

Epistemology Of Institutional Governance. Bifurcations Based On The Proposal Of Good Governance Case Study: Provincial Government Of Manabí

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ABSTRACT

This research work aims to analyze both the epistemology behind institutional governance and its transformation by good governance practices, being the Unit of Study the Provincial GAD of Manabí; an interpretative phenomenological paradigm and qualitative approach is adopted, based on documentary review and interviews with key informants, allowing to explore the reconfiguration of institutional governance. Special emphasis is given to the complexity of the conceptual and methodological ramifications that emerge from good governance practices, as well as the epistemological foundations that support them. The critical analysis delves into the ethical challenges and dilemmas that accompany the implementation of good governance, offering a contextualized reflection on its epistemology and the practical consequences it entails. In summary, the research provides a comprehensive and detailed view of institutional governance, highlighting the conceptual bifurcations originated by the good governance proposal and its effects on administrative practice.

KEYWORDS: Good government, epistemology, GAD, institutional governance.

1. Introduction

In the recent complex national and global landscape, characterized by uncertainty and changing citizen demands, governance emerges as a key paradigm for understanding and improving decision-making in public administration. Originally focused on decision-making and coordination between organizations, the concept of governance has evolved into a more comprehensive vision that includes ethics, transparency, and accountability (Bevir, 2010; Kooiman, 2003). It should be noted that the concept of governance transcends the traditional scope of the concept of governance, differentiating both in their definition and application, but remaining interdependent and mutually reinforcing. The government guides society through policies and programs, while the public administration implements mechanisms to improve the quality and effectiveness of management, which, in turn, strengthens governance, which encompasses the relationships, interactions, and networks of

actors involved in the management of public affairs.

In the field of public administration, institutional governance deals with the study of structures, practices and mechanisms that facilitate effective coordination between entities and levels of government (Stoker, 1998). International and multilateral organizations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Latin American Centre for Development Administration (CLAD), the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the European Community have stressed the importance of governance in the public sector. These institutions maintain that principles such as transparency, citizen participation, and accountability are fundamental for effective public management, culminating in public policies focused on significant social problems and consensual decision-making through the inclusion of relevant social actors and interest groups.

Governance, operating within the legal and institutional framework of the State, is recognized as a critical element for a government strategy that promotes best organizational practices. However, institutional governance is not uniform; Its interpretation and theoretical framework vary according to the political-social context, which leads to divergences in ethics, citizen participation and the application of principles such as transparency and accountability. This diversity of interpretations and their wide range of ramifications present a significant epistemological challenge. Hence, one of the most significant contributions to the field of governance is the proposal of good governance or good governance.

Although it has gained a prominent place in academic discourse and public practice in the northern hemisphere, the concept of good governance is still relatively new in our regions (Whittingham, 2011). This concept seeks to offer a normative and ethical guide to transform institutional governance, highlighting principles such as participation, the rule of law, efficiency, equity and accountability (Campo, 2018; Prats i Catalá, 2005). Thus, the proposal of good governance is aimed at satisfying the needs of society with a legitimate proposal for development, reflected in admiration and respect for the institutions in charge of administering public resources.

With all this in mind, this study focuses on governance and good governance in the Provincial Decentralized Autonomous Government of Manabí. Its purpose is to examine how the implementation of good governance practices reconfigures institutional governance, with a particular focus on the epistemological foundations that underpin such transformations and the ethical challenges involved. The central question of the research is: What is the perception of social actors about institutional governance in the context of good governance? The strategic goal is to contextualize the public management model of the Provincial GAD of Manabí, identify advances in institutional governance and discover how the proposal of good governance contributes to governance from a contemporary perspective.

To make this study viable, a collaborative agenda has been agreed with the Provincial Decentralized Autonomous Government of Manabí. This body has been selected as the ideal case study to investigate the dynamics of institutional governance. The interpretive and qualitative phenomenological methodology

adopted, based on documentary review and interviews with key informants, will facilitate an exhaustive exploration of the perceptions, experiences and meanings that actors confer on institutional governance and good governance practices.

A primary challenge in public administration is to understand governance not merely as a theoretical concept, but as a living strategy that promotes active citizen participation free of partisan bias. This participation can be enriched by technical language and professional experience that underlines the uniqueness of each issue. Although progress has been made in citizen participation in the Province of Manabí, these have not yet been fully translated into an institutional governance model that promotes a more deep-rooted commitment and a sense of local identity, crucial aspects given that governance focuses on local development and its specific context. Therefore, the importance of this research lies in providing elements to understand the complexity and multidimensionality of institutional governance, at a time when the influence of good governance is increasingly preponderant.

The Provincial Decentralized Autonomous Government of Manabí represents a key case to rethink the structure of effective institutional governance. Its study is crucial, as it will allow the generation of contextualized knowledge about the processes and dynamics that arise around the reconfiguration of institutional governance in a specific environment, thus allowing a deep dive into the description of processes and structures, as well as a critical scrutiny of the conceptual and methodological ramifications derived from the implementation of good governance. Special attention will be paid to the ethical dilemmas that such implementation entails, with the aim of offering a contextualized reflection that contributes to both academic debate and administrative practice.

This work aspires to enrich the field of Public Administration, illuminating the epistemological bifurcations that institutional governance faces today and setting a precedent in the understanding of public administration as a discipline in constant transformation. The relevance of this research lies in its ability to reveal opportunities to conceive a new model of public management, based on the principles of good governance. The aim is to provide some elements for the future development of a model that enables the public administration to forge alliances with social actors in a framework of institutional governance, committed to transparency in each phase of public policy design. In addition, this study aims to stimulate debates that lead to the creation of new theoretical and methodological constructs on governance and its adaptation to the specific context of application.

2. Theoretical Construct

2.1. Theoretical foundations of institutional governance

Governance has been the subject of increasing interest in the field of public administration and social sciences in recent decades. As Longo observes (2010), it has become the subject of great interest in academic circles. Approaches developed from governance transcend the traditional view of "governance" to focus on the analysis of networks, interactions, and coordination mechanisms among various actors involved in governance (Bevir, 2010; Kooiman, 2003). Governance,

understood as the management of a country's economic and social resources, has been a key concept in the development of international policies. Its origin dates back to 1989, when the World Bank (WB) introduced it in a report on sub-Saharan Africa, highlighting that the failure of development in the region was due to poor governance (World Bank, 1986).

To counteract this situation, the World Bank proposed the concept of "good governance", understood as an efficient public service, a reliable legal system and an administration accountable to citizens. In contrast, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) proposed a broader definition of governance. In its document "Initiatives for Change" this is defined as the exercise of authority at all levels of a country (United Nations Development Programme, 1994). This perspective includes the mechanisms, processes and institutions that allow citizens and groups to express their interests and exercise their rights, putting the human being at the centre of the promotion of human development.

For its part, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has also recognized the importance of governance for all its member countries, stressing that challenges vary across economic and institutional systems. From the IMF's perspective, governance is essential for sustainable economic development and global financial stability, not limited to government institutions, but including public-private interaction, transparency, accountability, and citizen participation (Camdessus, 1997). In the case of Europe, the European Commission (European Commission, 2001), has defined governance as a set of rules, processes, and behaviors that determine how power is exercised at the level of that continent, emphasizing the principles of openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness, and coherence. This definition, like the IMF's, underscores that governance transcends government institutions, encompassing the interaction between public and private actors at various levels, highlighting the need for effective collaboration between government, civil society, and the private sector to achieve a more inclusive and effective government.

For Latin America, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has defined governance as the relationships between numerous actors involved in the decision-making, execution, and evaluation process of matters of public interest, including both formal and informal institutions (Naser, 2021). This perspective highlights the complexity of governance and the variety of participants in the management of the public. Finally, the Latin American Center for Development Administration (CLAD) in its Ibero-American Public Management Charter for the 21st Century (Latin American Center for Development Administration, 2010), addressed public governance as a key field for understanding recent transformations in public administration. CLAD emphasizes that there has been a significant change in how governments deal with intra- and intergovernmental dynamics, as well as in their relationships with society and the market.

Citizen participation in governance has enabled the creation of broader and more inclusive social agendas, which originate from the local base and focus on the real problems of communities. Bravo and Vegas (2023), argue that governance involves mechanisms, practices, and norms that direct the manner in which power, especially political and economic power, is exercised to manage the resources and affairs of a

community or society, decision-making, and how citizens or relevant actors are involved in this process. From this perspective, institutional governance is characterized by focusing on its emphasis on coordination, interaction, and interdependence among the various actors, as well as on the importance of the rules, norms, and institutional mechanisms that shape and regulate such interactions (Rhodes, 1996; Stoker, 1998).

In addition to those main definitions developed to give it theoretical precision, governance is linked to different traditions of thought. Among the main ones are public choice theory and institutionalism, as well as multilevel governance and public policy networks: On the one hand, public choice theory and institutionalism have contributed to understanding the role of formal institutions and the incentives that guide the behavior of government actors (North, 2014; Ostrom, 2009). On the other hand, multilevel governance approaches and public policy networks have highlighted the importance of interactions and interdependence between different levels and spheres of government (Kickert, 1997). Likewise, the perspectives of new public management and collaborative governance have emphasized the need to incorporate a variety of actors in the decision-making processes and implementation of public policies, overcoming the hierarchical and unidirectional vision of traditional government (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Osborne, 2006).

The new public management focuses on the creation of an efficient and effective administration, and seeks to promote citizen participation (García, 2007; C. Gómez, 2013). Collaborative governance, on the other hand, is based on collaboration between different actors, including civil society, to co-produce and build public policies and services (Barandiarán et al., 2022). The diversity of approaches and conceptualizations reflects the complexity and multidimensionality of institutional governance, which will be fundamental to understanding its relationship with the proposal of "good governance" and the practical implications that it entails.

2.2. Epistemology of governance

Governance, as a conceptual and analytical framework, is based on certain epistemological assumptions that inform the way in which the study of phenomena related to the management of public affairs is conceived and approached. Understanding these epistemological foundations is crucial to analyze how these premises influence the conceptualization and study of institutional governance. Epistemology, understood as the theory of knowledge, is concerned with examining the nature, origins, and limits of knowledge (Rábade, 1995, p. 18). In the context of governance, epistemology refers to the underlying assumptions and beliefs that inform the way knowledge about governance processes, decision-making, and public policy implementation is conceived and produced (Cortés & Belmonte, 2010)

The study of institutional governance is nourished by various epistemological premises that outline conceptual frameworks, guide research questions, and define the methodologies applied. These epistemological foundations are crucial to understanding the dynamics and transformations within governance. Therefore, it is essential to highlight the main epistemological foundations that have shaped current approaches in this field. The conception of epistemology in governance is not merely theoretical, but has significant practical consequences in the way institutional

governance is investigated and understood.

The positivist approach holds that knowledge should be based on empirical observation and scientific verification, looking for generalizable laws and patterns (Berrocal, 1994; Ramos, 2015). In the field of governance, this perspective has given rise to studies that emphasize the analysis of formal structures, institutions, and processes. From a positivist approach, the analysis of institutional governance would focus on organizational structure, formal rules and procedures, and the measurement of performance indicators. On the other hand, the interpretativist approach highlights the importance of understanding the meanings, beliefs and practices that actors attribute to their actions and social phenomena (Berrocal, 1994). In the study of governance, this approach has led to greater attention to the narratives, discourses and negotiation processes between actors. From an interpretativist approach, the study of institutional governance would focus on understanding the narratives, beliefs, and practices of the actors involved in decision-making and policy implementation.

Finally, the critical approach questions the power relations, inequalities and structures of domination present in governance processes, seeking to transform social conditions (Berrocal, 1994). From this perspective, governance is analysed in terms of its capacity to promote justice, equity and the emancipation of marginalised groups. From a critical approach, the analysis of institutional governance would highlight the power relations, the interests at stake, and the inequalities that shape government processes.

2.3. Good governance and administrative practices

Good governance, also known as good governance good governance, has established itself as an essential normative paradigm that proposes an ethical and transformative vision of public administration (Gómez, 2014). This approach, supported by international organizations, governments and academics, seeks to raise the quality of public management by promoting principles such as efficiency, transparency, accountability, civil society participation, consensus-building and the rule of law (Giménez, 2018). Good governance is characterized by an exercise of power that fosters economic growth, democracy, respect for human rights and, in certain contexts, socio-economic equity. In addition, it implies citizen participation, either directly or through legitimate representatives, and advocates legality, transparency, consensus, equity, efficiency and responsibility (Ponce, 2019).

The interaction between good governance and institutional governance is vital for sustainable development and social stability. It is imperative that government institutions act with transparency and are accountable to citizens. The active involvement of civil society in decision-making processes and accountability are the pillars of good governance (Cujano et al., 2016). However, it is essential to take a more innovative approach to the application of ethical considerations of good governance and to assess their impact on governance from an epistemological perspective.

In addition, it is important to promote equal opportunities and reduce socioeconomic gaps to ensure inclusive development. This requires well-designed public policies

and programs that address the needs of the most vulnerable sectors of society (Dubet, 2012). Technology and advances in artificial intelligence offer innovative means to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of these policies (Corvalán, 2018). The implementation of control and supervision mechanisms, as well as the promotion of transparency in the management of public resources, are essential to combat corruption and ensure the proper use of state funds (Yerrén, 2022). Equally important is the promotion of ethical and moral values in public administration, which are essential to ensure the integrity and legitimacy of government institutions.

2.3.1. Epistemological perspective of good governance

The epistemological approach raises the need to go beyond the mere application of rules and regulations, to understand how knowledge about good governance and institutional governance is built. This involves exploring the different sources and theoretical foundations that underpin governance practices, and how they influence decision-making and the structure of institutions. This is pertinent when considering the proposal of good governance, which is based on certain epistemological assumptions that inform its conception and its practical implications. As already noted, good governance is positioned, from an epistemological perspective, as a normative approach that seeks to transform the way in which government and public administration processes are conceived and carried out.

From this perspective, in order to achieve sustainable and equitable development, it is essential to consider the ethical, cultural and social dimensions that underlie the pursuit of good governance (Lucena, 2017). This means considering the impact of socio-political, cultural and historical dynamics on the formation and evolution of governmental structures. Good governance also incorporates an ethical perspective, based on ethical principles such as integrity, equity and justice, with the aim of improving the quality of governance and public institutions (Prats i Catalá, 2005). By promoting equal opportunities and reducing socioeconomic gaps, the aim is to take into account that public policies must be sensitive to the diverse realities and needs of the most vulnerable sectors of society.

In addition to the above, other epistemological foundations of good governance can be mentioned, such as orientation towards results and the emphasis on participation and accountability. On the one hand, good governance can focus on the effectiveness, efficiency and effectiveness of public management, with the aim of generating tangible and measurable results. On the other hand, good governance tends to highlight the importance of citizen participation and transparency as key elements to legitimize government action and promote accountability (Keping, 2018).

2.4. Case Study: Institutional Governance of the Provincial GAD of Manabí

The Provincial Decentralized Autonomous Government (GAD) of Manabí in Ecuador is governed by an open and collaborative governance model, aligned with the National Development Plan (PND) 2021-2025. This model is based on multilevel governance, where interaction and coordination between subnational and local governments are essential for the development of effective public policies. The strategy of the Provincial GAD of Manabí is articulated around promoting citizen

participation, ensuring transparency and guaranteeing accountability. This is achieved through the implementation of open government policies and strategies that allow the articulation, integration, and coordination of intersectoral actions between public institutions and the GADs. The active participation of citizens in decision-making and territorial planning is a fundamental pillar of this governance model (Parrales & Vegas, 2022, p. 171).

The Organic Law on Transparency and Access to Public Information (LOTAIP) constitutes the legal framework to guarantee citizen participation and the right of access to information. In addition, Ecuador's Second Open Government Action Plan 2022-2024 seeks to strengthen these areas, allowing citizens to exercise effective control and hold government institutions accountable. In compliance with the LOTAIP, all entities with public information must keep such information updated and accessible on their institutional portals.

The Provincial GAD of Manabí has committed to collaborative governance and open government, aligning with the objectives of the PND 2021-2025. This approach focuses on annual accountability to citizens, encompassing policies, plans, programs, projects and budget execution, as well as public procurement processes. In addition, Ecuador's Second Open Government Action Plan 2022-2024 establishes firm commitments to strengthen citizen participation and control over the accountability of public institutions (Open Government Ecuador, 2022). The LOTAIP guarantees these rights, promoting public deliberation and participatory planning, which allows the needs and priorities of the community to be identified and addressed. To improve communication with citizens and efficiency in public management, the GAD of Manabí is implementing e-governance strategies, evaluated and recognized in national rankings (Zambrano et al., 2019). These strategies not only seek efficiency and transparency, but also encourage the creation of virtual spaces for citizen interaction, reflecting the potential of open government to achieve institutional objectives (Parrales & Vegas, 2022, p. 176).

2.5. Ethical and practical challenges in the application of Good Governance Practices

It is crucial to recognize that while good governance and institutional governance seek to ensure transparency and citizen participation, there are those who argue that this approach can lead to paralysis in decision-making (Arellano et al., 2014, p. 22). Some critics argue that seeking consensus and considering multiple perspectives risks diluting accountability and efficiency in government management. In addition, the active participation of civil society in decision-making can generate conflicts of interest and delay the implementation of policies necessary for the country's development (Valencia, 2012).

Despite the importance of taking an epistemological approach to the implementation of good governance, there are significant challenges that need to be addressed. One of the key challenges is the need to develop capacities at the governmental level to understand and apply epistemological principles in decision-making and policy-making (Lucena, 2017). This requires not only the training of government personnel, but also the integration of experts in epistemology into decision-making processes. Another challenge lies in the need to ensure that public policies based on an epistemological approach are inclusive and consider the perspectives of diverse

communities and marginalized groups (Gómez, 2014). It is vital to ensure that the application of this approach does not perpetuate existing inequalities, but rather works towards equality and social justice.

In addition, the evaluation and measurement of the results of the implementation of an epistemological approach in good governance represent another important challenge. The development of clear and robust indicators that can capture the impact of policies and practices based on this approach is required, which in turn implies a commitment to data collection and empirical research (Gómez, 2013). Addressing these challenges will require a multidisciplinary approach involving specialists in government, epistemology, political science, sociology, and other relevant disciplines. It is essential to foster interdisciplinary dialogue and promote collaboration between different areas of expertise to move towards a sound epistemological approach to good governance.

Good governance also relates to the rule of law, effective participation, political pluralism, transparent and accountable processes and institutions, an efficient and effective public sector, legitimacy, access to knowledge, information and education, political empowerment of the population, equity, sustainability and values that foster accountability, solidarity and tolerance.

3. Methodological Construct

The methodology of a research is the mirror of its epistemological approach, reflecting how the problem is approached and answers are sought, varying according to the interests and purposes of the researcher (Taylor & Bodgan, 1988). In this study, an interpretive and qualitative phenomenological approach is adopted for the analysis of the information. This approach is complemented by a documentary bibliographic research strategy, which allows the exhaustive treatment of the theoretical components that underpin the theories addressed, through primary, secondary and field notes.

This methodological approach is ideal for immersing oneself in the complexity of the phenomena associated with institutional governance and the implications of good governance practices. According to Rivadeneira (2015), qualitative research in the public sphere enables the subjects or groups of study to express their realities in an authentic and direct way, especially relevant in local public management. This approach allows the researcher to reflect and experience the search for data within the context that surrounds them, focusing on understanding the phenomenon instead of measuring variables, which leads to a process of inductive knowledge, from the particular to the general (Bravo & Vegas, 2023).

3.1. Level of depth and type of research

The depth and type of research are crucial aspects that define the methodological approach of a study. In this case, an interpretative phenomenological approach has been chosen, which focuses on the understanding of the meanings, experiences and perceptions that the actors involved attribute to social phenomena (Ramírez de Arellano & Moreno, 2016). This approach is particularly pertinent to investigate how

the actors of the Provincial Decentralized Autonomous Government of Manabí conceive and give meaning to institutional governance and good governance practices.

Accordingly, the research is developed under a qualitative methodology, which allows an immersion in the complexity of social phenomena, emphasizing the understanding of the dynamics and processes that characterize them (Rivadeneira, 2015). This approach is essential to explore the conceptual and methodological bifurcations that emerge from the reconfiguration of institutional governance through good governance practices. The synergy between the interpretative phenomenological approach and the qualitative methodology is key to achieving the objectives of this research, allowing the generation of deep and contextualized knowledge about the epistemology of institutional governance and its evolution through good governance practices.

3.2. Information collection techniques

The collection of information for this interpretive and qualitative phenomenological research was carried out using carefully selected techniques: direct observation, bibliographic-documentary review and interviews with experts in the field. It is important to note that this approach focuses on the observation and analysis of existing data, avoiding the manipulation of variables, to present the information in an objective and contextualized way, thus offering a comprehensive vision of the reality studied.

To begin with, a process of direct observation was carried out in certain areas of the Provincial GAD of Manabí. This allowed for a first-hand record of the dynamics, interactions, and day-to-day practices related to institutional governance. According to Vegas (2016), direct observation facilitates an intimate approach to the object of study, allowing a deep understanding of its elements and the relationship with previous knowledge of the phenomenon. The documentary review has been essential, encompassing an analysis of documentary sources associated with the epistemology of institutional governance and good governance practices, including institutional documents, management and accountability reports, provincial and national public policy texts, etc. This review has provided an understanding of the institutional and regulatory context, identifying prevailing discourses, practices and challenges linked to good governance.

In addition, a careful selection of key experts has been carried out to conduct four in-depth interviews. These individuals have been chosen for their expert knowledge in public administration and governance, including two academics and two officials of the Provincial Decentralized Autonomous Government of Manabí, and their contributions have been significant to the scientific narrative of this research. The interviews have been carried out in a structured manner, with questions that are aligned with an axiological, epistemological and phenomenological framework. The semi-structured interviews have been designed to investigate the perceptions, experiences and meanings that the actors assign to institutional governance and good governance practices. These have been recorded and transcribed for later analysis, processing the narrative discourse of the interviewees through qualitative content analysis, which involves the segmentation, grouping and classification of the texts.

(Varela & Sutton, 2021)

The questions asked in the interviews were the following: 1. How would you define the epistemology of institutional governance in the context of Latin American and Ecuadorian public administration, respectively? 2. From your perspective, what proposal for good governance allows for the consolidation of a conceptual framework that allows the epistemology of institutional governance to be addressed? 3. In your perception, in the context of the bifurcations in the science of public administration, how does the practice of institutional governance benefit or affect the existence of good governance? 4. In your opinion, what are the principles of institutional governance and good governance that enable more focused participation and transparency that generates public value?

For the analysis of the information collected, a thematic analysis approach has been chosen, which facilitates the identification and reporting of patterns within the data (Varela & Sutton, 2021). This analysis has been developed in four phases, firstly the synthesis of each interview that generates the discursive corpus, secondly the organization and categorization of the information, thirdly the interpretation of the findings that reflect the epistemology of institutional governance and the conceptual and methodological bifurcations derived from the implementation of good governance practices, and finally, as a last stage, the analysis of the resulting categories from the findings.

Phase 1. Organization of the discursive corpus

In this phase, the discursive corpus was organized, collecting the data through the transcription of the interviews of the four experts, observations and documents of the theoretical bases, and then coding these data into categories. From the qualitative analysis, the topics for the elaboration of the categorization tables emerged, in this case it was the Epistemology of Institutional Governance and Good Governance. After that, the narrative is fragmented through a systemic process of data immersion, open coding and identification of prominent themes that were most significant or recurrent in the interviews.

Phase 2. Categorization of information

For the categorization of the information, the coding is first carried out where the information is read and fragmented into discrete units. Each unit is assigned a code that conceptualizes and categorizes the fundamental information that each fragment represents. For Vegas (2016), it is the process of organizing and grouping data according to common characteristics, themes, concepts, or attributes, with the aim of better understanding the phenomenon under study and facilitating interpretation and analysis. Once the codes have been segmented, they are grouped into preliminary categories, empirical concepts through the identification of patterns, similarities and differences to synthesize and explain the observations made. In this case, 3 columns were identified, the first of the discursive corpus, the second in the development of the main or preliminary category and the third where subcategories are identified that allow a more detailed organization of data, the axial coding was chosen in the last column in order to find the connections, causes, conditions and consequences that relate the subcategories to their higher categories.

The following matrix shows the substantive and axial codes that resulted from the categorization of the information and the discursive corpus, using the level of depth of descriptive research and as a methodological current the grounded theory of qualitative-inductive research:

Table 1 Categorization of information. Criterion: Epistemology of institutional governance. Bifurcations based on the proposal of good governance.

Discursive corpus	Substantive codes	Axial codes
<p>Informant 1 I believe that we are on the right track, we must continue to work and promote collaborative or open governance that has made it possible to solve the problems evidenced in the territory, contribute to meeting the needs of the citizen and achieve legitimate and effective governance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Criteria for the epistemology of governance - Trust in public management - Effective problem solving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Open collaboration with social actors - Improvement of public services
<p>Informant 2 The term "good governance" lacks theoretical weight, what exists is governance and governability, what works and what needs adjustments is evaluated. No government allows the consolidation of a conceptual framework for the epistemology of institutional governance, instead, it offers mechanisms that facilitate horizontal interactions between the public, private and social sectors to reach agreements. Citizens have the ability to denounce corruption and demand transparency, but it is essential that they know how to do it. Public administrations often become spoils of political parties when they come to power, despite efforts to establish and professionalize careers in the public service.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Absence of good governance (governance and governability) -Control of the Patronage System -Political loot and nepotism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Social participation - Troubleshooting
<p>Informant 3. The risks that good governance runs is capture by companies, since they can impose themselves and affect the relationship between local governments and people. Conceptually, the principles of institutional governance and good governance are aligned with access to information, transparency, equal opportunities, participation, citizen involvement, accountability, and democracy. But for this to happen, the patronage system, the loot system, must be controlled, and it is necessary to train public administrators so that they have other types of values such as service to the community and the country.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Changing scenarios in the Latin American context - Economic Actors Prevent Civil Participation - Professional ethics and values towards the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Private sector collaboration - Training of Public Servants

Phase 3. Categorization according to what was identified in the interviews

During this phase, the information is categorized according to what was identified in the interviews, it is examined how each category relates to the topics and objectives established for the interview, ensuring that the interpretation remains aligned with the research questions. For Varela and Sutton (2021), in this phase the data must be analyzed in depth, experiences, opinions and behaviors expressed by the

interviewees in relation to the topics of the interviews.

We proceeded to recognize recurring patterns and themes within the categories that helped to understand the narratives and responses around the topics of the interview, to then relate them to each other and acquire a better understanding of the topics of the interview, thus schematizing the continuation of table 1 in the following criterion: Epistemology of institutional governance and its instrumentation in good governance proposals, as shown in the following table the categories and subcategories together with a proposal of good practice:

Table 1 Continued

Substantive concepts	Categories	Subcategories	Good practice proposal
More transparency, open, clear and accessible information.	Information transparency through the communication of government decisions, processes and resources.	Open channels of dialogue and accountability.	Transparency, participation of economic and social actors, control of political spoils and professional training in the public service, as a way to implement good governance.
More participation of economic and social actors.	Direct involvement of society in decision-making and dialogue with private companies.	Open dialogue to the community and public-private partnerships.	
Control and prevention, nepotism, and political loot.	Establish the meritocracy system.	Open selection processes.	
Professional Training of the Public Service.	Continuing Education, Ethics and Values.	Training programs, codes of conduct.	

Phase 4. Interpretation and analysis

This process involves contextualizing findings in relation to existing theory, examining how theoretical concepts are applied or challenged in the specific context of study. In view of this, the process of unveiling and interpreting findings begins. They are interpreted from the theoretical approaches, what was expressed by the interviewees, as well as from the criteria of the researchers. Below are the three findings found in the research:

Finding 1. Information transparency through the communication of government decisions, processes and resources. The experts interviewed agree that transparent communication about government actions is essential for the implementation of good governance. This involves disclosing complete and understandable information about the decisions made, the procedures followed and the resources used. This transparency of information allows citizens to know and understand how their resources are being managed and how decisions are being made that affect their daily lives.

According to Jiménez (2023), transparency in public administration refers to the openness and clarity with which government entities conduct their activities, make decisions, and manage public funds and information. This involves the availability and ease of access to government information by citizens and other stakeholders, allowing them to understand how the state is administered, how resources are used, and what the operational policies and processes are. Transparency allows for public scrutiny and helps prevent corruption, fostering accountability and citizen participation. It is driven by regulations and laws that stipulate what information

should be public, how it should be disclosed, and citizens' rights to access it. It is also a prerequisite for effective and legitimate public administration, as greater transparency can improve trust in government institutions, which is crucial for a country's stability and democracy (De la Torre & Núñez, 2023).

In Ecuador, access to local information is governed by the Organic Law on Transparency and Access to Public Information (LOTAIP). This law establishes that the Decentralized Autonomous Governments must ensure transparency and free access to the public information in their possession. GADs are required to proactively disclose certain information on their websites, including work plans, contracts, budgets, remuneration, and other data relevant to citizens. In addition, citizens have the right to request additional information, which must be provided within a set timeframe, unless such information is subject to legal exceptions such as personal privacy or national security (Núñez & De la Torre, 2023).

The implementation of this right is monitored, and access should be facilitated through electronic platforms and e-government tools to promote a more open administration. However, vulnerabilities have been detected in compliance with these legal requirements, with a high rate of non-compliance with the law by the organizations analyzed in recent studies (Núñez & De la Torre, 2023). This underscores the need for continuous improvement in administration to achieve the desired levels of transparency and citizen participation.

Finding 2. Direct involvement of society in decision-making and dialogue with private companies. It is a common consideration of experts that involving society in decision-making and encouraging dialogue with the private sector are effective strategies to implement good governance. The direct involvement of society in government decision-making is essential to ensure that policies and actions truly represent the interests and needs of the population. Citizen participation not only strengthens the legitimacy of government decisions, but also contributes to accountability and social control. In addition, dialogue with private companies can help establish public-private partnerships that drive development and efficiency in the delivery of services to the community.

To carry out effective engagement with society and the private sector, it is crucial to establish formal mechanisms that allow for the active and meaningful participation of citizens in the decision-making process. For López and Liccioni (2023) The active participation of society in governance refers to the involvement of citizens in decision-making processes and the management of public affairs. This can manifest itself in various forms, including, but not limited to: Participation in Community Councils or similar spaces that allow citizens to be an active part of the political process. Accountability and transparency initiatives that facilitate citizen oversight of institutions. Forms of participatory democracy such as the creation of transparency pacts between local authorities and civil organizations. The creation of new spaces for citizen participation and dialogue with the authorities.

In the context of Ecuador, close collaboration with private companies can optimize the implementation of government projects and initiatives, providing resources and expertise in specific sectors. However, it is essential to establish mechanisms that regulate these collaborations to prevent possible conflicts of interest and ensure that

decisions prioritize the well-being of society over particular interests. For Lunay (2005), is a process in which both sectors work together in an orderly manner and with a development approach to address challenges and achieve goals that would be difficult to achieve independently. This type of collaboration can involve a combination of resources, skills, and efforts, and can manifest itself through mechanisms such as public-private partnerships, co-management contracts, and other partnership formats that pursue shared goals.

Finding 3. Establish the meritocracy system. The experts interviewed identified one of the main challenges to the existence of good governance, which is accompanied by the hiring of public servants for nepotism or political interest. A system of meritocracy in the selection of public service personnel contributes to a more efficient and fair administration. To achieve this, transparent and unbiased recruitment processes must be implemented, in which candidates are selected based on their qualifications, skills, and experience rather than personal connections or political affiliations.

Meritocracy is a way of organizing and managing public institutions based on merit and competence, rather than privileges or favoritism (Íñiguez, 2017). It seeks to ensure that the most qualified and qualified people are selected to occupy positions in the public service, thus guaranteeing efficiency and quality in government management (Peláez & Valencia, 2023). The implementation of a meritocracy system in the selection of public officials is crucial to ensure an efficient and fair government. Recruitment processes should be transparent and unbiased, focusing on candidates' qualifications, skills, and experience rather than personal connections or political affiliations.

It is essential to establish objective and clear criteria for evaluating candidates, as well as to ensure equal opportunities for all applicants. In addition, it is important to develop monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure that hiring decisions are based on merit and not on external influences. The successful implementation of a meritocracy system requires a firm commitment on the part of the authorities, as well as the creation of structures and processes that promote equity and impartiality in the selection of personnel.

Finding 4. Continuing Education, Ethics and Values. The interviewees agree on the importance of continuing education, ethics, and values in the training of public servants to achieve effective implementation of good governance. According to (Lindor, 2019) Continuing education in public service allows civil servants to stay up to date with the latest best practices, technologies, and policies in their field, which in turn contributes to improving the efficiency and quality of government services. In addition, specific professional training in areas such as public ethics, leadership, and ethical decision-making is critical to fostering a culture of integrity and accountability in public service.

In addition, the promotion of ethical values, such as honesty, transparency, and accountability, is crucial to ensure that public servants act in the interest of the common good. According to the authors (Peláez & Valencia, 2023) The implementation of ethics and values training programs for public officials can help strengthen organizational culture and promote ethical behaviors in the performance

of their duties. The combination of continuing education, professional training and promotion of ethical values in public service creates an environment conducive to good governance, where public servants are trained to make informed and ethical decisions for the benefit of society (Arellano et al., 2014). It is essential that the Provincial GAD of Manabí implements continuous training programs and promotion of ethical values, incorporating best practices and fostering a culture of integrity and responsibility in all its activities.

In addition, it is important to consider collaboration with academic institutions and experts in ethics and public administration to design training and professional development programs that are aligned with the specific needs of the Provincial GAD officials. This proactive approach to developing ethical and professional capacities will contribute significantly to strengthening administration and promoting good governance in the province.

4. Final Thoughts

At the level at which the research was found and according to the methodological construct, the following final reflections should be made. From the analysis of the results and findings, a proposal of good practice was described that was called: Transparency, participation of economic and social actors, control of political spoils and professional training of the public service, as a way for the implementation of good governance. Determining that the way to move towards good governance is if the epistemology of institutional governance is formulated from the principles: transparency, participation, accountability, training and professional ethics.

The implementation of effective mechanisms for citizen participation, regulated collaboration with the private sector, the adoption of a meritocracy system in the selection of public officials, and the promotion of continuing education and ethical values in public service are fundamental pillars for the establishment and maintenance of good governance in the Provincial GAD of Manabí. These elements will not only strengthen governance and decision-making, but will also contribute to ensuring transparency, efficiency and equity in the provision of services to society. It is imperative that the Provincial GAD of Manabí actively integrates these practices and policies into its management approach, thus promoting an organizational culture based on responsibility, integrity, and public service.

In relation to the purposes of the research, the interpretation of the principles of the epistemology of institutional governance and their instrumentalization in good governance practices was considered as the first guideline (a similar way of presenting the categorized and interpreted criterion) and as a second guideline is the identification of limitations to the exercise of good governance practices. In relation to the first guideline, when synthesizing the positions of the interviewed experts, it was interpreted that the epistemology of governance is approached from the principles of collaboration of economic and social actors, which implies participation and transparency. Regarding the second guideline, the positions of the academics were reluctant to accept the existence of good governance, but they all agree that the main limitations of its implementation focus on the quality of public servants, which

is usually defective due to political interests or nepotism.

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