



Received: 05-01-2024
Accepted: 15-02-2024

International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research and Studies

ISSN: 2583-049X

Financial Autonomy in Public Universities: A Systematic Review

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Abstract

Today, university autonomy is a global trend in higher education governance. University autonomy, especially financial autonomy in public, is gradually becoming a necessary trend in the world as well as in Vietnam. The purpose of this study is to systematize previous studies on financial autonomy in public universities and to count and evaluate, according to the authors, the most influential research articles in the study of financial autonomy in public universities. The research data were collected and analyzed from Google Scholar data on VOSviewer 1.6.19 software

with 500 articles for the keyword "financial autonomy in public universities" filtered in abstract form. The results show that research on financial autonomy in public universities in the past 10 years has always been a topic of interest and research. The study also points out the most influential authors in terms of the number of articles and the number of citations. The research results have contributed to synthesizing a system of research documents on financial autonomy in public universities.

Keywords: Financial Autonomy, Public Universities, VOSviewer

1. Introduction

Pribadi, Y., Akhmadi, M. H., and Wardhana, I. W. (2022) ^[2] researched the efficiency of public universities in the context of financial autonomy. The study explores 138 higher education institutions in Indonesia with different levels of financial autonomy, including 12 fully autonomous, 52 semi-autonomous, and 74 non-autonomous universities. Using data envelope analysis and analysis of variance, the study revealed that more financial autonomy facilitates higher efficiency. In a similar vein, universities with higher efficiency scores are financially better than those with lower efficiency. We found that 3% of the universities are inefficient due to the COVID-19 pandemic challenges. However, 23% of them experienced an increase in output while reducing their input. From this, we propose initiatives to develop financial autonomy for public universities.

Waluyo, B. (2018) ^[3] researched balancing financial autonomy and control in issues emerging from Indonesian higher education. The purpose of this paper is to explore the practices of financial autonomy and control the emerging issue of agencification in the higher education sector. The practices are investigated using case studies from seven semi-autonomous state universities in Indonesia. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 17 respondents, including university officials, policymakers, and experts. The interview results were analyzed using an inductive-deductive approach. This research highlights an unstable balance between financial autonomy and control practices in universities. Autonomy supports agglomeration mainly by simplifying financial procedures and control, which is seen by university managers as being overemphasized compared to other state universities. Despite successes in introducing a business-like atmosphere within bureaucratic universities, questions about balancing financial autonomy and control remain.

Fabayo, J. A., Ololade, M. B., & Ogbeide, S. O. (2022) ^[1] researched university funding and financial autonomy: Issues and challenges for public and private universities in Nigeria. The employment of strategies for funding by university administrators to drive operations cannot be overemphasized. In the light of present-day economic challenges, where institutions, government agencies, departments, and the government at all three levels are struggling to pay salaries and meet other administrative costs, private and public universities, as well as colleges of education and polytechnics whose vision is skewed towards excellence and productivity, cannot afford to completely depend on tuition fees for financing and sustainability. The cause of financial setbacks in most tertiary institutions is premised on relying on one source of revenue generation. For most private universities, they mainly depend on fees from students, while for public universities, government monthly subventions and student tuition fees are predominantly the sources of revenue; yet, the challenges are continually on the rise. Thus, the aim of this chapter is to examine the factors driving university self-financing (funding) in the present-day university education system in Nigeria and

the financial autonomy of the universities, including the challenges of universities' funding and financial autonomy. Zastrozhnikova, I. V., Datsii, N. V., Filyanina, N. M., Lytvyn, L., Bielialov, T. E., & Martynets, L. A. (2021) ^[4] researched the development of financial and economic autonomy in the field of higher education. The development of alternative management tools to the old management models increasingly requires the expansion of autonomy in the activities of higher education. The aspect of financial independence has a prominent place in the university's system of autonomy. This article is devoted to the analysis and generalization of key global trends in the development of financial autonomy by higher education institutions, highlighting the complex process of university autonomy and studying the world experience of expanding their autonomy on the right to dispose of funds and organize other financial processes. The study outlined further prospects for increasing the financial and economic independence of universities, clarified the current and projected limits of the powers of universities in the paradigm of a developed and legally established model of autonomy, and identified effective solutions to the complex process of financial and economic autonomy. The results of the study can be used to learn about the processes of expanding the financial and economic autonomy of higher education institutions in the global dimension.

Therefore, this study helps readers grasp the development and quality of financial autonomy in public universities through the frequency of keyword usage, the number of citations, and the number of authors cited over time. At the same time, it helps future researchers to know the trend of this topic over time.

2. Financial autonomy in public universities

University autonomy aims to enhance the capacity and responsibility of higher education institutions and improve the quality of training and university administration in a modern direction. University autonomy is when a university carries out autonomous activities in the fields of organization and personnel, finance and assets, training, science and technology, international cooperation, and ensuring the quality of higher education. University autonomy is manifested in four aspects: Organizational autonomy, financial autonomy, personnel autonomy, and academic autonomy. Of these, financial autonomy is the most important component. With the goal of university autonomy, sustainable development of financial autonomy is one of the tools, as well as a solution, to implement full autonomy for higher education institutions.

For public universities, financial autonomy means that universities are autonomous in the following contents: Autonomy in professional activities (the right to decide on the organization of training and scientific research activities, to develop strategic development plans in a modern direction, to be able to compete to perform the functions of the university), autonomy in the organization of the apparatus (the right to autonomously arrange the apparatus, recruit or dismiss cadres and employees of the university), and financial autonomy (the right to decide on the financial activities of the university). Financial autonomy is related to autonomy in managing revenue and expenditure activities, managing and distributing financial results, managing funds, managing assets, where managing revenue sources and managing financial expenditures are the most important.

Financial autonomy in revenue management

The revenue sources of public universities include the following:

Revenue from the State Budget: Including funding allocated for education and training from the central and local budgets, regular expenditure for implementing scientific and technological research tasks from the competent ministry or agency selected or directly assigned, regular expenditure support after the unit has used career revenue sources and revenue sources fees are left to perform tasks, provide public career services belonging to the list of public career services but not yet ensuring regular expenses and other types of expenses such as expenses for implementing national target programs, expenses for training, training cadres according to approved projects... Revenue from the state budget must be managed and arranged for use in accordance with the budget estimate and regulations of the state.

Revenue from career activities: Including revenue from public career services; revenue from production, business activities, joint ventures, and partnerships with organizations and individuals in accordance with the law and approved by competent authorities with appropriate projects; revenue from leasing public assets. Revenue from public career services is the revenue received to carry out teaching, scientific research activities, and other auxiliary activities; revenue from training and teaching activities accounts for the largest proportion. When schools engage in commercial activity, they receive business revenue. Revenue from directly affiliated units is submitted in accordance with regulations. Other revenue is revenue outside the scope of the above regulations, such as revenue from investment, donations, interest, etc. In addition, in higher education institutions, there are also sources of fees left for spending in accordance with legal regulations on fees, sources of aid, funding in accordance with legal regulations, and other sources of revenue.

Financial Autonomy in Expenditure Management

The university's expenditures are the expenses incurred when carrying out teaching, scientific research activities, and other activities. University expenditures include:

Career expenses are expenses incurred when the university carries out teaching, scientific research activities, and other auxiliary activities. Career expenses include basic salary, supplementary salary, other salaries, welfare for staff, social insurance premiums, scholarships, official fees, professional activities, the purchase of equipment repairs, and other expenses.

Based on the purpose of using the funding source, career expenses include the following items:

Expenses for salaries and contributions based on salaries: Higher education institutions apply the salary regime according to the basic salary level, salary coefficient of the rank, position, and contributions based on salaries and allowances prescribed by the state for higher education institutions. In the context of the state adjusting the salary policy, public higher education institutions use a minimum of 40% of the revenue left according to the regime, saving 10% of regular expenses.

Expenses for hiring experts, scientists, and talented people to perform the tasks of agencies, organizations, and units: based on actual requirements and financial capacity, the unit is allowed to decide on the specific expenditure level

commensurate with the assigned task and must be specified in the unit's internal expenditure regulations.

Expenses for professional activities and management: Depending on the level of self-ensuring regular expenses, the units are allowed to decide on the expenditure level higher, equal to, or lower than the level prescribed by the state, which is specified in the internal expenditure regulations of the university. Expenses for professional activities and management include: Expenses for teaching activities; expenses for scientific research; expenses for professional support; expenses for administrative management; expenses for logistics; expenses for student activities outside of teaching, including student reward funds, student loan funds, scholarships, and student activity fees; expenses for insurance; welfare for cadres, teachers, and staff.

Expenses for performing the work, services subject to fees in accordance with the provisions of the law on fees and charges, and expenses for service activities provided in public higher education institutions.

Expenses for business are expenses incurred to carry out business activities that are not independently accounted for other expenses.

3. Research Methods

The authors synthesize previously published overview documents related to financial autonomy in public universities from data sources on Google Scholar. Overview studies will aim to explain the urgency of the study and indicate gaps in the research. The authors use VOSviewer 1.6.19 software to filter data with the keyword "financial autonomy in public universities" filtered in the abstract of the Google Scholar database, accessed on January 20, 2023. The results show 454 related articles in the selected category out of 500 articles. The collected data is used to analyze and answer the following research questions:

Q1: Research on financial autonomy in public universities from 2014 to December 2023

Q2: The most influential authors by number of articles and number of citations in universities

Q3: Which keywords are grouped into which topics?

4. Results

Statistics on publications on financial autonomy in public universities

From 2014 to 2023, the group of authors searched for a maximum of 500 articles; there were 454 articles on financial autonomy in public universities indexed in Google Scholar. The authors have excluded books and citations. An average of 45.4 articles were published each year. This shows that the issue of financial autonomy in public universities is still a concern for researchers today.

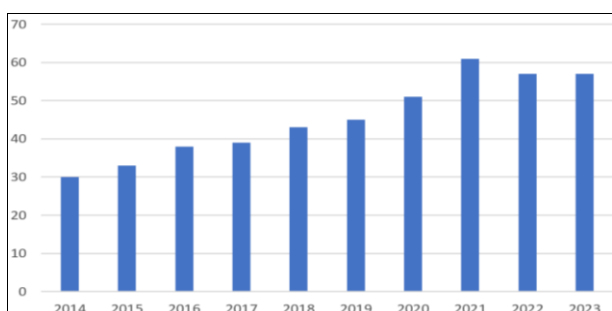


Fig 1: Graph of the number of studies over the years

Statistics on the most influential authors in the study of financial autonomy in public universities

To assess the most influential authors in the study of financial autonomy in public universities, we consider the number of article citations (Table 1), the number of articles by the authors (Table 2, Fig 2).

Highest citations by document

Table 1 shows the number of citations in the article by the group of authors L Cricelli, M Greco, and M Grimaldi. (2018) "Intellectual capital and university performance in emerging countries: Evidence from Colombian public universities" has the most number of citations (170 times), followed by FJ Alcaraz-Quiles, A Navarro-Galera (2015), "Factors determining online sustainability reporting by local governments" with 129 citations. NH Tien, DT Anh, M Van Luong, NM Ngoc... (2021), "Sustainable Development of Higher Education: A Case of Business Universities in Vietnam" has 128 citations. The remaining articles have all been cited more than 50 times.

Table 1: Frequency of the highest citation by documents

Documents	Cites
L Cricelli, M Greco, M Grimaldi... (2018)	170
FJ Alcaraz-Quiles, A Navarro-Galera... (2015)	129
NH Tien, DT Anh, M Van Luong, NM Ngoc... (2021)	128
B Jongbloed (2015)	104
S Kholmuminov, RE Wright (2017)	102
HT Nguyen, MO Hamid, K Moni (2016)	85
A Almagtome, A Shaker, Q Al-Fatlawi, H Bekheet (2019)	82
C Logli (2016)	80
M Dobbins, S Khachatryan (2015)	78
A Rosser (2016)	73
TJ Kallio, KM Kallio, A Blomberg (2020)	69
EB Pruvot, T Estermann (2017)	62
I Brusca, S Cohen, F Manes-Rossi... (2019)	60
M Dobbins, L Leišyte (2014)	60
CS Farinha, U Azeiteiro, SS Caeiro (2018)	59
A Conrath-Hargreaves, S Wüstemann (2019)	58
JBG Tilak (2016)	57
R Raudla, E Karo, K Valdmaa, R Kattel (2015)	57
F Michavila, JM Martínez (2018)	56
T Nokkala, A Bladh (2014)	56
P Allen, Q Cao, H Wang (2014)	56
G Nicolo', F Manes-Rossi, J Christiaens... (2020)	54
S Jarensiripornkul, IM Pandey (2018)	54
R Katawazai (2021)	53
M Bisogno, B Cuadrado-Ballesteros... (2019)	50

Source: Authors compiled from VOSviewer software

The highest documents by authors

Table 2: Frequency of the highest documents by authors

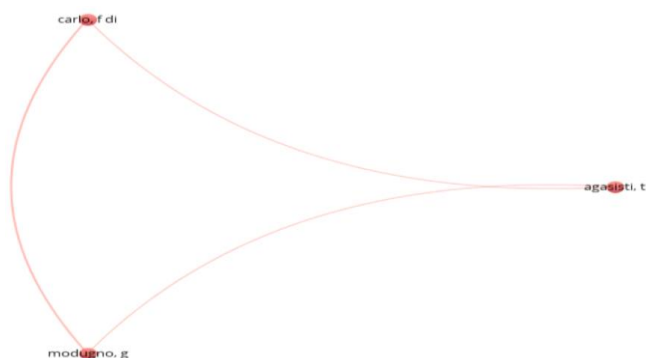
Selected	Author	Documents
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	carlo, f di	3
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	modugno, g	3
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	do, hth	3
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	hasbullah, na	3
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	mai, an	4
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	rahman, a ab	3
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	agasisti, t	3
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	balbachevsky, e	3
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	kohtamäki, v	8
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	koryakina, t	3
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	lee, mnn	3
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	nguyen, t	3
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	teixeira, pn	3
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	tran, t	3
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	wan, c da	4
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	aithal, ps	3
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	cotelnic, a	3
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	dobbins, m	3
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	gür, bs	3
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	hai, ptt	3

Source: Authors compiled from VOSviewer software

The authors with the most articles on financial autonomy in public universities are Kohtamaki, T. with 8 articles, Wan. C. Da with 4 articles, and Mai. An with 4 articles.

▪ **Co-authorship analysis**

To explore the collaboration trend in research on financial autonomy in public universities, this study conducted a co-authorship analysis among individual authors. According to Benoit *et al.* (2018), the analysis results help enhance the understanding of research collaboration and identify influential researchers. Fig 1 presents the co-authorship network map. The link between two nodes represents the collaboration relationship between two authors, and the thickness of the link represents the collaboration intensity. The most tightly connected group of authors is shown in the figure below. This is a cohesive group that has published multiple papers over the years.



Source: Authors compiled from VOSviewer software

▪ **Keyword analysis results**

In the keyword analysis, the study selected keywords that appeared 15 times or more. Based on their frequency and overall link strength, the software evaluated the keywords. The keyword analysis results can be exported as an image file. The keyword analysis result figure is as follows:

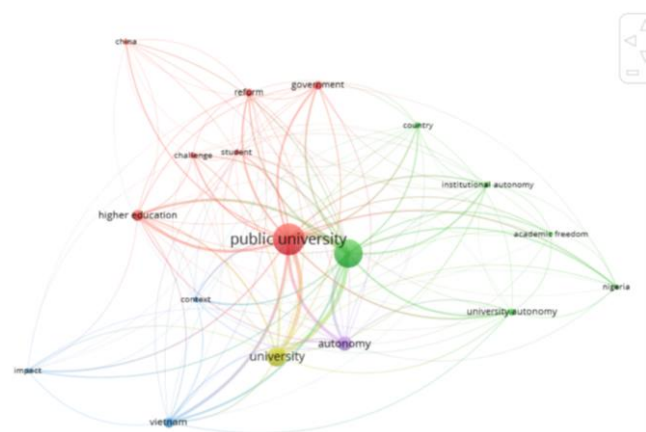


Fig 4: Co-occurrence networks and keyword networks

There are groups of related keywords, and each group has a different color. As can be seen from the figure, the keywords are divided into five groups. Group 1 is represented by the red links, which are combined by 7 keywords: Challenge, china, government, higher education, public university, reform, student, with the central keyword being “public university” with 17 links and a total link strength of 1868, which appeared 627 times. Group 2 is represented by the green links, which are combined by 6

keywords: Academic freedom, country, financial autonomy, institutional autonomy, Nigeria, and university autonomy, with the central keyword being “financial autonomy” with 17 links and a total link strength of 1680, and have appeared 519 times. Group 3 is represented by the blue links, which consist of 3 keywords: Vietnam, context, and impact, with the central keyword being “vietnam” with 15 links and a total link strength of 317, which appeared 67 times. Group 4 is represented by the yellow link, which consists of 1 keyword: University, with 17 links and a total link strength of 817, which appeared 241 times. Group 5 is represented by the purple links, which consist of the keyword autonomy with 17 links and a total link strength of 496, which appeared 130 times. With 5 research directions and 18 popular keywords, the results provide a comprehensive view of the issue of financial autonomy in public universities. Future research can use this as a basis for selecting research directions to fill the gaps or conduct more in-depth analysis.

5. Conclusion

In this study, we conducted a systematic review of the research on financial autonomy in public universities indexed in the Google Scholar database. These studies were published in the last 10 years, from 2014 to 2023, to provide detailed information on the number of publications, authors' citation frequency, citations of the studies, keyword networks, etc. The research results have contributed to the general theoretical basis, which serves as a foundation for reference studies on financial autonomy in public universities. Data collected from richer sources such as Scopus and OpenAlex are also suggestions for future in-depth research.

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