



Regulatory Approaches to Private Higher Education Institutions: Challenges and Policy Implications

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Abstract

The rapid expansion of private higher education institutions (PHEIs) has transformed global higher education systems, creating complex regulatory challenges concerning educational quality, institutional autonomy, accountability, and equitable access. This narrative review critically examines major regulatory approaches governing PHEIs, identifies persistent implementation challenges, and explores their implications for institutional performance and educational outcomes. Drawing on contemporary scholarly literature, the review synthesizes conceptual, institutional, and policy perspectives on licensing, accreditation, academic and financial oversight, transparency, performance-based regulation, and collaborative governance. The analysis highlights regulatory fragmentation, administrative burdens, commercialization, inconsistent quality assurance, and emerging digital and cross-border educational provision as significant challenges. It further identifies tensions between institutional independence and government intervention, emphasizing the need for regulatory mechanisms that protect public interests without restricting academic innovation. The review proposes a transition toward proportionate, risk-based, and outcome-oriented regulatory frameworks supported by independent accreditation, transparent institutional reporting, effective student protection, and coordinated regulatory oversight. Particular attention is given to the growing importance of digital governance, institutional sustainability, and educational equity. Future research should prioritize comparative and longitudinal evaluations of regulatory effectiveness. Overall, adaptive and evidence-informed regulatory approaches are essential for strengthening institutional accountability, maintaining educational standards, and supporting inclusive, innovative, and sustainable private higher education systems globally.

Keywords: Private Higher Education Institutions; Regulatory Governance; Quality Assurance; Institutional Autonomy; Higher Education Policy

Introduction

Private higher education has gained greater significance as part of today's higher education systems, given the increasing demand for tertiary education, limited public funding resources, institutional diversification and the effects of market-oriented strategies in the provision of higher education services. The growth of private higher education institutions (PHEIs) has led to an expansion of educational capacity and the possibilities of institutional specialization, innovation and adaptability to the needs of society and the labor market. Private higher education is a growing and little-studied area of global higher education, as described by Tilak (2025), and deserves more focus in scholarship. In addition to human-capital formation and knowledge production, private and public higher education institutions can play a role in innovation and economic development by interacting with economic sectors (Nevs, 2021). Furthermore, synergies between higher education institutions, governments and private-sector players can boost innovation ecosystems and support knowledge sharing (Gachie, 2020).

However, the rise of private provision raises significant questions about the quality of the academic product, the legitimacy of the institutions, their financial sustainability, transparency, student affordability, and protection. There is a need for robust regulation systems to ensure that institutions fulfil the necessary academic and operational requirements and have adequate flexibility for institutional development. To meet the growing complexity of regulatory requirements, governance structures must be flexible in the face of shifting higher education environments, as Scott (2021) asserts. Such concerns are especially important in market oriented and for-profit higher education, where institutional incentives, market pressures, regulation and educational performance dynamically interact (Hentschke et al., 2023). The connection between economic sustainability and governance is further demonstrated through its impact on institutional performance and perceptions of educational quality, as economic instability can also have a detrimental effect on the former (Scott & Guan, 2023).

One of the key issues is thus the proper balance between institutional independence and public accountability. PHEIs need a degree of independence to shape courses, devise creative teaching methods, move with the times and implement unique policies. Heavy regulation and regulatory oversight could inhibit flexibility and compliance costs, while inadequate oversight could lead to non-compliant education, low transparency, and inadequate education protection for students. The results from Kallio et al. (2022) indicate that the public steering mechanisms have a significant effect on the autonomy-accountability nexus in higher education. In times of institutional turmoil, when integrity, transparency and good governance are crucial to maintain public trust, accountability mechanisms are important (Blankenberger & Williams, 2020). New technologies like digital education and generative artificial intelligence add to the regulatory challenges, bringing new issues around academic practice, institutional policy and educational governance (Rudolph et al., 2024).

Considering this context, the process of regulating private higher education needs to be critically examined from the perspective of something beyond compliance. Privatization, accountability, quality assurance, institutional autonomy and regulatory governance are themes that have been the subject of existing scholarship, but they are treated separately. The purpose of this review is, then, to (1) look at the key regulatory strategies that govern PHEIs, (2) critically review the key problems of regulation and what they mean for the institutional and educational outcomes, and (3) propose policy directions and priorities for future regulatory directions that can balance institutional autonomy, quality assurance, accountability, equity, innovation, and sustainability. In this synthesis, the Review aims to help create more adaptive, proportionate and context sensitive regulatory systems for private higher education.

2. Evolution and Landscape of Private Higher Education

2.1 Expansion and Diversification of Private Higher Education Institutions

Figure 1 shows that the level of education demand has increased, as has public capacity, as well as the demand for flexible and professionally oriented education programs, leading to a marked growth in private higher education. This growth has led to more and more different institutional forms, which go beyond the traditional boundaries of public and private entities. Yee (2022) points to this evolving situation in the Philippines and Hunt and Boliver (2023) illustrate the diversity of private higher education providers in the United Kingdom. Growth in Brazil has been linked to several measures, including the process of privatization, distance learning, and market concentration, which highlights that higher education systems are also structurally reorganized with growth. (Carvalhaes et al., 2023)

2.2 Privatization and Marketization of Higher Education

Privatisation has enhanced market mechanisms in higher education, thus making competition among universities, students and resources more intense. Marketization may affect not just institutional management, but academic practice, academic identities, and curriculum (Javadi & Azizzadeh, 2020). While these developments provide opportunities to be responsive and innovative, they can also raise concerns about commercial priorities, market concentration, and unequal educational opportunities (Carvalhaes et al., 2023).

2.3 Changing Role of the State in Higher Education Governance

The role of the state has not been replaced by growth of the private sector, it has been transformed. In addition to their traditional role of funding and public provision, governments are becoming more and more involved as regulators, quality guarantors and coordinators. This regulatory role is especially strong in the presence of entrenched social and economic disparities and gaps (Lebeau & Oanda, 2020). Governments must also transform governance to new institutional and educational systems in order to digitalize (Akour & Alenezi, 2022).

2.4 Public-Private Dynamics in Higher Education Systems

Institutions are more and more embedded in complex systems, in which competition, complementarity and institutional differentiation are present. The market dynamics affect the positioning and response of the two sectors to the demand for education (Olaleye et al., 2020). But more diversity of institutions can bring about diversity of access, quality, and resources. Governance should thus be measured in terms of flexibility and innovation in the private sector, quality controls, access, and public service goals of higher education (Yee, 2022; Lebeau & Oanda, 2020).

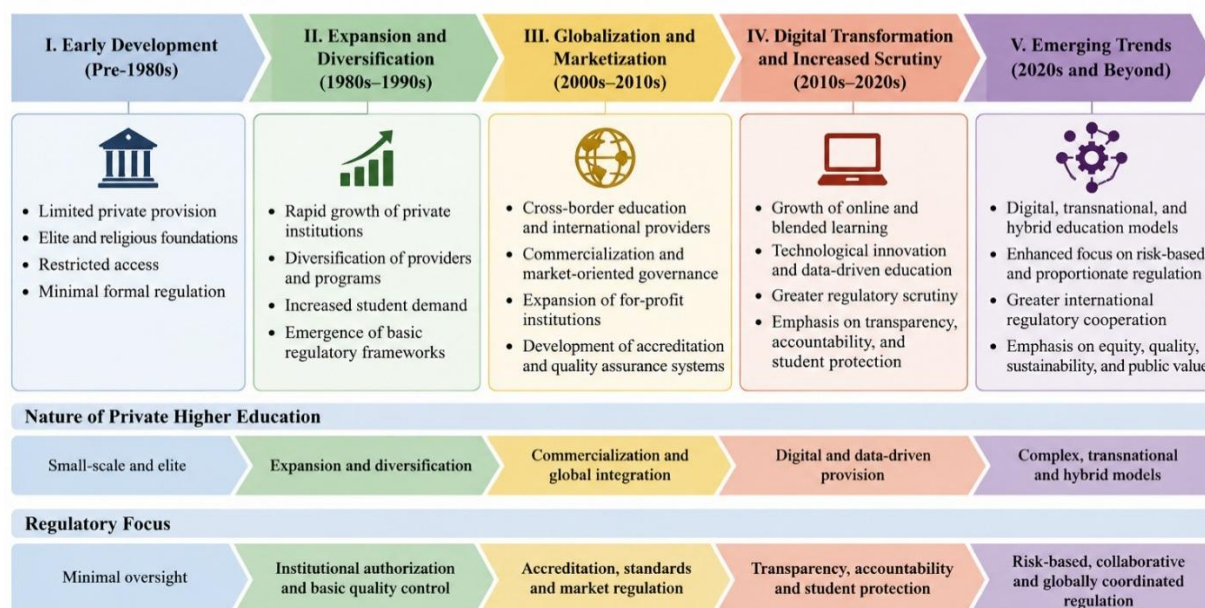


Figure 1. Evolution of Private Higher Education and Regulation

3. Conceptual Foundations of Regulatory Governance

The purpose of regulatory governance in private HE is to protect educational quality, institutional accountability and public interests, whilst also allowing for institutional diversity and innovation. Private higher education institutions (PHEIs) are increasing and the requirements for regulating academic standards, financial sustainability, transparency, and protection of stakeholders have been growing. Kajawo (2020) points to the benefits and challenges of private higher education, noting the need to strike the right balance between the development of the institution and good governance. Regulatory governance is not only about laws and regulations, it also includes policy instruments that foster institutional responsibility and transparency. Bennett and Raab (2020) offer a more general governance analysis of the functioning of regulatory instruments in “complex institutional environments.”

One of the conceptual rationales for government intervention in private higher education is provided by the theory of market failure. Information asymmetry, unequal access and commercialisation can have an impact on educational quality and wider societal interests. Onifade and Taşar (2020) explore the connection between market failure and government intervention and discuss the difficulties in the regulatory processes. What is happening in higher education institutions with regard to commercialization and its consequences are examined by Busch (2023) in a critical manner. Beyond the traditional notion of market failure correction, Mazzucato (2024) recommends a framework of governance to actively set a collective agenda with a preference for public value over institutional efficiency; the need to promote public value in the regulation of education.

Autonomy in institutions and accountability for regulation are mutually dependent principles of good governance in higher education. Autonomy allows institutions to shape their academic programs, distribute resources, and innovate in education while accountability guarantees them that they are meeting set standards and public expectations. These connections are explored by Chattopadhyay (2020) who has highlighted the need for academic freedom and institutional accountability in the Indian National Education Policy 2020. Too much regulation can limit institutional flexibility, and too little can undermine transparency and public trust. Therefore, there is a need for proportionate governance mechanisms to balance institutional independence and the regulatory role.

Quality assurance is a key component of the quality system that helps to ensure standards and credibility in education. Strengthening accountability and continuous improvement through accreditation and institutional evaluation, as well as through performance monitoring and internal quality assessment. However, compliance-focused regulation is unlikely to be able to fully encompass educational effectiveness and institutional diversity. Kajawo (2020) highlights the problems facing private higher education and emphasizes the need for proper regulation. Bennett and Raab (2020) expand on these general principles of regulatory governance and further demonstrate the applicability of coordinated policy instruments. While maintaining academic autonomy and pursuing public educational goals, quality assurance will be embedded in external assessment, institutional self-evaluation and continuous improvement (Figure 2).

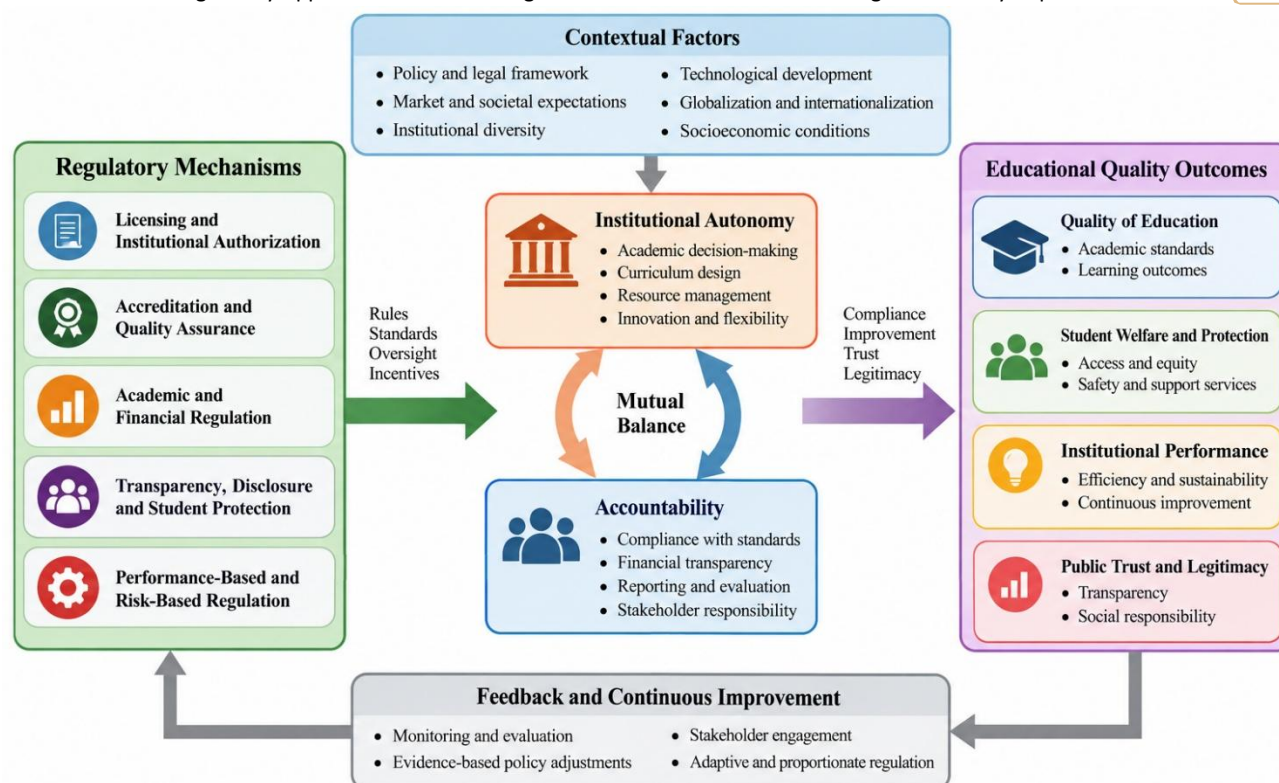


Figure 2. Regulatory Mechanisms and Educational Quality Outcomes

4. Regulatory Approaches to Private Higher Education Institutions

Licensing and institutional authorization are two basic mechanisms that can be used to control PHEIs and that create minimum standards for legitimacy, governance, academic infrastructure and establishment of PHEIs. These mechanisms have the potential to assess institutional preparedness before authorising institutions to operate or grant degrees. Regulatory arrangements need to be sensitive to the need to expand institutions and grow public accountability and equal opportunity to education. Bellei and Muñoz (2023) illustrate the impact of regulatory models and educational policies on institutional evolution and provide comparative analysis of the effectiveness of regulation. This requires the transparent nature of authorisation processes, periodic institutional assessment, and proportional requirements for compliance, to ensure institutional legitimacy.

Accreditation and quality assurance are integral to achieving academic quality, institutional credibility and continuous enhancement of educational quality. The accreditation systems usually evaluate the quality of the curriculum, faculty qualifications, learning materials, institutional governance and educational outcomes. Kumar et al. (2025) analyses the evolution of accreditation and quality assurance practices and outlines key research areas and institutional challenges. Yet, the effectiveness of accreditation relies on the transparency of the assessment, responsiveness of the institution and regulatory capacity. As a result, quality assurance must move beyond a procedural focus to a focus on measurable educational improvement and institutional accountability.

Academic and financial regulation is focused on issues of institutional sustainability, curriculum standards, academic integrity and responsible use of resources. There is a difference between academic oversight, which sets standards for the provision of education, and financial regulation, which can include auditing, financial disclosure, solvency and institutional risk assessment. Financial technology changes can help enhance administrative transparency and financial oversight, but they have not yet been assessed to their use in higher education (Sangwan et al., 2020). Academic quality monitoring and financial accountability should be combined in effective regulation, but there should be no undue administrative restrictions that would limit institutional flexibility.

There needs to be transparency, disclosure and protection of students as part of responsible regulatory governance. Institutions must furnish proper details on accreditation, tuition costs, academic programs, admissions criteria and complaints' redressal. Salmi and D'Addio (2021) stress the importance of inclusive higher education policies, which reflects the need to include equity issues in the governance of higher education institutions. The digital learning environment poses new challenges in relation to privacy, information security and the ethical use of technology. Safeguarding student information is crucial in the context of AI in education, as highlighted by Huang (2023) in the discussion of student privacy and data protection issues.

Performance-based and risk-based regulation are two strategies aimed at increasing the effectiveness of the

regulatory system and the utilization of resources. Performance-based oversight focuses on educational outcomes, institutional effectiveness and quality improvement, and risk-based regulation prioritizes monitoring based on institutional characteristics, compliance histories, and risks to educational standards. The literature on accreditation offers a basis for assessing the quality assurance mechanisms and their weaknesses (Kumar et al., 2025). However, performance indicators need to be context-specific to avoid any negative impacts on institutions that cater to the socioeconomically marginalised population.

Other approaches to balancing institutional autonomy and external accountability are self-regulation and co-regulatory models. Self-regulation focuses on internal governance, institutional quality assurance and professional responsibility, and co-regulation involves institutional involvement and independent regulation. Comparative studies of educational governance models emphasize the need for considering policy design and institutional context to explain educational governance outcomes (Bellei & Muñoz, 2023). Therefore, to be effective, co-regulation must have clear responsibilities, transparent reporting, independent evaluation and credible enforcement mechanisms. Together, these regulatory methods highlight the need for a multi-faceted strategy to private higher education governance that is based on a combination of institutional flexibility, educational quality, financial responsibility, and public accountability, rather than on prescriptive elements of compliance only (Table 1).

Table 1. Major Regulatory Approaches to Private Higher Education Institutions

Regulatory Approach	Primary Objective	Key Regulatory Mechanisms	Major Challenges	Supporting References
Licensing and Institutional Authorization	Establish institutional legitimacy and minimum operational standards	Registration, institutional approval, authorization renewal	Administrative delays, inconsistent standards, regulatory fragmentation	Bellei & Muñoz (2023)
Accreditation and Quality Assurance	Maintain academic quality and institutional credibility	External evaluation, institutional accreditation, periodic quality audits	Compliance-oriented assessment, inconsistent evaluation, resource constraints	Kumar et al. (2025)
Academic and Financial Regulation	Safeguard academic integrity and financial sustainability	Curriculum standards, financial audits, budgetary oversight, faculty requirements	Financial instability, excessive compliance costs, limited institutional flexibility	Scott & Guan (2023)
Transparency and Student Protection	Strengthen accountability and protect student interests	Public disclosure, grievance mechanisms, data protection, inclusive access policies	Information asymmetry, inadequate disclosure, privacy risks	Salmi & D'Addio (2021); Huang (2023)

Performance-Based and Risk-Based Regulation	Improve regulatory efficiency and institutional performance	Outcome indicators, risk assessments, differentiated monitoring	Indicator bias, unequal institutional capacity, excessive emphasis on measurable outcomes	Kumar et al. (2025)
Self-Regulation and Co-Regulatory Models	Balance institutional autonomy with external accountability	Internal quality assurance, institutional governance, independent oversight	Conflicts of interest, inconsistent enforcement, regulatory capture	Bellei & Muñoz (2023); Kallio et al. (2022)

5. Key Challenges in Regulating Private Higher Education

The governance of HEIs is complex because of the diverse structures of governance, overlapping jurisdictions and varying oversight of individual HEIs. There is uncertainty and administrative inefficiency because there may be multiple competing requirements regarding institutional authorization, academic standards, financial accountability and educational provision that regulatory authorities have with respect to institutions. In this conceptual overview of extraterritorial regulation and global governance, Krisch (2022) investigates the difficulties of deciding on the jurisdiction and overlapping regulation. These difficulties are especially important when private institutions provide education services across regional or national borders, and the regulatory authorities need to be coordinated to ensure uniformity of services provided in education.

The process of regulatory compliance is also burdensome and administrative capacity is limited, contributing to institutional governance. The rigorous documentation, accreditation process and financial reporting requirements and periodic evaluations can impact smaller institutions that have limited resources. The challenges of weak regulatory capacity can also negatively impact tracking, enforcement and accountability of institutions. While their research is not on higher education, Dávid-Barrett and Fazekas (2020) illustrate how governance processes can be susceptible to political favoritism and provide general lessons on institutional integrity and regulatory vulnerability. Transparent procedures, independent oversight and sufficient administrative means are therefore vital to bolstering the credibility of the regulatory framework.

Ensuring educational quality and academic standards continue to be a major challenge, too. Institutional expansion and competition can result in unequal academic facilities, teacher qualifications, the approach to teaching and learning, and student support. Substantive educational outcomes, therefore, need to be assessed in quality assurance frameworks in addition to procedural compliance. Williamson et al. (2020) challenge and scrutinize the datafication of teaching in higher education and discuss issues related to the growing digitalization of information and performance metrics. Their analysis indicates that monitoring based on data must be carefully considered to prevent it from constraining the quality of education to a limited set of quantitative measures.

The question of institutional autonomy vs government control needs to be balanced as well. Too much intervention can lead to constrained access to academic freedom, innovation and responsiveness, while too little to a loss of accountability and public trust. In this way, Angom (2022) provides a specific focus on institutional autonomy and governance conflicts in the Indian private university sector that is directly relevant to the issue of governance tensions in private higher education. Good regulatory structures should thus differentiate between warranted and unwarranted public control and interference in academic and administrative decision-making.

New issues arise around issues of affordability, educational equity, and the public functions of higher education when it enters the realm of commercialization. For revenue reasons, institutional strategies can focus on student bodies or programs that are financially appealing, thus exacerbating the inequity of access. Higher education's role in supporting local, national and global development also needs to be considered, as noted by Chankseliani et al (2021) who offer a wider perspective on the role of HE institutions beyond just economic outcomes. It is important, therefore, to balance financial sustainability with inclusive access, academic quality and social development in regulation.

Conventional regulatory structures are further complicated by digital, online and cross-border higher education. The uncertainties surrounding jurisdiction, accreditation recognition, student protection, and data governance in the context of virtual delivery and international partnerships and data-rich educational technologies emerge. The conceptual framework of Krisch (2022) is useful for understanding the challenges of extraterritorial regulation, and Williamson et al. (2020) discuss some of the important issues around data

use in education. To respond to these new challenges, the regulation of education must be coordinated, flexible, and responsive to technology, do not unduly limit institutional innovation, and ensure the quality of education (Table 2).

Table 2. Key Regulatory Challenges and Their Implications for Private Higher Education Institutions

Regulatory Challenge	Key Causes	Institutional Implications	Policy Responses	References
Regulatory Fragmentation	Overlapping authorities	Compliance uncertainty	Harmonized regulations	Krisch (2022)
Compliance Burden	Complex procedures	Higher administrative costs	Simplified reporting	Angom (2022)
Quality Assurance	Inconsistent standards	Uneven educational quality	Independent accreditation	Williamson et al. (2020)
Institutional Autonomy	Excessive state control	Reduced academic flexibility	Balanced oversight	Angom (2022)
Commercialization and Equity	Profit orientation	Affordability barriers	Equity-focused policies	Chankseliani et al. (2021)
Digital and Cross-Border Education	Technological and jurisdictional complexity	Accreditation and privacy risks	Coordinated digital regulation	Krisch (2022); Williamson et al. (2020)

6. Impact of Regulation on Institutional and Educational Outcomes

The quality and performance of the educational institutions and programmes and students' learning outcomes are affected by the rules and regulations as they set the expectations for academic standards, governance efficiency and institutional accountability. Continuous improvement can be enhanced through accreditation, performance monitoring and institutional evaluation, but depends upon the effectiveness of the regulatory capacity and institutional responsiveness. The study by Fomba et al. (2023) explores the role played by the institutional quality in the educational quality in developing countries, emphasizing the importance of context where institutional quality is transmitted and how it influences the quality of education. But compliance does not necessarily meet with better learning outcomes, especially if the assessment systems focus on administrative rather than substantive aspects of learning. Institutional assessment and evidence-based quality improvement must therefore be combined in efforts of effective regulation.

Another key element of effectiveness in regulating is institutional autonomy and academic freedom. While autonomy allows private higher education institutions (PHEIs) to establish their own academic priorities and implement their own educational strategies and methods, external oversight aims to ensure the institutions are accountable and that there is public confidence in them. Angom (2022) looks at the issue of institutional autonomy in Indian private universities, especially its significance in private universities' governance. The authors of Bergan et al. (2020) also prove that academic freedom and institutional autonomy are important for democratic governance in general. Too little regulation can dilute institutional responsibility, and too much regulation can limit academic freedom. Consequently, proportionate regulation should ensure academic decision-making is retained and ensure that there are clear accountability processes in place.

Institutional authorization, tuition policies, standards for quality, and measures for student protection are other ways that regulation affects access, affordability, and equity in education. Private provision can increase educational opportunities, but so can market-oriented financing, which may become a barrier to affordability and contribute to socioeconomic inequalities. Fomba et al. (2023) also offers a more comprehensive institutional analysis of the quality of education in developing nations, indicating that the condition of the educational governance structure is crucial in assessing the quality of education. The effectiveness of regulation should also be judged by its ability to facilitate inclusive participation and equitable educational

opportunities.

There are other outcomes that are related to regulatory design, such as innovation and organizational flexibility. Institutions should be able to become flexible enough and adapt new technologies, update curricula, and adjust to new educational needs. Awais et al. (2023) investigates the connection between strategic flexibility, innovation and organizational performance, thus giving a wider organizational perspective, which is applicable to institutional adaptability. This is because, Chan (2023) argues, the design of an AI policy education framework for university teaching and learning should enable the demonstration of the value of institutional responses to technological change. Responsible innovation needs to be fostered in adaptive regulatory frameworks, which should at the same time ensure academic integrity, ethical protection and education quality.

Regulatory governance has many related outcomes, such as accountability, trust in the public, and sustainability of institutions. The confidence of stakeholders can be strengthened through reporting, quality assurance and good institutional governance, which can, in turn, help to increase sustainability and ensure continued institutional legitimacy. The importance of autonomy and academic freedom for society in general has been noted by Bergan et al. (2020), and the relationship between autonomy and educational quality has been emphasised by Fomba et al. (2023). However, too much regulation can result in higher administrative costs and limit institutional sustainability. Good governance, therefore, requires a continuum of management of quality in education and autonomy, equity of access, innovation and accountability of the institution and the resilience of the institution (Figure 3).

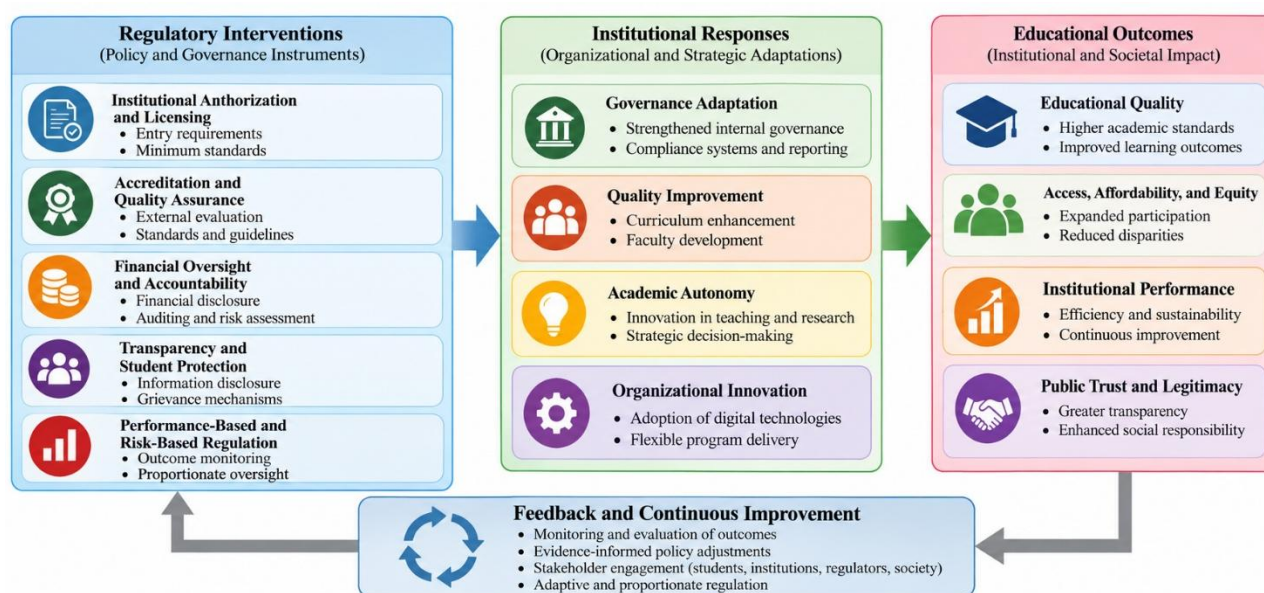


Figure 3. Regulatory Interventions and Educational Outcomes

7. Policy Implications and Future Regulatory Directions

The ongoing process of private higher education development requires a regulatory system that can balance the freedom of the institutions, the quality of the education, responsiveness and concern of the public. The shift to proportional and risk-based regulation offers one means of breaking free from the one size, fits all agenda of regulation and aligns it with institutional risk, performance and governance. This type of practice can help alleviate needless administrative burdens and focus regulatory attention on institutions that are financially unstable, have substandard academic programs or fail to protect students. However, risk classification must be based on clearly defined criteria, and third-party evaluation, which ensures no arbitrary decision making and institutional discrimination. Consequently, measures of compliance are not a good way to assess the effectiveness of regulations, but rather the substantive educational outcomes.

Enhancing accreditation and quality assurance continues to be important to boost institutional performance and public trust. Kumar et al. (2025) have discussed about the developments and the research requirement in the field of Accreditation and Quality Assurance, where they pointed out that the evaluation systems need to go beyond the mere compliance to procedures. External accreditation, internal quality assurance, institutional review (periodic), and outcome-oriented assessment should be adopted in the regulatory framework. Furthermore, the evaluation system should be flexible and allow for institutional diversity and should have a minimum academic level. The credibility of the regulators can be improved using independent accreditation agencies, clear assessment criteria, and regular mechanisms for improvement.

Public accountability and institutional autonomy is also a major policy issue. In the Indian context, Angom (2022) delves into the issue of institutional autonomy in private universities and underscores the significance of institutional autonomy in the governance framework of private universities. Likewise, Bergan, et al. (2020)

state “Academic freedom and institutional autonomy are important in democratic societies.” Hence, any reform of the regulations should be done in such a way that it clearly separates the academic decision making from the ones that have to be publicly monitored by the regulatory bodies such as financial integrity, disclosure of the institution, and the protection of the students. Clear institutional accountability and appropriate levels of enforcement can facilitate a balance between flexibility and accountability.

In the era of technology integration and growing diversification of private higher education, transparent policy and protection for students are more in need of being addressed. Institutions should make accreditation status, tuition information, academic results, grievance processes and financial details easily accessible through reporting methods. This has been reiterated by Salmi and D'Addio (2021) on the need for inclusive higher education policies, further highlighting the importance of equity in regulatory governance. Further, the protection of students' data should be embedded in the institutional accountability system, especially in an increasingly digital learning environment and with the growing use of AI (Huang, 2023).

Regulatory issues with cross-border accreditation, institutional jurisdiction, academic integrity and data governance emerge with digital and transnational higher education. The comprehensive artificial intelligence policy frameworks for university teaching and learning have been highlighted by Chan (2023) and the notion of extraterritorial regulatory authority is discussed more broadly in Krisch (2022). Future regulatory strategies should take into account that education should be supported in a way that is possible to cooperate with other countries, to be carried out in a way that is interoperable, and to be recognised in a transparent manner, while not hindering national education priorities.

Notwithstanding the scientific advances, there are several key areas of research that are still underdeveloped. Even with the advances in scholarship there are still some significant gaps in the research on the long-term impact of regulatory interventions, comparative institutional outcomes, and the effects of risk-based oversight. Future studies should be conducted using longitudinal design and cross-national design to investigate the effects of various regulatory models on the quality of education, the cost of education, autonomy of schools, innovative practice, and sustainability of schools. Focus also needs to be on the outcomes for students, the capacity of the regulatory bodies, digital governance and the experiences of digital institutions in resource-poor settings. These priorities relate to each other and will help shape adaptive, evidence-based, public-serving, and institutionally diverse and innovative regulatory frameworks.

8. Conclusion

The policy challenge of regulating private HEIs involves balancing the parameters of quality of education, autonomy of the HEIs, public accountability and social equity. This is a narrative review that aims to highlight a evolving regulatory context and how the traditional approach that focuses on compliance is no longer sufficient to meet the diversification, commercialization and technological transformation of institutions and the growing globalisation of education. Licensing, accreditation, financial oversight, and performance monitoring are all tools that play an important role in regulation; however, they will need to be used in a context where institutions are consistently bound to the rules, they are transparent, and they have the capacity to administer them. Effective governance is difficult because of control from several regulators, and because of the expense of increased compliance and because of the conflict between state involvement and academic freedom, with respect to access to the education sector. The review highlights the need for reforms in regulatory approaches to become more proportionate, risk-based and outcomes-focused, with flexibility to respect institutional diversity and protect the public interest. Building independent QA, the transparency of institutional reporting, safety of students and coordination of regulation can support more accountable and resilient HE systems. Moreover, new digital technologies and international education models require flexible governance arrangements with international partnership and responsible ethical protectionism. Longitudinal studies, comparative regulatory studies, and outcome studies centered on the student should be emphasized in future research to develop greater evidence of regulatory effectiveness. In conclusion, sustainable and integrated private higher education governance needs to be flexible, inclusive and evidence-based and balance institutional innovation with educational integrity, equal access and sustainable development of society.

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