A CASE STUDY OF THE GOVERNANCE MODELS OF SCHOOLS AND DEPARTMENTS IN TSINGHUA UNIVERSITY, CHINA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to analyze the governance structure of Tsinghua University at the school and the department levels. This study takes a qualitative approach by collecting data from university archive and in-depth interviews. The data were triangulated to seek for common patterns and emerging themes. Five types of governance at the school and the department levels were identified: the pluralistic co-governance model, the academic-led model, the administrative-academic coordination model, the academic-social interaction model, and the state-led model. The special features of each type of model were analyzed to reflect their suitability to the corresponding schools or departments.

INTRODUCTION

For years, the Chinese government has been promoting the reform of higher education by continuously searching for areas of improvement with particular focus on diminishing administrative bureaucracy and decentralizing managing authorities. Many research oriented Chinese universities have taken the lead in reforming their systems of governance in response to the call of the Chinese government. Tsinghua University, a leading research university in China, has a long history of continuous reforms in higher education to meet the needs of social and economic development. In 2014, the Chinese government officially approved Tsinghua University to be one of the experimental fields for the comprehensive reforms of higher education in China. The university assumed the reform responsibility by starting with its personnel system as a testing ground. Then, based on the experiences of personnel system reform, the university initiated practical reforms of its governance in other areas such as education, scientific research and institutional mechanism. The reform effort of Tsinghua University in the structure and function of its governance body, particularly at the school and the department levels, can serve as a very typical model for other universities worldwide in conducting their governance reforms. The purpose of this study is to examine the effort of Tsinghua University in delivering its governance system for the improvement of system efficiency and effectiveness at the school and the department levels. Tsinghua University is in the front line of research universities in China. The effort of Tsinghua University is leading other major Chinese universities in initiating reorganization of their governance systems.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Theory of Governance

Yu (2014) stated that a system called governance needs to be created in an organization to generate specific guidelines as to how complicated encounters can be resolved. He claimed that, in any organization, attention needed to be drawn to the detailed technicalities of the governance mechanism with work division and shared responsibilities so that all parties involved knew what were expected of them. Jessop (1998) also acknowledged that such a system of governance has proved to work in many university systems of multi-levelled authorities.

Stakeholder Theory

Freeman (1984) explained the difference between shareholders and stakeholders of an organization. He claimed that shareholders of an organization were only interested in profit making as a result of the operation of the organization. Stakeholders of an organization consist of all members of the working team who plan and work hard together to meet the organizational goals. Some stakeholders may be coming from outside of the organization. They contribute to the success of the organization by offering monetary and material support besides personal time and effort. Freeman (1984) reiterated that stakeholders hold different positions and play different roles in the operation of the organization. A university is structured with multi-levelled layers of authorities. The stakeholder theory has been employed by many universities to suit their governance needs.

Organizational Behavior Theory

Luthans (2002) elaborated on his positive organizational behavior theory in practice. He uttered that the best components of a successful organization consisted of quality human resources and positive mindset of its members. The theory has been adapted to human resource development for the improvement of organizational performance. Robbins and Judge (2008) further elaborated that the study of organizational behavior was focused on the relationship of individual behaviors, group behaviors and system behaviors within the organization. He added that these three behaviors could interactively impact the developmental activities of the organization. In a university setting, leaders in higher education are able to draw upon the enthusiasm of the most talented minds in different academic fields. It becomes clear that the most positive psychological spirit of the university can be turned into the most powerful strategies to contribute to the best success of the university.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Mission of Higher Education

The mission of higher education has been the argument of different scholars. It is commonly believed that the main functions of the academic organizations include the exploration of advanced knowledge and the satisfaction of social needs. Brubacher (1982) asserted that higher education institutes were established in search of higher levels of knowledge. He was also in support of the practicality that the outcomes of advanced knowledge need to serve in improving the livelihood of people in the country. The scholastic point of view has held that faculty members of the universities are required to demonstrate their scholarship in addition to their teaching responsibilities (Braxton, 1996). However, some scholars have argued that higher education must serve the political purpose of a country by preparing the needed manpower of all levels to keep the country going (Council of Europe, 2007; Gibson, 1976). On the other hand, new political managerialism could infiltrate governmental strategies and modified existing governance models of higher education (Braun, 1999).

Division Between Administration and Academics in Higher Education

For years, teaching staff and administrative staff of higher education have understood that the core of university governance is the rational allocation of responsibilities and effective operation of diversified entities (Allen & Mintrom, 2010; Birnbaum & Edelson, 1989; Corson, 1960; Liu, 2015; Wang, 2002; Yuan, 2000). Academic staff with their specialties in their areas of expertise are held responsible for academic program development and instructional strategies to the best benefit of the students. They have a free hand to manage academic matters such as student admission, student evaluation and student graduation requirements (Brubacher, 1982). Jasper (1960) has agreed that

academic freedom in universities should be enjoyed by academic staff who teach and research on subjects at their own free will and students can freely choose to study subjects of their own interest. However, administrative staff are also well trained in their areas of business expertise. As Brubacher (1982) declared that a collaborative division of work must be reached between teaching staff and administrative staff to achieve a high degree of efficiency and effectiveness of university operation.

The Role of Faculty in University Governance

University governance is embodied in the faculty level. The most significant aspect of governance is to respect the faculty members and their associated schools and departments by highlighting the leading role of faculty groups in the governance organization (Schoorman 2013; Tuchma, 2015). An effective university governance ensures faculty participation through academic power organizations such as academic committees and administrative task forces (Maassen, 2000; Schaeffer, 1991). Glass (1980) studied the role of faculty members in university governance through the faulty members' expectations of their roles. She concluded that faculty members in general showed a desire to participate in a wider range of decision-making processes, and female or non-tenured faculty members expected a high degree of participation in university governance.

Stakeholders in University Governance

University administrative staff, faculty members, students and the university cooperative partners are commonly identified as the stakeholders in university governance. Good interaction within the university among the stakeholders determines the effectiveness of the governance (Gallos, 2009; Zhao & Yan, 2012). Student participation in decision-making on matters of students' vital interest is an essential part of the university governance. Therefore, the importance of student participation in university governance is the concern of educational researchers of higher education (Chen & Chen, 2013; Maassen, 2000). In addition, cooperation between faculty members and administrators on university governance is also an important factor contributing to the success of the governance (Del Favero, 2003; King, 2013). Furthermore, the role of the deans of schools plays another important factor to the effectiveness of the governance. The deans' perceptions of faculty governance, their administrative decisions and their leadership styles have impact on how the university governance works (Bolton, 1996; Gmelch et al, 1999; Ren, 2009). Wise, Dickinson, Katan and Gallegos (2020) proposed to higher education policy researchers and university managers the establishment of indigenous university governance with fundamental elements of diversity, equality, and inclusivity. They aimed to empower Indigenous leaders to create positive impact in higher education, contributing to high quality education and research for Indigenous students and communities.

Governance Systems in Chinese Universities

Chinese scholars have commented on the governance systems in Chinese universities. Some have taken the governance system in view of the Chinese cultural context. They claimed that the direction of the governance activities needs to be developed to achieve the university goals (Liu, 2015; Qin, 2013). The authorities of the university governance system are conferred by the charters and rules of the university. Therefore, for the governance system to be effectively operated, the charters and the rules of the university need to be straightly followed (Yuan, 2012). In developing the university governance system, the most fundamental thing is to clearly stipulate the way of assignment of responsibilities and the procedures of stakeholders' participation in academic decision-making (Ouyang, 2008). Han and Xu (2019) argued that the underlying governance logics of Chinese higher education were moving from direct controls to indirect supervision; however, they claimed that

despite the increasing university autonomy and academic freedom in some areas, the state has not abdicated its authority over higher education institutions.

Studies on The University Governance
Most of the studies on university governance have been focused on the internal organization and the responsibilities of the composing entities of the governance. However, some scholars have shifted their studies from the institutional areas to the personnel areas emphasizing the importance of formal and informal interactions between stakeholders in professorial governance by highlighting the importance of human concerns (Ehrenberg, 2004; Li, 2013; Xuan, 2012). Some researchers also emphasized the need for studying university governance under a broader context of the times basing on a more precise understanding of the history and cultural environment of the universities and the entire higher education system (Yonezawa, 2014; Zhao & Yan, 2012). Claxton-Freeman (2015) also studied four-year public institutions to determine if there are significant differences among the institutions based on efficiency and effectiveness scores within the types of governance structures in operation in the United States. All these studies have opened alternative directions to explore the significance of governance in higher education systems.

RESEARCH QUESTION
What governance models are used in the structure of the organizational system in Tsinghua University?

METHODOLOGY
Research Design
This study takes a qualitative approach by undergoing indepth interviews with research participants and reviewing significant documentary files in the respective academic units. As described by Fraendel, Wallen and Hyun (2012), 'Rearch studies that investigate the quality of relationships, activities, situations, or materials are frequently referred to as qualitative research.' (P. 426)

Participants
Purposive sampling method and snowball sampling method were used to identify the research participants in this study to represent the administrative section, the academic section and the support section of the university. Consequently, a total of fifty-three members of the administrative section, the academic section and the support section agreed to participate in the study. The administrative section includes twenty-nine deans and deputy deans of schools and party secretaries. Academic representatives include fourteen persons consisting of chairmen of academic committees, members of teaching and program committees, teachers, and student representatives. Support section is represented by 10 members to include office directors, chairman of student council, laboratory technicians and business managers. All the research participants agreed to personal interviews with the researcher in discussing relevant aspects of the university governance in this study.

Data Collection
Archival data relating to the University's history, organization, governance structure, systematic norms and subject cultures needed for this study were retrieved from the filed documents of Tsinghua University with the University permission. Document review only involves colleges or departments

from which administrators, faculty and support staff were selected for the study. All the interviews with the research participants were semi-structured and completely open. A copy of the standard interview questionnaire (see Attachment) was sent to each of the interviewees prior to the interviews to allow them time for preparation. In some cases, follow-up interviews were conducted in order to fully explore the interviewees' personal experience on the structure, operation mechanism, characteristic experience, contradictions of the departments and the relationships between school and university (Bradburn et al, 1979).

Data Analysis

All the archived data of participating colleges and departments of Tsinghua University were examined through a careful documentary analysis (Creswell, 2009). The purpose was to seek for an understanding of the background of the developmental trend of the different current governance systems used within the Tsinghua University. The data collected through the interviews with participants were recorded and written into drafts. Recurring terms were systematically coded. Analysis of the interview data involved the careful observation of the emerging themes of the key elements of the interview data. A triangulation process was performed in lining up the interview data with the archived documentary data. The triangulation of two sets of data helps yielding meaningful findings to answer the research questions.

FINDINGS

Through a triangulation process, data from archival documents and in-depth interviews were carefully analyzed resulting in significant findings for the development of Tsinghua University. Results of data analysis indicate that five models of governance system are currently in operation at the school and department levels of Tsinghua University. They are the pluralistic co-governance model, the academic-led model, the administrative-academic coordination model, the academic-social interaction model, and the state-led model. The formation of these models has special historical relevance, and the models are applicable to different schools or departments to best suit the development of the corresponding disciplines. The findings of each model are presented in the following:

The Pluralistic Co-governance Model

The pluralistic co-governance model is highlighted by stakeholder participation, group decision and high level of collaboration. In this model, all the stakeholders in the school or the department participate in the governance of the school or the department. They include the dean, assistant deans, department heads and their assistants, professors, administrative staff, and students. Operating policies and regulations of schools or departments are made by different committees with participation of the stakeholders through group decision making. As stated by a department head, "All the members of the committees work together collaboratively with high professional standards to achieve the university goals."

The Department of Industrial Engineering has adopted the pluralistic co-governance model of administration since the department was first established with an American professor serving as department head. The department has maintained its internationally open policy, fair evaluation system and full participation of all the stakeholders. Committees with the leadership of department head, assistant department heads or senior faculty members make decision on the daily operation of departmental affairs with the collaboration of all the participating committee members. Committees

are formed to reflect the different aspects of the departmental work such as the International Advisory Committee, Academic Committee, the Instructional Committee, the Student Practicum Committee, the Ethics Committee, the Curriculum Design Committee, the Promotion Committee, the Thesis Committee and the Doctoral Student Advisory Committee. Committee members serve on the committees with professionalism and respect for one another. For example, the Promotion Committee is attended by all the faculty members who review all the cases with care, fairness, and integrity.

The Academic-led Model

The academic-led model reflects the inherent requirements of basic scientific research and the free and independent development of talent cultivation. The school or the department governance is circled around the initiative of advancing scholarship as an essential component of the governance. When the academic-led model is adopted, it is believed that the school or the department is committed to academic development as its priority. "The academic theme is filtered into all aspects of the school or the department organizations and activities." as described by a department head. Academic staff in the school or the department are given total freedom to undertake their research projects and are fully supported by the school or the department resources. In teaching responsibilities, academic staff are assigned with the task of developing students' talents in scholarship and helping students grow as future scholars and researchers. The academic-led model is most applicable to the governance of purely basic disciplines such as mathematics, physics, biomedicine, and humanistic sciences.

Taking the Department of Physics as an example, the department has been chaired by internationally known scholars in the study of physics. He or she in turn recruits the top-notch scientists in physics to teach and conduct critical research in the department. The Department of Physics has initiated the tenure system to offer attractive benefits to keep its best professors in the department. The Tenure and Promotion Review Committee sets high standards to challenge the faculty members to contribute their best. Even at the annual faculty performance review of the department, demanding scholarship requirements are set for faculty members to meet. The department exposes itself to the international scene by inviting prestigious scholars worldwide to visit and lecture at the department.

These scholarly visitations not only promote Tsinghua University's international status, but also provide excellent opportunities for faculty members and students to interact with well-known scholars of the field. In curriculum design, the department challenges the high-ranking universities worldwide and determines to develop its physics program to be levelled in alignment with the top standards of the world. To promote academic activities, weekly colloquium is held to provide opportunities for faculty members to share the progress of their research projects and learn from one another. High student academic standards are set by Academic Committee, Degree Committee, Undergraduate Program Development Committee and Graduate Program Development Committee in requiring outstanding student performance. The Department of Physics best exemplifies how the academic-led governance model acts.

The Academic-administrative Coordination Model

The academic-administrative coordination model of governance is a common model that is generally adopted by many schools in higher education institutions in the world. The great advantage of the model is that, through a division of work, the model offers a platform to keep a balance of the administrative power and the academic power within the school or the department. The model

underscores the concept of specialization which supports the notion that when people are assigned to work in the best of their specialties, the most effective result is achieved in the work. The governance of a school or a department with the adoption of the academic-administrative coordination model calls for administrative work and academic work to be separated. While administrators manage all the extensive and tedious details of work procedures, scholars can focus their attention on teaching and scholarship development. The dean of a school further explained, "At times, administrators and scholars in the school or department may work together to resolve issues that relate to both administration and academics to attain the best benefit of the school or the department." In this model, in addition to aiming at high scholarship levels, the school or department is also working diligently to prepare practitioners of high quality to meet the social needs. Departments at Tsinghua University exercising this academic-administration coordination model of governance include the Department of Electronics, the Department of Mechanical Engineering, the Department of Automation, the Department of Chemical Engineering, the School of Architecture, the School of Environment, School of Civil Engineering, and the School of Social Sciences. The Department of Electronics in employing the academic-administration coordination model demands both administrators and academic staff to work together collaboratively to achieve the great mission of the university. Because of the division of work, the department has emphasized high level of specialization in each of the faculty's teaching and research areas. Faculty members are asked to challenge themselves at the highest international levels. The administrators have been reminded all the times that one of the university missions is to develop the talents of program participants and prepare them to serve as the front runners to lead the practical functions of society. In this respect, the administrators and the academic staff have worked together in developing the most efficient and effective programs to cultivate the best human resources to meet both the academic demands and practical needs of society. All the committees in the department, either administrative or academic, consist of members from both the administrative and academic sections to ensure a balance of voices for the advancement of the department.

The Academic-social Interaction Model
The academic-social interaction model is the product of the combination of the mission of world-class universities and the practical needs of applied disciplines. In growing to be a world class university, Tsinghua University has supported the schools and the departments to adopt the academic-social interaction model of governance to strengthen its academic research to be in the world's forefront. At the same time, the schools and departments are asked to position themselves as the provider of specialty services the society needs. Consequently, the schools or departments developed their programs in two tracks, one in scholarly research and the other in practical application. The development of scholarly research is seen in the expansion of graduate studies to match world standards. In practical application, the schools, or departments design programs to focus on producing graduates to meet the needs of practical work fields. On the other hand, as one of the department heads added, "the schools or the departments also contract with business or social organizations to help them with the specialty services faculty members can offer." This academic-social interaction model is very popularly used in disciplines of social sciences including the School of Economics and Management, the Law School, Department of Public Administration, Public Communication Department and the School of Education Studies.

The School of Economics and Management has successfully adopted the academic-social interaction model in the fast advance of the school. Academically, the school opens itself to international

cooperation by working with world top universities in offering joint graduate programs such as the Master of Business Administration (MBA) program and the Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) program. In this cooperation, the school has drawn in world class scholars to enrich the program and upgrade the image of Tsinghua University worldwide. The school is closely connected with the business world to identify the specific needs of each business field so that the programs are geared at producing exactly the best candidates to suit the business market. Being confident of the high program quality of the school, many businesses work with the School of Economics and Management in offering in-service workshops for their current employees in the advancement of their knowledge and skills. The school administrators are also able to take advantage of the expertise of its faculty members in offering special designing, planning, and marketing services to many needed businesses for their future development. The School of Economics and Management has demonstrated itself to be a successful example in the application of the academic-social interaction model of governance.

The State-led Model
The state-led model, characterized by administrative command and centralized unification, is a special governance model quite different from other governance models of Tsinghua University. There are reasons for the existence and development of this model because it meets the country's needs of the national strategic development and international competitiveness. The state-led model of governance supports any state-funded special programs or projects which are particularly important in the development of the country. The model calls for a unification of the administrative and research activities by the creation of a school or department council to provide guidelines and lead the program or projects assigned by the state. In this model, academic freedom has to give in for the state directions. It is through this unique model that the school or the department can concentrate its effort and resources to achieve what the state assigns to do. In some areas, confidentiality needs to be highly maintained. The idea of this model of central unification penetrates through the teaching approach, curriculum design and practicum exercises. The Institute of Nuclear and New Energy Technology, Engineering Physics Department, School of Journalism and Communication are typical organizations in Tsinghua University that adopt the state-led model of governance.

For example, the Institute of Nuclear and New Energy Technology is fully supported by government funding to conduct research on nuclear development. The purpose of the institute is to put the effort of all the elite scholars together to research on the development of nuclear power and new energy technology to lead the world. The institute is also responsible for preparing world class researchers and practitioners in the field to support the nuclear industries of the country. The Institute Council, headed by the Head of Institute and participated by lead professors, manages all the academic and administrative business of the institute, and makes decisions on actions to be followed by all members of the institute. The council examines the goals of the institute and makes sure that the resources are appropriately allocated to all the research fields of the institute. Annual review of the performance of the academic staff is not by the quantity or quality of their publications. All the academic staff are reminded to demonstrate their own performance by collecting evidence of self-assessing their contributions to achieving the goals of the institute.

CONCLUSIONS
The findings of this study indicate that five models of governance system are currently in use at the school or the department levels of Tsinghua University: the pluralistic co-governance model,

the academic-led model, the administrative-academic coordination model, the academic-social interaction model, and the state-led model. These models are being used in different schools or departments to best suit the development of their disciplines. Each model has its own special features that highlight interaction and inter-relationship of the stakeholders in the functioning of the school or the department. In deciding the type of model to be used, consideration needs to be given to the balance of academics and administration, stakeholder participation, division of responsibilities, efficiency, and effectiveness in attaining the university missions and the special requirements of the individual programs. The final decision on the model to be used should not be limited to the five types found in this study. Planners of higher education may be able to discover another new type of governance model to better suit certain programs of their own. It is necessary to point out that there is no one-size-fits-all ideal governance model in higher education. The ideal governance model is based on the academic, the social and the political conditions of the time and the place. The connotation and extension of various governance models change with the internal and external environments. Many models running well in past years may need to be modified to suit the environment of the time. Therefore, while learning from the experiences of the governance models of other institutions, planners of higher education need to refer to the specific needs of their own universities for future development.

DISCUSSION

The pluralistic co-governance model as adopted by the Department of Industrial Engineering calls for total participation of all the parties involved in the operation of the department. It is a democratic way of governance as advocated by Freeman (1984) and Ouyang (2008). Freeman particularly claimed that stakeholders of an organization consist of all members of the working team like the pluralistic co-governance model calls for. The team plans and works hard together to meet the organizational goals.

The Department of Physics employed the academic-led model of governance in the management of the department affairs. The department places high priority in the advancement of scholarship as its primary goal and is demanding its faculty members to demonstrate high levels of scholarship. Schoorman (2013) and Tuchman (2015) also called for all the scholarly faculty members to participate in department governance. Departmental governance as shown in faculty participation through academic power organizations such as academic committees and administrative task forces is also favored by Maassen (2000) and Schaeffer (1991).

The academic-administration coordination model is the most popularly used model of governance in universities of the world. Through the division and specialization of work, both academic and administrative staff know exactly what they need to concentrate in their work and that they need to do their best. This is reflecting the work of Allen and Mintrom (2010), Birnbaum and Edelson (1989), Corson (1960), Liu (2015), Wang (2002), Yu (2014) and Yuan (2000) who agreed that academic staff and administrative staff of higher education need to understand that the core of university governance is the rational allocation of responsibilities and effective operation of diversified entities. Brubacher (1982) stated that higher education institutions were established for the advancement of high levels of knowledge and for the improvement of social lives of the people. This is exactly what is called for in the academic-social interaction model of governance used in Tsinghua University. This model exemplified a balance between academics and practicality.

The state-led model of governance is only used in a few schools and departments at Tsinghua University because of its exclusive purpose of establishment. Even though it does not encourage academic freedom, it emphasizes the concentration of talents under a unified leadership. This is what Luthans (2002) elaborated on his positive organizational behavior theory that the best components of a successful organization consisted of quality human resources and positive mindset of its members.

IMPLICATIONS TO EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

The findings of this study are significant not only to provide Tsinghua University a source of reference in reviewing its system of governance, but also to offer lessons of practical application of the governance models of higher education that universities in other countries can learn. Even though universities in the world are situated in government settings of different political beliefs, there are common missions and goals that educational institutions agree to achieve. Based on the findings of this study, the following observations could serve as objective reviews of implications to educational planning for the governance of higher education in the world.

First, in planning for the system of governance, universities do not need to be operated under a single uniform model of governance to be effective. Different models of governance can be explored. Schools and departments within a university could use different models of governance to the best of their program suitability. Deans, department heads and faculty members can discuss the advantages and disadvantages of different governance systems and decide on the one they feel comfortable.

Second, the choice of governance model of a school or a department is guided by the university mission and the nature and the demand of specific disciplines. Schools and departments of universities could select to use a particular model of governance to achieve the mission of the university in the most efficient and effective way. At the same time, consideration needs to be given to certain governance models that would better promote the development of particular programs.

Third, many universities worldwide are established for the purpose of both knowledge advancement and serving social needs. Therefore, consideration should be given to choosing the type of governance model that would serve both purposes well.

Fourth, one of the considerations of deciding on the use of governance system in higher education is the balance of power between academics and administration. Some kinds of joint organizations consisting of all program stakeholders, like school council or department council, could be created to discuss and resolve on issues relating to common interest and concerns between academics and administration.

Fifth, in satisfying the social needs, schools or departments of universities sometimes offer their unique services to social groups by committing to direct service contracts. These kinds of contract services are very popular in some universities. They can help society with the university expertise and at the same time can generate additional resources to help with the school or the department operational expenses. However, care needs to be taken not to over commit the effort of the school or the department to contract services while overlooking the mission of academic advancement and talent development.

Sixth, many factors play in planning and determining the kind of governance to be adopted in a university and its colleges and departments. Among these factors, respecting culture, honoring tradition, achieving missions, competing in the market, and securing social support need to be kept in good balance for efficient and effective operations.

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APPENDIX

Interviewee's Data Collection Form

Please provide the following basic information about yourself:

      1. Title of your position:_____

      2. Work responsibilities: _____

      3. Years of service in this position: _____

      4. Age: _____

      5. Education background:_____

      6. Work experiences: _____

Please respond to the following core questions about the unit in which you are serving:

      1. What are the missions and goals of your unit?

        _____

      2. What is the organizational structure and function of your unit?

        _____

      3. What is the current condition of operation in your unit? (Relate to problems and issues

        and strategies to meet challenges.)

        _____