietnam (Nguyen, 2019; Tran, 2020). Moreover, prior research has often emphasized isolated dimensions of governance, such as leadership or policy, while overlooking the complex interactions between internal organizational capacities and external environmental conditions.

From an analytical perspective, governance effectiveness in private schools is shaped by both external and internal factors. External factors include the legal framework, socio-economic conditions,

and technological transformation, all of which shape the operational environment and strategic constraints of schools (Santibáñez et al., 2014; Nguyen & Tran, 2023; Do & Le, 2024). At the same time, internal factors such as financial resources, physical infrastructure, organizational culture, and leadership capacity determine institutions' ability to respond to external pressures and sustain long-term development (Baker et al., 2016; Loh et al., 2021; Unda et al., 2023; Nguyen & Ha, 2025).

Another notable gap lies in the limited consideration of multi-stakeholder perspectives. Private school governance is inherently multi-layered, involving administrators, teachers, and support staff who may perceive institutional challenges and priorities differently. However, empirical studies comparing these perspectives remain scarce, thereby limiting the development of comprehensive and inclusive governance strategies.

To address these gaps, this study aims to provide a systematic and empirical analysis of the factors influencing governance in private general education schools in Ho Chi Minh City. Specifically, it examines both external factors (legal environment, socio-economic conditions, and technological trends) and internal factors (financial resources, facilities, organizational culture, and leadership capacity). The study also explores differences in perceptions among key stakeholder groups. Accordingly, the following research questions are raised:

1. To what extent do internal and external factors influence governance in private general education schools in Ho Chi Minh City?
2. Are there statistically significant differences among administrators, teachers, and staff in their perceptions of these influencing factors?
3. What governance implications and strategic recommendations can be derived to enhance autonomy, adaptability, and sustainable development in private schools?

By addressing these questions, the study contributes to both theory and practice. Theoretically, it enriches the literature on school governance by integrating internal and external perspectives within a unified analytical framework. Practically, it provides evidence-based insights to support school leaders and policymakers in improving governance effectiveness in rapidly evolving private education in Vietnam.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. School Governance and Autonomy**

School governance has evolved from traditional administrative control toward more decentralized and performance-oriented models. One of the most influential frameworks is School-Based Management, which emphasizes the transfer of decision-making authority from central authorities to individual schools (Mohrman & Wohlstetter, 1994; Cheng & Chan, 2000). This shift aims to enhance institutional flexibility, responsiveness, and accountability by empowering school-level actors to manage resources, personnel, and instructional strategies.

In recent years, governance models have continued to evolve through the integration of results-based management (RBM) and data-driven decision-making. RBM focuses on aligning inputs, processes, and outputs with measurable performance indicators, thereby enhancing accountability and transparency in educational institutions (Day et al., 2020). Meanwhile, data-driven governance leverages digital technologies and information systems to support evidence-based decision-making, enabling schools to monitor performance, optimize resource allocation, and improve educational outcomes (Do & Le, 2024).

In the private education context, governance exhibits distinct characteristics compared to that of public systems. Private schools operate with greater autonomy but also face stronger accountability

pressures due to their reliance on tuition fees and market competition. Effective governance in private schools requires balancing educational objectives with financial sustainability while ensuring transparency and stakeholder engagement (Arar & Abu Nasra, 2020; Alajmi, 2022). Empirical studies have shown that autonomy in private schools is often associated with higher levels of innovation and organizational flexibility; however, it also increases exposure to financial risks and operational uncertainties (Dieudé & Prøitz, 2024; Rowan et al., 2024).

In developing countries, including Vietnam, the implementation of school-based management (SBM) and autonomous governance models remains uneven. Institutional capacity, regulatory constraints, and resource limitations often affect the effectiveness of governance reforms (Santibáñez et al., 2014; Bandur et al., 2022). Therefore, understanding the factors influencing governance effectiveness in private schools is essential for informing both policy and practice.

## 2.2. External Factors Affecting School Governance

School governance is embedded within a broader institutional and socio-economic context. External factors play a crucial role in shaping governance structures, operational strategies, and institutional effectiveness.

*First*, the legal and policy framework provides the foundational structure within which schools operate. Regulations concerning investment conditions, organizational structures, and quality assurance define the scope of autonomy and accountability in private schools. In Vietnam, recent reforms such as the Law on Education (2019) and Decree No. 125/2024/NĐ-CP have expanded institutional autonomy while reinforcing regulatory oversight (Government, 2024; Pham, 2025). However, policy inconsistencies and frequent regulatory changes may create uncertainty, thereby hindering long-term planning and governance effectiveness (Santibáñez et al., 2014).

*Second*, socio-economic conditions significantly influence school governance. Factors such as household income, demographic trends, and parental expectations directly affect student enrollment, tuition policies, and educational service provision. In competitive urban contexts such as Ho Chi Minh City, private schools must continuously adapt to evolving demands for comprehensive education, including academic achievement, soft skills development, and international integration (Nguyen & Tran, 2023).

*Third*, technological advancement and digital transformation have become critical drivers of governance innovation. The integration of information technology into administrative and instructional processes enables more efficient management, real-time data monitoring, and enhanced communication among stakeholders. Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and learning management systems are reshaping governance practices by enabling data-driven decision-making and personalized learning (Do & Le, 2024).

*Overall*, these external factors create both opportunities and constraints for private schools. Their impact depends not only on their intensity but also on the institutions' internal capacity to respond effectively.

## 2.3. Internal Factors Affecting School Governance

While external conditions set the operational context, internal factors determine how effectively schools can respond and adapt. These factors represent the core capacities of the institution and play a decisive role in governance outcomes. A fundamental internal factor is financial resources and physical infrastructure. Financial capacity directly influences a school's ability to maintain operations, invest in facilities, and attract qualified staff. Effective financial governance, including transparent budgeting and resource allocation, enhances institutional credibility and sustainability (Baker et al., 2016; Unda et

al., 2023). Similarly, adequate infrastructure and technological systems support both teaching activities and administrative efficiency.

Another critical factor is organizational culture and the working environment. A positive organizational culture characterized by trust, collaboration, and shared values fosters employee engagement and commitment. Research has shown that participatory and supportive work environments contribute significantly to improved organizational performance and governance effectiveness (Nguyen & Ha, 2025). In private schools, where staff retention is often a challenge, organizational culture plays an essential role in maintaining stability and performance.

Finally, leadership capacity is widely recognized as a central determinant of governance success. School leaders are responsible for strategic planning, decision-making, and coordinating organizational activities. Private education leaders must possess not only pedagogical expertise but also managerial and entrepreneurial competencies. Effective leadership involves vision development, risk management, stakeholder communication, and the ability to drive innovation (Luong & My, 2025; Day et al., 2020). Leadership also acts as a mediating factor that integrates internal resources and external demands into coherent governance strategies.

## **2.4. Research Gaps and Hypothesis Development**

Despite the growing body of literature on school governance, several research gaps remain. First, most studies have focused on public education systems or have examined governance from a macro-policy perspective, with limited attention to private general education schools, particularly in developing countries such as Vietnam (Nguyen, 2019; Tran, 2020). Second, existing research often analyzes governance factors in isolation, without considering the integrated effects of both internal and external factors. Third, empirical studies incorporating multi-stakeholder perspectives, such as administrators, teachers, and staff, are still limited, reducing the comprehensiveness of governance assessments.

To address these gaps, this study proposes a conceptual framework that examines the combined effects of external and internal factors on school governance. Based on the literature, the following hypotheses are developed:

H1: External factors (legal environment, socio-economic conditions, and technological trends) have a significant impact on school governance.

H2: Internal factors (financial resources, infrastructure, organizational culture, and leadership capacity) have a significant impact on school governance.

H3: Internal factors exert a stronger influence on school governance than external factors.

H4: There are statistically significant differences among administrators, teachers, and staff in their perceptions of the factors influencing school governance.

This integrated framework provides a foundation for empirical analysis and contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of governance in private general education schools.

## **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1. Research Design**

This study adopts a quantitative research approach using a cross-sectional survey design to examine the impact of internal and external factors on the governance of private general education schools. A cross-sectional design is appropriate for capturing perceptions, attitudes, and evaluations of respondents at a single point in time, allowing for efficient data collection from a large sample (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Ho et al., 2021).

The study is grounded in a positivist paradigm, aiming to quantify relationships among variables and test the proposed hypotheses through statistical analysis. A structured questionnaire was employed as the primary data collection instrument, enabling the transformation of qualitative perceptions into measurable variables suitable for inferential analysis.

### 3.2. Research Instrument

The questionnaire used in this study was developed based on an extensive review of the literature on school governance and its influencing factors (Arar & Abu Nasra, 2020; Nguyen & Ha, 2025; Unda et al., 2023). The instrument comprises two main sections. Section A collects demographic information of respondents, including their position and years of experience, to support comparative analysis across stakeholder groups. Section B focuses on measuring six groups of factors influencing school governance: (1) legal environment and policies, (2) socio-economic context and learner demand, (3) technology, integration, and digital transformation, (4) financial resources and physical infrastructure, (5) organizational culture and working environment, and (6) leadership capacity and management competence. Each construct is operationalized through five observed variables, resulting in a total of 30 measurement items. A five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was employed to quantify respondents' perceptions, ensuring consistency and comparability in data analysis. Prior to the official survey, the questionnaire was reviewed by experts in educational management to ensure content validity and was pilot-tested with a small sample to refine wording, improve clarity, and enhance overall reliability.

### 3.3. Sampling and Data Collection

The study was conducted in Ho Chi Minh City with the most developed and diverse system of private general education schools in Vietnam. Data were collected using a combination of convenience sampling and stratified random sampling. The final sample consisted of 599 valid responses, used to comprehensively evaluate six groups of factors influencing school governance (legal environment, socio-economic context, technology, financial resources and facilities, organizational culture, and leadership capacity).

The sample was stratified into three occupational groups: administrators ( $n = 125$ ), teachers ( $n = 354$ ), and administrative/support staff ( $n = 120$ ). Using a large and consistent sample across all measurement criteria ensures data reliability and consistency. Moreover, this clear stratification allows for multi-perspective comparisons between decision-makers (school leaders and boards of directors) and implementers (teachers and staff), thereby enhancing the validity and practical relevance of the findings.

**Table 1. Sample Structure**

Respondent Group	Sample Size	Percentage
Administrators	125	20.87%
Teachers	354	59.10%
Staff	120	20.03%

While the sample size is sufficiently large to ensure statistical reliability, it is acknowledged that the use of convenience sampling may limit generalizability. This limitation is addressed in the discussion section. Data were collected through direct and online survey distribution. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents.

### 3.4. Data Processing and Analysis

**Table 2. Reliability Test Results (Cronbach's Alpha)**

Factor Group	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha Evaluation	
Legal environment and policies	5	0.774	Acceptable
Socio-economic context & learner demand	5	0.842	Good
Technology, integration & digital transformation	5	0.808	Good
Financial resources, facilities & infrastructure	5	0.872	Very good
Organizational culture & working environment	5	0.802	Good
Leadership capacity & management competence	5	0.771	Acceptable

Note: All Alpha values > 0.7 indicate high internal reliability.

All collected data were carefully screened and processed prior to analysis to ensure accuracy and reliability. The data processing procedure included cleaning the dataset by removing incomplete responses and eliminating patterned or inconsistent answers, coding the data by assigning numerical values to Likert-scale responses, and validating data entry through cross-checking to minimize input errors. The cleaned dataset was then analyzed using SPSS statistical software through a series of systematic procedures. *First*, reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha to assess the internal consistency of the measurement scales, with acceptable thresholds set at  $\alpha \geq 0.70$  and item-total correlations  $\geq 0.30$  (Field, 2024; Hoang, 2008). *Second*, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was employed to validate the construct structure and ensure that observed variables appropriately loaded onto their intended factors, thereby strengthening the measurement validity. *Third*, descriptive statistics, including mean scores and standard deviations, were calculated to evaluate the level of influence of each factor on school governance. *Fourth*, one-way ANOVA was applied to examine statistically significant differences among the three stakeholder groups (administrators, teachers, and staff) in their perceptions of influencing factors. *Fifth*, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to assess the relationships among factor groups and identify patterns of interaction. Finally, multiple regression analysis was performed to examine the impact of independent variables on school governance, allowing for the assessment of the relative contribution of each factor and the testing of the proposed research hypotheses.

### 3.5. Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted in accordance with established ethical standards in social science research. Participation was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents prior to data collection. Participants were fully informed about the purpose and academic nature of the study, as well as their right to withdraw at any stage without any consequences. All collected data were anonymized to protect participants' identities and were treated with strict confidentiality. The data were used solely for research purposes and were not disclosed to any third parties.

### 3.6. Limitations of the Study

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. *First*, the use of convenience sampling, although practical, may limit the generalizability of the findings to the broader population of private general education schools. *Second*, the cross-sectional research design captures respondents' perceptions at a single point in time and does not reflect changes over time or causal dynamics. *Third*, the study relies on self-reported data, which may be subject to response bias or social desirability effects. These limitations suggest directions for future research, including the adoption of longitudinal designs to capture temporal changes and the application of more advanced analytical techniques, such as Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), to provide deeper insights into causal relationships among variables.

## 4. RESEARCH RESULTS

### 4.1. Impact of External Factors

**Table 3. Legal Environment and Policy Factors**

Evaluation Criteria	Administrators (M/SD)	Teachers (M/SD)	Staff (M/SD)	Overall Mean	P-value
Legal documents affect planning and organization	3.28 / 0.90	3.26 / 0.87	3.03 / 0.97	3.22	0.039
Autonomy policy affects decision-making	3.41 / 0.83	3.30 / 0.89	3.24 / 0.84	3.31	0.305
Accountability affects transparency	3.43 / 0.88	3.47 / 0.86	3.32 / 0.84	3.43	0.222
State regulations affect daily operations	3.33 / 0.91	3.36 / 0.81	3.20 / 0.84	3.32	0.201
Inspection affects compliance	3.47 / 0.87	3.43 / 0.89	3.33 / 0.82	3.42	0.386

The findings in Table 3 indicate that legal and policy-related factors exert a moderate influence on school governance in private general education institutions, with overall mean scores ranging from 3.22 to 3.43. Among the evaluated criteria, accountability affecting transparency records the highest overall mean ( $M = 3.43$ ), suggesting that stakeholders perceive accountability requirements as a key driver in enhancing transparency and governance practices. Similarly, inspection and supervision activities ( $M = 3.42$ ) and autonomy policies ( $M = 3.31$ ) are also rated relatively high, reflecting the importance of regulatory oversight and decentralized decision-making in shaping school operations.

A notable finding is the statistically significant difference among stakeholder groups regarding the impact of legal documents on planning and organization ( $p = 0.039 < 0.05$ ). Administrators ( $M = 3.28$ ) and teachers ( $M = 3.26$ ) perceive this factor more strongly than staff ( $M = 3.03$ ), indicating that those directly involved in strategic planning are more sensitive to legal frameworks. This difference highlights the varying levels of engagement with policy implementation across organizational roles.

In contrast, other factors such as autonomy policy, accountability, state regulations, and inspection show no statistically significant differences among the three groups ( $p > 0.05$ ), suggesting a relatively consistent perception across stakeholders. This consistency implies a shared understanding of the regulatory environment's role in school governance.

Overall, the results emphasize that while legal and policy frameworks are not perceived as overwhelmingly strong influences, they remain foundational elements that shape governance structures, ensure compliance, and guide strategic decision-making in private schools.

**Table 4. Socio-economic Context**

Evaluation Criteria	Administrators (M/SD)	Teachers (M/SD)	Staff (M/SD)	Overall Mean	P-value
Local economic conditions affect enrollment	3.42 / 0.96	3.43 / 0.88	3.34 / 0.85	3.41	0.645
Parental financial capacity affects tuition	3.38 / 0.99	3.34 / 0.92	3.09 / 0.89	3.30	0.025
Student development needs affect curriculum	3.31 / 0.92	3.30 / 0.88	3.05 / 0.94	3.25	0.022
Parent expectations affect governance	3.26 / 1.03	3.11 / 1.06	2.98 / 0.98	3.12	0.094
School choice trends affect enrollment strategy	3.40 / 0.89	3.35 / 0.89	3.34 / 0.86	3.36	0.848

Table 4 shows that socio-economic factors have a moderate level of influence on school governance, with overall mean scores ranging from 3.12 to 3.41. Among the criteria, local economic conditions affecting enrollment has the highest mean ( $M = 3.41$ ), indicating that stakeholders widely

recognize the role of the local economic environment in shaping student recruitment and school scale. Similarly, school choice trends ( $M = 3.36$ ) and parental financial capacity ( $M = 3.30$ ) are also perceived as important, reflecting the market-oriented nature of private education.

Notably, two factors show statistically significant differences among stakeholder groups. First, parental financial capacity affecting tuition and services ( $p = 0.025$ ) reveals that administrators ( $M = 3.38$ ) and teachers ( $M = 3.34$ ) perceive this factor more strongly than staff ( $M = 3.09$ ). This suggests that those involved in planning and policy decisions are more aware of financial constraints and their implications for tuition strategies. Second, student development needs affecting curriculum design ( $p = 0.022$ ) also shows a similar pattern, with staff reporting lower perceptions ( $M = 3.05$ ) compared to administrators and teachers. This may reflect differences in professional roles and levels of engagement in curriculum development.

In contrast, factors such as parent expectations and school choice trends do not show significant differences ( $p > 0.05$ ), indicating a shared perception across groups. Overall, these findings highlight that socio-economic conditions play a critical but differentiated role, particularly in financial planning and curriculum responsiveness within private school governance.

**Table 5. Technology and Digital Transformation**

Evaluation Criteria	Administrators (M/SD)	Teachers (M/SD)	Staff (M/SD)	Overall Mean	P-value
International integration affects development	3.49 / 1.02	3.33 / 0.95	3.36 / 1.08	3.37	0.309
International standards affect governance	3.44 / 1.01	3.25 / 0.99	3.33 / 1.09	3.31	0.204
Technology affects management methods	3.39 / 0.91	3.42 / 0.94	3.35 / 1.03	3.40	0.793
Digital transformation affects decision-making	3.34 / 0.96	3.19 / 1.00	3.26 / 1.10	3.24	0.358
AI affects governance innovation	3.54 / 0.95	3.32 / 0.98	3.29 / 1.07	3.36	0.075

Table 5 indicates that technology and digital transformation factors exert a moderate influence on school governance, with overall mean scores ranging from 3.24 to 3.40. Among the evaluated criteria, technology affecting management methods has the highest mean ( $M = 3.40$ ), suggesting that stakeholders recognize the role of technological tools in reshaping administrative processes and operational efficiency. Closely following are international integration ( $M = 3.37$ ) and AI affecting governance innovation ( $M = 3.36$ ), reflecting growing awareness of global trends and emerging technologies in education.

Although AI application receives relatively high attention, it also shows a borderline level of statistical difference among stakeholder groups ( $p = 0.075$ ). Administrators ( $M = 3.54$ ) perceive the impact of AI more strongly than teachers ( $M = 3.32$ ) and staff ( $M = 3.29$ ), indicating that leadership positions are more attuned to innovation and strategic technological adoption. This gap may reflect differences in exposure, digital competence, or involvement in decision-making processes.

Other factors, including international standards, digital transformation in decision-making, and technology in management methods, do not show statistically significant differences ( $p > 0.05$ ), suggesting a relatively consistent perception across all groups. However, the slightly lower mean for digital transformation affecting decision-making ( $M = 3.24$ ) implies that the practical implementation of digital governance systems may still be limited or uneven.

Overall, the findings highlight that while technology is acknowledged as an important driver of governance modernization, its impact is still developing, with varying levels of readiness and perception across stakeholder groups.

## 4.2. Impact of Internal Factors

**Table 6. Financial Factors**

Evaluation Criteria	Administrators (M/SD)	Teachers (M/SD)	Staff (M/SD)	Overall Mean	P-value
Financial resources affect operations	3.30 / 1.02	3.44 / 0.95	3.80 / 0.75	3.48	0
Financial allocation affects governance	3.46 / 0.93	3.48 / 0.83	3.68 / 0.78	3.51	0.048
Facilities affect educational activities	3.58 / 0.94	3.58 / 0.95	3.74 / 0.82	3.61	0.181
Technology infrastructure affects management	3.51 / 0.96	3.56 / 0.85	3.73 / 0.87	3.58	0.121
Human resources affect governance	3.44 / 0.96	3.35 / 0.95	3.48 / 0.94	3.40	0.371

Table 6 reveals that financial resources and infrastructure are among the most influential factors affecting school governance, with overall mean scores ranging from 3.40 to 3.61, the highest compared to other factor groups. Notably, facilities affecting educational activities records the highest mean ( $M = 3.61$ ), followed by technology infrastructure ( $M = 3.58$ ), highlighting the critical role of physical and technological conditions in ensuring effective school operations and teaching quality.

A particularly important finding is the statistically significant difference among stakeholder groups regarding financial resources affecting operations ( $p = 0.000$ ). Staff report the highest perception ( $M = 3.80$ ), compared to teachers ( $M = 3.44$ ) and administrators ( $M = 3.30$ ). This suggests that staff, who are often directly impacted by financial stability in terms of salaries and operational support, are more sensitive to financial conditions. Similarly, financial allocation affecting governance also shows significant differences ( $p = 0.048$ ), with staff again perceiving a stronger impact than other groups.

In contrast, factors such as facilities, technology infrastructure, and human resources do not show statistically significant differences ( $p > 0.05$ ), indicating a relatively consistent perception across stakeholders. However, their relatively high mean scores confirm their importance in supporting governance effectiveness.

The results underscore that financial capacity and infrastructure constitute the core foundation of private school governance, directly influencing operational stability, strategic decision-making, and the overall quality of educational services.

**Table 7. Organizational Culture**

Evaluation Criteria	Administrators (M/SD)	Teachers (M/SD)	Staff (M/SD)	Overall Mean	P-value
Core values affect governance unity	3.46 / 0.97	3.42 / 0.95	3.40 / 0.92	3.43	0.897
Behavioral norms affect discipline	3.32 / 1.00	3.25 / 0.91	3.14 / 1.04	3.24	0.336
Democratic environment affects participation	3.23 / 1.00	3.14 / 0.97	3.23 / 1.01	3.18	0.584
Collaboration affects effectiveness	3.41 / 0.98	3.38 / 0.90	3.23 / 1.02	3.35	0.235
Innovation culture affects adaptability	3.36 / 0.95	3.36 / 0.93	3.13 / 1.01	3.31	0.071

Table 7 shows that organizational culture has a moderate influence on school governance, with overall mean scores ranging from 3.18 to 3.43. Among the criteria, core values affecting governance unity records the highest mean ( $M = 3.43$ ), indicating that a shared value system plays an essential role in fostering consistency and alignment in school operations. Similarly, collaboration among members ( $M = 3.35$ ) and innovation culture ( $M = 3.31$ ) are also rated relatively important, reflecting the need for teamwork and adaptability in a dynamic educational environment.

Importantly, none of the factors show statistically significant differences among the three stakeholder groups (all  $p$ -values  $> 0.05$ ). This suggests a high level of consensus among administrators, teachers, and staff regarding the role of organizational culture in governance. Such consistency implies that cultural elements are widely experienced and perceived similarly across all levels of the school system.

However, some variations in mean scores provide additional insights. For example, staff tend to report slightly lower perceptions in areas such as innovation culture ( $M = 3.13$ ) and collaboration ( $M = 3.23$ ), which may indicate challenges in fully engaging all members in innovation processes or coordinated activities. Meanwhile, the relatively lower mean for democratic working environment ( $M = 3.18$ ) suggests that participatory governance practices could be further strengthened.

The findings highlight that while organizational culture is not the strongest influencing factor, it serves as a critical enabling condition that supports cohesion, participation, and adaptability in school governance.

**Table 8. Leadership Factors**

Evaluation Criteria	Administrators (M/SD)	Teachers (M/SD)	Staff (M/SD)	Overall Mean	P-value
Vision-building capacity	3.20 / 1.04	3.14 / 0.97	3.08 / 1.11	3.14	0.666
Decision-making capacity	3.30 / 0.92	3.18 / 0.85	3.14 / 1.05	3.20	0.368
Professional competence	3.40 / 0.95	3.32 / 0.87	3.33 / 0.95	3.34	0.695
Legal knowledge	3.54 / 0.95	3.47 / 0.92	3.42 / 0.99	3.47	0.610
Coordination capacity	3.47 / 0.93	3.38 / 0.82	3.39 / 0.95	3.40	0.563

Table 8 shows that leadership capacity exerts a moderate influence on school governance, with overall mean scores ranging from 3.14 to 3.47. Among the assessed criteria, legal knowledge receives the highest evaluation ( $M = 3.47$ ), indicating that stakeholders consider compliance and understanding of regulatory frameworks as essential competencies for school leaders. This is followed by coordination capacity ( $M = 3.40$ ) and professional competence ( $M = 3.34$ ), highlighting the importance of managerial skills and the ability to align different stakeholders within the organization.

Conversely, vision-building capacity ( $M = 3.14$ ) and decision-making capacity ( $M = 3.20$ ) are rated lower, suggesting that strategic leadership functions are not yet strongly emphasized in practice. This may imply that school leaders tend to prioritize operational management and regulatory compliance over long-term strategic planning and innovation.

Importantly, none of the factors show statistically significant differences among administrators, teachers, and staff (all  $p$ -values  $> 0.05$ ). This indicates a high level of agreement across stakeholder groups regarding the role of leadership capacity in governance. Such consistency suggests that leadership practices are relatively visible and similarly experienced throughout the school system.

Overall, the findings imply that while leadership capacity is recognized as a necessary component of effective governance, its impact remains moderate, with particular need for improvement in strategic vision and decision-making to support long-term development and adaptability of private schools.

### 4.3. Correlation Analysis

**Table 9. Correlation Matrix**

	AH1	AH2	AH3	AH4	AH5	AH6
AH1	1					
AH2	.549**	1				
AH3	.456**	.409**	1			
AH4	.453**	.353**	.516**	1		
AH5	.466**	.503**	.511**	.457**	1	
AH6	.527**	.464**	.401**	.344**	.460**	1

Table 9 presents the Pearson correlation matrix among the six factor groups influencing school governance (AH1-AH6). Overall, all correlation coefficients are positive and statistically significant at the 0.01 level ( $p < 0.01$ ), indicating that the factors are interrelated and tend to move in the same direction. The strength of correlations ranges from 0.344 to 0.549, suggesting moderate relationships among the variables without signs of multicollinearity.

The strongest correlation is observed between AH1 (Legal environment) and AH2 (Socio-economic context) ( $r = 0.549$ ), implying that regulatory frameworks are closely linked with socio-economic conditions in shaping school governance. Similarly, AH3 (Technology) shows relatively strong correlations with AH4 (Financial resources) ( $r = 0.516$ ) and AH5 (Organizational culture) ( $r = 0.511$ ), highlighting the interconnected role of technological advancement, financial capacity, and internal organizational dynamics.

In addition, AH6 (Leadership capacity) demonstrates consistent moderate correlations with all other factors, particularly with AH1 ( $r = 0.527$ ) and AH2 ( $r = 0.464$ ). This suggests that leadership plays a central and integrative role, linking both external and internal dimensions of governance.

Importantly, none of the correlation coefficients exceed 0.8, confirming the absence of serious multicollinearity issues and supporting the suitability of the dataset for further regression analysis. Overall, the findings indicate that school governance is shaped by a system of interdependent factors, where improvements in one domain are likely to reinforce others.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive and empirically grounded understanding of the internal and external factors influencing school governance in private educational institutions in Ho Chi Minh City. From Tables 3-9 results, several key issues emerge that both confirm existing theoretical frameworks and extend current knowledge in the field of educational management.

*First*, regarding legal environment and policy factors (PL), the results indicate a moderate level of influence (overall mean ranging from 3.22 to 3.43). Among these, accountability and inspection mechanisms received relatively higher evaluations ( $M = 3.43$  and  $3.42$ ), highlighting the increasing importance of transparency and compliance in school governance. This finding aligns with prior studies emphasizing the role of accountability systems in decentralized educational governance (Arar & Abu Nasra, 2020). However, the statistically significant difference observed in perceptions of legal documents ( $p = 0.039$ ) suggests that staff members may experience regulatory impacts more directly in operational tasks compared to administrators and teachers.

*Second*, socio-economic factors (KT) demonstrate selective influence, particularly in aspects related to financial capacity and learner demand. Notably, parental financial capacity ( $p = 0.025$ ) and student development needs ( $p = 0.022$ ) show significant differences among stakeholder groups, indicating varying levels of sensitivity to market-driven dynamics. These findings reinforce the argument that private schools operate within a quasi-market system, where financial sustainability and customer expectations (parents and students) strongly shape governance decisions (Menashy, 2017). However, overall mean scores remain moderate (3.12-3.41), suggesting that socio-economic pressures are influential but not dominant.

*Third*, technology and digital transformation (CN) factors are perceived as increasingly important, particularly in relation to artificial intelligence ( $M = 3.36$ ) and international integration ( $M = 3.37$ ). Although no statistically significant differences were found among groups, the relatively high standard deviations indicate variability in readiness and perception. This reflects the uneven adoption of digital transformation in educational institutions, as also noted by Unda et al. (2023). The findings suggest that

while technology is recognized as a strategic driver, its practical implementation in governance remains in a transitional stage.

*Fourth*, financial resources and infrastructure (TC) emerge as the most influential factor group, with the highest overall mean scores (up to 3.61). The item “financial resources affect operations” shows a highly significant difference ( $p = 0.000$ ), with staff rating it highest ( $M = 3.80$ ), indicating their direct dependence on financial stability for job security and working conditions. This supports the resource-dependence perspective in organizational theory, where financial capacity is a critical determinant of institutional effectiveness. Additionally, infrastructure and technology systems also receive high evaluations, underscoring their role in enabling operational efficiency.

*Fifth*, organizational culture (VH) shows relatively consistent perceptions across groups, with no statistically significant differences ( $p > 0.05$ ). Core values ( $M = 3.43$ ) and collaboration ( $M = 3.35$ ) are rated higher than democratic participation ( $M = 3.18$ ), suggesting that while cultural alignment exists, participatory governance mechanisms may still be limited. This finding is consistent with previous research highlighting the gradual transition from hierarchical to participatory cultures in educational organizations.

*Sixth*, leadership capacity (NL) is evaluated at a moderate level ( $M = 3.14-3.47$ ), with legal knowledge ( $M = 3.47$ ) and coordination capacity ( $M = 3.40$ ) rated higher than vision-building ( $M = 3.14$ ). The absence of significant differences among groups indicates a shared perception of leadership effectiveness. However, the relatively lower score for strategic vision suggests a gap in long-term leadership capacity, which is critical for sustainable school development (Day et al., 2020).

*Finally*, the correlation analysis (Table 9) reveals statistically significant positive relationships among all six factor groups ( $r = 0.344$  to  $0.549$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This confirms that school governance is a multidimensional construct where internal and external factors interact systematically. Notably, the strongest correlations are observed between AH1-AH2 ( $r = 0.549$ ) and AH3-AH4 ( $r = 0.516$ ), indicating close linkages between policy-context and technology-resources dimensions. These findings support integrated governance models such as SBM, where multiple factors jointly influence effectiveness.

In summary, the study confirms that while all six factor groups significantly contribute to school governance, financial resources and infrastructure play the most decisive role, followed by legal frameworks and technological factors. At the same time, the interaction among factors highlights the need for a holistic governance approach rather than isolated interventions.

## 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6.1. Conclusion

This study provides empirical evidence on the factors influencing governance effectiveness in private schools in Ho Chi Minh City within the context of ongoing educational reform and increasing institutional autonomy. Based on data collected from 599 respondents across three stakeholder groups, the findings confirm that school governance is shaped by a multidimensional system of interrelated internal and external factors, including the legal environment, socio-economic context, technology and digital transformation, financial resources and infrastructure, organizational culture, and leadership capacity.

Among these, financial resources and infrastructure emerged as the most influential factor, highlighting the critical role of financial sustainability and resource allocation in ensuring effective school operations. Legal and policy frameworks also play a significant role in guiding transparency, accountability, and compliance, while technology and digital transformation are increasingly recognized as strategic drivers, although their implementation remains uneven.

The study further reveals that organizational culture and leadership capacity, while important, are perceived at a moderate level and require further strengthening, particularly in terms of strategic vision and participatory governance. In addition, statistically significant differences in perceptions among administrators, teachers, and staff were identified in several areas, reflecting the diverse roles and experiences of stakeholders in school governance.

Correlation analysis confirms that all factor groups are positively interrelated, reinforcing the view that school governance should be approached holistically rather than through isolated interventions. Overall, the study contributes both theoretically and practically by providing a context-specific understanding of governance dynamics in private education in Vietnam.

## 6.2. Recommendations

Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed to enhance governance effectiveness and promote sustainable development in private schools:

### *(1) For school administrators and private educational institutions*

Strengthen financial management capacity by diversifying revenue sources, improving budget allocation efficiency, and enhancing financial transparency.

Invest in modern infrastructure and digital systems, particularly in school management software, data-driven decision-making tools, and digital learning platforms.

Promote a participatory organizational culture, encouraging collaboration, shared decision-making, and internal communication among administrators, teachers, and staff.

Enhance leadership capacity, especially in strategic vision-building, innovation management, and adaptive leadership in response to changing educational demands.

### *(2) For policymakers and educational authorities*

Improve the legal framework for school autonomy to ensure a balance between institutional flexibility and accountability for private institutions.

Develop supportive policies that facilitate digital transformation in education, including funding mechanisms, professional development programs, and technological infrastructure support.

Strengthen inspection and quality assurance systems to promote transparency while avoiding excessive administrative burdens on schools.

### *(3) For future research*

Conduct longitudinal studies to examine changes in governance factors over time and their long-term impacts.

Apply more advanced analytical approaches such as Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test causal relationships among variables.

Expand research scope to include comparisons between public and private schools or across different regions to enhance generalizability.

In conclusion, improving governance in private education requires a systemic and integrated approach in which financial, institutional, technological, and human factors are aligned to ensure long-term sustainability and educational quality.

## DECLARATIONS

**Funding:** The author declares that no financial support was received for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

**Ethical Considerations / Institutional Review Board Statement:** This study involved a quantitative survey of human participants (school managers, teachers, and staff). Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Participants were fully informed about the academic purpose of the study, and their participation was strictly voluntary. All collected data were anonymized, kept confidential, and used solely for statistical analysis.

**Transparency:** The author confirms that the manuscript presents an accurate, honest, and transparent account of the research. All essential aspects of the study, including the methodology, sample characteristics, and data analysis, have been transparently reported, and no important details have been omitted.

**Competing Interests:** The author declares no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

**Author's Contributions:** Quoc Giang Tran: Sole author. Responsible for Conceptualization, Methodology, Data Collection, Formal Analysis, Writing - Original Draft Preparation, Writing - Review & Editing. The author has read and approved the final version of the manuscript for publication.

**Disclosure of AI Use:** During the preparation of this manuscript, the author used an AI assistant (Google Gemini) primarily for language refinement, structural formatting, and translation assistance. After using this tool, the author rigorously reviewed, edited, and verified all the generated content. The author takes full and final responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the publication.

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