

5-21-2014

# Shared Governance: A Comparison of Perceptions and Implementation between American and Chinese Higher Education Institutions

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## Citation Information

Zhang, Dianyu; Lampley, James; and Good, Donald W.. 2014. Shared Governance: A Comparison of Perceptions and Implementation between American and Chinese Higher Education Institutions. Oral presentation. *International Conference on Learning and Administration in Higher Education*, Nashville, TN. 323-336. <http://iclahe.org/Proceedings/2014/2014-Proceedings.pdf>

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# Shared Governance: A Comparison of Perceptions and Implementation between American and Chinese Higher Education Institutions

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**Shared Governance:  
A Comparison of Perceptions and Implementation between  
American and Chinese Higher-Education Institutions**

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**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to assess the status of institutional stakeholders' perceptions and application of shared governance on an American higher education campus and a counterpart in China and determine if there were differences among the groups of stakeholders both within and between the institutions. Significant differences were found among the four categories of participants at the Chinese institution. For the General Acceptance dimension of the Perceptions of Shared Governance Inventory (PSGI) the Chinese staff members reported significantly higher scores than all the other three categories. For the Implementation dimension, staff members and the students scored significantly higher than the administrators and the faculty members. For the two dimensions of the Application of Shared Governance Inventory (ASGI), administrators reported significantly higher scores than the other categories. At the participating American university, a significant difference was found between the students and the administrators in the General Acceptance dimension. Comparisons between the American institution and the Chinese institution found that the Chinese faculty members scored significantly higher than Americans in the General Acceptance dimension, but the American faculty members scored significantly higher in both the General Acceptance and the Implementation dimensions. Chinese staff members and the Chinese students scored significantly higher than Americans in both the General Acceptance and the Implementation dimensions, but the American staff members and the American students scored significantly higher in both the General Acceptance and the Implementation dimensions. Also, years of service plays a significant role in two Chinese groups.

## INTRODUCTION

In a changing climate, both American and Chinese universities are facing numerous trends and challenges. American Higher education is confronted with a decline of public funding, a public view transition from higher education benefiting society to benefiting the individual, pressure for more accountability in institutional governance, administrators pressured to increase retention to demonstrate outcomes-driven accountability, and increasing demand from nontraditional students and for distance learning (Burgan, 2004). Other challenges include sharing authority between faculty senates, labor unions and administrators seeking to include more stakeholders in governance processes, and inadequate time for effective faculty involvement in shared governance (Aronowitz, 2006). Chinese institutions of higher education are faced with a policy of deepening reform and opening, dealing with the relationship between knowledge generation and its application, applying electronic means and multimedia in instruction, participating in globalization, alleviating administrerization, and sharing responsibility with all internal stakeholders (Liu & Jin, 2011).

Colleges and universities in China and the U.S. are involved in common challenges. Administrators at institutions of higher education are deeply concerned about whether to offer larger classes, to offer traditional courses at workday hours or online or on nights and weekends. College administrators are also making decisions about whether to encourage faculty to focus on teaching or on research, to enroll well qualified students or offer disadvantaged students opportunities by running remedial courses, or to provide a traditional education of liberal arts and sciences or prepare students for career.

The purpose of this study was to assess American and Chinese administrators, faculty, staff, and students' acceptance and perceptions of shared governance, the level and implementation of shared governance at the two participating universities, and to compare Chinese administrators, faculty, staff, and students' acceptance and perceptions of shared governance and level and implementation of shared governance with those of their American counterparts. This study will identify similarities and differences in opinions and attitudes toward shared governance between stakeholders at the participating American and Chinese universities. The results of the survey will also identify the status of shared governance at the participating universities.

In order to accomplish the purpose of this study, the following research questions provided the focus for examination of data.

1. Are there significant differences in the mean scores on the two dimensions of the *Perceptions of Shared Governance Inventory* (General Acceptance and Implementation) between American university administrators and Chinese university administrators at the participating universities?
2. Are there significant differences in the mean scores on the two dimensions of the *Application of Shared Governance Inventory* (General Acceptance and Implementation) between American university administrators and Chinese university administrators at the participating universities?
3. Are there significant differences in the mean scores on the two dimensions of the *Perceptions of Shared Governance Inventory* (General Acceptance and Implementation) between American university faculty members and Chinese university faculty members

- at the participating universities?
4. Are there significant differences in the mean scores on the two dimensions of the *Application of Shared Governance Inventory* (General Acceptance and Implementation) between American university faculty members and Chinese university faculty members at the participating universities?
  5. Are there significant differences in the mean scores on the two dimensions of the *Perceptions of Shared Governance Inventory* (General Acceptance and Implementation) between American university staff members and Chinese university staff members at the participating universities?
  6. Are there significant differences in the mean scores on the two dimensions of the *Application of Shared Governance Inventory* (General Acceptance and Implementation) between American university staff members and Chinese university staff members at the participating universities?
  7. Are there significant differences in the mean scores on the two dimensions of the *Perceptions of Shared Governance Inventory* (General Acceptance and Implementation) between American university students and Chinese university students at the participating universities?
  8. Are there significant differences in the mean scores on the two dimensions of the *Application of Shared Governance Inventory* (General Acceptance and Implementation) between American university students and Chinese university students at the participating universities?

### RELATED LITERATURE

A detailed review of the history of American higher education and that of Chinese higher education revealed that China has a longer history of higher education. China has had institutions of higher education since 124 B.C. (Sun, 2010). While the first U.S. college was established in 1636, China's experience and level of development remains low as a result of slow social development, scarce resources and a lack of developmental consistency in higher education. In terms of institutional governance, Chinese institutions of higher education practice the president accountability system under the leadership of the Communist Party of China (Higher Education Law of the People's Republic of China, 1998, Clause 39). Both the Party Secretary and the President report to the government. Democratic procedures are confined to the Board of Regents, the Academic Council, the Faculty and Staff Congress, and the President Open Day, a policy concerning meeting students. The organization of the institution is an identical copy of government agencies which, according to Liu and Jin (2011), leads to bureaucracy, administerization, low efficiency, tension, and lack of professionalism. Although, no study was found that addressed stakeholders' satisfaction with administrators' governance of the institution a negative perception prevails. Since 2006, numerous calls have been made for innovations in Chinese institutional governance, among which the most powerful voice is eliminating administerization and applying shared governance.

Since the establishment of Harvard College in 1636, American higher education has experienced a long and consistent journey of development. American higher education has passed through four phases: colonial and early American colleges (1636–1800), growth and change (1800–1900), expansion of higher education (1900–1960), and access and choice (1960–the 21<sup>st</sup> Century) (McCarthy, 2011). With regard to institutional governance, institutions started with the

combination of lay boards of trustees, strong presidents, a weak professoriate, and the absence of a central authority for higher education (Cohen, 1998). For the last 75 years the basic structure of governance has remained the same. Many American universities practice shared governance as their overriding principle that guides decision-making (Kezar, Lester, & Anderson, 2006). In spite of the contributions made by shared governance, Diamond's 1991 national survey found that 70% of campus faculty, administrators, and staff believed that decision-making processes were working ineffectively. Another national survey of 40,000 faculty members at 421 institutions found that only 52% full-time faculty at four-year public institutions believed that the relationship between faculty and administration was satisfactory or very satisfactory (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2006). Drummond and Reitsch (1995) stated both university administrators and faculty members have similar opinions regarding the desirability of shared governance. Waugh (2003) pointed out the tendency for college and university presidents to focus more on the management of their institutions and less on the processes of shared governance in decision making because of the pressures for efficiency and the achievement of performance goals.

The most commonly referenced definition of shared governance, found in the Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure published by the AAUP, defined shared governance as a shared responsibility among faculty, administrators, trustees, and where appropriate, students (AAUP Joint Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities, 1966). According to Mortimer and Sathre (2007), the role of shared governance is to formulate and implement meaningful ways to engage large numbers of people in the decision making process. Faculty, administrators, and boards are the three groups of stakeholders that usually have the major responsibility for sharing and making shared governance work. As institutions become larger and more complex, other groups of stakeholders such as students, support staff, and adjunct faculty want their voices heard in the governance process (Leach, 2008). Shared governance requires mutual respect and effective communication (Oliver & Hyun, 2011).

In the process of its evolution and implementation, shared governance was sometimes charged with irrelevancy and inefficiency (Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Colleges, 1996). Facing the doubt of the relevancy of shared governance, Leach (2008) stated that as a result of the trends, challenges, and tensions, the need for effective shared governance has never been greater than it is in today's rapidly changing environment. To make shared governance effective attention has to be drawn to institutional diversity that exists from one institution to the next making it impossible to prescribe a one-fits-all solution for shared governance (Minor, 2003). Different groups of stakeholders can be assigned responsibility for respective areas; but, as illustrated by Birnbaum's 1988 Collegiate Model, shared governance is a process characterized by fluidity because there are both singular and shared areas of responsibility for both the administrative and technical elements of the institution. Morphew (1999) viewed shared governance not as a static condition but fluid over time, which will respond to environmental changes or change in the tasks of the institution, or a combination of both. Considering the diversity and the new situations that may arise institutional stakeholders should anticipate experimentation and innovation in campus shared governance (Keller 2004).

## METHODOLOGY

2014-Joint Meeting of the  
International Conference on Learning and Administration in Higher Education  
and the  
International Conference of the Academic Business World

The participants in the study were university administrators, faculty members, staff members, and students from a four-year American public university and a four-year Chinese public university. Data were collected on two dimensions (general acceptance and implementation) of shared governance with consideration to gender, age, number of years of service for administrators, faculty, and staff, as well as gender and age for students. This non-experimental research design used an electronic survey on the American campus and on-ground survey on the Chinese campus with Likert-type questions.

### **Instrumentation**

The researcher-developed survey of shared governance was used to collect data for this study. To make sure that the items in the survey instrument reflect necessary conditions for sound shared governance Ramo's (1998) *Assessing the Faculty's Role in Shared Governance: Implications of AAUP Standards and AAUP Indicators of Sound Governance* and Kaplan's (2001) survey for universities to assess governance on their campuses sponsored by the AAUP and the ACAD were consulted and referenced. The AAUP's Committee on College and University Government approved Ramo's instrument as a tool for assessing the extent to which implementation of shared governance at an institution comports with national standards for shared governance in higher education. Each of the items on the questionnaire, though not intended to be exhaustive, is considered reflecting necessary conditions for sound shared governance.

The survey for this study was designed to empirically measure American and Chinese institutional stakeholders' perceptions of shared governance and the application of shared governance, and determine if there were differences among the groups of stakeholders both at the same institution and between the institutions. The instrument was a 2-inventory (Perceptions of Shared Governance Inventory and Application of Shared Governance Inventory) questionnaire. The Perceptions of Shared Governance Inventory included 20 statements relative to shared governance in general, and the Application of Shared Governance Inventory was composed of 20 statements relevant to shared governance specific to the respondent's institution. Each inventory had 20 statements in two dimensions: general acceptance and implementation. The instrument consisted of 40 items using a Likert-type format. The survey instrument also included questions related to demographics of the respondents. The survey was delivered separately to administrators, faculty, and staff, and students because of such different features in demographics as age, category, years of service, level of education, and grade level. The demographics in the Shared Governance Survey for Administrators, Faculty, and Staff were gender, age, years of service, and level of education. The demographics in the Shared Governance Survey for Students were gender, age, and class status.

The 40 items were designed using a scale from 1 to 6, Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. Each of these 40 items was related to and classified into one of the two dimensions (general acceptance and implementation). The total score for each of these categories was derived by adding the assigned numeric values for each response from a survey.

### **Population and Sample**

The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (2010) was used as a guide to select the four-year American public university as a sample that matched the Chinese sample in institutional size, classification, and mission. Their proximity and comparability were further

enhanced by the partnership relationship between the two samples. The population of this study included all potential administrators, faculty members, staff members, and students with the online survey on the American campus. Fifty administrators, 170 faculty members, 145 staff members and 558 students were randomly selected with the on-ground survey on the Chinese campus.

### Data Collection

Prior to beginning of the research, permission to conduct research was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the researcher's home institution in America. Permission to perform this study on the American campus was obtained from the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at the participating university. SurveyMonkey, an online survey instrument, generated electronic hyper-links to the two surveys (one for students and the other for administrators, faculty, and staff). Potential participants received the survey through the university's listserv. Permission to perform this study on the Chinese campus was obtained from the School of Graduate Studies at the Chinese university. The surveys were distributed with permission to participants at administrator, faculty, or staff meetings, and students' classes. All responses were confidential and the demographic information collected did not identify the participants in the study at either participating university.

## RESULTS

At the participating American university administrators, faculty and staff members were distributed in all the age groups and years of service in higher education. At the participating Chinese university, however, the 61-or-more age group was missing because of mandatory retirement at the age of sixty. At the participating American university, among those students who provided demographic information, 276 female students accounted for 64% and 153 male students 36% of the participants. The students fell into all the four age groups. The 18-24 age group consisted of 177 students or 41% of the American students who provided age information, the 25-32 age group 20%, the 33-50 age group 28%, and the 51-or-more age group 11%. At the participating Chinese university, however, the 253 female or 46% and 297 male students or 54% stayed within the 18-24 and 25-32 age groups because almost all university students are traditional young learners between the age of 18 and 30. The 18-24 age group consisted of 217 students or 40% of the Chinese student respondents and the 25-32 age group 333 students or 60%. See Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1  
*Administrator, Faculty and Staff Respondents' Demographic Information by Institution*

Category	American Institution			Chinese Institution		
	Administrator	Faculty	Staff	Administrator	Faculty	Staff
Total Responses with Complete Information	48	164	136	50	165	140



Female/Male Responses	32/16	74/90	102/34	20/30	102/63	82/58
Age Group/Number (1=20-30, 2=31-40, 3=41-50, 4=51-60, 5=61 or more)	1/1	1/7	1/24	1/1	1/19	1/8
	2/8	2/25	2/26	2/8	2/36	2/63
	3/11	3/31	3/25	3/31	3/81	3/64
	4/13	4/57	4/46	4/10	4/29	4/5
	5/15	5/44	5/15			
Years of Service in Higher Education	1/12	1/51	1/75	1/1	1/19	1/45
	2/14	2/52	2/34	2/39	2/73	2/75
Group/Number (1=0-10, 2=11-20, 3=21-30, 4=31 or more)	3/10	3/31	3/17	3/9	3/54	3/19
	4/12	4/30	4/10	4/1	4/19	4/1

Table 2  
*Student Respondents' Demographic Information by Institution*

Institution	Total Responses with Complete Information	Female/Male Responses	Age Group			
			18-24	25-32	33-50	51 or More
American Institution	429	276/153	177	86	118	48
Chinese Institution	550	253/297	217	333		

### Research Question 1

An independent-samples t test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean scores for the General Acceptance dimension of the *Perceptions of Shared Governance Inventory* between American university administrators and Chinese university administrators at the participating universities differ. The grouping variable was American university administrators and Chinese university administrators. Their scores for the General Acceptance dimension of the *Perceptions of Shared Governance Inventory* were the test variable. The test was not significant,  $t(95) = 1.66$ ,  $p = .100$ . The  $\eta^2$  index was .03, indicating an effect size between small and medium. Therefore, the American administrators ( $M = 45.36$ ,  $SD = 5.78$ ) tended to report similar levels of general acceptance in their perceptions of shared governance as the Chinese administrators ( $M = 47.36$ ,  $SD = 6.07$ ). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was (-4.39 to .39).

An independent-samples t test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean scores for the Implementation dimension of the *Perceptions of Shared Governance Inventory* between American university administrators and Chinese university administrators at the participating universities differ. The grouping variable was American university administrators and Chinese university administrators. Their scores for the Implementation dimension of the *Perceptions of Shared Governance Inventory* were the test variable. The test was not significant,  $t(95) = .37$ ,  $p = .712$ . The  $\eta^2$  index was .001, indicating a small effect size. Therefore, the American administrators ( $M = 43.40$ ,  $SD = 5.27$ ) tended to report similar levels of implementation in their perceptions of shared governance as the Chinese administrators ( $M = 43.84$ ,  $SD = 6.23$ ). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was (-2.77 to 1.90).

### Research Question 2

An independent-samples t test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean scores for the General Acceptance dimension of the *Application of Shared Governance Inventory* between American university administrators and Chinese university administrators at the participating universities differ. The grouping variable was American university administrators and Chinese university administrators. Their scores for the General Acceptance dimension of the *Application of Shared Governance Inventory* were the test variable. The test was not significant,  $t(95) = 1.70$ ,  $p = .092$ . The  $\eta^2$  index was .03, indicating an effect size between small and medium. Therefore, the American administrators ( $M = 39.04$ ,  $SD = 7.74$ ) tended to report similar levels of general acceptance in the application of shared governance as the Chinese administrators ( $M = 36.68$ ,  $SD = 5.85$ ). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was (-.39 to 5.12).

An independent-samples t test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean scores for the Implementation dimension of the *Application of Shared Governance Inventory* between American university administrators and Chinese university administrators at the participating universities differ. The grouping variable was American university administrators and Chinese university administrators. Their scores for the Implementation dimension of the *Application of Shared Governance Inventory* were the test variable. The test was not significant,  $t(94) = .19$ ,  $p = .851$ . The  $\eta^2$  index was less than .001, indicating a small effect size. Therefore, the American administrators ( $M = 37.24$ ,  $SD = 7.43$ ) tended to report similar levels of implementation in the application of shared governance as the Chinese administrators ( $M = 37.50$ ,  $SD = 6.09$ ). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was (-3.00 to 2.48).

### Research Question 3

An independent-samples t test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean scores for the General Acceptance dimension of the *Perceptions of Shared Governance Inventory* between American university faculty members and Chinese university faculty members at the participating universities differ. The grouping variable was American university faculty members and Chinese university faculty members. Their scores for the General Acceptance dimension of the *Perceptions of Shared Governance Inventory* were the test variable. The test was significant,  $t(328) = 2.64, p = .009$ . The  $\eta^2$  index was .02, which indicated a small effect size. The American faculty members ( $M = 46.64, SD = 4.85$ ) tended to report lower levels of general acceptance in their perceptions of shared governance than the Chinese faculty members ( $M = 47.76, SD = 2.58$ ). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was (-1.97 to -.29).

An independent-samples t test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean scores for the Implementation dimension of the *Perceptions of Shared Governance Inventory* between American university faculty members and Chinese university faculty members at the participating universities differ. The grouping variable was American university faculty members and Chinese university faculty members. Their scores for the Implementation dimension of the *Perceptions of Shared Governance Inventory* were the test variable. The test was not significant,  $t(327) = 1.75, p = .081$ . The  $\eta^2$  index was .01, which indicated a small effect size. The American university faculty members ( $M = 44.79, SD = 4.65$ ) tended to report similar levels of implementation in their perceptions of shared governance as the Chinese faculty members ( $M = 45.65, SD = 4.27$ ). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was (-1.83 to .11).

### Research Question 4

An independent-samples t test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean scores for the General Acceptance dimension of the *Application of Shared Governance Inventory* between American university faculty members and Chinese university faculty members at the participating universities differ. The grouping variable was American university faculty members and Chinese university faculty members. Their scores for the General Acceptance dimension of the *Application of Shared Governance Inventory* were the test variable. The test was significant,  $t(305) = 11.21, p < .001$ . The  $\eta^2$  index was .29, which indicated a very large effect size. The American faculty members ( $M = 36.93, SD = 7.99$ ) tended to report significantly higher levels of general acceptance in the application of shared governance than the Chinese faculty members ( $M = 27.72, SD = 6.41$ ). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was (7.60 to 10.83).

An independent-samples t test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean scores for the Implementation dimension of the *Application of Shared Governance Inventory* between American university faculty members and Chinese university faculty members at the participating universities differ. The grouping variable was American university faculty members and Chinese university faculty members. Their scores for the Implementation dimension of the *Application of Shared Governance Inventory* were the test variable. The test was significant,  $t(305) = 3.17, p = .002$ .  $\eta^2$  index was .03, which indicated an effect size between small and medium. The American faculty members ( $M = 35.94, SD = 6.73$ ) tended to report

significantly higher levels of implementation in the application of shared governance than the Chinese faculty members ( $M = 33.92$ ,  $SD = 4.29$ ). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was (.77 to 3.27).

### Research Question 5

An independent-samples t test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean scores for the General Acceptance dimension of the *Perceptions of Shared Governance Inventory* between American university staff members and Chinese university staff members at the participating universities differ. The grouping variable was American university staff members and Chinese university staff members. Their scores for the General Acceptance dimension of the *Perceptions of Shared Governance Inventory* were the test variable. The test was significant,  $t(276) = 5.35$ ,  $p < .001$ . The  $\eta^2$  index was .09, which indicated an effect size between medium and large. The American staff members ( $M = 46.22$ ,  $SD = 6.50$ ) tended to report significantly lower levels of general acceptance in the perceptions of shared governance than the Chinese staff members ( $M = 49.49$ ,  $SD = 3.14$ ). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was (-4.47 to -2.07).

An independent-samples t test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean scores for the Implementation dimension of the *Perceptions of Shared Governance Inventory* between American university staff members and Chinese university staff members at the participating universities differ. The grouping variable was American university staff members and Chinese university staff members. Their scores for the Implementation dimension of the *Perceptions of Shared Governance Inventory* were the test variable. The test was significant,  $t(275) = 4.79$ ,  $p < .001$ . The  $\eta^2$  index was .08, which indicated an effect size between medium and large. The American staff members ( $M = 43.95$ ,  $SD = 6.62$ ) tended to report significantly lower levels of implementation in the perceptions of shared governance than the Chinese staff members ( $M = 47.07$ ,  $SD = 3.91$ ). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was (-4.41 to -1.84).

### Research Question 6

An independent-samples t test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean scores for the General Acceptance dimension of the *Application of Shared Governance Inventory* between American university staff members and Chinese university staff members at the participating universities differ. The grouping variable was American university staff members and Chinese university staff members. Their scores for the General Acceptance dimension of the *Application of Shared Governance Inventory* were the test variable. The test was significant,  $t(250) = 8.21$ ,  $p < .001$ . The  $\eta^2$  index was .21, which indicated a large effect size. The American staff members ( $M = 35.84$ ,  $SD = 9.63$ ) tended to report significantly higher levels of general acceptance in the application of shared governance than the Chinese staff members ( $M = 27.74$ ,  $SD = 5.93$ ). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was (6.16 to 10.05).

An independent-samples t test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean scores for the Implementation dimension of the *Application of Shared Governance Inventory* between American university staff members and Chinese university staff members at the participating universities differ. The grouping variable was American university staff

members and Chinese university staff members. Their scores for the Implementation dimension of the *Application of Shared Governance Inventory* were the test variable. The test was significant,  $t(249) = 5.83, p < .001$ . The  $\eta^2$  index was .12, which indicated an effect size between medium and large. The American staff members ( $M = 35.70, SD = 7.69$ ) tended to report significantly higher levels of implementation in the application of shared governance than the Chinese staff members ( $M = 31.33, SD = 3.95$ ). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was (2.90 to 5.85).

### Research Question 7

An independent-samples t test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean scores for the General Acceptance dimension of the *Perceptions of Shared Governance Inventory* between American university students and Chinese university students at the participating universities differ. The grouping variable was American university students and Chinese university students. Their scores for the General Acceptance dimension of the *Perceptions of Shared Governance Inventory* were the test variable. The test was significant,  $t(1093) = 2.81, p = .005$ . The  $\eta^2$  index was .01, which indicated a small effect size. The American university students ( $M = 47.28, SD = 5.21$ ) tended to report significantly lower levels of general acceptance in the perceptions of shared governance than the Chinese university students ( $M = 47.96, SD = 2.37$ ). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was (-1.17 to -.21).

An independent-samples t test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean scores for the Implementation dimension of the *Perceptions of Shared Governance Inventory* between American university students and Chinese university students at the participating universities differ. The grouping variable was American university students and Chinese university students. Their scores for the Implementation dimension of the *Perceptions of Shared Governance Inventory* were the test variable. The test was significant,  $t(1092) = 6.45, p < .001$ . The  $\eta^2$  index was .04, which indicated an effect size between small and medium. The American university students ( $M = 44.95, SD = 5.36$ ) tended to report significantly lower levels of implementation in the perceptions of shared governance than the Chinese university students ( $M = 46.57, SD = 2.47$ ). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was (-2.12 to -1.13).

### Research Question 8

An independent-samples t test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean scores for the General Acceptance dimension of the *Application of Shared Governance Inventory* between American university students and Chinese university students at the participating universities differ. The grouping variable was American university students and Chinese university students. Their scores for the General Acceptance dimension of the *Application of Shared Governance Inventory* were the test variable. The test was significant,  $t(954) = 10.92, p < .001$ . The  $\eta^2$  index was .11, which indicated an effect size between medium and large. The American university students ( $M = 38.04, SD = 8.91$ ) tended to report significantly higher levels of general acceptance in the application of shared governance than the Chinese university students ( $M = 33.66, SD = 2.59$ ). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was (3.59 to 5.17).

An independent-samples t test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean scores for

the Implementation dimension of the *Application of Shared Governance Inventory* between American university students and Chinese university students at the participating universities differ. The grouping variable was American university students and Chinese university students. Their scores for the Implementation dimension of the *Application of Shared Governance Inventory* were the test variable. The test was significant,  $t(955) = 21.15, p < .001$ . The  $\eta^2$  index was .32, which indicated a very large effect. The American university students ( $M = 37.30, SD = 8.09$ ) tended to report significantly higher levels of implementation in the application of shared governance than the Chinese university students ( $M = 29.45, SD = 2.78$ ). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was (7.12 to 8.58).

## CONCLUSIONS

The image of American higher education institutions as the envy of the world is inseparable from the manner by which the institutions are governed. Shared governance has served American institutions as an overriding principle for more than 80 years; but, instead of becoming obsolete, shared governance is still greatly needed. During the process of reorganizing public higher education in Tennessee the AAUP strongly suggested that all efforts be based on shared governance (Tennessee AAUP Statement on the Reorganization of Public Higher Education in Tennessee, 2009). However, institutional stakeholders must recognize that shared governance is fluid over time and in terms of types of tasks and areas of responsibility. Therefore, experimentation and innovation are always necessary in the application of shared governance.

Administrators, as managers in the organizations of higher education, play a key role in the perceptions and application of shared governance. Administrators must embrace the idea and the practice of shared governance for it to work effectively. Their attitudes and decisions directly determine whether other stakeholders have opportunities to participate in sharing information and making decisions and the extent to which shared governance is implemented.

Stakeholders' concerns over shared governance and willingness to participate also mean much to the implementation of shared governance. Instead of waiting to be asked to participate in the process of shared governance, stakeholders must press for opportunities, both formal and informal. Collective bargaining, a formal and legal measure that is not available in Chinese institutions, may guarantee faculty power and involvement in decision making; but, informal communication between administrators and the other stakeholders may be more beneficial to improving trust and building an institutional culture of shared governance.

A clear idea of the status of shared governance at Chinese institutions is indispensable. Despite the administrators' positive response to the application level of shared governance at their institution, shared governance remains at a very low level in Chinese institutions. Findings of the present research indicate that Chinese stakeholders have a good knowledge and understanding of shared governance; therefore, the focus of education can be shifted from educating all stakeholders about shared governance to persuading administrators to share power with the other stakeholders and motivating faculty, staff, and students to actively participate in the process of shared governance.

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