

SHARED GOVERNANCE AS A CATALYST FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE IN HIGHER INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT: Shared governance has become an essential principle in the administration of higher education institutions, especially as universities face increasing complexity in academic, financial, and technological domains. This article explores the role of shared governance in enhancing academic excellence by examining how inclusive decision-making among faculty, administrators, and other stakeholders contributes to institutional quality. Drawing on theoretical perspectives from participative decision-making and organizational behavior, the article analyzes governance models across diverse higher education systems, including both developed and developing contexts. A qualitative case-article approach is employed, focusing on selected institutions that have successfully implemented shared governance mechanisms. Findings suggest that when faculty, staff, and administrators collaborate effectively, there is a significant improvement in academic planning, research innovation, and institutional morale. However, the implementation of shared governance is not without challenges; tensions between traditional hierarchies and collaborative ideals, resistance to change, and resource constraints often undermine its potential. The article concludes by offering a framework for embedding shared governance in university structures, with recommendations for institutional leaders, policymakers, and accreditation bodies seeking to align governance practices with academic goals. Ultimately, the article underscores that shared governance, when genuinely practiced, can be a driving force for excellence, resilience, and innovation in higher education.

Keywords: Role, Shared Governance, Academic Excellence, Higher Education.

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INTRODUCTION

The 21st-century university operates in a context marked by rapid change, complex stakeholder expectations, and intensifying demands for academic accountability (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009). As institutions of higher learning navigate issues such as globalization, digital transformation, financial austerity, and equity mandates, the question of how they are governed has gained renewed importance (Marginson, 2011; Kezar & Eckel, 2004). In this evolving landscape, shared governance has emerged as a vital mechanism for balancing administrative

authority with academic freedom, fostering collaboration, and enhancing institutional effectiveness (Birnbaum, 2004; Kezar, 2009).

Shared governance refers to the organizational principle that empowers various stakeholders most notably faculty members, administrators, and, in some contexts, students to participate meaningfully in institutional decision-making (Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges [AGB], 2017). Traditionally rooted in the collegial model of university governance, shared governance upholds the notion that those closest to the core academic mission of teaching, research, and service should have a voice in shaping the policies and priorities that govern academic life (Minor, 2003). This principle contrasts with purely top-down managerial models, which may prioritize administrative efficiency but often do so at the expense of transparency, morale, and academic integrity (Ginsberg, 2011).

Despite its normative appeal, shared governance remains a contested and unevenly practiced ideal. In many institutions, particularly in developing economies, governance structures are either overly bureaucratic or highly centralized, marginalizing faculty input and limiting responsiveness to academic needs (Salmi, 2009; Obasi, 2008). Furthermore, as universities face mounting financial pressures, there is a growing tendency to adopt corporate-style governance models that prioritize market competitiveness over participative engagement (Deem, Hillyard, & Reed, 2007). These shifts raise critical questions:

- Does shared governance genuinely contribute to academic excellence?
- If so, how can it be effectively operationalized across diverse institutional contexts?

This article aims to address these questions by exploring the conceptual foundations, practical applications, and measurable outcomes of shared governance in higher education. Drawing on both literature and case studies, it examines how inclusive governance structures influence academic quality, faculty morale, research productivity, and institutional innovation (Kezar & Holcombe, 2017). It also critically analyzes the challenges institutions face in implementing shared governance and proposes strategic recommendations for embedding this principle in a manner that aligns with the goals of academic excellence. Therefore, this article contributes to an urgent conversation on how universities can remain mission-driven, stakeholder-responsive, and academically robust in an era of unprecedented change.

Statement of the Problem

The traditional top-down governance approach of governance often leads to disengagement, lack of transparency, and resistance to change, ultimately undermining academic performance and innovation. Shared governance a model that promotes collaborative decision-making among faculty, administrators, and sometimes students and staff is widely recognized as a means of fostering institutional effectiveness and academic excellence.

Despite the increasing complexity of higher education systems and the growing demand for accountability, many institutions continue to operate under centralized administrative structures that limit the participation of faculty and other stakeholders in decision-making processes. However, in practice, its implementation remains inconsistent and poorly defined across institutions, especially in developing countries. There is a lack of empirical evidence linking shared governance practices to measurable improvements in teaching quality, research productivity, and student learning outcomes. This gap raises important questions about the actual

impact of shared governance on academic excellence and the conditions under which it can be effectively implemented in diverse higher education contexts.

In Nigeria, the higher education system is facing increasing challenges related to declining academic standards, inadequate funding, brain drain, and institutional instability. A significant contributing factor to these problems is the limited involvement of key academic stakeholders particularly faculty members in institutional decision-making processes. Many Nigerian universities operate under highly centralized and hierarchical administrative systems that marginalize academic staff from governance structures, leading to dissatisfaction, low morale, industrial disputes, and reduced commitment to institutional goals. While the principle of shared governance where administrators, faculty, and sometimes students collaboratively shape academic policies and strategic decisions has been widely promoted as a means to enhance academic excellence, its application in Nigerian universities remains weak and fragmented. There is little empirical research examining how shared governance, when effectively practiced, can improve teaching quality, research productivity, and student outcomes in the Nigerian context. Without clear evidence and strategic models tailored to the unique challenges of Nigerian higher education, the potential of shared governance to foster academic excellence remains largely untapped.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptualizing Shared Governance in Higher Education

In higher education Shared governance is a decision-making framework that emphasizes collaborative leadership and participatory structures involving faculty, administrators, staff, and sometimes students. According to Kezar and Eckel (2004), shared governance promotes inclusivity, transparency, and accountability in institutional decisions, particularly concerning academic programs, budgeting, and strategic planning. The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) defines shared governance as a system where academic staff and administration work together to achieve institutional goals while respecting each other's areas of authority.

Shared Governance and Academic Excellence

Numerous studies have linked shared governance to improved academic outcomes. Birnbaum (1988) argued that shared governance enhances institutional adaptability and innovation, especially in curriculum development and quality assurance. When academic staff are involved in governance, they are more likely to uphold academic standards, ensure relevance in curriculum content, and engage more fully in research and mentorship. Moreover, collaborative governance is positively associated with job satisfaction and reduced faculty turnover (Minor, 2003).

Challenges in the Implementation of Shared Governance

Despite its theoretical application, shared governance faces several practical challenges. These include power struggles between faculty and administrators, lack of clarity in governance structures, and time constraints that hinder faculty participation. O'Meara (2005) noted that

institutional culture and leadership style greatly affect the implementation of shared governance. In environments where authoritarian leadership dominates, such as many universities in developing nations, shared governance is often symbolic rather than functional.

Shared Governance in the Nigerian Higher Education Context

The practice of shared governance remains largely underdeveloped in Nigeria. Many public and private universities operate within bureaucratic frameworks heavily influenced by federal or state government policies. Academic unions, such as the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), have consistently criticized university management for sidelining faculty in strategic decision-making. Ololube (2024) pointed to an urgent need for governance reforms that promote collaboration, transparency, and academic autonomy. However, there is limited empirical research examining how shared governance models could be adapted to the socio-political realities of Nigerian universities to foster academic excellence.

CRITICAL FACTORS FOR A SHARED GOVERNANCE MODEL

A shared governance model in higher education involves the participation of various stakeholders, including faculty, staff, students, and administrators, in the decision-making process. Listed here are key factors that contribute to the successful implementation of a shared governance model in colleges and universities (Kezar, 2004; Kezar & Eckel, 2004; Birnbaum, 2004; Gigliotti, 2017; Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges [AGB], 2017):

- **Inclusivity:** This is the active participation of relevant stakeholders in decision-making. It ensures that everyone is empowered to contribute their opinions and ideas. Inclusivity fosters diversity of thought, cultivates a culture of respect, and ensures that decisions align with the institution's collective needs and interests.
- **Transparency:** This fosters openness and accountability that encourages stakeholders to be responsible for their actions and decisions. It involves access to pertinent information and sharing of decision-making processes and outcomes. Transparency helps cultivate trust among stakeholders and promotes a clear understanding of how institutional decisions are made.
- **Collaboration:** This will encourage stakeholders to work together towards common goals. Collaboration involves engaging in meaningful discussions, valuing diverse perspectives, and fostering teamwork. It promotes collective ownership of decisions, constructive engagement, and a culture of cooperation, resulting in effective governance practices.
- **Responsiveness:** This involves timely and effective responses to the needs and concerns of stakeholders. Responsiveness also emphasizes active listening to feedback, addressing issues, and taking proactive and constructive actions.
- **Consensus-Oriented:** This involves considering diverse viewpoints and achieving compromise through robust discussions and impartial mediation. Public hearings, forums, and citizens' right to petition leaders help achieve consensus. Good governance prioritizes agreement from diverse perspectives for the benefit of the entire community.
- **Equity:** This allows all stakeholders to have equal opportunities to participate, contribute, and benefit from decision-making processes, regardless of their background or position.

It promotes inclusivity, diversity, and a culture of respect, where all voices are valued and considered. Equity in governance prevents bias or discrimination, fostering a fair and inclusive environment.

CRISES IN SHARED GOVERNANCE

Historically, university governance respected the critical role of faculty and staff in shaping the academic mission of institutions. Faculty senates, committees, and representative assemblies were valued as co-governors in decisions affecting teaching, research, and institutional policy (Birnbaum, 2004; Gerber, 2014). However, in recent years, a growing number of public officials, trustees, and top administrators have begun to treat higher education not as a public good, but as a commercial enterprise—reducing institutions to market-driven entities with profit-oriented goals (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Ginsberg, 2011).

This shift toward a “corporatized” model of governance has recast university presidents as CEOs, prioritizing metrics, branding, and market value over academic leadership (Washburn, 2005). Academic decision-making is increasingly subordinated to administrative efficiency, financial targets, and political agendas. Faculty participation in key decisions such as presidential hiring, budgeting, and curriculum development has been diminished, with external search firms and opaque executive processes becoming the norm (Gerber, 2014). The implications of corporatization are far-reaching. These include:

- Outsourcing of instructional design and teaching tasks to private vendors and digital platforms;
- Replacing full-time faculty with contingent academic laborers, adjuncts, part-timers, and graduate assistants who receive low pay, lack job security, and operate without academic freedom (Kezar & Maxey, 2013);
- Reorienting the curriculum to emphasize vocational, profit-oriented learning at the expense of liberal arts and critical thinking;
- Commercializing educational resources, such as courseware, for financial gain;
- Establishing for-profit subsidiaries that operate without public oversight;
- Forging consortia with corporate partners to pursue research and product development.

These trends have contributed to faculty demoralization, reduced shared governance participation, and an erosion of academic integrity. Increased workloads, rigid tenure policies, and pressures to adopt new technologies without adequate support exacerbate the situation (Kezar, 2004).

The weakening of shared governance undermines institutional balance and democratic accountability. Just as checks and balances preserve fairness in democratic governments, a robust shared governance structure ensures that academic institutions remain focused on education, inquiry, and public service, which are not just profitability. When governance becomes centralized in politically appointed boards or market-driven executives, students and the broader public the true stakeholders of higher education are the ones who lose (Ginsberg, 2011; AAUP, 2020).

STRENGTHENING AND EXPANSION OF SHARED GOVERNANCE:

Shared governance in higher education must be strengthened and expanded to reflect the increasingly interdependent and multifaceted nature of academic institutions. Effective governance today demands complex coordination, transparent communication, and inclusive planning among all institutional stakeholders, including faculty, administrators, staff, and professional specialists (Kezar & Maxey, 2014; AGB, 2022).

Faculty and administrators rely heavily on a growing body of specialists to fulfill academic functions. These include student counselors who offer academic and career advising, information technologists who enhance instruction and research, and laboratory staff who support scientific teaching and experimentation (Kezar & Holcombe, 2017). The traditional boundaries of academic work are shifting, necessitating broader stakeholder engagement in institutional decision-making.

Part-time and adjunct faculty, once marginal, now constitute a significant portion of the instructional workforce. Despite their integral role, they often face limited participation in governance and precarious employment conditions (Gappa, Austin, & Trice, 2007). Similarly, classified and support staff vital to the day-to-day operations of institutions are frequently excluded from meaningful governance roles despite their deep institutional knowledge and operational expertise (Bess & Dee, 2008).

Employees across the academic spectrum have long sought formal channels for participation in governance through unions, staff associations, and professional organizations. In some states and institutions, shared governance roles for non-faculty employees are statutorily mandated. Many have engaged in collective bargaining to secure a voice in policy-making processes. Where staff input is welcomed, institutional decision-making tends to be more equitable and effective; where it is excluded, governance becomes less transparent and responsive, ultimately diminishing institutional performance and student outcomes (Kezar, 2004).

Expanding shared governance ensures that decisions reflect the insights and expertise of all institutional actors, fostering a more democratic, resilient, and mission-aligned higher education environment.

Principles of Shared Governance

The following are basic principles of shared governance that should be observed in establishing, maintaining and strengthening institutions as endorsed by professional bodies such as the American Association of University Professors (AAUP, 1994, 2020) and the Association of Governing Boards (AGB, 2022), emphasized collaborative leadership and collective responsibility:

- Faculty and professional staff, particularly those directly involved in teaching and conducting research, should have the lead role in determining the content of the curriculum, degree and certificate requirements, standards of instruction, student achievement standards, grading, and all matters relating to student progress in academic programs. To fulfill this responsibility effectively, faculty and professional staff must be given access to information and resources. Their judgments should be subject to overrule only rarely, with compelling reasons provided in writing and with an opportunity for response by the faculty and professional staff.

- Faculty and professional staff must be able to exercise independent academic judgment in the conduct of their teaching and research. Administrators should not interfere in these matters except in proven cases of academic incompetence or wrongdoing. A strong tenure system is the bulwark of protecting academic freedom against intimidation and arbitrary dismissal. Beyond that, protections of free expression should be extended to all staff to ensure openness, objectivity and creativity.
- Faculty should have the primary role in interviewing and recommending candidates for academic appointment to the faculty, for tenure and promotion, research support, sabbaticals, and other incentives and measures of academic quality. Similarly, professional staff should have the primary role in interviewing and recommending candidates for appointment to their ranks, for advancement in academic status and promotion and for other incentives and measures of professional quality. Administrative overrule of these decisions should be rare and for compelling reasons, given in writing, and be subject to individual and collective response.
- A well-functioning college or university is one that ensures that all faculty and all staff from full professors to adjunct lecturers, from librarians to departmental support staff have suitable arrangements for their voices to be heard and given proper weight in decisions that affect the mission and operation of the institution. For example, all faculty and staff should play a direct and prominent role in developing and advising on institutional budgets. All faculty and staff should have a leading role on institutional committees, task forces and decision-making bodies that affect their work and are within their areas of expertise, including search committees for choosing presidents and administrators. Given the growing interdependence among faculty, staff, students, administrators and institutional boards, all of those who aid in the design and/or implementation of the academic mission of the institution have a stake in shared governance. While full-time faculty have traditionally been able to claim a central role along with top administrators and boards, a number of trends, accelerating since the last quarter of the twentieth century, favor the expansion of governance roles to other staff. For instance, the increased specialization of traditional academic functions, away from active faculty involvement and toward professional and technical personnel, necessitates the inclusion of these experts into appropriate roles in shared governance. Similarly, the enlargement of the role of non-tenure-track and part-time/adjunct faculty, as well as of graduate employees (teaching and research assistants) calls for the development of appropriate means and mechanisms to draw them into shared governance.

The forms of shared governance and degrees of participation will vary according to the particular institutional arrangements currently in place, but each group whose work contributes to the academic enterprise should be involved in a manner appropriate to its institutional function and responsibilities.

- The organizational forms of shared governance differ among institutions, depending on institutional history, norms and customs. In many institutions, these forms are called senates or assemblies, though these terms are not definitive, for faculty senates may include or exclude administrators, non-teaching professionals, non-tenure-track and part-time faculty.
- In many colleges and universities, faculty and staff have turned to collective bargaining, both as a way to increase the influence of their voices, to provide institutional means for their voices to be heard and represented in the absence of pre-existing roles for them in

shared governance, or to support and bolster the existing structures of shared governance. Unionization is a basic democratic right of all employees. Higher education unions are democratically elected representatives of these employees with a legitimate role in shared governance.

A standard management tactic, however, is to attempt to convince faculty and staff especially during campaigns to establish collective bargaining that the existence of a faculty or staff union will destroy the “collegiality” of the shared governance process. In particular, the argument goes, the union will take over the powers and responsibilities of the faculty senate or whatever the governance body is called.

The position of the American Federation of Teachers has always been that the functions of the union and the governance bodies complement, rather than compete with, each other. Despite predictions by opponents of unionization that the presence of a faculty or staff union would destroy the shared governance body and shatter collegiality, this observation is unfounded. In fact, the opposite is often true.

Unions and collective bargaining do not and should not supplant effective structures of shared governance, i.e., those structures that derive their legitimacy from genuine representation of faculty and staff. When faculty and staff choose unions and collective bargaining, they do so because clear majorities believe that the existing structure is not sufficient to guarantee full and true collegiality the kind that comes from working with top administrators and board members as equal partners on the basis of legally enforceable rights and responsibilities.

Specifically, collective bargaining strengthens collegiality by establishing and enforcing contractual ground rules supporting it. Typically, committee procedures developed in the institution’s shared governance traditions have been incorporated into union contracts, strengthening the senate’s (or other body’s) role and preserving collegial practices. One can think of it in the following way: the union itself is one form of shared governance, but one that is able to create the conditions under which other shared governance mechanisms like the faculty senate can operate successfully and without administrative interference. In the end, we believe that the strongest shared governance systems are based on sound collective bargaining contracts that clearly delineate an active role for faculty and staff at the institution.

On a college-by-college basis, it is important that the respective roles of the union and the shared governance structures be understood mutually. There is no one template for shared governance for all institutions of higher education, nor should there be. Differences among colleges will be based, among other things, on the federal, state and local legal mandates governing particular colleges and universities, on the requirements of applicable labor laws, on institutional traditions, on the terms of the collective bargaining agreement and on the institution’s circumstances of labor-management relations.

- Accrediting agencies should support fully the concept of shared governance in their standards. Regional and specialized accrediting agencies, whose role it is to establish standards for higher education institutions, should guarantee that enforceable shared governance procedures are not only included in written institutional policies, but also are practiced in reality. For instance, as institutions shift more course work into a distance education medium, accrediting agencies should ensure that faculty and staff remain as

deeply involved in setting curriculum and academic standards as they are in traditional courses and that their teaching continues to be protected by academic freedom.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Participative Decision-Making Theory

Participative Decision-Making Theory (PDM), rooted in organizational behavior literature, posits that individuals who are involved in the decision-making processes of an institution are more likely to be committed to its goals, show higher levels of motivation, and contribute positively to organizational outcomes (Likert, 1967, cited in Ololube, 2024). In the context of higher education, this theory supports the view that when faculty, staff, and other stakeholders are included in governance, it leads to improved policy outcomes, better alignment between academic programs and institutional goals, and enhanced accountability.

In Nigerian universities, where hierarchical administrative systems often dominate, this theory highlights the need to move towards more inclusive and decentralized governance structures. Applying PDM could increase faculty engagement, reduce internal conflicts, and ultimately improve student learning and research productivity.

Transformational Leadership Theory

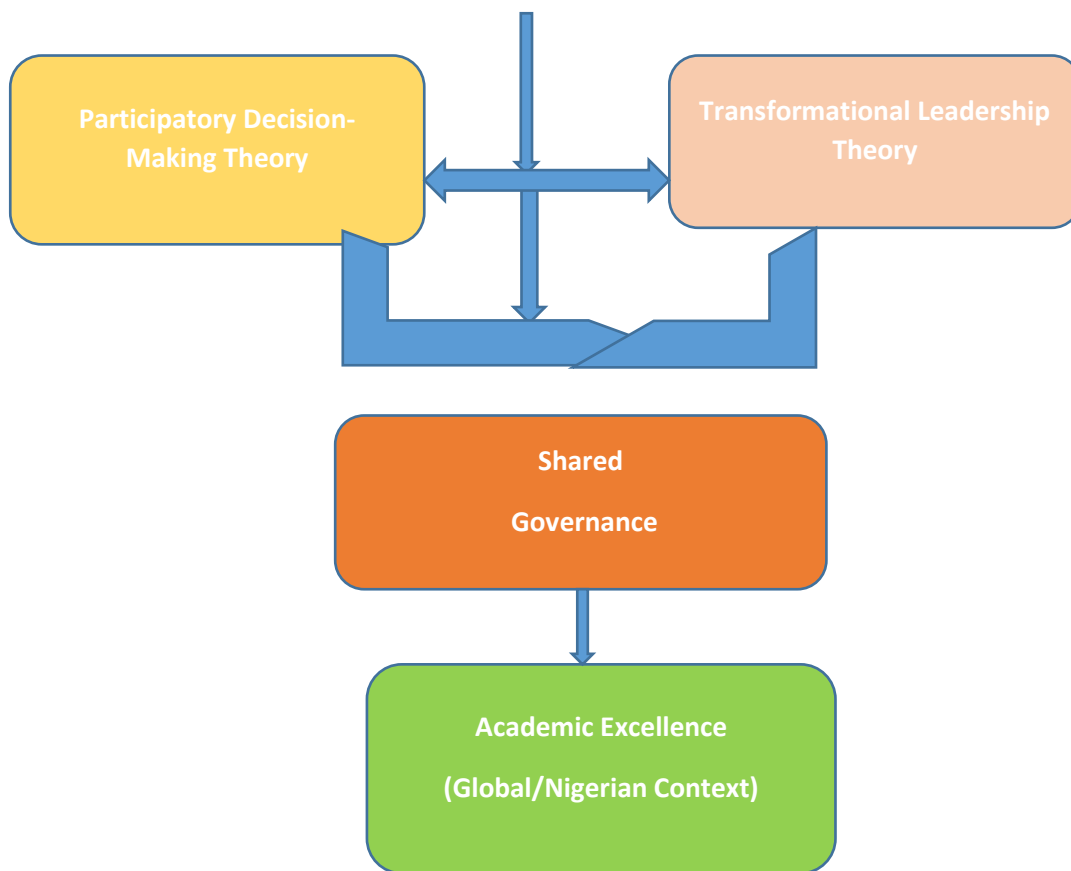
Transformational Leadership Theory, developed by Burns (1978) and later expanded by Bass (1985) as cited in Ololube (2024), emphasized that leadership inspires, motivates, and fosters a shared vision among organizational members. Transformational leaders empower others, encourage intellectual stimulation, and consider the individual needs of team members. In the higher education context, this theory aligns closely with the principles of shared governance by advocating leadership that promotes collaboration, trust, and mutual respect.

In Nigerian universities, transformational leadership can play a vital role in cultivating a culture of shared governance. University leaders who embrace this model are more likely to support inclusive policy-making, mentor faculty, and champion academic freedom, all of which contribute to academic excellence.

Synthesis of Theories

The integration of Participative Decision-Making Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory provides a comprehensive framework for examining the role of shared governance. While PDM explains the structural and procedural aspects of inclusive governance, Transformational Leadership highlights the human and motivational elements necessary to sustain it. Together, they offer a robust lens through which to assess how shared governance can enhance academic standards, improve institutional performance, and foster a culture of excellence in Nigerian higher education.

Theoretical Framework



FINDINGS

Structural Inclusion and Decision-Making Power

In all institutions, the presence of formal governance bodies such as academic senates, curriculum committees, and faculty councils demonstrated the institutional commitment to shared governance (Kezar & Eckel, 2004). However, the degree of actual influence these bodies wielded varied significantly. Faculty participation was embedded in the institutional DNA in some contexts. Faculty senates had statutory authority over curricular matters, research priorities, and faculty hiring (Birnbaum, 2004). Interviewees described a culture in which consultation was not only procedural but meaningful. One faculty member stated, “The administration knows better than to bypass the senate; it would lead to real consequences.”

Equally, at the public university in the developing country, while governance structures formally existed, they were often ceremonial. Key decisions, especially around budgeting and resource allocation, were made by senior administrators or influenced by external political actors (Obasi, 2008; Salmi, 2009). A faculty member lamented, “We attend meetings, but decisions are already made before we get there.” This disconnect between structure and substance limited the potential of shared governance to impact institutional performance.

The private university represented a hybrid model. Faculty members were deeply involved in academic matters but excluded from strategic financial decisions. This partial model

still contributed to strong academic ownership but limited broader institutional impact (Deem, Hillyard, & Reed, 2007).

The above findings support organizational theory in higher education, which suggests that the collegial model yields better academic outcomes when faculty have actual and not just symbolic power (Ginsberg, 2011; Kezar & Holcombe, 2017). The data also confirm that decision-making authority must be distributed meaningfully for shared governance to move beyond rhetoric (Kezar, 2009).

Impact on Academic Quality and Innovation

The paper revealed a strong correlation between effective shared governance and enhanced academic quality and innovation (Kezar & Holcombe, 2017; Minor, 2003). At the developed research university, shared governance facilitated a continuous process of curriculum review, faculty-led research agendas, and cross-departmental collaboration. Faculty described how the governance process encouraged academic experimentation: “Because we have control over our programs, we can take pedagogical risks that improve learning outcomes.”

At the private university, faculty involvement in curriculum design led to programs that were both locally relevant and internationally competitive. Faculty members reported feeling a sense of ownership that translated into higher teaching quality and sustained research engagement (Birnbaum, 2004; Deem, Hillyard, & Reed, 2007).

However, at the public university, the centralization of decisions limited innovation. Curricula were often outdated, and faculty initiatives required prolonged approval processes that discouraged experimentation. Students expressed dissatisfaction with the relevance of their academic programs, pointing to a lack of responsiveness from institutional leadership (Obasi, 2008; Salmi, 2009).

This aligns with participative decision-making theory, which emphasizes that involvement enhances commitment, creativity, and performance (Cotton et al., 1988; Vroom & Jago, 1988). Institutions with strong shared governance structures were more responsive to academic needs and better positioned to pursue innovation. The data suggest that shared governance can serve as a platform for academic agility, especially in rapidly changing global and technological landscapes (Kezar & Eckel, 2004; Ginsberg, 2011).

Faculty Morale and Institutional Commitment

A consistent theme across all cases was the link between shared governance and faculty morale (Kezar & Holcombe, 2017; Birnbaum, 2004). Faculty at institutions with effective governance structures described high levels of institutional loyalty, lower turnover, and a strong sense of community. As one professor noted, “When your voice matters, your commitment deepens.”

Conversely, at the public university where governance was largely top-down, faculty morale was low. Many spoke of feeling disengaged and undervalued, with some actively seeking employment elsewhere. This environment bred cynicism and undermined academic performance, with ripple effects on student learning (Ginsberg, 2011; Deem et al., 2007).

This finding underscores the affective dimension of shared governance. Beyond its structural and functional aspects, shared governance fosters a sense of belonging and professional respect (Kezar & Eckel, 2004; Minor, 2003). These affective factors are crucial for

maintaining high faculty performance and for building a cohesive academic culture that supports excellence (Bensimon, 1991; Tierney, 1988).

Barriers to Effective Shared Governance

Despite its benefits, shared governance faces significant barriers, particularly in resource-constrained or politically volatile contexts (Kezar, 2004; Salmi, 2009).

- **Bureaucratic Resistance:** In the public university, entrenched hierarchies and rigid administrative protocols impeded participatory reforms. Efforts to strengthen governance often stalled due to lack of political will or administrative buy-in (Obasi, 2008; Ginsberg, 2011).
- **Role Ambiguity:** At the private university, blurred lines between faculty and administrative responsibilities occasionally led to conflict and inefficiency. Some faculty felt overburdened by governance responsibilities without corresponding institutional support (Deem, Hillyard, & Reed, 2007).
- **Power Dynamics:** Even in the developed research university, tensions occasionally emerged between faculty autonomy and managerial efficiency. For example, efforts to streamline operations were sometimes perceived as attempts to bypass the governance process (Birnbaum, 2004; Kezar & Eckel, 2004).

These challenges reflect insights from political models of governance, which acknowledge that universities are contested spaces where competing interests must be negotiated (Baldrige, 1971; Tierney, 1988). Successful shared governance requires clear role definitions, capacity-building, and a culture of mutual respect. It also demands institutional autonomy particularly from external political pressures in order to flourish (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009; Berdahl, 1990).

CONCLUSION

Shared governance has long been considered a hallmark of democratic decision-making in higher education, contributing to academic excellence, institutional integrity, **and** faculty engagement. This article has examined how shared governance influences academic outcomes across different higher education contexts and highlighted its potential and challenges.

The findings suggest that shared governance, when effectively implemented, positively impacts academic quality and innovation, enhances faculty morale, and strengthens institutional commitment. However, the article also identified significant barriers to its full realization, including bureaucratization, unequal participation, managerial overreach, and resource constraints. These challenges underscore the importance of intentional governance design, **a** collaborative institutional culture, and adequate support mechanisms.

Ultimately, shared governance should not be viewed as a one-size-fits-all solution but as a context-dependent process that must evolve to meet the unique needs of each institution. When embraced authentically, with careful attention to inclusivity, efficiency, and academic autonomy, shared governance remains a powerful tool for advancing academic excellence **and** institutional resilience in the 21st century.

Recommendations

Based on the findings discussed in this article, the key recommendations for institutions seeking to strengthen shared governance and, by extension, enhance academic excellence are outlined below:

- To avoid bureaucratization and inefficiency, institutions should consider streamlining governance procedures while maintaining inclusivity.
- Institutions must prioritize equitable representation across all governance levels, ensuring that marginalized and junior faculty, non-teaching staff, and students have meaningful input.
- While efficiency and external accountability are important, universities must avoid over-application of corporate management practices that undermine academic integrity.
- To overcome resource constraints, especially in developing countries, it is crucial to invest in infrastructure and capacity-building.
- The success of shared governance depends not only on formal structures but also on a culture of trust and collaboration. Institutions should:
- Promoting a collaborative culture, universities can transform shared governance from a procedural framework into a dynamic, collegial process that enhances academic performance.

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