

Analyzing Theoretical Perspectives of Shared Governance Model

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to explore the perspectives of shared governance as this university governance model is adopted by universities in the world involving all stake holders in the governance process specially faculty. Shared governance model is mostly hallmark in American colleges and universities which was promoted by AAUP (American Association of University Professors). Although, some researchers have pointed out its limitations but on the whole this model is successfully practiced in the academia.

Keywords Universities, Shared Governance, Participation

Paper type Conceptual paper

Shared governance has been a hallmark of American colleges and universities for over a generation which is practiced in some institutions in different forms, like constant flow of faculty members in administrative positions, departments' key link in shared governance, academic senates and students' element added to shared governance in 60s and 70s dramatically situation altered with students representation shut and faculty influence lost in governance process (Tierney et al. 2003; Baldrige, 1982; Shah et al. 2014). Gradually, decision making became administrative hierarchy. Now the real threat is "Administrative Imperialism may be pushing for centralization and faculty provincialism at tug of war. In this situation shared governance can save universities from decay or administration because it stands for emphasis on sharing not for balance of power the notion of participatory and inclusive governance has been a desire for the academy since 1961 (AAUP, 1966).

Shared governance has been universally acknowledged as shared authority or joint participation is a concept promoted by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), the American Council on Education (ACE), and the Association of Governing Boards (AGB) to outline what academic governance ought to be in the United States. The concept embodies the idea that there should be joint effort through communication, mutual interests and understanding between the constituents of colleges and universities in decision-making and in the planning of institutional matters. However, this concept of shared authority has come to be universally accepted (Gallos, 2009; Onwunli and Augustine, 2004).

Governance is a process of structure and how making people to function within that structure and a system to comprise the explicit and implicit framework to allocate to various stakeholders the authority and power for making decisions (Lanning, 2006; Kaplan, 2004). In that process a governance model that engages all stakeholders in the process is termed as "shared governance", "participatory decision-making", or "team leadership". As such, the idea of shared governance appears to vary from college to college, as each institution views it a little bit differently (Piland and Bublitz, 1998).

Some barriers in shared governance

Stephen, Rampp, and Mitchell (2000) believe that shared governance is a popular concept in the academic community. It has potential advantages like shared decision making, total quality management, local decision making and participatory management. They have pinpointed the barriers which need to be addressed to avail maximum output of the shared governance as they argue that its definitions are unclear. Allen (1991) had noted diluting, mergering and sharing of duties and processes assure that participation will be difficult because academic and administration mix and merger via the process of shared governance looks uncomfortable alliance.

On the contrary, Mahon (1994) observes at it is still a best process which involves participants in the process of adopting or using shared governance is convinced to solve all their institutional frustrations.

Thus, negative attitude in academic community is not popular. The other barrier it cited as poor communication. On the contrary, shared governance is for proper communication. Trust is another issue of the trust. Again, there is scope to maintain trust. Participation of all groups makes shared governance work well. They stress on commitment, communication, participation to focus on attainable goal, patience and belief that governance is about improvement of education rather resolving societal ills.

It has been criticized for due to faculty obstruction contemporary governance system cannot appropriately respond on changes in external environment and being cumbersome timely decisions are difficult to make, small factions are able to impede decision making process (AGB 2001(American Governing Boards). Both the reservations have been addressed logically in favor of shared governance such as regarding first one it has been traced out that the objection is baseless because it has been found that institutions are responding actively to the environmental pressures (Computerizing, raising external funds, joint programs with industry, offering external degrees and reducing full time faculty) higher education, contrary to popular political belief is in many ways extra ordinary responsive to external environment especially in market-driven solutions and orientation like 30 or 20 years ago, American colleges and universities no longer look or act like that (Eckel, 2003; Mingle, 2000).

The second objection has been countered logically that it is not efficiency or speed but reality and trust for good decisions. Quick decisions may be subject to bad decisions. Faculty participation promises discussion providing a sagacity of order and stability. It is not greatest danger that decisions are made too slowly but that they are made swiftly without regards for institutional core values (Brinbaum, 2003; Kerr, 1963).

Again, Brinbaum (2003) quotes that entrepreneurial universities cannot wait for windy faculty debates to run their course lest valuable opportunities be lost in the fast moving world which we live in through inordinate faculty delays. Therefore, he is afraid that without active participation of faculty universities may be affected, instead of improvement they would suffer a setback. If faculty role reduced in shared governance is more likely to diminish rather than improve institutional effectiveness (Brinbaum, 2003). Alfred (1998) has described disadvantages which are however countered on many forums such as slow decision making, hampers effective management, limits efficiency, diminishes quality of decisions, adds to the responsibility of administrators, lead to confusion and polarization. Obviously, this aim appears to support shared governance concept and if they are addressed objectively.

The shared governance concept would prove good strategy for higher educational institutions. The parties need identify specific areas of responsibility and administrator's work in collaboration with faculty, staff, senates and unions to make college effective organization. However, clear definition and shared responsibility is pre-requisite. Alfred (1998) says what is shared governance? Is it shared responsibility? Shared authority? Shared power? Total involvement in decisions? A place for all groups at the bargaining table? He concludes on insisting practice of shared governance to make educational institutions need oriented, effective and prospective.

Merits : A mission not profit

Looking from different angles researchers have expressed supporting views regarding shared governance such as Cox (2000) says there are various systems for consultation and decision making created by individual institutions to operationalize the shared aspect of governance appears to-day to be working well and are generally supported by both faculty and administrators. Brinbaum (2003) supports the system that since this system is generally accepted any attempt reducing faculty role may create negative result. The end of governance must support the aims and objective designed to create an institution. Aim of academic institutions is a mission not profit. It is that justified to look back ward far their mission and governance system.

Emerson (1856) says the university must be retrospective (Brinbaum, 2003). Alfred (1998) has also described the advantages of shared governance; he says it fosters sense of empowerment through participation in decision making. It promotes greater "buy-in" to decisions to influence income, encourages staff to accept responsibility, results in improved morale leading to relationship among trustees, increases the breadth of understating related to issues, improves communication, fosters divergent points of view, encourages compromise to avert harmful statements among factions on important issues. In addition, shared governance embraces the culture combining tradition, tact and symbolism. In the views of Crellin (2010) it is integral to culture of academy. It is part tradition, part tactic and largely symbolic.

Means to an end

Shared governance is both a means to an end and to be maintained valued. This system remains crucial for institutions of higher education. Different aspects of this model are effective and its structures work well leading to promotion of positive outcomes. Hence, it is not likely to be changed radically. There are many ways if adopted by those in the lead to “re-endow” this term with new meaning and definition. Thus, it would enable the institutions of higher education to meet the ensuing challenges in the coming times. Crellin (2010) believes those faculties are the primary up holders of the academic culture and those that give precedence to the idea of a university as an academic institution that there are few earthly things more splendid than a university are likely also continue to believe in the importance of shared governance.

According to Baker –Brown (2011) shared governance by its very nature of inclusiveness, creates an environment where stake holders have more vested interest where there is commitment can lead to reduced conflicts greater commitment to the institution, and greater job satisfaction. She has used Ramo’s (1997) seven tents of shared governance to seek faculty views.(1) institutional communication (2) Board’s role (3) President’s role (4) faculty role (5) Joint decision making (6) climate of governance and (7) organizational environment. The implication arising out of the study shows community College faculty be given greater role in governance through structured entities such as faculty senates. College board be structured to include faculty representation. The proportion of faculty across higher education levels that is universities and community colleges to provide greater awareness of governance issues as shared sense of ownership of higher education and better articulation across levels. It recommends shared governance process in Jamaica. It suggests qualitative approaches to further studies are shared governance which would be beneficial for Jamaican Community Colleges. It can be very effective in managing change of a lasting nature because it offers ways of modifying fundamental attitudes and values through group processes to enhance the governing body by strengthening participant support of the decision-making process (McCauley, 2002; Richardson, 1975).

Joint consultation

Different amendments and suggestions have been pouring in respect of shared governance. Different aspect have been explored to maximum of the concept of it to match it with international criteria and worldwide agreeable adoptable to come to gather to suggest, listen, and learn, and where both look forward to the exchange for strong strategic capacity, integrated management systems, swift and flexible decision making capabilities and dispersed leadership throughout the organization to improve academic environment of teaching and learning (Gallos 2009; Middlehurst, 2004; Beckwith, et al. 2010). Shared governance model would thus come true as Middlehurst (2004) aspires through her “Changing Internal Governance”. Increase efficiency, find new sources of income, and improve performance across an over widening range of services, have been watch words for successive governments.

Task oriented activity

Kezar & Eckel (2004) explores the characteristics of shared governance as the institutions operate with many unclear, competing and inconsistent goals, which can be accommodated in shared governance. Again, organization accomplishes its task through unclear processes that govern technologies. Through shared governance system they can understand those activities and produce their output. Then participation is fluid actor flow in and out of decision making opportunities. As such, there is evidence in respect of practicing shared governance in Los Angeles City College. It has created conducive and harmonious educational environment which may serve as an example to be followed subject to the requirement of prevailing social setup in a given area. In pursuance of Caliphornia Assembly Bill 1725 LACC (2002) (Los Angeles City College) faculty staff and students developed shared governance to make acceptable decisions through expertise of the participants, faculty, classified staff students and administration involved in the process. However, this model is based on cooperation, mutual trust, honesty and consensus rather than confrontation. SGC (Shared Governance Council) establishes agenda for progress and achieving institutional goals. Classified staff is assigned role in development of College policy which works through collective bargaining, students role is represented by providing recommendations. Administration assists operational policies by facilitating and support environment where fair, rational consistent and shared decision making is possible.

Thus, this strategy has been a success. Since each group’s role is defined every component works within the scope. Therefore, fairness and equity of decisions and actions is ensured. It carries the concept of shared governance at its best. Inclusiveness, Co-operation makes it mutually valued process (Spangler, 2002). Refuting the idea of replacing shared governance by hierarchical corporate model Gerber (2001) states the practice of shared governance deserves to be supported not as a means of serving particular interests of faculty but rather shared governance ultimately serves the needs of society. He further explains that since pursuit of knowledge is

must for survival of society and without shared governance it is less likely to do so and the students may not be provided liberal education to become informed citizens to participate fully in democracy. It may not be mistaken for speech as protected in the constitution. Because teachers and researchers need protection that other citizens do not require. They need authority to shape the environment in which they carry out their responsibilities. How to conduct research, who is qualified to teach and approve courses for curriculum are the areas which concern about academic freedom and governance to link closely. Though, shared governance does not guarantee violation of academic freedom yet more likely academic values not extraneous concerns will guide decisions. Again, not of shared governance is not for deference to the ideal of democracy as a college is not “speaking a democratic polity”.

The AAUP’s (American Association of University Professors) policy document assumes for faculty primary responsibility decisions in universities are taken on the basis of academic criteria instead of political pressure or arbitrary administration therefore academic freedom remains determining factor (Gerber 1997). Though, historically shared governance is grounded in professionalism not democracy yet instead of co-operate model it is giving importance to the ideals of liberal education which are essence for democratic society. Because the goals of liberal education are enabling the citizens to think critically, get independent minded, have sense of history and understanding the world they live in. if faculty does not retain its primary responsibility for academic matters targets of liberal education remain unattained and without their participation effective governance is incredible (Gerber (2001).

Gerber (1997) has concluded his argumentation as he thinks, however, that it would be fair to say that the principles and practice of shared governance that have emerged over that past century in our best colleges and universities have more relevance for businesses in new economy than a highly questionable model of corporate governance has for our institutions of higher education. Garber’s inextricably linked shared governance and academic freedom. This comparison bring the aspect of liberal education under the shared governance more realistic than the hierarchical corporate model of management in respect of preparing the future generation efficient and able to lead the world in right direction only by giving freedom to the faculty to execute their duties regarding academic affairs.

Investigating shared governance process in four research universities of Maryland at College Park, Organ State University, University of Rochester and Kent State University, Eckel (1999) explores question of ability of shared governance about institutional hard decisions and the key role of interest groups in the process. The study finds that shared governance facilitates the discontinuance process in three ways i.e Governance provided the stage from which administrators could gain a commitment and persuade that campus of seriousness of the problems. Brought various interest groups in legitimate ways of accomplish a high stakes task provided mechanism to correct potential errors.

As such, through shared governance system the universities could enable themselves make best decisions on the basis of required information. This study has logically proved that this system through involvement of faculty, gathered different perspectives and experience which helped them understand the implication of closing certain programs (Eckel, 1999).

According to Heaney (2010) shared governance neither compromises administrators or board members rightful authority nor lessens faculty’s primary responsibility for the overall curriculum. It acknowledges inter weaving role of faculty, administration, staff and students in respect of a university mission. He refers when values are not aligned then the board may assert its prerogatives regardless of faculty sentiments, ignoring the sentiments that give voice the faculty sentiments.

Conclusion.

Shared Governance is a model which is explained, pleaded explored, examined and objection over ruled. It has been successfully implemented and practiced successfully like LACC (Los Angeles Community College) and such other institutions. The more reservation are raised against it more merits are explored in its favor lord Ashby had initiated it by stirring the stagnant water of prevailing hierarchical models and its wrinkles have touched the depth of educational entity that the process has continued to bring the best in educational environment the world over. If the university became institution managed by an oligarchy instead of a society managed by its members it would fail to survive (Ashby, 1963).

Shared governance does not necessitate a balance of power but emphasis on sharing responsibilities it is for agreeable decision making (Eckel, 1999) in it all members of cabinet are made aware of managing educational

resources which enable them to cross over other's areas with comfort and of expert's guidance this interdependent ship creates unanimity of decisions. Cabinet management and open style dissemination of information are directions of future (Lisensky, 1971).

Shared model of university governance is preferable and sustainable as it is being propagated and practiced by the majority of universities the world over as being suitable to address complicated issues of governance. It would put all the bodies and stakeholders through joint participant on the right track of cooperation and collaboration Eckel (1999). This would enable them to steer to the goal and shorten their course to the ultimate end of educational institution.

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