

IT Operating Models for Multi-Campus Education Groups in ASEAN

A comprehensive analysis of IT organizational structures across Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, examining how education conglomerates manage technology across multiple campuses and levels.



The ASEAN Education Landscape

Thailand

Smaller education groups with decentralized models. SISB Schools operates 5 international campuses with centralized IT. St. Gabriel's Foundation manages 14+ schools under Assumption Network with decentralized operations.

Indonesia

BINUS leads with centralized IT Directorate serving university and K-12. Sampoerna Schools System uses cloud-based centralized model. Muhammadiyah network spans 4,500+ schools with fully decentralized approach.

Malaysia

Most mature centralized models. Taylor's Education Group, Sunway, UCSI, and HELP all employ Group IT structures with shared services across universities and international schools.

Philippines

Transitioning from decentralized to federated. PHINMA standardizing IT across 10+ universities. STI operates 63 campuses with centralized firewall and LMS. iPeople managing diverse portfolio post-merger.

Case Study: BINUS Indonesia

Centralized Excellence

BINUS elevated IT from department to Directorate level in 2005, creating a unified structure serving the entire foundation including universities, online programs, and BINUS Schools across multiple cities.

Key Features:

- IT Directorate with 51-200 staff reporting directly to foundation leadership
- Shared infrastructure serving all education levels
- Standardized platforms across Jakarta, Bandung, and branch campuses
- Centralized decision-making for architecture and procurement

Confidence Level: High - Publicly documented organizational structure





Case Study: Sampoerna Schools System

Sampoerna demonstrates centralized IT with cloud migration strategy. With only a few IT personnel managing security for the entire organization, they moved most applications to cloud infrastructure to increase operational efficiency.

The system serves two distinct audiences - Sampoerna University (faculty and students) and Sampoerna Academy K-12 (teachers and parents) - on the same platform, showcasing successful multi-level integration.

Source: Biznet Gio case study (2022) documented their cloud transformation journey and unified service delivery model.

Malaysian Leadership in Group IT

5

Major Groups

Taylor's, Sunway, UCSI, HELP, and SEGi all employ centralized or federated IT models

100%

CIO Adoption

All major education groups have appointed Group CIOs or IT Directors

27K+

Student Scale

SEGi alone serves over 27,000 students across 5 campuses with unified IT

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Malaysia's education conglomerates demonstrate the most mature IT governance structures in ASEAN, with clear Group IT leadership and shared services models that balance efficiency with campus autonomy.

The Four IT Operating Model Archetypes

1

Centralized

All IT functions consolidated under Group IT. Single decision point, standardized services, maximum efficiency. Best for cost optimization and risk control.

2

Federated

Hybrid approach combining central governance with local execution. Group IT sets standards and provides core platforms; campuses maintain operational teams.

3

Decentralized

Each campus operates independently with own IT team and systems. Maximum autonomy but higher costs and inconsistent experiences.

4

Hybrid by Segment

Different models for different education levels. Universities may centralize while K-12 remains federated, or vice versa.



Centralized Model: Maximum Efficiency

Advantages

- **Cost Efficiency:** 10-30% savings through economies of scale, reduced duplication
- **Consistent Quality:** Standardized ITIL processes, uniform SLA across all campuses
- **Risk Control:** Centralized security, easier compliance, reduced shadow IT
- **Data Strategy:** Unified data governance enables enterprise-wide analytics

Challenges

- **Reduced Flexibility:** Campuses must wait for central prioritization
- **Central Overload:** Risk of bureaucracy, distance from local needs
- **Change Resistance:** Staff fear job loss, leaders resist losing control
- **Single Point of Failure:** Heavy dependence on central team capacity

Federated Model: The Balanced Approach

Central Architecture

Group IT defines standards, platforms, and policies. Ensures consistency while allowing flexibility.

Joint Governance

IT steering committee with Group CIO and campus representatives makes major decisions together.



Local Operations

Campus IT teams handle day-to-day support, understand local needs, respond quickly to faculty.

Shared Services

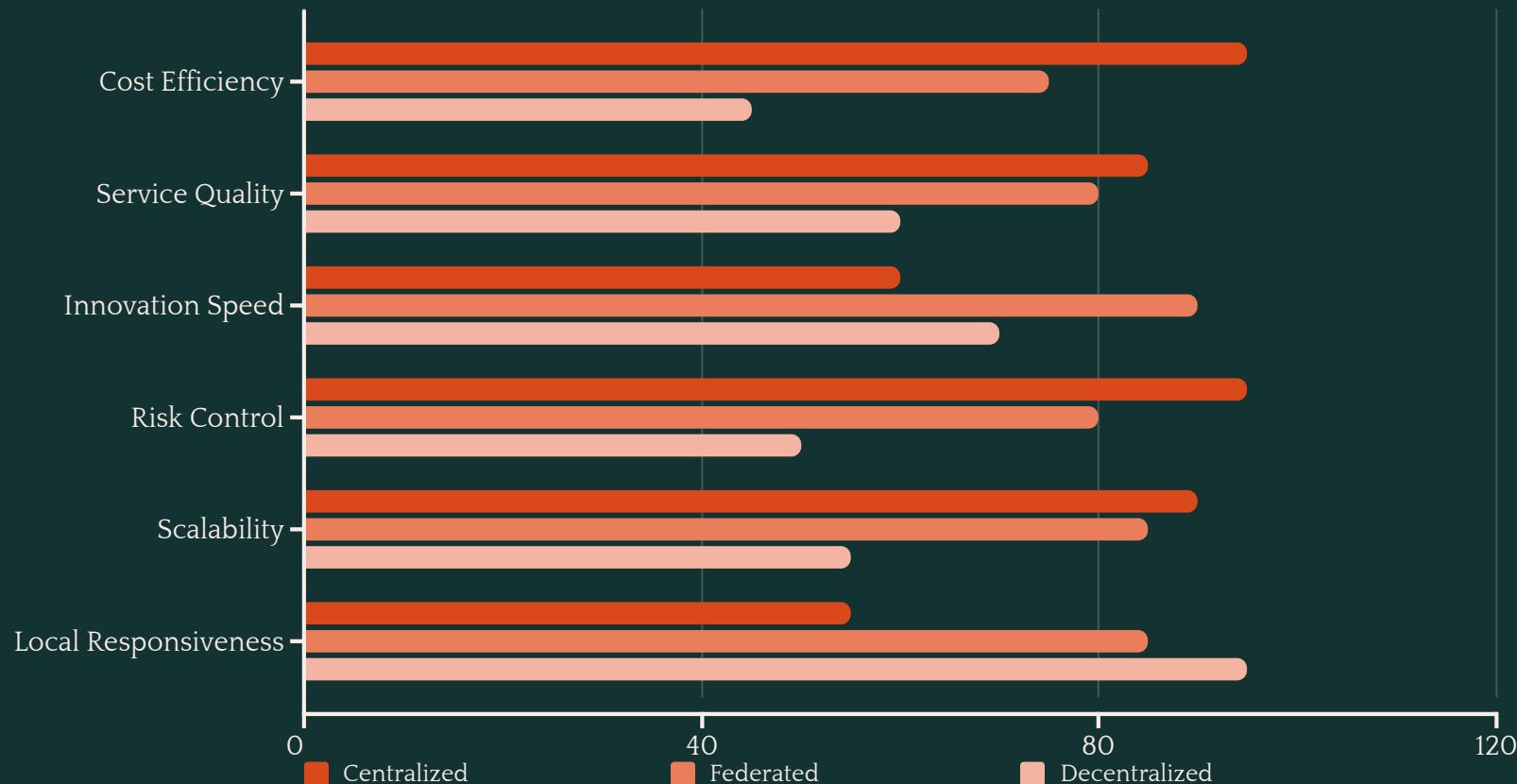
Core infrastructure, security, ERP, and data platforms managed centrally for efficiency.

Innovation Space

Campuses can pilot new solutions; successful ones scale across the group.

Most common model for mid-to-large education groups - balances efficiency with responsiveness.

Decision Framework: Choosing Your Model



Federated model scores consistently high across most criteria, making it the "safe choice" for diverse education groups. Centralized excels in efficiency and control. Decentralized only leads in local responsiveness.

When NOT to Centralize

Vastly Different Business Models

When your portfolio includes research universities, vocational schools, language centers, and K-12 with completely different technology needs - forcing one IT model creates inefficiency.

Multi-Country with Legal Barriers

Different data sovereignty laws, language requirements, and regulatory frameworks across countries make pure centralization impractical.

Weak Central Leadership

Without a capable CIO and strong executive support, attempting centralization will fail. Better to maintain decentralized until leadership is ready.

Extreme Autonomy Culture

When campuses have strong traditions of independence and leaders who will actively resist - forcing centralization creates destructive conflict.

Expected Benefits of IT Transformation



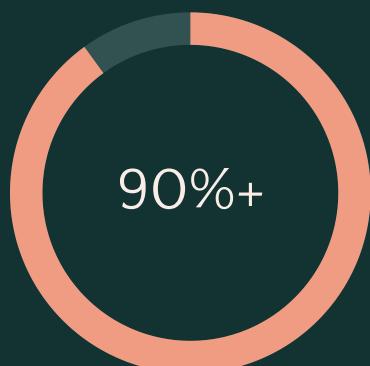
Cost Reduction

Typical IT operating cost savings within 2-3 years through consolidation and volume purchasing



Procurement Savings

Hardware and software price reductions through enterprise agreements



User Satisfaction

Target satisfaction scores with consistent, professional IT service delivery



Shadow IT Reduction

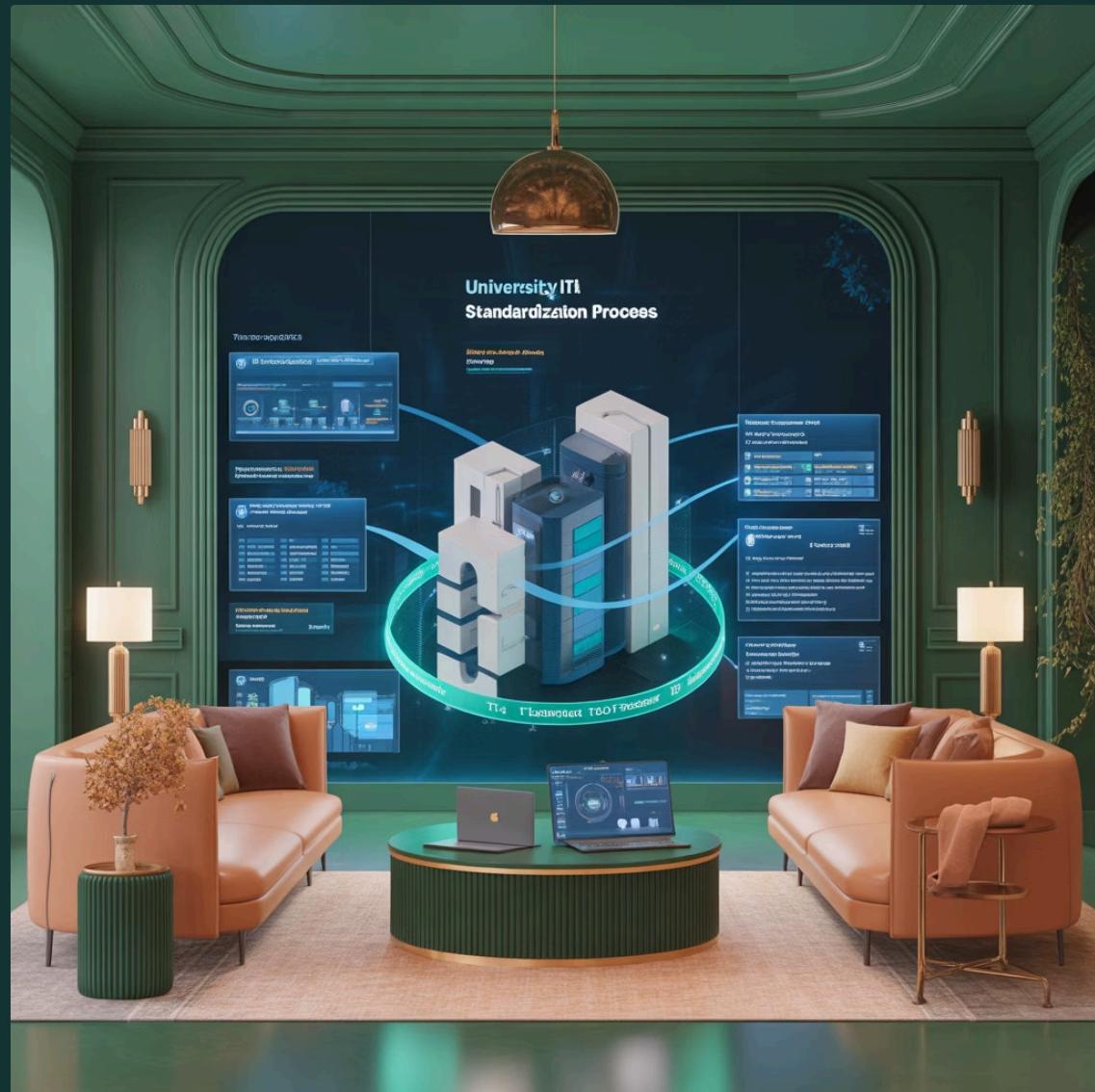
Decrease in unauthorized applications through better service catalog

The PHINMA Transformation Journey

From Chaos to Coordination

PHINMA Education operates 10+ universities across Philippines and Indonesia serving 120,000+ students. Before 2020, each campus independently purchased equipment, creating dozens of incompatible models and maintenance nightmares.

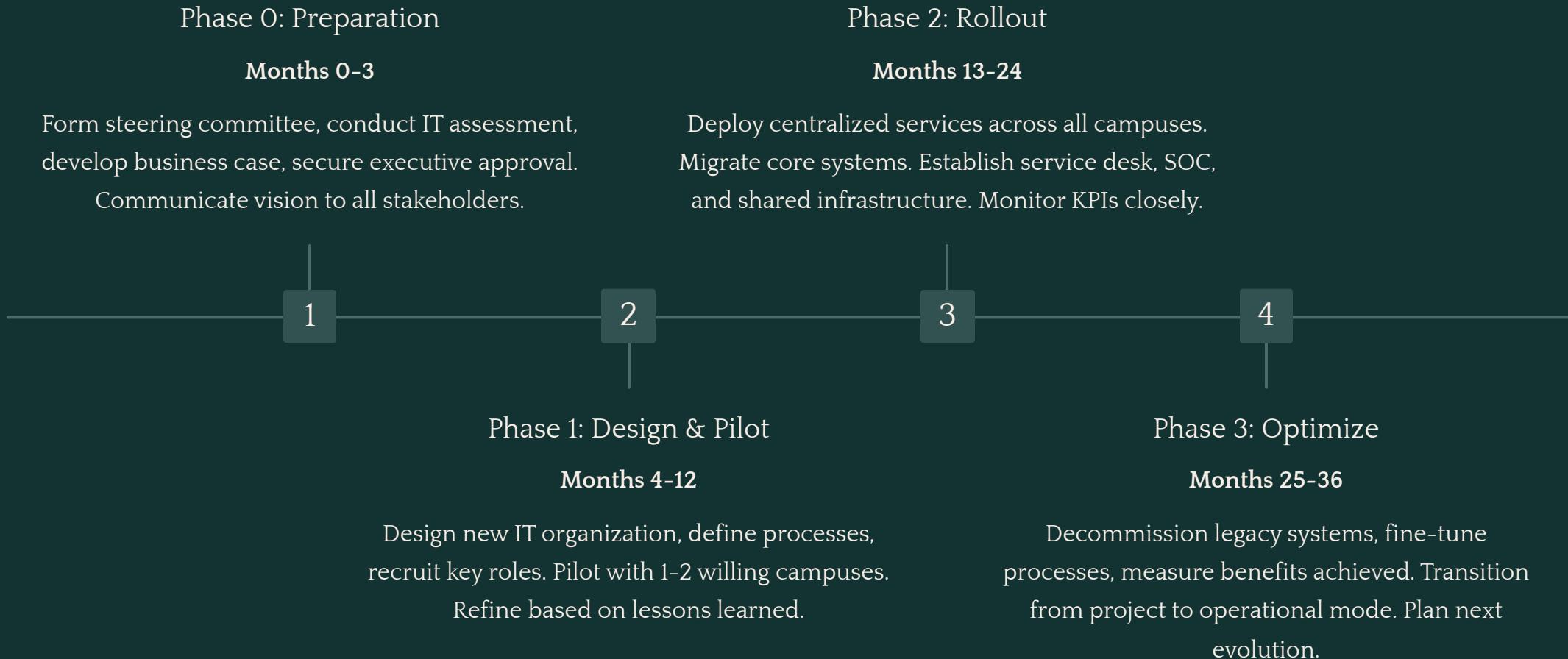
The Shift: Established Central IT Team that standardized device catalog, centralized procurement, and implemented group-wide policies. Campuses now select from approved Lenovo models at the start of each academic year.



Result: Significant cost savings, easier maintenance, and faster deployment of new technology initiatives across the network.

Source: Lenovo case study (2021) and PHINMA CTO interviews (2025)

36-Month Transformation Roadmap



Critical Success Factors



Executive Commitment

CEO and Board must champion the transformation through difficult periods. IT consolidation is "very hard and painful" - requires sustained leadership support.



Change Management

Invest heavily in communication, training, and addressing concerns. Demonstrate quick wins early to build trust and momentum.



Reliable Infrastructure

Ensure strong network connectivity between central and campuses. Poor infrastructure will doom centralized services to failure.



Quality Central Team

Hire capable Group CIO and build skilled team with customer service mindset. They must view campuses as valued clients, not subordinates.



Clear Governance

Document who decides what, establish SLAs, create transparent prioritization process. Avoid ambiguity that breeds conflict.



People Strategy

Create career paths for displaced staff, offer retention bonuses for key people. Avoid mass layoffs that destroy morale and institutional knowledge.

Recommendations by Context

01

Small Groups (2-4 Campuses)

Adopt **centralized model** for maximum efficiency. Scale is too small to justify federated complexity. Single IT team can serve all locations effectively.

02

Medium Groups (5-10 Campuses)

Implement **federated model** as the balanced approach. Centralize infrastructure, security, core systems. Maintain campus IT for daily support and local needs.

03

Large/Diverse Groups (10+ Units)

Consider **hybrid by segment**. Different models for universities vs K-12, or by geography. Coordinate through light Group IT governance layer.

04

High M&A Activity

Start with **federated approach** for acquired institutions. Allow time for cultural integration before pushing full centralization. Standardize gradually.

Key Insight: Federated model emerges as the "safe choice" for most ASEAN education groups - balancing efficiency gains with cultural acceptance and operational flexibility.