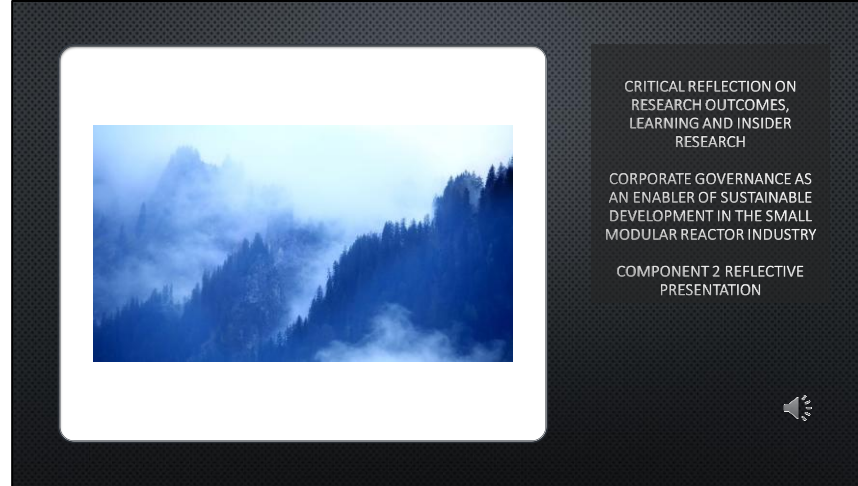




This presentation provides a critical reflection on component one of module 7002, which examined how corporate governance influences sustainable development outcomes within the Small Modular Reactor industry (“SMRs”)

I will focus on my learning throughout the research process. I will reflect on why I chose the topic, the key insights I gained, the strengths and limitations of the research, and the challenges of conducting research within my own professional field.

A key theme throughout the project was exploring governance beyond its organisational role and examining how it contributes to wider societal outcomes, public value and sustainable development

RESEARCH CONTEXT AND PROFESSIONAL RELEVANCE

MODULE REQUIREMENTS

- THE PROJECT REQUIRED:
- SELECTION OF AN INDUSTRY LINKED TO PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE
- ANALYSIS OF TWO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS
- USE OF SECONDARY QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE DATA
- ASSESSMENT OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE INTERACTIONS

MY RESEARCH FOCUS

- SMALL MODULAR REACTOR (SMR) INDUSTRY
- SDG 7: AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY
- SDG 16: PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS
- CORPORATE GOVERNANCE PERSPECTIVE

Critical Reflection

Selecting the SMR industry enabled me to investigate a sector I work within professionally, whilst examining governance through an academic lens rather than solely a practitioner perspective.



I selected the SMR industry because it is directly relevant to my professional role as a governance professional.

The project requirements focused on analysing two Sustainable Development Goals using secondary qualitative and quantitative data. I chose SDG 7 and SDG 16 because both have strong links to governance, infrastructure delivery and institutional effectiveness.

One of the most valuable aspects of the project was the opportunity to examine governance from an academic perspective rather than solely a practitioner perspective. Instead of asking how governance supports organisational performance, I was able to explore how governance contributes to sustainable development and public value.

This shift in perspective became one of the most important aspects of my learning journey.

WHY GOVERNANCE BECAME MY ANALYTICAL LENS AND PROFESSIONAL RELEVANCE

EXISTING PERSPECTIVE

- BEFORE BEGINNING THE RESEARCH, I ALREADY VIEWED GOVERNANCE AS:
- STRATEGIC
- VALUE CREATING
- IMPORTANT FOR ACCOUNTABILITY
- IMPORTANT FOR ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND NEGATIVE INTERACTIONS

RESEARCH OPPORTUNITY

- THE PROJECT ENABLED ME TO EXPLORE:
- GOVERNANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY
- GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL LEGITIMACY
- GOVERNANCE AND PUBLIC VALUE CREATION
- GOVERNANCE WITHIN AN EMERGING TECHNOLOGY SECTOR

Reflection

The research did not change my view that governance is important. Instead, it expanded my understanding of how governance influences outcomes beyond organisational boundaries.



Before beginning the research, I already viewed governance as strategic, value creating and important for organisational effectiveness.

The project did not fundamentally change that view. Instead, it expanded my understanding of governance by connecting it to sustainability, institutional legitimacy and public value creation.

A recurring theme in the literature was that trust in institutions is often more important than technical understanding when shaping public acceptance of nuclear technologies.

This encouraged me to view governance not simply as an internal organisational capability but as something that influences relationships between organisations, stakeholders and wider society.

THE MOST SIGNIFICANT LEARNING

GOVERNANCE AS A MEDIATOR

THE CENTRAL INSIGHT FROM THE STUDY WAS:

TECHNOLOGY ALONE DOES NOT DELIVER SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

RATHER:

TECHNOLOGY + EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE + STRONG INSTITUTIONS

CREATE GREATER POTENTIAL FOR SUSTAINABLE OUTCOMES.

REFLECTION

THE RESEARCH DEMONSTRATED THAT GOVERNANCE ACTS AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN TECHNOLOGICAL CAPABILITY AND SOCIETAL VALUE.



The most significant learning for me was recognising governance as a mediator between technology and sustainable development outcomes.

Much of the discussion surrounding SMRs focuses on engineering capability, safety and economics. However, the evidence suggested that technology alone does not create societal value.

Instead, governance influences whether investment is secured, whether stakeholders trust institutions and whether projects are delivered successfully.

This led me to conclude that sustainable development emerges through the interaction of technology, governance and strong institutions rather than from technological innovation alone.

STRENGTHS OF THE RESEARCH

KEY STRENGTHS

- EXTENSIVE SECONDARY EVIDENCE BASE
- INTERNATIONAL DATA SOURCES
- GOVERNANCE-FOCUSED ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK
- MULTIPLE GOVERNANCE THEORIES
- QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE EVIDENCE

REFLECTION

THEORETICAL TRIANGULATION STRENGTHENED THE ANALYSIS BY ALLOWING GOVERNANCE TO BE EXAMINED FROM MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES RATHER THAN THROUGH A SINGLE EXPLANATORY MODEL.



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One of the main strengths of the study was the breadth of evidence considered. The research drew upon academic literature, government publications, international datasets and regulatory reports.

A further strength was the use of multiple governance theories. Combining Agency Theory, Stakeholder Theory, Legitimacy Theory, Stewardship Theory and Public Value Governance allowed the evidence to be interpreted from different perspectives.

This theoretical triangulation strengthened the analysis and reduced reliance on a single explanation of how governance influences sustainable development outcomes.

LIMITATIONS AND CRITICAL EVALUATION

LIMITATIONS

- RELIANCE ON SECONDARY DATA
- LIMITED COMMERCIAL SMR DEPLOYMENT
- DIFFICULTY ESTABLISHING CAUSAL RELATIONSHIPS
- EVIDENCE CONCENTRATED IN MATURE NUCLEAR ECONOMIES

REFLECTION

THE STUDY WAS ABLE TO IDENTIFY PATTERNS, RELATIONSHIPS AND THEMES, BUT IT COULD NOT DEFINITELY PROVE THAT GOVERNANCE CAUSES SPECIFIC SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES.



The most significant limitation was the reliance on secondary data. This allowed broad analysis but limited the ability to establish direct causal relationships.

Although the evidence consistently suggested a relationship between governance quality and positive outcomes, it could not prove that governance alone was responsible.

A further limitation was the early stage of commercial SMR deployment. Many anticipated benefits remain theoretical because few commercial SMRs currently operate at scale.

These limitations reinforced the importance of maintaining caution when interpreting conclusions.

REFLECTING ON MY POSITION AS AN INSIDER RESEARCHER

INSIDER ADVANTAGES

- INDUSTRY KNOWLEDGE
- FAMILIARITY WITH GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORKS
- UNDERSTANDING OF REGULATORY ENVIRONMENTS
- AWARENESS OF CONTEMPORARY INDUSTRY ISSUES
- ABILITY TO INTERPRET GOVERNANCE LITERATURE CRITICALLY

EXISTING ASSUMPTIONS

- CONFIRMATION BIAS
- OVEREMPHASISING GOVERNANCE INFLUENCES

Reflection

Working within the industry enhanced my understanding of the context, but it also required conscious awareness of how my professional perspective could shape interpretation.



Being an insider researcher presented both opportunities and challenges.

My professional background provided valuable contextual understanding of governance frameworks, regulatory environments and governance terminology.

However, it also created the risk that I might place too much emphasis on governance as an explanatory factor because of my professional experience.

This required continual self-awareness to ensure that conclusions were evidence-led rather than influenced by professional assumptions.

MANAGING BIAS AND PRACTISING REFLEXIVITY

ACTIONS TAKEN

- USED MULTIPLE INDEPENDENT SOURCES
- EXAMINED GOVERNANCE FAILURES AS WELL AS SUCCESSSES
- CONSIDERED ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS
- INCLUDED CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON NUCLEAR ENERGY
- CONTINUOUSLY QUESTIONED ASSUMPTIONS

REFLECTION

- THE RESEARCH PROCESS REINFORCED THE IMPORTANCE OF DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE AND ACADEMIC EVIDENCE.



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Managing bias became an important part of the research process.

To support objectivity, I used multiple independent sources, considered governance failures as well as successes, and included alternative viewpoints regarding nuclear energy and SMR deployment.

The Fukushima case study was particularly useful because it demonstrated how governance failures can undermine public trust and institutional legitimacy.

The project reinforced the importance of distinguishing between professional experience and academic evidence, particularly when researching a topic closely connected to my own career.

THE GOVERNANCE PARADOX
MOST INTERESTING FINDING

STRONG GOVERNANCE CAN:

- IMPROVE ACCOUNTABILITY
- BUILD TRUST
- STRENGTHEN LEGITIMACY
- SUPPORT RISK MANAGEMENT

BUT CAN ALSO:

- INCREASE COMPLEXITY
- EXTEND TIMESCALES
- INCREASE COSTS
- REDUCE ORGANISATIONAL AGILITY

REFLECTION
THE PROJECT CHALLENGED ANY ASSUMPTION THAT STRONGER GOVERNANCE AUTOMATICALLY LEADS TO BETTER OUTCOMES.



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The governance paradox was the most intellectually interesting finding from the study.

The evidence showed that strong governance improves accountability, transparency, legitimacy and risk management. However, it can also increase complexity, cost and delivery timescales.

This challenged any assumption that more governance automatically leads to better outcomes.

Instead, governance effectiveness appears to depend on balancing competing priorities such as innovation and regulation, assurance and delivery, and commercial performance and public value.

This idea became one of the most important insights from the assignment.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

IMPACT ON MY PROFESSIONAL THINKING

- THE PROJECT STRENGTHENED MY UNDERSTANDING OF:
- PUBLIC VALUE GOVERNANCE
- LONG-TERM STEWARDSHIP
- INSTITUTIONAL TRUST
- STAKEHOLDER LEGITIMACY
- SUSTAINABLE VALUE CREATION

MOST SIGNIFICANT PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

GOVERNANCE EFFECTIVENESS SHOULD BE JUDGED NOT ONLY BY ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE, BUT ALSO BY ITS CONTRIBUTION TO BROADER SOCIETAL OUTCOMES

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The project strengthened my understanding of Public Value Governance, long-term stewardship, stakeholder legitimacy and institutional trust. Most significantly, it broadened my understanding of governance beyond organisational performance.

The research highlighted that governance effectiveness should also be evaluated according to its ability to create public value and contribute to wider societal outcomes.

This has influenced how I think about governance both academically and professionally.

FINAL REFLECTION

KEY CONCLUSIONS FROM MY LEARNING JOURNEY

- GOVERNANCE INFLUENCES SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT BUT DOES NOT DETERMINE IT ALONE.
- GOVERNANCE OPERATES ALONGSIDE TECHNOLOGY, POLICY, FINANCE AND SOCIETAL FACTORS.
- EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE REQUIRES BALANCE RATHER THAN MAXIMUM CONTROL.
- INSIDER RESEARCH PROVIDES VALUABLE INSIGHT BUT REQUIRES CONTINUOUS REFLEXIVITY.

CLOSING REFLECTION

THE MOST IMPORTANT LESSON FROM THIS PROJECT WAS NOT THAT GOVERNANCE MATTERS BUT DEVELOPING A MORE NUANCED UNDERSTANDING OF HOW GOVERNANCE CONTRIBUTES TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, WHERE ITS INFLUENCE IS STRONGEST, AND WHERE ITS LIMITATIONS BEGIN.



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Reflecting on the overall research journey, the most important lesson was developing a more nuanced understanding of governance.

The study demonstrated that governance influences sustainable development but does not determine it alone. It operates alongside technology, policy, finance and wider societal factors.

The research also highlighted the importance of balance. Effective governance is not about maximising control but about achieving an appropriate balance between accountability, legitimacy, innovation and delivery.

Finally, the experience reinforced the value of reflexivity when conducting insider research.

Ultimately, my biggest learning was not simply that governance matters, but understanding where its influence is strongest, where its limitations begin and how it contributes to sustainable development outcomes.