

Original Research

Received : 05 June 2026

Revised : 25 June 2026

Accepted : 05 August 2026

Natural Resources for Human Health 2026, Vol. 6 (5s): 707–722

KEYWORDS:

university governance; institutional discourse; academic culture; quality assurance; accreditation; university leadership; Saudi higher education; Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University; Saudi Vision 2030

Constructing the Transforming University: Governance, Leadership, Academic Culture, and Quality Assurance in the Institutional Discourse of Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University

Norah Nasser Saleh Alowayyid*

Department of Educational Sciences, College of Education, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Al-Kharj, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

*Correspondence: N.alowayyid@psau.edu.sa

ABSTRACT: Saudi higher education is being reshaped by a policy environment that simultaneously expands institutional responsibility and intensifies evaluation, accreditation, performance monitoring, and alignment with national development priorities. This article examines how Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University (PSAU) discursively constructs that changing institutional order. It integrates a substantial body of Saudi scholarship on governance, leadership, quality assurance, academic accreditation, human capital, and institutional performance with a qualitative institutional discourse analysis of publicly available PSAU documents issued or maintained between 2019 and 2026. The corpus comprises the University's strategic, identity, governance, quality, accreditation, academic-programme, and Vision 2030 texts. The analysis identifies five interconnected constructions. First, autonomy is represented as governed discretion exercised within national frameworks, authorised procedures, and measurable objectives. Second, leadership is presented as participatory and capacity-building, yet remains embedded in formally hierarchical approval structures. Third, academic culture is constituted through the recurring values of quality, mastery, transparency, teamwork, innovation, responsibility, and continuous improvement. Fourth, accreditation is transformed from an external inspection event into an internal architecture of evidence, review, benchmarking, and programme redesign. Fifth, institutional transformation is legitimised through alignment with Saudi Vision 2030, labour-market relevance, digitalisation, research impact, sustainability, and community partnership. These constructions are productive but not tension-free: participation coexists with central authorisation, innovation with standardisation, and improvement with compliance. The article contributes a discourse-centred account of Saudi university transformation and proposes practical safeguards for ensuring that governance and quality systems develop institutional learning rather than merely expanding documentary workload.

1. INTRODUCTION

Universities are no longer described only as communities of scholars or administrative extensions of the state. Across many higher education systems, they are increasingly expected to act as coherent organisations with distinctive identities, strategic priorities, measurable outcomes, and demonstrable public value. They must compete for students and staff, respond to labour-market change, participate in global rankings, build partnerships, document performance, and show that public resources produce credible educational, research, and social returns. This organisational turn has altered both the work universities perform and the language through which they explain themselves. Terms such as governance, accountability,

excellence, quality culture, innovation, stakeholder participation, evidence, and institutional transformation now organise everyday university planning and evaluation.

This change should not be mistaken for a simple movement from government control to institutional freedom. Comparative research shows that states rarely withdraw from higher education; instead, they change the instruments through which universities are steered. Direct administrative commands may be supplemented or partly replaced by accreditation, performance indicators, competitive funding, reporting systems, strategic targets, and audit mechanisms (Capano & Pritoni, 2020; Capano, 2022). Universities consequently receive more responsibility for designing programmes and managing resources while operating within denser systems of evaluation and public accountability. The result is a hybrid order in which institutional discretion and external steering are mutually constitutive rather than opposites.

Saudi higher education offers a particularly important setting in which to examine this hybrid order. The Universities Law, Saudi Vision 2030, the Human Capability Development Program, and the national accreditation system have created an environment in which universities are called upon to become more responsive, efficient, innovative, and development-oriented while remaining accountable to national priorities and quality standards (Bureau of Experts at the Council of Ministers, 2019; Education and Training Evaluation Commission, 2026; Saudi Vision 2030, 2026a, 2026b). Public universities are thus asked to exercise strategic agency, but that agency is legitimated through alignment: with national development, labour-market needs, accreditation requirements, financial sustainability, research priorities, and community expectations.

Existing Saudi scholarship documents a substantial research tradition on governance, quality assurance, accreditation, internal review, institutional performance, academic leadership, human capital, and university autonomy. A recurring empirical pattern is that respondents assess many governance and quality practices at moderate rather than fully developed levels. The same literature repeatedly identifies leadership support, procedural clarity, staff participation, decentralisation, adequate resources, training, and follow-up as conditions of improvement. Yet most studies employ descriptive survey designs and treat governance, leadership, culture, accreditation, and transformation as separate variables. They tell us much about perceived levels of implementation, but considerably less about how universities publicly define these ideas, connect them to one another, and use them to construct an institutional identity.

This omission matters because official discourse is not merely decorative language placed around organisational practice. Policy guides, strategic plans, accreditation documents, annual reports, and identity statements define legitimate problems, assign responsibilities, create categories of evidence, and make particular futures appear necessary or desirable. When a university declares that programmes must be aligned with national priorities, benchmarked internationally, reviewed periodically, and approved through specified committees, it is not simply reporting an existing structure. It is producing a normative map of how the institution should think, decide, and act. Institutional discourse therefore deserves analysis as a mechanism of governance in its own right (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000; Phillips et al., 2004).

Against this background, the article investigates the official institutional discourse of Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University (PSAU). It asks three questions: (1) How do PSAU documents construct university governance and leadership? (2) How are academic culture, quality assurance, and accreditation represented as mechanisms of institutional transformation? (3) What tensions emerge between autonomy and national steering, participation and hierarchy, innovation and standardisation, and improvement and compliance? By bringing these questions together, the study moves beyond measuring whether governance or accreditation is present. It examines the institutional logic through which these elements are made coherent and meaningful.

2. SAUDI HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE INSTITUTIONAL SETTING

The contemporary Saudi university operates within a national reform agenda that links education to economic diversification, human capability, innovation, employability, and social development. Saudi Vision 2030 identifies improved learning outcomes and stronger university performance among the means through which a thriving economy and globally competitive society are to be built. The Human Capability Development Program extends this agenda across the life course and places emphasis on skills, competitiveness, labour-market readiness, and lifelong learning (Saudi Vision 2030, 2026a, 2026b). Universities consequently occupy an important position between public policy and local implementation: they must translate broad national aspirations into programmes, curricula, research projects, partnerships, and measurable institutional outcomes.

The Universities Law issued by Royal Decree No. M/27 in 2019 formalised a framework for modernising university administration, resources, and decision-making. Its significance lies not in creating unrestricted autonomy, but in redefining

the relationship between the state and individual institutions. Universities may receive greater space to develop internal regulations, programmes, resources, and partnerships, while the state retains strategic oversight through the Council of Universities Affairs, financial rules, national policy, and external quality assurance (Bureau of Experts at the Council of Ministers, 2019). This arrangement resembles the wider pattern of ‘steering at a distance’: control is exercised less exclusively through direct instruction and more through frameworks, standards, incentives, authorised procedures, and evaluation.

Accreditation is central to this environment. The National Center for Academic Accreditation and Evaluation is responsible for evaluating and accrediting public and private higher education institutions and programmes in Saudi Arabia (Education and Training Evaluation Commission, 2026). Accreditation establishes a common vocabulary of mission alignment, learning outcomes, programme management, faculty sufficiency, student support, evidence, periodic review, and continuous improvement. These requirements can improve institutional coherence, but they can also generate a procedural culture in which the production of forms and reports becomes an end in itself. The practical question is therefore not whether universities should document quality, but how evidence systems can remain connected to educational judgement and organisational learning.

PSAU’s official discourse is situated directly within this national architecture. Its vision, mission, and strategic-plan materials connect distinguished education, competitive research, knowledge-economy contribution, and active community partnership. Its institutional identity page explicitly links activities and programmes to strategic objectives in education, research, and community engagement (Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University [PSAU], 2024a, 2024b, 2024c). More recent governance, quality, and academic-programme documents add a detailed procedural layer. They specify policy lifecycles, authorised responsibilities, programme-development requirements, peer review, benchmarking, monitoring, accreditation preparation, and alignment with national development and labour-market needs (PSAU, 2025a, 2025b, 2026a). These documents provide an unusually clear corpus for examining how a Saudi university narrates its transformation from a collection of academic units into a coordinated strategic actor.

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The analysis combines four complementary perspectives: hybrid governance, university actorhood, institutional discourse, and quality culture. Together they explain why official documents matter, how they organise authority, and how apparently technical terms carry normative assumptions about the university.

Hybrid governance refers to arrangements in which multiple steering instruments coexist. Capano and Pritoni’s (2020) comparative analysis of sixteen European systems demonstrated that higher education did not follow a uniform transition from governmental control to institutional autonomy. Instead, systems developed different mixtures of regulation, evaluation, performance funding, target setting, and institutional discretion. Capano (2022) similarly argues that contemporary reforms often rely on indirect steering: institutions are given room to act, but their action is structured by expanding expectations of accountability and performance. Musselin (2021) places this relationship across macro, meso, and organisational levels, showing that university governance is shaped simultaneously by national policy, sectoral arrangements, and internal structures. This perspective is useful in Saudi Arabia because it prevents an overly simple reading of autonomy. A university may have more responsibility for programme design while also facing more detailed requirements for approval, accreditation, reporting, and strategic alignment.

University actorhood describes the process through which universities become recognisable organisational actors with identities, strategies, boundaries, and the capacity to represent themselves publicly. Zapp et al. (2021) show that global higher education increasingly encourages universities to formulate institutional missions, build partnerships, adopt managerial structures, and respond to transnational expectations. Stensaker (2015) likewise argues that organisational identity helps explain how universities navigate change, while Gioia et al. (2000) emphasise that identity is not entirely fixed: it can remain durable enough to guide action yet adaptive enough to respond to external pressure. Strategic capacity is therefore not simply possession of a plan. It is the institutional ability to connect priorities, structures, resources, and collective action over time (Thoening & Paradeise, 2016).

Institutional discourse analysis adds a constitutive account of language. Organisational texts do not merely reflect institutions; they help produce them. Phillips et al. (2004) explain that discourse can generate categories, rules, and taken-for-granted understandings that support institutionalisation. Alvesson and Kärreman (2000) caution that discourse operates at different levels, from local language use to broader systems of meaning. Fairclough’s (2003) approach is especially relevant because it

attends to vocabulary, modality, agency, intertextuality, and the social practices presupposed by a text. A strategic plan may repeatedly use obligatory modal forms such as 'shall', 'must', or 'is responsible for', thereby distributing authority. A quality guide may turn contested educational judgements into apparently neutral procedures. An identity statement may connect the university's local activities to national and global narratives. Such language performs governance by making some actions legitimate, urgent, measurable, and accountable.

Legitimacy is a related concern. Organisations justify change by drawing on recognised values and authoritative narratives. Suddaby and Greenwood (2005) show that rhetorical strategies can make new organisational forms appear consistent with moral duties, historical continuity, professional expertise, or rational necessity. In a Saudi university, Vision 2030, national development, labour-market relevance, community service, and international accreditation provide powerful legitimating references. Their presence does not mean that the university passively repeats policy. Rather, the institution selects, translates, and combines these references to construct a distinctive account of its responsibilities and ambitions.

Quality assurance adds a further conceptual tension. Harvey and Green (1993) famously demonstrated that 'quality' has multiple meanings, including excellence, consistency, fitness for purpose, value for money, and transformation. Later scholarship distinguishes between assurance as external compliance and quality as an internal culture of inquiry and improvement. Newton (2000) described the danger that quality systems may become a bureaucratic 'beast' that consumes staff effort, while Teelken (2012) showed that academics often respond to managerial reform through combinations of compliance, pragmatic adaptation, and professional reinterpretation. Harvey's (2024) review of three decades of quality assurance similarly concludes that external systems can prompt reflection but do not automatically create a lived culture of improvement. Romanowski and Nasser (2022) further show how accreditation can function as governance at a distance by requiring institutions to internalise external expectations and render themselves auditable.

Leadership and culture mediate whether these systems become developmental or merely procedural. Transformational leadership is associated with shared purpose, motivation, innovation, and participation, although its institutional effects depend on structures and resources. Etomes et al. (2025) found that sustainable productivity in higher education required more than executive decisions; it depended on leadership capable of involving organisational members in change. In the Saudi context, Albaroudi and Iqbal (2025) found that quality culture was directly associated with university performance and also worked through transformational and transactional leadership. Academic culture, from this perspective, is not an informal background variable. It is produced through repeated expectations concerning responsibility, evidence, collegiality, excellence, innovation, and improvement.

These perspectives are combined in a single analytical proposition. PSAU's institutional discourse is expected to construct transformation through five linked dimensions: governance specifies legitimate authority; leadership mobilises and coordinates actors; academic culture defines valued conduct; quality and accreditation establish evidence and review practices; and strategic identity connects these internal arrangements to national and social purposes. The analysis therefore examines not only the presence of each dimension but also the relations and tensions among them.

4. SAUDI SCHOLARSHIP AND THE RESEARCH GAP

The Saudi literature reviewed here is broad and cumulative. Early comparative and institutional studies emphasised the need for explicit governance frameworks, wider participation, financial and administrative development, and movement towards decentralisation. Al-Furaih (2019), drawing on comparative experience, recommended formal governance documents and more participatory institutional arrangements. Al-Ramthi (2019) reported that governance at the University of Bisha was generally moderate and proposed a systemic model linked to strategic planning and Vision 2030. These studies established an enduring concern: the effectiveness of governance depends not simply on regulations but on whether authority, participation, responsibility, and institutional strategy are connected in practice.

Studies of future policy and the knowledge economy reached a similar conclusion from a different direction. Ghaws (2020) found very high support for standards concerning equal opportunity, lifelong learning, quality assurance, internationalisation, development relevance, research, technology, access, and financial diversification. Yet some of these aspirations, particularly community participation in educational policy, lifelong learning, research support, and diversified finance, were weakly represented in existing policy. Al-Ghamdi (2020) likewise found only a moderate level of implementation for economic incentives and institutional systems associated with knowledge-economy transformation. The findings suggest that strategic language can advance faster than the organisational capacity needed to realise it.

A large group of studies then examined quality assurance and accreditation. Abu Rayan (2021) reported a moderate application of quality and accreditation standards in an educational administration master's programme at King Abdulaziz University. Al-Khulewi (2021) found a moderate assessment of the role played by King Saud University's development and quality deanship in supporting academic departments, alongside substantial perceived difficulties. Al-Shammari (2021) found that governance requirements associated with institutional accreditation at the University of Hafr Al-Batin were moderately available and recommended better representation of faculty across campuses, clearer leadership-selection systems, and greater training in governance standards. These results are important because they connect formal quality requirements to representation, leadership development, and organisational knowledge.

Research on internal review and audit sharpened the procedural dimension. Al-Otaibi (2021) examined internal review for programme accreditation across six Saudi universities and found that planning was stronger than implementation, evaluation, and follow-up. Material, administrative, and human constraints remained significant, whereas international cases displayed clearer review stages, information sources, reviewer selection, timelines, recommendations, and multi-level participation. Al-Mubarak and Al-Jabr (2021) found variation from moderate to high in the extent to which university internal-audit units complied with the unified regulation. They argued that the newer university system, by increasing institutional responsibility, also increased the need for effective risk management, control, governance, and internal audit. Accreditation and autonomy therefore emerged as mutually dependent rather than competing developments.

Other studies widened the picture to include institutional capability. Najmi (2021) connected the entrepreneurial university to innovation, technology, new sources of finance, and responses to global challenges. Al-Shammari (2022) reported moderate levels of human capital and institutional performance at the University of Hail and identified barriers to using intellectual, social, and psychological capital effectively. Abu Qaoud (2022) found that teaching skills were closer to a high level, while research and administrative skills remained more uneven. Such findings support the view that transformation requires a culture of learning and staff development, not only revised structures.

The relationship between autonomy and governance has also been directly studied. Al-Ghamdi and Al-Zahrani (2022) found that academic leaders at King Saud University viewed administrative and financial challenges to autonomy as high and academic challenges as moderate. Their recommendations included phased administrative autonomy, stronger governance, clearer academic-freedom regulations, improved leadership selection, and financial rules tailored to institutional objectives. Al Muslat (2023) found only moderate use of benchmarking for programme improvement at King Khalid University and recommended a dedicated unit, training, and a supportive competitive culture. More recent studies have continued to connect governance to administrative excellence, accreditation to contextual variation, and quality culture to leadership and performance (Al-Zahrani, 2024; Al-Qahtani, 2024; Albaroudi & Iqbal, 2025).

Taken together, this literature provides a rich account of perceived conditions, barriers, and improvement priorities. Its methodological concentration, however, is striking. Most studies use descriptive surveys, questionnaires, or evaluative models. Governance, leadership, quality culture, accreditation, human capital, and transformation are commonly operationalised as variables whose degree of availability or influence can be measured. Far fewer studies analyse the official texts through which these categories are defined and joined. This synthesis therefore identifies a clear gap: Saudi research has seldom examined governance, leadership, academic culture, accreditation discourse, and transformation as an integrated meaning system within a specific university. The present study addresses that gap by analysing how PSAU's documents construct institutional order, responsibility, identity, and change.

5. METHODOLOGY

This study uses qualitative institutional discourse analysis. The approach is suitable because the research questions concern how official texts define institutional realities rather than how frequently employees endorse predetermined survey items. The unit of analysis is the meaningful textual construction: a statement, cluster of statements, procedural rule, value formulation, or intertextual reference that assigns agency, obligation, legitimacy, or institutional purpose.

The corpus was assembled from PSAU's official public website and document repositories. Documents were included when they were institution-wide or centrally authorised, publicly available, and directly concerned with at least one of the five focal domains: governance, leadership, academic culture, quality and accreditation, or institutional transformation. Materials limited to a single course or routine announcement were excluded. The final corpus covered strategic, identity, annual-reporting,

governance, programme-development, quality-management, accreditation, and Vision 2030 materials. All web materials were checked on 20 August 2026. Table 1 summarises the corpus.

Table 1. Corpus of official PSAU documents

Document	Genre	Date	Analytical relevance
Vision, Mission and Objectives	Strategic webpage	2024	Defines education, research, knowledge-economy, community-partnership and institutional values.
The Strategic Plan	Strategic webpage	2019/2024	Frames institutional growth, participation, quality, partnerships, innovation and Vision 2030 alignment.
Institutional and Visual Identity	Identity webpage	2024	Connects the University's identity to coordinated education, research and community activities.
Annual Report for 1444 AH	Annual report	2023	Links strategic goals, indicators, values, achievements and institution-wide participation.
Procedural Guide for Academic Programs and Study Plans	Regulatory guide	2025	Specifies programme design, approval, peer review, benchmarking, accreditation and labour-market alignment.
Policies and Procedures Governance Guide	Governance guide	n.d.	Defines policy ownership, consultation, approval, review, dissemination and amendment.
Academic Quality Management System	Quality-system guide	2025	Connects quality objectives to processes, responsibilities, evidence and improvement.
Governance and Institutional Compliance Office	Institutional webpage	2026	Frames governance as transparency, accountability, compliance, prevention and shared responsibility.
Academic Accreditations	Institutional webpage	2026	Presents accreditation as institutional credibility and evidence of programme quality.

Document	Genre	Date	Analytical relevance
Vision 2030 Initiatives	Institutional webpage	2026	Links university initiatives to national development, human capability, sustainability, digitalisation and performance.

Note. Dates refer to publication or displayed maintenance dates where available. The analytical focus was the authorised institutional construction of governance and transformation, not the verification of implementation outcomes.

5.1 Analytical Procedure

The analysis proceeded in three cycles. The first cycle involved close reading and descriptive coding. Terms and passages were coded for authority, responsibility, participation, quality, evidence, review, national alignment, labour-market relevance, innovation, research, community partnership, digital transformation, and sustainability. The second cycle examined relations among codes. For example, statements about programme innovation were read alongside rules for approval and accreditation; references to participation were compared with provisions assigning final authority; and values such as transparency or teamwork were traced across strategic and procedural texts. The third cycle identified interpretive themes and tensions, with particular attention to modality, actor positioning, intertextual references, and legitimisation.

Several steps strengthened analytical credibility. Documents of different genres were compared so that findings did not depend on the promotional language of a single webpage. Procedural guides were read against identity and strategic texts, and claims of participation were examined alongside formal approval structures. Negative or complicating evidence was retained rather than resolved artificially; the analysis therefore reports simultaneous commitments to participation and hierarchy, innovation and standardisation, and culture and compliance. A document log and thematic matrix linked each interpretive claim to specific corpus items. The study does not treat official discourse as proof of implementation. It analyses the organisational reality that the University authorises and projects, while recognising that enacted practice may diverge from formal representation.

No human participants or private records were involved. All materials were publicly accessible institutional documents. Ethical risk was therefore minimal, although interpretive care remained necessary. The analysis avoids attributing intentions to individual leaders and distinguishes between textual construction and demonstrated organisational effects.

6. FINDINGS

Across the corpus, institutional transformation is not presented as a discrete project with a clear beginning and end. It is constructed as an ongoing mode of organising the University. Strategy, governance, quality, accreditation, identity, and national alignment repeatedly appear in the same semantic field. The five themes below show how that field is assembled.

6.1 Governed Autonomy: Discretion Inside an Authorised Framework

The first theme is governed autonomy. PSAU's documents grant colleges, departments, committees, and programme teams meaningful responsibility, but that responsibility is consistently situated within national policy, University strategy, specialised standards, and authorised approval routes. The 2025 Procedural Guide for Academic Programs and Study Plans is exemplary. It enables academic units to establish, develop, and modify programmes, yet defines a unified regulatory framework for doing so. Programme development must align with national directions, the University's strategic initiatives, applicable regulations, benchmarking, academic standards, accreditation expectations, community needs, and current or anticipated labour-market requirements (PSAU, 2025a). Academic initiative is therefore encouraged, but only after it has been translated into a form that is comparable, reviewable, and institutionally authorised.

This construction differs from both traditional command administration and unrestricted academic discretion. The guide does not prescribe every curricular decision from the centre. It delegates substantive work to specialist committees and academic units, recognises disciplinary expertise, and creates room for peer review and programme redesign. At the same time, it establishes which bodies may initiate, evaluate, recommend, approve, monitor, and revise that work. Authority is distributed

functionally but integrated procedurally. The University becomes capable of acting as one organisation because local academic decisions are routed through common definitions, templates, standards, and decision points.

The governance guide extends this logic beyond curricula. Policies and procedures are represented as institutional assets with identifiable owners, review cycles, consultation requirements, approval authorities, dissemination processes, and rules for amendment (PSAU, 2025b). Stakeholders may contribute to policy development, but policy interpretation and final authorisation remain formally located. This is a clear instance of hybrid governance: participation and delegation operate within a system that preserves institutional coherence through central validation.

Intertextual alignment is a major source of legitimacy. The documents repeatedly connect University action to Vision 2030, national frameworks, the University's mission, accreditation standards, and labour-market development. Such references do more than provide context. They transform discretion into accountable discretion. A new programme is legitimate not simply because an academic group considers it valuable, but because it can demonstrate relevance to institutional strategy, recognised standards, public development, and stakeholder need. Autonomy thus becomes an obligation to justify decisions through shared institutional languages.

This theme clarifies why the language of 'clear procedures', 'precise standards', 'responsibilities', 'monitoring', and 'approval' is so prominent. The discourse seeks to reduce arbitrary variation without eliminating academic judgement. Its strength is organisational consistency; its risk is that compliance with the authorised route may be mistaken for the quality of the underlying decision. Governed autonomy becomes developmental only when procedures support informed judgement rather than replace it.

6.2 Leadership as Mobilisation Within Hierarchy

The second theme concerns leadership. PSAU's strategic and annual-report discourse constructs leadership as collective mobilisation rather than the activity of a single office. The strategic plan describes broad participation by academic and administrative leaders in planning, implementation, and unit-level action. The annual report links strategic goals to performance indicators and presents achievement as the result of coordinated work across University sectors (PSAU, 2023, 2024b). The programme guide similarly assigns interconnected roles to vice presidencies, standing committees, colleges, departments, curriculum units, reviewers, and councils. Leadership is therefore dispersed through a chain of responsibility.

Participation is not framed as optional goodwill. It is a governance resource. Consultation is expected to improve policy quality, programme relevance, stakeholder acceptance, and implementation. The governance guide requires attention to relevant stakeholders during policy development, while programme design incorporates peer review, public and private sector cooperation, and labour-market alignment (PSAU, 2025a, 2025b). Leadership is consequently represented as the capacity to convene expertise, coordinate units, and convert external needs into institutional decisions.

At the same time, the discourse retains a recognisable hierarchy. Standing committees are established through authorised decisions; policies require formal approval; councils validate programmes; and designated offices control interpretation, documentation, or compliance. This hierarchy is not concealed by participatory language. Rather, the two are combined. The resulting model may be described as participation within authorisation: members contribute evidence, expertise, and proposals, while final institutional legitimacy is produced by formal approval.

The creation of the Governance and Institutional Compliance Office in 2026 makes this construction more explicit. The office presents governance as a shared institutional responsibility grounded in transparency, accountability, and compliance, while also positioning itself as a coordinating and preventive oversight mechanism (PSAU, 2026a). Its discourse is developmental rather than purely punitive: governance should improve policy, reduce risk, clarify responsibility, and align practice with strategy. Yet the office also adds another layer through which conduct is observed and rendered compliant. Leadership becomes simultaneously enabling and supervisory.

This duality has practical consequences. Distributed responsibility can deepen ownership, but it can also diffuse accountability if roles overlap or if consultation has little influence on final decisions. Formal hierarchy can protect consistency, but it can discourage initiative when approval chains are slow or opaque. The documents seek to resolve this tension through role clarity, procedural sequencing, and documented responsibility. Whether that resolution succeeds in practice depends on the quality of feedback between levels, not merely on the existence of an organisational chart.

6.3 Academic Culture as a Normative Programme

The third theme is the construction of academic culture as a normative programme. PSAU's values and identity statements repeatedly foreground quality, mastery, continuous improvement, transparency, accountability, justice, teamwork, innovation, national identity, and social responsibility (PSAU, 2023, 2024a, 2024c). These terms appear aspirational, but they also define the kind of institutional subject the University expects: a staff member or unit that collaborates, documents, reviews, improves, innovates, and connects specialised work to a wider public mission.

Culture is therefore not treated as an inherited set of academic customs. It is something that can be deliberately shaped through strategy, leadership, training, policy, evaluation, and repeated institutional communication. The annual report presents strategic indicators and achievement reporting as part of collective performance. The programme guide makes continuous review, peer evaluation, benchmarking, and responsiveness to knowledge development normal features of academic work. The Academic Quality Management System similarly links quality objectives to processes, responsibilities, evidence, and improvement (PSAU, 2025c). Together, these texts make reflexive self-evaluation a cultural expectation.

Innovation occupies a prominent but carefully bounded position. The University's identity and Vision 2030 materials associate institutional advancement with emerging technologies, research impact, digital transformation, sustainability, entrepreneurship, and partnership (PSAU, 2024c, 2026c). Yet innovation is not represented as departure from governance. It is expected to occur through approved initiatives, strategic goals, national priorities, quality systems, and documented outcomes. The preferred innovator is not an autonomous disruptor but an institutionally aligned problem-solver.

The discourse also reframes academic professionalism. Traditional academic autonomy often rests on disciplinary expertise and collegial judgement. PSAU's documents retain these elements through peer review and specialist committees, but they add responsibilities for evidence, stakeholder relevance, strategic contribution, and measurable improvement. Professional credibility is therefore expanded: expertise must be made visible in forms that other institutional actors can evaluate. This may strengthen transparency and cross-unit coordination, although it also increases the documentary labour attached to academic work.

The Saudi studies synthesised earlier help explain why this cultural dimension matters. Moderate levels of governance, quality application, human-capital use, benchmarking, and research or administrative skills cannot be resolved by new rules alone. Etomes et al. (2025) and Albaroudi and Iqbal (2025) similarly suggest that leadership and culture determine whether organisational systems become sustainable practice. PSAU's discourse recognises this by repeatedly translating procedures into values and values into responsibilities. The unresolved question is whether employees experience these expectations as meaningful professional development or as an accumulating performance script.

6.4 Accreditation as an Architecture of Evidence

The fourth theme is the transformation of accreditation from a periodic external judgement into an internal architecture of evidence. In PSAU's programme-development discourse, accreditation is woven into the entire programme lifecycle. New and revised programmes require mission alignment, needs analysis, learning outcomes, curriculum coherence, benchmarking, peer review, resources, authorised committees, timelines, monitoring, and periodic evaluation (PSAU, 2025a). Accreditation is no longer a final inspection applied to a completed programme. It becomes a design principle through which programmes are made intelligible from their inception.

This architecture produces several benefits. It creates a common institutional memory, clarifies responsibilities, and reduces dependence on informal knowledge held by particular individuals. It makes programmes comparable across colleges and creates a basis for identifying gaps, following recommendations, and demonstrating improvement. The academic accreditation page and Vision 2030 materials then position accreditation achievements as evidence of institutional credibility and national contribution (PSAU, 2026b, 2026c). Accreditation serves both internal learning and external reputation.

The architecture also changes what counts as knowledge about education. Learning quality must be represented through specified outcomes, indicators, reports, surveys, benchmarks, minutes, action plans, and documented follow-up. These devices are not neutral containers. They privilege evidence that can circulate across committees and withstand review. Tacit disciplinary judgement remains important, but it acquires institutional force when translated into auditable artefacts. In this sense, accreditation is a technology of visibility.

The corpus consistently attempts to protect accreditation from being reduced to paperwork by linking it to continuous improvement, student learning, labour-market relevance, national development, and programme sustainability. This is an important discursive move. It presents documentation as a means rather than an end. Nevertheless, the possibility of ritual compliance remains. Saudi studies of internal review have found planning stronger than evaluation and follow-up, while studies of quality units and programme accreditation report administrative, material, and human obstacles (Al-Khulewi, 2021; Al-Otaibi, 2021). A formally complete evidence file may therefore coexist with weak learning from evidence.

The central challenge is to preserve what may be called evidential purpose. Every required document should answer a substantive question: What decision will this evidence inform? Who will review it? What change can follow? How will the effect of that change be examined? Without such links, evidence expands institutionally while learning remains static. PSAU's language of review, feedback, and improvement provides the normative basis for avoiding that outcome, but implementation requires disciplined selectivity as well as documentation.

6.5 Transformation Through Alignment, Relevance, and Public Value

The fifth theme is the construction of an institution in continuous transformation. PSAU's strategic identity rests on a recurring triad: education, research, and community partnership. The vision and mission connect distinguished education to competitive research, the knowledge economy, social responsibility, and a stimulating academic environment (PSAU, 2024a). The identity page reinforces this connection by stating that University activities and programmes are directed towards strategic objectives in education, research, and community engagement (PSAU, 2024c). The University is represented as an integrated actor whose components derive meaning from a common institutional direction.

National alignment is the strongest legitimating frame. Vision 2030 is invoked through human-capability development, labour-market readiness, research and innovation, digital governance, sustainability, financial efficiency, and social development (PSAU, 2026c). These references place institutional transformation within a national narrative of economic diversification and public-sector modernisation. Change is not presented as an imported managerial fashion; it is a contribution to a collective Saudi future.

Labour-market relevance performs a similar role at programme level. The programme guide repeatedly requires academic development to respond to current and future employment needs, community change, and cooperation with public and private sectors. This does not eliminate disciplinary or intellectual purposes, but it adds a strong utilitarian test: programmes should explain how learning outcomes contribute beyond the University. The transformed university is accountable not only for teaching content but for graduate capability and social relevance.

Global reference points are also present. International accreditation, benchmarking, distinguished institutions, rankings, partnerships, and competitive research support claims to quality and ambition. Yet globalisation is rhetorically domesticated through national priorities and local service. International comparison is valuable when it helps the University achieve its mission and serve Saudi development. This balancing act allows PSAU to present global competitiveness and national identity as complementary rather than contradictory.

Digitalisation and sustainability further extend the transformation narrative. Digital systems are associated with service quality, evidence-based decision-making, governance, efficiency, and accessibility, while sustainability connects institutional practice to long-term social and environmental responsibility. Both themes broaden the meaning of quality beyond academic programmes. The University's legitimacy depends increasingly on how its administrative, technological, financial, research, and community systems work together.

The overall identity is therefore future-oriented but highly organised. Transformation is made credible through procedures, indicators, responsibilities, accreditation, and reports. The institution narrates itself as agile, yet its agility is produced through coordination rather than looseness. This is the central paradox of the corpus: the University seeks to become more responsive by standardising the means through which responsiveness is proposed, evaluated, and authorised.

6.6 Productive Tensions in the Institutional Discourse

The themes above reveal a coherent institutional model, but coherence does not remove tension. Five recurring tensions are especially significant. They are summarised in Table 2 and should be treated as productive questions rather than textual failures.

Table 2. Central tensions in PSAU's institutional discourse

Tension	Discursive configuration
Autonomy / national steering	Academic units are enabled to develop programmes, but must demonstrate alignment with national frameworks, strategy, standards and accreditation.
Participation / hierarchy	Stakeholder consultation and distributed responsibility coexist with formal approval, designated ownership and central interpretation.
Innovation / standardisation	Innovation is encouraged through research, technology and new programmes, while common templates and procedures regulate how novelty is authorised.
Quality culture / compliance	Quality is described as mastery and continuous improvement, but it is enacted through extensive documentation, indicators and auditability.
Local mission / global comparison	Community relevance and national identity are combined with international benchmarking, accreditation, rankings and competitive research.

Note. The paired terms are not mutually exclusive. Their coexistence identifies the practical work that governance and leadership must perform.

7. DISCUSSION

The findings support the argument that Saudi university reform is best understood as hybrid governance rather than linear decentralisation. PSAU is constructed as a strategic actor with responsibility for programme development, quality, research, partnerships, digitalisation, and community contribution. Yet the exercise of that responsibility is embedded in national frameworks, accreditation, performance indicators, and formal approval systems. This pattern closely resembles Capano and Pritori's (2020) account of mixed policy instruments and Capano's (2022) concept of steering at a distance. Institutional responsibility expands at the same time as the obligation to demonstrate alignment and performance.

The analysis also extends the literature on university actorhood. Zapp et al. (2021) describe the global rise of universities that possess identities, strategies, and organisational boundaries. PSAU's discourse displays these features, but its actorhood is relational rather than self-enclosed. The University defines itself through its connection to national development, local community, labour markets, accreditation bodies, public and private partners, and international standards. Its identity is not simply 'who we are' but 'how our coordinated action contributes'. This is consistent with Stensaker's (2015) view that identity becomes especially important during change because it links internal coherence to external legitimacy.

A distinctive contribution of the Saudi case is the role of national-development discourse. Vision 2030 operates as an intertextual bridge across otherwise different organisational domains. Curricular reform, research, sustainability, digital transformation, human capital, financial efficiency, and community partnership can all be narrated as parts of the same public project. This provides strong legitimacy and reduces fragmentation. At the same time, national alignment can narrow institutional debate if it is treated as a self-evident formula rather than an invitation to specify how particular programmes create public value. The most meaningful alignment is interpretive and evidence-based, not merely lexical.

The findings further show that accreditation has been internalised as an organisational language. It structures programme design, role allocation, evidence, review, and reputation. This confirms Romanowski and Nasser's (2022) argument that accreditation governs institutions by shaping how they observe and present themselves. Yet PSAU's documents also seek to reclaim accreditation as improvement by linking it to learning outcomes, sustainability, peer review, labour-market needs, and

continuous development. The resulting discourse is neither purely coercive nor purely developmental. It contains both possibilities.

Leadership mediates these possibilities. The corpus promotes distributed participation while preserving formal hierarchy. This arrangement may be appropriate for a large public institution, but its effectiveness depends on whether participation influences decisions and whether approval bodies provide reasoned feedback. Consultation without traceable influence can become ceremonial; central approval without contextual understanding can become delay. Conversely, uncoordinated decentralisation can produce inconsistent standards and duplicated effort. The concept of participation within authorisation captures the institutional compromise, while also identifying the point at which governance should be evaluated.

Finally, the article explains why earlier Saudi survey studies repeatedly report moderate implementation. Rules, structures, and quality offices may be present while the cultural and relational conditions of enactment remain uneven. The gap between policy and practice is not necessarily resistance or failure. It may arise from workload, unclear role boundaries, limited data capacity, weak follow-up, insufficient training, or a perception that documentation has little effect on substantive decisions. A discourse-centred analysis cannot measure these conditions, but it reveals the institutional expectations that staff must interpret and enact.

8. PRACTICAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Four implications follow. First, governance should be evaluated through decision quality, not document completion alone. Policy and programme templates should identify the decision each evidence item is intended to support, the body responsible for responding, and the feedback returned to contributors. Second, participation should be made traceable. Consultation records should show which proposals were accepted, modified, or declined and why; this converts participation from symbolic inclusion into organisational learning.

Third, quality and accreditation systems should practise documentary proportionality. Evidence requirements need periodic review so that duplicated reports, inactive indicators, and low-value forms can be removed. A smaller body of evidence that informs action is more credible than a larger archive that is rarely used. Fourth, governance, strategy, quality, data, and professional-development units should operate through shared review cycles. When indicator results, accreditation recommendations, staff development, and strategic planning are separated, the University may produce abundant information without a coherent learning loop.

These implications do not call for weaker accountability. They call for accountability that returns knowledge to the people and units expected to improve. The strongest expression of governed autonomy is not freedom from evidence, but the capacity to use evidence intelligently and to explain institutionally consequential choices.

9. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The study analyses official discourse rather than enacted practice. Public documents may present a coherent and aspirational institutional image that differs from everyday experience. The corpus also privileges centrally authorised texts and does not include internal correspondence, committee deliberations, interviews, or observation. Future research should compare the formal discourse with faculty, student, administrator, and quality-practitioner accounts; trace how specific accreditation recommendations move through decision systems; and examine change longitudinally across successive strategic plans. Comparative studies across Saudi universities could also determine which elements reflect a national governance vocabulary and which are institutionally distinctive.

10. CONCLUSION

PSAU's official discourse constructs the transforming university through an integrated grammar of governance, leadership, culture, evidence, and public purpose. Institutional discretion is encouraged, but it is made accountable through national alignment, standards, committees, approval routes, monitoring, and accreditation. Leadership is distributed across organisational levels, yet participation remains nested within formal authority. Academic culture is presented as a programme of quality, mastery, teamwork, transparency, innovation, responsibility, and continuous improvement. Accreditation becomes an internal architecture of evidence that shapes programme design and institutional visibility. Transformation is legitimised through Vision 2030, labour-market relevance, research, digitalisation, sustainability, and community partnership.

The principal contribution is to show that these dimensions do not operate separately. They form a single institutional discourse that tells members what responsible action looks like and tells external audiences why the University's development is legitimate. That discourse has considerable productive capacity, but it also carries risks: procedure can displace judgement, consultation can become ceremonial, standardisation can constrain experimentation, and evidence can accumulate without learning. The future effectiveness of university transformation therefore depends less on adding new governance vocabulary than on preserving the substantive purposes behind it. Quality systems become culturally embedded when evidence changes decisions, participation shapes outcomes, and institutional alignment remains open to reasoned academic interpretation.

Funding

The author extends their appreciation to Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University for funding this research work through the Project number (PSAU/2026/02/43815).

Data Availability Statement

All primary documents analysed in this study are publicly available through Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University's official website and document repositories. The table of corpus materials and reference list provide the relevant titles and access locations.

Ethics Statement

The study involved no human participants, personal data, or private institutional records. It analysed publicly accessible organisational documents; therefore, formal human-subject ethics approval was not required.

REFERENCES

- [1] Abu Qaoud, G. (2022). Teaching, research, and administrative skills of faculty members according to academic accreditation standards: An exploratory study at Al-Baha University in Saudi Arabia. *Mu'tah for Research and Studies: Humanities and Social Sciences Series*, 37(1), 145–184.
- [2] Abu Rayan, S. (2021). The degree of application of quality assurance and academic accreditation standards in the Master of Educational Administration programme at King Abdulaziz University from faculty members' perspectives. *International Journal of Curricula and Technological Education*, 3, 19–85. [In Arabic]
- [3] Al Muslat, M. A. A. (2023). A proposed guide for activating benchmarking as a tool for improving academic programmes at King Khalid University in light of selected international models. *Umm Al-Qura University Journal for Educational and Psychological Sciences*, 15(1), 114–125. [In Arabic]
- [4] Al-Anazi, Y. D. (2022). Obstacles to applying programme accreditation standards in the College of Education at Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University and ways to overcome them. *Journal of University Performance Development*, 18(1), 335–346. [In Arabic]
- [5] Al-Furaih, W. I. (2019). A comparative study of university governance systems in South African and Dutch universities and the possibility of benefiting from them in Saudi Arabia. *Educational Journal*, 65, 801–832. <https://doi.org/10.12816/EDUSOHAG.2019.46543> [In Arabic]
- [6] Al-Ghamdi, F. M. A. (2020). The application of the economic incentive system and institutional systems indicator in Saudi universities for transformation towards the knowledge economy. *Journal of Educational Sciences*, 32(1), 47–70. [In Arabic]
- [7] Al-Ghamdi, H. A., & Al-Zahrani, A. M. (2022). Challenges to the autonomy of Saudi universities and ways to overcome them from academic leaders' perspectives: King Saud University as a model. *Journal of the Faculty of Education in Educational Sciences*, 46(1), 265–310. [In Arabic]
- [8] Al-Jumaili, M. A. (2025). Obstacles to academic accreditation in private colleges in the Qassim region from academic leaders' perspectives. *Journal of Educational Studies and Research*, 5(14), 434–468. [In Arabic]
- [9] Al-Khulewi, L. S. (2021). The role of the Deanship of Development and Quality at King Saud University in supporting academic departments to obtain academic accreditation. *Journal of Educational Sciences*, 26(3), 151–214. [In Arabic]

- [10] Al-Mubarak, A. I., & Al-Jabr, A. A. (2021). The status of internal auditing in Saudi public universities: A field study. *Scientific Journal of King Faisal University: Humanities and Management Sciences*, 22(1), 209–218. <https://doi.org/10.37575/h/mng/2364> [In Arabic]
- [11] Al-Otaibi, H. B. B. (2021). Developing the management of internal review processes for academic-programme accreditation in Saudi universities in light of international experiences: A proposed framework (Doctoral dissertation, King Saud University). [In Arabic]
- [12] Al-Qahtani, R. T. M. (2024). Quantitative evaluations of academic accreditation standards for educational postgraduate programmes in Saudi and international universities: An exploratory comparative study. *Journal of Educational Sciences*, 10(4), 307–335. [In Arabic]
- [13] Al-Ramthi, S. M. (2019). Developing institutional performance at the University of Bisha in light of prominent global systems of university governance: A proposed model. *Educational Journal*, 66, 403–438. <https://doi.org/10.21608/edusohag.2019.49680> [In Arabic]
- [14] Al-Shammari, A. N. (2022). A proposed framework for investing human capital to improve institutional performance at the University of Hail. *Arab Research in Fields of Specific Education*, 28(1), 95–132. <https://doi.org/10.21608/raes.2022.265940> [In Arabic]
- [15] Al-Shammari, K. A. M. (2021). The availability of governance-standard requirements at the University of Hafr Al-Batin in light of institutional accreditation standards. *Journal of Educational Sciences and Humanities Studies*, 6(15), 461–491. [In Arabic]
- [16] Al-Zahrani, M. A. M. (2024). The role of governance application, in light of institutional accreditation requirements, in achieving administrative excellence: A field study at King Abdulaziz University. *Arab Journal for Scientific Publishing*, 72, 902–917. [In Arabic]
- [17] Albaroudi, H. B., & Iqbal, S. (2025). Role of leadership styles in connecting quality culture and university performance: A higher education perspective from Saudi Arabia. *The TQM Journal*, 37(6), 1643–1665. <https://doi.org/10.1108/TQM-02-2024-0072>
- [18] Alvesson, M., & Kärreman, D. (2000). Varieties of discourse: On the study of organizations through discourse analysis. *Human Relations*, 53(9), 1125–1149. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726700539002>
- [19] Bureau of Experts at the Council of Ministers. (2019). Law of Universities (Royal Decree No. M/27, 30 October 2019). <https://laws.boe.gov.sa/Files/Download/?attId=e98dc40f-954f-4b5c-b50d-b11600dbcf5f>
- [20] Capano, G. (2022). Governance reforms in comparative perspective and their path in the Italian case. In G. Capano & M. Regini (Eds.), *Trajectories of governance: How states shaped policy sectors in the neoliberal age* (pp. 19–44). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-07438-7_2
- [21] Capano, G., & Pritoni, A. (2020). What really happens in higher education governance? Trajectories of adopted policy instruments in higher education over time in 16 European countries. *Higher Education*, 80(5), 989–1010. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-020-00529-y>
- [22] Education and Training Evaluation Commission. (2026). National Center for Academic Accreditation and Evaluation. <https://etec.gov.sa/en/centers/ncaa>
- [23] Etomes, S. E., Endeley, M. N., Aluko, F. R., & Molua, E. L. (2025). Transformational leadership for sustainable productivity in higher education institutions of Cameroon. *Higher Education*, 90, 521–543. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-024-01334-7>
- [24] Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing discourse: Textual analysis for social research*. Routledge.
- [25] Ghaws, A. A. R. (2020). Proposed standards for building a future policy for higher education in Saudi Arabia. *Journal of Education*, Al-Azhar University, 39(187), 444–477. [In Arabic]
- [26] Gioia, D. A., Schultz, M., & Corley, K. G. (2000). Organizational identity, image, and adaptive instability. *Academy of Management Review*, 25(1), 63–81. <https://doi.org/10.5465/AMR.2000.2791603>

- [27] Harvey, L. (2024). What have we learned from 30 years of Quality in Higher Education? Academics' views of quality assurance. *Quality in Higher Education*, 30(3), 360–375. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13538322.2024.2385793>
- [28] Harvey, L., & Green, D. (1993). Defining quality. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 18(1), 9–34. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0260293930180102>
- [29] Musselin, C. (2021). University governance in meso and macro perspectives. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 47, 305–325. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-090320-012708>
- [30] Najmi, F. A. (2021). Strengthening the entrepreneurial role of Saudi universities amid global transformations: Singularity University as a model. *Educational Journal*, 87(2), 828–882. [In Arabic]
- [31] Newton, J. (2000). Feeding the beast or improving quality? Academics' perceptions of quality assurance and quality monitoring. *Quality in Higher Education*, 6(2), 153–163. <https://doi.org/10.1080/713692740>
- [32] Phillips, N., Lawrence, T. B., & Hardy, C. (2004). Discourse and institutions. *Academy of Management Review*, 29(4), 635–652. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2004.14497617>
- [33] Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University. (2023). Annual report for the academic year 1444 AH. <https://www.psau.edu.sa/en/open-data-library>
- [34] Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University. (2024a). Vision, mission and objectives. <https://www.psau.edu.sa/en/vision-mission-and-objectives>
- [35] Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University. (2024b). The strategic plan. <https://www.psau.edu.sa/en/strategic-plan>
- [36] Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University. (2024c). Institutional and visual identity. <https://www.psau.edu.sa/en/identity>
- [37] Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University. (2025a). Procedural guide for academic programs and study plans: Rules and regulations (2nd ed.). https://www.psau.edu.sa/acp/sites/uploads/acp/2026-08/Procedural%20Guide%20for%20Academic%20Programs%20and%20Study%20Plans%20Rules%20and%20Regulations%20%28Second%20Edition%202025%29_compressed.pdf
- [38] Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University. (2025b). Policies and procedures governance guide. Governance and Institutional Compliance Office.
- [39] Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University. (2025c). Academic Quality Management System. <https://www.psau.edu.sa/ddq/sites/uploads/ddq/2025-12/AQMS.pdf>
- [40] Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University. (2026a). Governance and Institutional Compliance Office. <https://www.psau.edu.sa/igc/en>
- [41] Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University. (2026b). Academic accreditations. <https://www.psau.edu.sa/en/academic-accreditations>
- [42] Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University. (2026c). Vision 2030 initiatives. <https://www.psau.edu.sa/en/vision-2030-initiatives>
- [43] Romanowski, M. H., & Nasser, R. (2022). Controlling higher education from a distance: A governmentality perspective on accreditation. *Cogent Education*, 9(1), Article 2073631. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2022.2073631>
- [44] Saudi Vision 2030. (2026a). Human Capability Development Program. <https://www.vision2030.gov.sa/en/explore/programs/human-capability-development-program>
- [45] Saudi Vision 2030. (2026b). Vision 2030 overview. <https://www.vision2030.gov.sa/en/overview>
- [46] Stensaker, B. (2015). Organizational identity as a concept for understanding university dynamics. *Higher Education*, 69(1), 103–115. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-014-9763-8>
- [47] Suddaby, R., & Greenwood, R. (2005). Rhetorical strategies of legitimacy. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 50(1), 35–67. <https://doi.org/10.2189/asqu.2005.50.1.35>

- [48] Teelken, C. (2012). Compliance or pragmatism: How do academics deal with managerialism in higher education? A comparative study in three countries. *Studies in Higher Education*, 37(3), 271–290. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2010.511171>
- [49] Thoenig, J.-C., & Paradeise, C. (2016). Strategic capacity and organisational capabilities: A challenge for universities. *Minerva*, 54(3), 293–324. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11024-016-9297-6>
- [50] Zapp, M., Marques, M., & Powell, J. J. W. (2021). Blurring the boundaries: University actorhood and institutional change in global higher education. *Comparative Education*, 57(4), 538–559. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2021.1967591>