Governance Structures for Open and Distance High Schools

A rapid policy and evidence scan

About this document

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Reviewers

Nimra Afzal, Arie Susanty, Cahya Kusuma Ratih, and Rebekka Flam

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Abbreviations and acronyms

DepEd   Department of Education (Philippines)

ICT   Information and communications technology

LMS   Learning management system

MoE   Ministry of Education

MoEC   Ministry of Education and Culture (Indonesia)

MoES   Ministry of Education and Sports (Lao PDR)

MoET   Ministry of Education and Training (Vietnam)

MoEYS   Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport (Cambodia)

ODL   Online Distance Learning

OHS   Open and Distance High School

OHSP   Open High School Programme

1. Introduction

This EdTech Hub Helpdesk Report has been created in response to a request from the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Open Learning Centre (SEAMEOLEC) to support a comprehensive review and analysis of governance practices for Open and Distance High Schools (OHSs) across Southeast Asia, with a specific focus on informing Indonesia's recent policy on distance learning for lower- and upper-secondary school students in the country. While distance learning has expanded globally, there is a need to consolidate policies and evidence on how K–12 open and distance models are formally governed, regulated, and integrated within national education systems. To inform the development of a new policy framework, the Directorate of Special Education and Special Education Services is interested in:

- Reviewing international governance models for OHSs, with attention to evidence and insights from international benchmarks on how distance learning is established in K–12 education.

- Comparative insights from international governance structures, policies, and practices in K–12 distance learning.

- Identifying effective policy instruments (e.g., decrees, regulations, accreditation systems) that legitimise and sustain OHSs within formal K–12 systems.

- Drawing lessons from other countries' experiences, particularly regarding inclusion, financing, and quality assurance, to understand what conditions enable resilient, equitable, and sustainable distance education provision.

This rapid policy and evidence scan collates global and regional examples of governance strategies for Open and Distance High Schools to provide structured insights.

1.1. Scope and approach

The inclusion criteria for the policies, plans, and strategies highlighted are:

- National or sectoral frameworks that explicitly govern distance learning or OHSs in K–12 contexts, with a focus on structures, coordination mechanisms, and oversight.

- Evidence includes both policy documents (by country) and research and guidance documents from international institutions (e.g., EdTech Hub, UNESCO).

- Geographic focus on ASEAN member states, with selective inclusion of international comparators to broaden learning.

- Focus on post-2019 publications, unless an older policy has key insights that are particularly relevant to the specific request at hand.

- Contexts comparable to the Directorate's priorities, including low- and middle-income countries or systems with significant experience in institutionalising OHSs.

- Focus on basic education (K–12), rather than tertiary or adult education distance models.

- Publicly available documents (noting this as a limitation of the scan).

Section 2 presents the findings of the policy and evidence scan, organised to provide comparisons across governance contexts. The evidence is synthesised in two structured tables. Table 1 collates country-specific policy and guidance documents to highlight how OHS models are formally governed, regulated, and implemented at the national level. Table 2 brings together resources from international institutions to surface cross-cutting principles, tools, and lessons relevant to system-level planning. Rather than providing exhaustive country profiles, the tables present concise descriptions and policy-relevant takeaways from the resources to enable rapid comparison and identification of patterns across contexts.

Finally, Section 3 draws on these findings to translate the policy and evidence scan into actionable insights for ministries and stakeholders engaged in designing, strengthening, or scaling governance frameworks for OHSs.

2. Policy and evidence scan

This section presents the results of the policy and evidence scan, bringing together selected national and international resources that illustrate how OHSs are governed, regulated, and supported within formal K–12 systems. The scan highlights governance-relevant features such as institutional arrangements, regulatory instruments, and implementation mechanisms, with the aim of surfacing patterns and reference points that can inform policy dialogue and decision-making. The resources are divided into two categories:

1. **Country-specific resources,** including national policies, decrees, frameworks, and plans issued by ministries of education or equivalent bodies.

   – **Policy documents** are official directives or legal documents that set rules or requirements for action (e.g., official policy/law, ministry of education circulars on distance learning).

   – **Guidance documents** are resources that offer recommendations, strategies, or tools to support implementation (e.g., teacher handbooks on online teaching practices).

2. **Resources from international institutions,** such as EdTech Hub, UNESCO, and other organisations that provide comparative insights, policy guidance, and evidence on distance and open learning.

2.1 Country-specific resources

Table 1 presents a selection of country-specific policy and guidance documents that govern, regulate, or operationalise distance learning and OHSs within formal K–12 education systems across Southeast Asia. The table focuses on official policies, regulations, sector plans, and implementation guidance issued by ministries of education or equivalent authorities. For each country, the table summarises the purpose and scope of the resource and distils key governance-relevant takeaways, including institutional arrangements, regulatory mechanisms, financing approaches, quality assurance provisions, and equity considerations. The table is designed to support rapid identification of and comparison across national contexts, highlighting how different systems have formalised OHS models and integrated them within broader education governance frameworks.

Table 1. *Country-specific resources*

Country	Title, description, and citation of resource	Key takeaways
Brunei	***Digital Transformation Plan 2023–2027*** **Guidance document** that presents a strategic plan issued by the Ministry of Education in 2022/2023, aligning education modernisation with Brunei's Digital Economy Masterplan and Wawasan 2035. (⬆MoE, 2022)	■ Embeds digital education within a **national development vision**, showing how an Open and Distance High School (OHS) policy can be tied to long-term goals. ■ Defines **governance pillars** (service delivery, teacher quality, data management) and offers practical models for OHS structures. ■ Prioritises **system-wide modernisation**, ensuring OHSs become part of mainstream reforms rather than a marginal initiative. ■ Provides a **time-bound roadmap** that illustrates the value of framing OHS policy within clear strategic timelines. ■ Reinforces that OHS sustainability comes from **integration with national digital strategies**, not isolated interventions.

Country	Title, description, and citation of resource	Key takeaways
Cambodia	***Policy and Strategy on Information and Communication Technology in Education*** **Policy document** that establishes a framework for technology in schools and integrates information and communication technology (ICT) priorities into system-wide reforms. (⇧Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport [MoEYS], 2018)	■ Establishes **ICT governance structures**, which OHS can build on for oversight and delivery. ■ Links ICT to **equity objectives**, reinforcing the idea that OHSs can target underserved learners. ■ Embeds **monitoring and evaluation frameworks**, providing tools for OHS accountability and quality tracking. ■ Demonstrates **sequenced policymaking**, with a stand-alone ICT policy first, then mainstreaming into the national sector plan, a model for how OHS adoption could proceed. ■ Frames ICT within **education quality reforms**, situating OHS as part of the overall system transformation.

Country	Title, description, and citation of resource	Key takeaways
Indonesia	***Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture (MoEC)*** **Policy document** that governs the implementation of distance learning at the primary and secondary education levels. Provides legal definitions, institutional arrangements, licensing requirements, funding sources, quality assurance obligations, and evaluation procedures. (⬆MoEC, 2014)	■ Establishes **OHS-relevant structures** by legally defining OHSs as formal units authorised to deliver education primarily through self-study and distance methods. This provides a clear precedent for how ministries can formally recognise OHSs within the national system. ■ Details **institutional arrangements**, requiring principals, tutors, managers, and education staff to be part of governance. For OHSs, this highlights the need for explicit organisational roles and accountability at the school level. ■ Specifies **modes of delivery** (single, dual, consortium), allowing flexibility in how OHSs can be structured, as either fully distance, blended, or through partnerships among schools. ■ Mandates the use of **learning management systems (LMSs)** covering administration, planning, implementation, assessment, and supervision, which offers a governance template for how OHS can manage digital schooling. ■ Embeds **funding, licensing, and quality assurance (QA) mechanisms**, with oversight shared by the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and local governments; accreditation is explicitly required, alongside internal QA systems, reporting obligations, and multi-level supervisory responsibilities. This provides a model for how other distance learning systems can be financially sustained and monitored for quality and transparency.

Country	Title, description, and citation of resource	Key takeaways
Lao PDR	***Education and Sports Sector Development Plan 2021–2025*** **Policy document** that outlines the official five-year sector plan. It sets out national education priorities, financing, and governance structures. The plan explicitly includes digital learning and e-learning system development as core strategies to expand access and improve quality. (⬆Ministry of Education and Sports [MoES], 2020)	■ Integrates **digital education into sector-wide priorities**, showing OHSs must be part of broader planning, not a silo initiative. ■ Calls for **legal and institutional frameworks** for e-learning, highlighting that OHSs require specific regulatory underpinnings such as formal recognition in law, accreditation and quality assurance standards, a dedicated Ministry of Education and Sports unit for oversight, and rules on teacher deployment and digital content compliance. ■ Emphasises **capacity-building for teachers and administrators**, showing that OHS governance must invest in human resources. ■ Frames e-learning as a **tool for inclusion**, especially in rural areas, aligning with OHS goals of reaching marginalised learners. ■ Outlines two external financing scenarios for non-formal and distance learning, both of which show that **projected resources will fall short and that significantly more funding will be required** to sustain and improve programmes. ■ Connects digital initiatives to **sector-level monitoring and evaluation (M&E)**, providing a framework for evaluating OHSs at the national level.

Country	Title, description, and citation of resource	Key takeaways
Malaysia	***Manual for Teaching and Learning at Home (PdPR)*** **Guidance document** for home-based teaching and learning (PdPR), issued by the Ministry of Education to standardise remote schooling during closures. (⬆MoE, 2020a)	■ Provides **detailed operational guidance** for online, offline, and hybrid modes, showing how ministries can create practical implementation manuals for OHS delivery. ■ Prioritises **equity and inclusion**, addressing how to support students with limited access to the internet or devices—a critical consideration for OHS governance. ■ Clarifies the **roles of teachers, leaders, and parents**, providing a governance model of shared responsibilities that OHSs can adapt. ■ Serves as a **national reference tool** that standardises expectations, illustrating the importance of OHS policy documents being clear and widely accessible. ■ Demonstrates how guidance documents can be **iterated and updated** (e.g., v2.0), showing the need for OHS policy to remain MEadaptive.
Philippines	***Implementation of Open High School Program (OHSP) of Oquendo National High School*** **Policy document** that operationalises OHSP at Oquendo NHS, based on RA 10665 (Open High School System Act) and DepEd Order 46, s.2006, with guidelines on learners, teachers, and reporting. (⬆Department of Education [DepEd], Philippines, 2025	■ Grounds OHSP in **national law and DepEd policy**, showing how division-level governance executes national mandates. ■ Identifies **target groups** like dropouts, out-of-school youth (OSY), Alternative Learning Systems (ALS), Philippine Educational Placement Test (PEPT) passers, reinforcing OHSs as an inclusion strategy. ■ Requires **readiness tests, contracts, and orientation** to provide governance safeguards for learner suitability. ■ Mandates **weekly learner–teacher sessions, small class sizes, and collaborative planning**, highlighting structured support for distance learners. ■ Embeds **regular monitoring, reporting, and teacher incentives**, offering practical accountability mechanisms for OHS.

Country	Title, description, and citation of resource	Key takeaways
Philippines	***DepEd Data Bits: Learning Delivery Modalities*** **Guidance document** that reports on the adoption of learning delivery modalities under the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan for School Year 2020–2021 and School Year 2021–2022, covering public, private, and Philippine Schools Overseas. (↑DepEd, 2022)	■ Shows that **Modular Distance Learning (MDL-Print)** was the dominant modality for K–12 learners (75.1% or ~20.7M learners), reflecting how OHSs may need to prioritise low-tech solutions for equity. ■ **Blended learning and Online Distance Learning (ODL)** saw significant growth between SY 2020–21 and 2021–22, suggesting that OHS governance can allow flexible, evolving modality mixes. ■ Adoption patterns varied by **sector**: public schools relied heavily on MDL, while private schools preferred ODL, demonstrating that OHS must adapt its governance to diverse contexts. ■ Identifies **barriers such as internet and device access**, underscoring the need for OHS to incorporate inclusion strategies, especially in rural and disadvantaged areas. ■ Highlights government responses, such as the **Digital Rise Program** (infrastructure, software, and capacity-building), which offers a governance model for supporting OHS implementation.

Country	Title, description, and citation of resource	Key takeaways
Philippines	***The Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan in the Time of COVID-19*** **Policy document** that issues the official response to the disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. It outlines principles, strategies, and implementation mechanisms to ensure education continuity while safeguarding the health and well-being of learners, teachers, and staff. (↑DepEd, 2020)	■ Establishes **curriculum streamlining** through Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs), demonstrating how OHSs and distance learning can prioritise critical skills and reduce overload. ■ Introduces **multiple delivery modalities** (modular, online, TV/radio, blended, homeschooling) and provides governance options for diverse OHS contexts. ■ Requires **capacity building for teachers and school leaders** in distance learning, underscoring the need for OHS policies to integrate professional development. ■ Embeds **health standards, risk assessment, and equity considerations**, showing that OHS governance must address learner safety, socio-economic disparities, and inclusiveness. ■ Establishes a **monitoring and evaluation framework** for continuity planning, which can be adapted as a quality assurance mechanism for OHSs.
Singapore	***Transforming Education through Technology: EdTech Masterplan 2030*** (last updated December 5, 2025) **Guidance document** (2023–2030) issued by the Ministry of Education that provides a long-term strategic vision for integrating technology and blended/online learning across schools. (↑MoE, 2026)	■ Situates OHSs within a **long-term vision**, ensuring they are not treated as a temporary solution but as part of the future of schooling. ■ Places emphasis on **teacher capability development**, especially in e-pedagogy and data literacy, highlighting how OHS success depends on teacher readiness. See Singapore's Teacher Growth Model on implementing teacher readiness. ■ Builds in **infrastructure and AI-driven personalisation**, providing lessons on how OHSs can be scaled effectively with technology. ■ Demonstrates the need for OHSs to be **aligned with broader ICT and education agendas**, ensuring coherence across national strategies. ■ Provides a governance model that prioritises **innovation and resilience** relevant to OHSs as systems evolve.

Country	Title, description, and citation of resource	Key takeaways
Thailand	***Ministry of Education Digital Transformation for Education Action Plan*** **Policy document** issued as part of Thailand's national digital transformation strategy. Provides a three-year framework for integrating digital technology into teaching, learning, and education management, aligned with the National Education Strategy and Thailand 4.0 priorities. (⬆MoE, 2020b)	■ Establishes a **system-wide framework** that embeds digital and distance education in sector modernisation. ■ Prioritises **equity of access**, aiming to reduce rural–urban divides through "anywhere, anytime" learning. ■ Defines **multi-level benefits** for learners, teachers, schools, and the ministry, showing how OHS can be institutionalised. ■ Anchors digital learning in **long-term national strategies**, ensuring OHS is coherent with state goals. ■ Introduces **governance tools** such as leadership, design thinking, and PDCA cycles, and offers models for OHS management. ■ Positions the Ministry of Education as a **data-driven organisation**, underscoring the importance of data systems to monitor OHS quality and equity.
Vietnam	***On Management and Organization of Online Teaching in General Education Institutions and Continuing Education Institutions*** **Policy document** issued by the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) in 2021 that regulates online teaching in general and continuing education. It sets out rules for governance, assessment, infrastructure, and teacher readiness. (⬆Ministry of Education and Training [MoET], 2021)	■ Demonstrates **how a ministry can codify minimum requirements** such as infrastructure standards, teacher competencies, and support systems, which help ensure OHSs are viable across diverse schools. ■ Shows the importance of **aligning online teaching directly with the national curriculum**, providing a model for how OHS policies can guarantee equivalence with traditional education. ■ Establishes **governance for assessments**, allowing both online and in-person approaches, which illustrate how OHS policy can balance flexibility with credibility. ■ Provides a clear structure of accountability by assigning roles to central, provincial, and school-level authorities, which is a valuable example of multi-tiered OHS governance.

2.2 Institutional resources

Table 2 complements the country-level scan by presenting resources produced by international and regional institutions that offer comparative evidence, policy guidance, and analytical frameworks relevant to the governance of OHSs. These resources synthesise global lessons, propose monitoring and quality assurance frameworks, and outline principles for system readiness, equity, and sustainability. The table highlights how international guidance can inform national policy design and implementation by providing tools and considerations that cut across diverse governance and capacity contexts.

Table 2. *Resources by institution*

Institution	Title, description, and citation of resource	Key takeaways
Asian Development Bank (ADB)	***Toward Mature Digital Education Ecosystems: The Digital Education Readiness Framework*** **Guidance document** that introduces the Digital Education Readiness Framework (DERF), a tool with 56 indicators across five categories: Infrastructure, Government and Policy, Schools and Teachers, Students and Parents, and Service Providers. Used to assess digital education readiness in 10 developing member countries (Bangladesh, **Cambodia**, Fiji, **Indonesia**, Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Pakistan, **Philippines**, Uzbekistan, **Vietnam**). (↑ADB, 2023)	■ **All 10 countries were in the "emerging" stage**, showing OHSs must plan for gradual capacity-building rather than full readiness at launch. ■ **Infrastructure and policy gaps** (low device access, weak policies, high costs) highlight the need for OHS governance to focus on **affordable access and supportive regulations.** ■ **Teachers' digital skills are limited**, requiring structured pre-service and in-service training for OHS delivery. ■ **Students rely on mobile devices** and lack computers, suggesting OHSs must include **device support schemes** and mobile-friendly platforms. ■ Private EdTech is underused except in Indonesia, pointing to **public–private partnerships** as a growth area for OHSs ■ **The Covid-19 pandemic accelerated digital adoption**, creating momentum for embedding **blended and online learning in national strategies**

Institution	Title, description, and citation of resource	Key takeaways
EdTech Hub	***Monitoring Distance Education: A Brief to Support Decision-Making in Bangladesh and Other Low- and Lower-Middle Income Countries*** **Guidance document** that provides globally relevant recommendations on how to monitor distance education programmes. Outlines frameworks, case studies, and nine key recommendations for governments and partners on **monitoring availability, access, usage, and learning in distance education.** (↑Kaye et al., 2020)	■ Introduces a **four-part monitoring framework** (availability, access, usage, and learning) showing how OHSs can systematically track not just delivery but actual learner engagement and outcomes. ■ Recommends **collaborative monitoring plans** involving ministries, non-governmental organisations, and development partners, highlighting that OHS governance can integrate diverse stakeholders. ■ Stresses the importance of **innovative data collection** (phone surveys, SMS polls, community-sourced data, platform analytics) and provides low-cost models for OHS to monitor learners in resource-constrained settings. ■ Places **equity and inclusion** at the centre of monitoring, warning that the hardest-to-reach learners are often excluded unless explicitly targeted, which is critical for OHSs to address gaps in access. ■ Recommends building **long-term monitoring platforms** for data storage, analysis, and reporting, showing how OHSs can move from ad hoc monitoring to sustainable data-driven governance

Institution	Title, description, and citation of resource	Key takeaways
UNESCO	National Distance Learning Programmes in Response to the COVID-19 Education Disruption: Case study of the Republic of Korea **Case study** examining how Korea's Ministry of Education (MoE) and partner ministries implemented a national distance learning programme during the Covid-19 pandemic. Documents governance mechanisms, roll-out strategies, teacher training, social care, equity provisions, and lessons for post-pandemic blended learning. (⇡UNESCO, 2022)	■ Shows a **centralised but locally adapted governance model**, with the MoE leading policy and regional offices implementing and monitoring. ■ Demonstrates **multi-ministry coordination** (Health, ICT, Gender, Labour) to support access, social care, and equity. ■ Uses **public–private partnerships** (e.g. Samsung, LG) to secure platforms, devices, and connectivity. ■ Embeds **equity measures** like device loans, internet subsidies, multilingual and disability-accessible resources. ■ Provides **robust monitoring and funding**, including inspections, surveys, helplines, and multiple rounds of state support.

Institution	Title, description, and citation of resource	Key takeaways
UNESCO	***National Distance Learning Programmes in Response to the COVID-19 Education Disruption: Case study of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*** **Case study** examining the country's national distance-learning response during the Covid-19 pandemic, focusing on governance, platforms, inclusion, and long-term policy shifts. (↑UNESCO, 2022)	■ The MOE created a **Supreme Committee and 47 regional supervisory committees** to oversee distance learning nationwide, offering a model of **multi-level governance** that could be adapted for OHSs. ■ The **iEN Education Portal and Madrasati LMS** reached **98% of students**, showing how **national platforms can centralise curricula, virtual classes, and assessments** for OHSs. ■ **Equity was prioritised** through free devices, subsidised internet, and accessible tools such as **sign language channels and Braille devices**, highlighting how OHS policy must address inclusion for marginalised learners. ■ More than **428,000 teacher training sessions** were delivered, and **parental accounts on Madrasati** showed that families engaged in learning, demonstrating that OHS governance can integrate both **teacher readiness and parental involvement.** ■ The **National eLearning Center (NELC)** developed **standards, evaluation frameworks, and Vision 2030 alignment**, showing how OHSs can be embedded into **long-term education strategies** rather than treated as a short-term solution. ■ Discusses recognition of online learning, standards, and e-learning quality assurance. OHSs can be used as elements of accreditation.

Institution	Title, description, and citation of resource	Key takeaways
UNESCO	***Guidelines on Open and Distance Learning for Youth and Adult Literacy*** **Guidance document** to help governments, non-governmental organisations, and education providers plan, design, implement, and evaluate open and distance learning (ODL) programmes targeted at youth and adult literacy. **Applicable to K–12 students, but also includes adults.** Consolidates decades of field experience and case studies, offering structured steps (planning, curriculum, implementation, monitoring and evaluation) and policy considerations to ensure ODL systems are inclusive, sustainable, and responsive to diverse learner needs. (⬆UNESCO, 2021)	■ **Establish strong administrative and governance systems**. Effective ODL programmes require well-developed administrative structures that go beyond traditional schooling, including clear roles for staffing, financial management, quality assurance, and learner support. Policies can formalise these governance mechanisms to ensure scalability and sustainability. ■ **Aligns with national policies while tailoring to learner needs**. Successful ODL governance involves analysing community contexts, aligning with national education strategies, and ensuring equity considerations (e.g., gender, language, disability). Policy frameworks must explicitly require this alignment to ensure that distance education systems are both nationally coherent and locally relevant. ■ **Mandate monitoring, evaluation, and accountability structures**. Governance models for ODL can institutionalise mechanisms for monitoring, data collection, and quality assurance, not only to track learner progress but also to maintain accountability at institutional and national levels. This ensures long-term credibility and integration with mainstream education systems.

Institution	Title, description, and citation of resource	Key takeaways
World Bank	***Remote Learning During COVID-19: Lessons from today, principles for tomorrow*** **Guidance document** that analyses evidence from March 2020 to October 2021 across low-, middle-, and high-income countries to assess the effectiveness of remote learning and derive policy principles for more resilient systems. (⬆Muñoz-Najar et al., 2021)	■ Effective remote learning depends on the alignment of **teachers, technology, and learner engagement**. For OHSs, this means embedding **teacher digital training and learner support** into governance frameworks. ■ Governments used **multimodal strategies** (TV, radio, paper, mobile, and internet), but often faced the **"remote learning paradox"**, choosing digital solutions inaccessible to many students. OHS policies can be designed around **fit-for-purpose technologies** rather than aspirational but exclusionary tools. ■ The **digital divide widened into a "digital chasm"**, with marginalised learners (girls, children with disabilities, ethnic minorities) disproportionately excluded. OHS governance must integrate **equity safeguards** into policy and implementation. ■ The report proposes **five principles for reimagining learning**: suitable technology, effective teachers, two-way interactions, parental and student engagement, and broad public–private cooperation. These principles provide a **direct roadmap for OHS governance structures**.

3. Key considerations for policy planning and implementation

The key considerations included in the subsections below synthesise emerging insights from global evidence on how ministries of education have approached the planning and implementation of governance structures for Open and Distance High Schools (OHSs). The objective is to highlight critical enablers, ranging from clear institutional mandates and coordination mechanisms, to quality assurance, financing, and equitable learner access. They also underscore the importance of policy coherence and strategic partnerships in ensuring governance models are both scalable and resilient. This analysis serves as an initial synthesis and can be further deepened by drawing on select country examples and international guidance documents from the collated evidence base.

3.1 Clear institutional mandates and governance structures

Successful OHS systems require formalised legal and institutional frameworks that define roles, responsibilities, and oversight (⬆MoEC: Indonesia, 2014). National policies and regulations should specify the mandates of ministries, local authorities, and school-level actors, ensuring that OHSs are integrated into the education system rather than treated as ad hoc programmes. Clear governance structures, including accreditation, licensing, and accountability mechanisms, provide legitimacy and sustainability (⬆MoET: Vietnam, 2021).

Across the documents, several governance models emerge. Some countries use multi-level systems in which national ministries set policy, provincial or division offices supervise, and schools implement (Vietnam, the Philippines, Korea). Others embed governance directly within school-level structures, requiring roles such as school managers, tutors, and quality assurance staff to oversee OHSs (Indonesia). A few establish specialised institutions or units, such as Saudi Arabia's National eLearning Center for accreditation and Thailand's Chief Information Officer (CIO)-led digital governance teams, to ensure standards and innovation. Finally, some embed digital education governance in sector-wide plans, like Lao PDR, which calls for legal frameworks and monitoring systems to institutionalise e-learning.

3.2 Policy coherence, innovation, and strategic partnerships

OHS strategies are most effective when aligned with broader national education and digital transformation agendas (↑MoE: Thailand, 2020b; ↑MoE; Singapore, 2023). Embedding OHS within sector plans and long-term visions, such as digital economy frameworks and education modernisation plans, ensures coherence and resilience. Strategic partnerships with private EdTech providers, telecoms, non-governmental organisations, and local communities can expand access, provide innovative solutions, and share costs (↑UNESCO, 2022). Continuous policy adaptation, supported by innovation and data systems, helps maintain relevance and scalability (↑ADB, 2023).

3.3 Equity, access, and inclusion as core principles

OHS planning must explicitly address the digital divide and marginalised learners. Policies should embed strategies such as multimodal delivery (low tech and high tech), device support schemes, internet subsidies, and inclusive learning resources, such as multilingual content and disability-accessible platforms (↑DepEd: Philippines, 2020; ↑MoE: Malaysia, 2020a). Placing equity at the centre ensures that distance education does not exacerbate inequalities but instead becomes a pathway for reaching dropouts, out-of-school youth, and learners in rural or underserved areas.

3.4 Sustainable financing

Strong OHS governance requires dedicated and predictable financing mechanisms to support infrastructure, teacher incentives, learner support services, and digital platforms. Policies should earmark funds within education budgets and explore blended financing models, including partnerships with the private sector (for-profit and not-for-profit) and development partners to ensure long-term viability (↑UNESCO, 2022; ↑UNESCO, 2022).

3.5 Teacher capacity building and professional development

The effectiveness of OHSs depends on systematic teacher preparation and ongoing training. Policies must mandate pre-service and in-service development of digital pedagogy, equipping teachers with skills in

e-learning design, learner engagement, and online assessment (↑MoES: Lao PDR, 2020; ↑MoE: Singapore, 2023). Incentives and support structures should be integrated to sustain teacher motivation and performance in distance learning environments.

3.6 Monitoring, evaluation, and quality assurance

OHS systems require robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks that track learner engagement, equity of access, and learning outcomes (↑Kaye et al., 2020; ↑MoEYS: Cambodia, 2018). Policies should institutionalise mechanisms for continuous data collection, reporting, and quality assurance at national, regional, and school levels. This ensures accountability, informs iterative improvements, and establishes credibility for OHSs as equivalent to traditional schooling (↑ADB, 2023).

3.7 Curriculum and instructional design

A strong OHS system depends on curriculum alignment and instructional adaptability. Policies should ensure that distance learning curricula are fully aligned with national standards while allowing flexibility for individualised pacing and learner-centred approaches (↑MoET: Vietnam, 2021; ↑DepEd, Philippines, 2020). Instructional design must integrate interactive, multimodal, and competency-based methods, supported by digital platforms and teacher guidance. This ensures that OHSs maintain academic rigour while adapting to diverse learner contexts and technological realities.

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These references are available digitally in our evidence library at
https://docs.edtechhub.org/lib/ZEM52EK3

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