

University Governance and Undergraduate Program Establishment

*A multi-case study of two Chinese
Universities*

Hong Zhong



Master of Philosophy in Higher Education
Department of Education, Faculty of Educational
Sciences

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Hong Zhong

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Abstract

Chinese universities are undergoing modernization reforms that aim to improve the rather bureaucratized management structure. The objective of this study is to examine how the power distribution within the universities is changing as a result of these reforms and how academics and administrators are involved in the establishment of new undergraduate programs. A multi-case study at two Chinese universities differing in their institutional prestige is utilized in addressing the research question. Data are collected through document analysis and qualitative interviews with key actors at different levels of the university, and analyzed using neo-institutional theory. The results show that at University X administrators maintained their influence in establishing new undergraduate programs at both faculty and institutional levels, while at University Y parts of authority has been transferred from administrators to academics. A comparison between the two universities reveals that the combination of the institutional autonomy and a prevailing logic of appropriateness among administrators can promote the institutionalization of authority redistribution between administrators and academics in the framework of the analyzed reforms.

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Abbreviations

CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CUP	Classification of Undergraduate Programs in Regular Higher Education Institutions
CCCPC	Central Committee of the Communist Party of China
CPC	Communist Party Committee
HEI	Higher Education Institution
MOE	Ministry of Education
NPM	New Public Management
TAO	Teaching Affairs Office

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research background and rationale

The provision of undergraduate programs of a university forms the disciplinary base that shapes its teaching and research (Clark, 1983). Given the special nature of teaching and research activities (Musselin, 2006), the establishment of new bachelor's program requires substantial collegial participation in that the faculty hold the expertise required for the production of these activities. However, while the faculty is the primary actor in the establishment process, new actors within universities have been getting included in the decision-making process with the changing governance structure through university reforms.

Various studies on higher education conclude that many far-reaching changes have been introduced in the governance of higher education systems and institutions around the globe (see e.g. Amaral, Meek, & Larsen, 2003; Christensen, 2011). These changes, derived from a belief that strategic organizational actorhood of more autonomous universities will be more efficient, more effective and more responsive in an increasingly complex and global environment (Krücken & Meier, 2006), attempts to address a growing imbalance between the demands on universities and their capacity to respond (Clark, 1998). Traditionally, universities were controlled by senior professors who were elected to manage for a limited period of time (Fumasoli, Gornitzka, & Maassen, 2014). This collegial model (Musselin, 2006) becomes inefficient with growing expectations on universities that arisen from massification, internationalization and the role of the knowledge economy (Altbach, 2008; Olsen & Maassen, 2007; Trow, 1970). To increase institutional efficiency, decentralization reforms have been conducted to transform the relationship between the state, the university and academics (Christensen, 2011). This includes at the system level transferring parts of the decision-making authority vertically towards the universities (Amaral et al., 2003). At the institutional level, the role and position of leaders and managers have been strengthened and professionalized at the cost of the general involvement of the academic staff in institutional governance, leading to an emerging pattern of coexistence between institutional leadership, administrators and academics in the management structure within the university (Fumasoli et al., 2014). Empirical studies in other countries suggests that the power distribution between academics and institutional managers in introducing new academic programs varies across

institutions and systems (Locke, Cummings, & Fisher, 2011). So how is this phenomenon taking place at Chinese universities?

In China, the establishment of new undergraduate programs was initially controlled by the government. The primary mechanism for the government to introduce a new degree program was the demand of labor forces for the national development in the central planned economy and labor market demand in the market-oriented economy (Yu, 2014). Both mechanisms for introducing new programs were instrumental. Such an instrumental-oriented program establishment had a negative impact on the programmatic diversity of the Chinese higher education system, especially with regards to subject matters (interdisciplinary, professional vs. disciplinary-based, applied). One consequence of the state-controlled program establishment was the rise of two problems after the transition to mass higher education. The first is that graduates of Chinese universities were criticized of lacking innovation, practical abilities and social responsibility (Cai, 2011). The second is a lack of diversity among HEIs, all of which model themselves on comprehensive research universities with regard to the study programs offered (Zha, 2009). The isomorphism of HEIs reduced the system's ability to serve the diverse needs of students, contributing to a rise of unemployment of university graduates (Cai, 2011).

In response to these problems, a comprehensive reform proposal was presented in the Outline of China's National Plan for Mid- and Long-term (2010-2020) Education Reforms and Development. One of the most important objectives elaborated in this modernization agenda is to build a strong national higher education system by further increasing institutional autonomy and academic capacity in academic governance. It is against this policy context that part of the decision-making authority in introducing new undergraduate degree programs was transferred to universities in 2012 with the promulgation of the Provisions on Opening and Readjusting Undergraduate Programs. The establishment of some undergraduate programs no longer requires the approval of the government. Instead, it requires joint decisions of institutional managers and academics through the Academic Committee. According to the MOE's reports, more than 96% of new undergraduate programs were introduced without requiring government approval in 2013 and 2014.

However, the increase of institutional autonomy in introducing new bachelor' programs does not assure a "healthy" program diversity in the Chinese context. Clark (1983) points out that anything approaching a monopoly of power becomes the greatest single danger in the

operation of a system of higher education. This is attested by the vicious cycle in higher education reforms whereby power delegation leads to disorder, which in turn leads to tighter control, thus ending the reform attempts. Between 1985-2009 the autonomy to establish new undergraduate programs was granted to HEIs several times, but each time it ended with the government stepping back in and retaking control due to a soaring number of new programs and a decrease in the quality of the programs (G. L. Zhou & Wu, 2009). One factor of this irrational increase is the administrator-dominated decision making. Chinese universities had been managed mainly by administrative power. The central administration had the executive power on all key university decisions (Xiong, 2009). Academics, though the principal workers in the university, had little say in final decisions and their roles were often impinged upon by administrators (Jiang & Wei, 2011). Therefore, the solution to the above mentioned two problems not only requires the delegation of power to the university, but also a redistribution of power within the university concerning the introduction of undergraduate programs, given that the professoriate is often described as a determinant force that shapes the quality and direction of higher education (Enders, 2006).

Moreover, Chinese universities have been under an increasingly fierce public criticism from internal and external stakeholders for being more like a government unit than an academic institution. This criticism strengthens the need for increasing academic influence in university governance. As an academic institution, universities are normally characterized as a bottom-heavy institution that is characterized by a strong influence of academic professionals on the determination of goals, the management of the institution, and the daily routines of work (Clark, 1983). Hence, the increase of academic power could be an important step to increase the legitimacy of Chinese universities.

1.2 Research question

Based on the above considerations, this thesis attempts to investigate how new programs are established within Chinese public universities that are concerned primarily with education as an end rather than as a means. In other words, this research mainly focuses on the research-oriented public universities in Chinese universities, where there is a normative argument for the academic participation in the establishment of new undergraduate programs (Birnbbaum, 2004). Special focus will be given to the changing role of academics in the backdrop of modernization reforms that aim to improve academic participation in institutional governance.

Thus, the time frame of this thesis is focused on the past five years. Accordingly, the research question for this study is:

How is the power distribution with regard to the introduction of undergraduate programs changing within Chinese universities against the backdrop of the latest university reforms?

In order to answer the overall question, the following three sub-questions are raised:

1. How has the formula of the intra-university authority distribution changed in the framework of recent policy reforms in China in relation to the establishment of new undergraduate programs?
2. To what extent have these reform ideas been translated and implemented in practice?
3. How is the *de facto* power distribution in approving new undergraduate programs changing and what are factors that influence the process of change?

The first sub-question aims to examine policy changes that are relevant to the introduction of new bachelor's programs before and after the reforms as well as the objectives of these reforms. The second sub-question takes the inquiry one step further by examining which changes have been taking place within the university in response to these policies, and how these changes impact the role of the Academic Committee, as the main professorial governance body within universities, in the establishment of new bachelor's programs. The third sub-question tries to explore possible factors that affect the universities' ability to implement and translate policies into *de facto* changes in the governance practices of the institution.

1.3 Thematic relevance of this thesis

This research is relevant for three reasons. First of all, university governance reforms that aim to increase academic participation in institutional governance are an important and long-term policy shift that has affected and will continue to affect institutional governance arrangements in Chinese universities. By investigating how the authority redistribution within universities has been taking place in introducing new undergraduate degree programs, this research can catch a glimpse of the overall changing governance structure in Chinese universities.

Furthermore, the investigation of changes in governance within universities has received far less attention in the research literature than analyses of changes in the university-government relationship in China.

Second, by investigating the power redistribution in core academic decisions in two universities that have different degrees of prestige in China, this research can be expected to provide insights into how the institutional prestige affects the outcomes of processes of governance reforms. This could contribute to the understanding of the impact of differentiation among Chinese universities on their responsiveness to national reforms.

Third, the reform ideologies underpinning the decentralization policies in Chinese universities are in line with the ideas underlying the “global reform script” for universities (Christensen, Gornitzka, & Maassen, 2014). Since most of the empirical research on governance changes have been conducted in European countries or the United States, this empirical study on the outcomes of governance reforms in Chinese universities might provide a picture of university changes from an opposite starting point, and thus brings insights in higher education analysis on, for example, patterns and pathways of convergence/divergence in the global higher education era.

1.4 Thesis Outline

The rest of the thesis is organized as follows:

Chapter 2 presents the theoretical and analytical framework. It first reviews the underlying themes that are relevant to the power distribution in the university, including university autonomy, academic freedom and authority distribution in the modern university. Based on these underlying themes, a neo-institutional approach is adopted to conceptualize and analyze not only the changes in formal legal terms, but more importantly, the *de facto* re-distribution of power within Chinese universities.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the empirical setting of this study. A detailed description of the situation in university governance and management before 2010 is provided and changes in the national policies concerning the introduction of new bachelor’s programs are analyzed. This is followed by an introduction to the cases.

Chapter 4 explains the methodological approach in detail. The research design and choice of case are discussed. The validity and limitation of this research design are also discussed.

Chapter 5 presents the analysis of the findings. First the current establishment procedures at the two universities are characterized in order to find out which actors are involved in the establishment process and what their roles in this process are. In the second stage of the analysis the establishment process is analyzed and discussed according to the regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive pillars of the institution to identify changes that have been taking place and their impact on the power distribution.

Chapter 6 is the conclusion where the research question is answered, implications as well as limitations of the study are discussed, and suggestions for future research are made.

2 THEORETICAL AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter presents the theoretical and analytical framework of the study. This is done in two sections. In the first section the themes of university autonomy, academic freedom and internal governance will be discussed. The aim is to introduce mechanisms concerning the distribution of authority inside the university, to gain a better understanding of the research topic. It also serves as a brief literature review, providing an overview of the state-of-the-art knowledge on higher education development. In the second section, an institutional framework on how to operationalize the research questions is provided. This includes the elaboration of the concepts of institution, institutional change, as well as the role of actors in the institutional work.

2.1 Underlying themes of the study

2.1.1 University autonomy and academic freedom

Autonomy is seen as a necessity for universities to properly fulfill their functions and objectives. Traditionally, university autonomy was linked to academic freedom and academic self-government, which are the legacy of the Humboldtian University (Anonymity, 1970; Fumasoli et al., 2014). Academic freedom refers to the freedom of the individual scholar in his/her teaching and research to pursue truth wherever it seems to lead without fear of punishment for having violated some political, social or religious orthodoxy (Berdahl, 1990). Academic self-government is concerned with the collective control of academics in academic matters (Musselin, 2006).

In earlier times, universities were committed to the advancement, validation and dissemination of knowledge for its own sake. They were protected by law and funded by the state in order to safeguard against any external intervention with the freedom of scientific inquiry (Ben-David, 1984). The protection of academic freedom and institutional autonomy and the guaranteed funding by the state enabled universities to establish normative and constitutive principles such as free inquiry and intellectual freedom, rationality, academic competence and expertise (Olsen, 2007). The societal valuation on objective knowledge has contributed to a stable relationship between university and society. This relationship can be

interpreted as a pact, which is “*a fairly long-term cultural commitment to and from the University, as an institution with its own foundational rules of appropriate practices, causal and normative beliefs, and resources, yet validated by the political and social system in which the University is embedded*” (Gornitzka, Maassen, Olsen, & Stensaker, 2007, p. 184).

The relationship between university and society was relatively uncontested until the university started to grow, transiting from an “elite” to a “mass” system (Trow, 1970). In the mass higher education system, the goal of teaching function was no longer to train the bureaucracy for the nation-state (Castells, 2001). Instead, it is to provide the technical skills needed for a growing number of jobs that require sophisticated knowledge and educate people to think critically (Altbach, 2008). The research is also increasingly utilitarian oriented and linked to the needs of national economy (Maassen & Stensaker, 2011). These changing expectations on the university over the past three decades have transformed the relationship between the state and higher education institutions (HEI). This is echoed in the recent university reforms dominated by New Public Management (NPM) in many countries that aim to give universities more formal autonomy and to strengthen the actorhood of universities as organizations. However, the increased formal autonomy is always accompanied with increasing accountabilities in order to ensure the responsiveness of universities to the needs of the society (Christensen, 2011). The paradox of deregulation and regulation has gradually redefined institutional autonomy as a series of operational conditions and functions (Fumasoli et al., 2014).

To discuss the increasingly complex relations between government and university with the ethical and philosophical axiom of university autonomy, Berdahl (1990) breaks down the issue of autonomy into two major parts. One is called substantive autonomy, which deals with the power of the university to determine its goals and programs such as what to teach and who to admit. The other is called procedural autonomy that concerns the power of the university to determine the means of pursuing its goals and programs, like finance and staff regulations. Governmental interventions in procedural matters are sometimes onerous and often counter-productive to efficiency, but they do not prevent universities from ultimately achieving their goals, whereas actions that affect substantive issues, for example the establishment of new degree programs, affect the heart of the academe (Berdahl, 1990).

The gradual redefinition of university autonomy has reshaped the distribution of authority within universities. Before turning to the changes in the distribution of authority, it is

worthwhile to first discuss the different forms of authority and the stakeholders they represent in the next section.

2.1.2 Authority in the University

The legitimate power has many forms in higher education systems. Clark (1983) categorizes them into three primary types according to where they are rooted: discipline, enterprise or whole systems. This thesis focuses on forms of authority that are rooted in disciplines and enterprises.

Discipline-rooted/Academic Authority

Discipline-rooted Authority is held by faculty members, and lodged mainly at departments and faculties. Clark (1983) identifies four forms of discipline-rooted authority: personal ruler ship, collegial ruler ship, guild authority and professional authority. The form that is relevant to this study is collegial authority. This is because in China the Academic Committee is the main agency that enables the faculty to participate in the decision making process of undergraduate program introduction.

Collegial authority is distributed and balanced among a group of peers consisting of all or representative professors. It is ideologically supported by the doctrine of academic freedom. Based on their professional expertise, these professors are entitled to exercise collective controlled over teaching and research matters in the department, faculty and university through the several-hour meetings (Clark, 1983).

Bureaucratic/Administrative authority

The form of enterprise-based authority concerned in this study is bureaucratic authority (Clark, 1983). This authority is lodged primarily at institutional level. It is formally delegated to hierarchical positions and offices in the university, such as the president, provost, deans and heads of the department, who coordinate with each other according to laws and rules. As their job-rewards and careers success depend directly on the apparent success of the university, values and interests of these administrators can be different from those of the faculty (Clark, 1983).

Authority distribution in the university

Authority is allocated to different actors according to the governance of the university, i.e. the structures and processes through which participants interact with and influence each other (Birnbaum, 1991). Traditionally, universities were governed by senior professors with a symbolic leadership. According to Fumasoli et al. (2014), symbolic leadership consisted of selected professors who acted as university president, dean or department head for a limited period of time. They dealt with teaching and research matters through collective agreement, and with the assistance of an administrative support structure that was responsible for basic administrative tasks. As such, the university governance was characterized by a high level of professional autonomy and a high level of faculty participation in the management.

This balance of power between academics and administrators changed fundamentally by NPM-inspired reforms introduced in the late 1980s and 1990s in many countries (Fumasoli et al., 2014). The decentralization and regulation elements, which are based on a combination of new institutional economic theory and management theory, place greater emphasis on the formalization and responsibility concerning leadership alongside a stronger task specialization (Christensen & Læg Reid, 2007; Larsen, Maassen, & Stensaker, 2009). As a consequence, the role of academics in university governance and management declined substantially (Amaral, Jones, & Karseth, 2002). The traditional substantive and procedural authority of academics over primary activities in the university was replaced by an executive structure comprised of increasingly professionalized managers and administrators (Fumasoli et al., 2014).

Meanwhile, there are struggles trying to balance the increasing administrative power with processes of “shared governance” articulated in the 1996 Statement on Government of Universities and Colleges. This statement, which is jointly formulated by the Association of Governing Board of American Colleges and Universities, American Association of University Professors and American Council on Education, suggests that the faculty should have primary authority for such substantive areas as curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction, research etc. Clark (1998) in his analysis of entrepreneurial university, while recognizing the importance of strengthening the steering core, also emphasizes the importance of reconciling new managerial values with traditional academic ones.

Different emphasis on the ideological and practical basis for university governance and management has produced variance in the way in which administrative and academic

decision-making structures are organized (Larsen et al., 2009). In general there are two main types of governance structures in different European higher education systems: dual and unitary (Estermann & Nokkala, 2009). In the unitary structure, the academic authority and administrative authority is integrated. An individual actor or a single collective body holds the decision-making authority in relation to both administrative and academic matters. While in the dual structure, there is a separation between the two authorities. Actors and bodies exercising administrative authority are responsible for administrative matters, and those representing the academic authority are in charge of academic decisions. The two decision-making structures are parallel, with each either being equal or in a hierarchical position to one another (Larsen et al., 2009).

After given some theoretical considerations on the issue of autonomy and authority distribution in the university, it is now time to adapt them to this study. Therefore, next section will present the analytical framework in order to measure and explain the outcomes of the case study.

2.2 Analytical framework

Taking the above considerations as point of departure, this study adopts a neo-institutional approach. The neo-institutional perspective on university change highlights the embeddedness of the university in the social and cultural contexts that affect micro-translation of individuals (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). Following the argument of Hall and Taylor (1996), this study combines different schools of new institutionalism to analyze why Chinese higher education institutions choose to decentralize the decision making in the university when there is a global pursuit of efficiency (Christensen et al., 2014) and how the existing national and institutional culture as well as individual actions would circumscribe the range of institutional creation of this new practice.

2.2.1 Institutions, institutional change and the role of actors

Institutions

The analytical framework of this study is built based on an institution, which is conceived as *“a relatively enduring collection of rules and organized practices, embedded in structures of meaning, and resources that are relatively invariant in the face of turnover of individuals and*

changing external circumstance” (Olsen, 2009, p. 9). There are three central building blocks of an institution: regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive elements (Scott, 2013).

- **Regulative elements:** The regulative elements of institutions are embodied in different written documents such as organizational charts, guidelines and rules. These regulations structure institutional behavior through the standardization and formalization of operating procedures. The behavioral mechanism is using incentives or coercion to make people follow rules. The institutional logic underlying this pillar is instrumentality. Rules are crafted and structures designed to channel the actions of decision-makers in certain directions in order to realize collective goals in the future.
- **Normative elements:** The normative pillar of an institution includes both socially created values and norms. Such norms and values are often in forms of models and standards. They prescribe appropriate activities for particular individuals in specified positions. The central consideration for actors committed to the normative standard is: what is the appropriate behavior for them to carry out given their roles and within certain situation. Therefore, the empirical indicators of the existence of normative institutions are accreditations and certifications.
- **Cultural-cognitive elements:** The third pillar of an institution emphasizes the shared definition of the nature and properties of roles and actions. The shared definitions are developed empirically through habituated and objectified behaviors. Hence institutionalized actions are replicated by latecomers because they are taken-for-granted ways of doing things. The prevailing logic employed to justify compliance is orthodoxy. Each actor is motivated to comply with the shared norms because otherwise his/her actions cannot be understood by others in the system.

The different elements of an institution can be combined in various forms to produce varying degree of social stability, as each of them provides a basis of legitimacy for stability. Legitimacy is defined by Suchman (as cited in Colyvas & Powell, 2006) as “*a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of the entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed systems of norms, values, beliefs and definitions.*” Since these elements have different substantive focus, the bases of legitimacy they provide are different and may be in conflict. When cognitive, normative and regulative supports are well aligned, they can produce formidable strength in supporting the social order. Whereas

misalignment between them would lead to situations of confusion and conflict, providing conditions that are highly likely to give rise to institutional change (Scott, 2013).

Institutional change and role of actors

Institutional change is conceptualized as change in the existing regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive components of institution. It is a process of de-institutionalization of the existing practice and re-institutionalization of the new action (Scott, 2013). Such conceptualization emphasizes that institutional change needs to be examined not only in terms of the three pillars but also how changes in these pillars interact with each other in the process. The former is important for examining what has changed, while the latter investigates how much has been changed and how stable such change will be, i.e. the level of institutionalization of new practice, which will be elaborated with the attachment to our case later.

As institutions are sustained, altered and extinguished through everyday activities of individuals, it is important to understand the role of individuals in institutional works. In new institutional theories individuals are not portrayed simply as “over-socialized cultural dopes” (Colyvas & Powell, 2006). They are also substantially empowered actors whose actions are based on the “logic of consequence” and “logic of appropriateness” (Christensen, Lægreid, Roness, & Røvik, 2007). Individuals act based on the former logic seek to maximize the degree of goal achievement, while those in line with the latter prefer actions that are considered appropriate in institutional contexts (Hall & Taylor, 1996; Meyer, 2008). As stated earlier, this study combines insights from different schools of neo-institutionalism, so it assumes there are varied combinations of the two logics guiding individual behavior in an actual situation, such as one logic operating alone, or the two work together, but with one assuming primacy.

The operation of different (combination of) logic leads to different levels of institutionalization. In situations that logic of consequence prevails, actors will resist new practices if they will be worse off by making changes, even if these new practices provide better solutions and are compatible with existing institutions. It follows that when confronted within the same choice, actors with prevailing logic of appropriateness will actively work on the construction of institutions. However, what makes an action appropriate is a normative and institutional foundation based on past experience, which provides the filters for

individuals to interpret both the situation and themselves (Thelen, 1999). Hence, the understanding of appropriate action can be highly divergent in organizations that take different developmental trajectories.

2.2.2 Adaptation: indicators of change in power redistribution in the undergraduate program establishment

As stated earlier, the focus of this study is on the redistribution of authority in the introduction of undergraduate programs within the university. The authority distribution in the university concerns (1) the design of the formal organizational structure and rules of process used to get the task done and (2) the legitimate power of different actors. These different aspects of authority distribution can be seen as constituting institutions. On the one hand, the formal organizational structure and rules of processes, by defining roles not only determine who are involved in the decision-making process but also constrain their behaviors by restricting the scope of what they can do. On the other, the expertise of each actor and the special identity of the university discussed in the first section provide the normative and cultural-cognitive basis of legitimate power for different roles. Thus, the authority reallocation in this case can be conceptualized as institutional change.

The effect of institutional change in this study focuses mainly on the process of institutionalizing the new formal and informal rules in relation to the establishment of new undergraduate programs provided by the national policy initiatives. This is because the old way of introducing programs will be automatically destabilized with the increasing institutionalization of the new practices in the university. However, the organizational arrangement of the old way can constrain actors, and thus impact the degree of the institutionalization of the new approaches.

Institutionalization involves the development of the regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive elements of the new approaches to introduce a new undergraduate program as well as strengthening the alignment between them. In this case of study, the regulative institutionalization of authority redistribution in opening new undergraduate programs includes the formalization and standardization of establishment procedures that reduce uncertainty and conflict concerning who does what, when and how. Formalization refers to the extent to which communications and procedures are written and filed, while standardization concerns the degree according to which certain procedures (e.g. decision-

making, information provision) are repeatable after a given set of rules (Fumasoli et al., 2014). Special attention has to be given to the source of formalization, as it is assumed that the degree of formalization is increased with the increasing autonomy. Accordingly, empirical indicators of the development and province of regulative institutions are: changes in regulations concerning program establishment, and clarity on the allocation of formal authority among leadership level, administrative units and faculties.

Table 1: Indicators for regulative pillar

Adaptation of regulative element to authority distribution	Indicators
Regulatory processes involve the standardization and formalization of procedures of establishing new undergraduate degree programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in regulations • Clarity on the allocation of formal authority

Institutional work on the normative elements requires gaining legitimacy in relation to the norms and values from the social environments (Christensen et al., 2007). This concerns how behavioral rules are to be described, explained and justified, with a common vocabulary and success criteria (Olsen, 2009). Empirical indicators of the existence and pervasiveness of normative institutions in this study are: a) the socialized norms and values on the legitimate sources of authority in China in this dimension, and b) the common vocabulary related to authority distribution on the university regulations for academic decisions in general and undergraduate program establishment in particular.

Table 2: Indicators for normative pillar

Adaptation of normative element to authority distribution	Indicators
Normative institution concerns the university's incorporation of socialized norms and values on who should participate in the decision-making process concerning the establishment of undergraduate programs i.e. the resonance between organizational and environmental norms and values.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the common vocabulary of the university regulations on the authority distribution • Identify the socialized norms on the legitimate sources of authority in the decision-making process in this dimension

Institutional work on the cultural-cognitive aspects contains the increasing taken-for-grantedness of these new approaches and boosting their cognitive legitimacy (Colyvas & Powell, 2006). Based on the situation in Chinese higher education, empirical indicators of the development and degree of the cultural-cognitive institutions are to be found in the composition and status of the Academic Committee, as well as the extent to which the new practice is taken-for-granted. The Academic Committee is expected to enable the faculty to exercise its right to participate in the decision-making process of introducing new undergraduate programs. If there are non-academic members, such composition of an academic decision-making body will raise an issue about whether and how decisions made within this body are influenced by the identity of its members. The answer to this question can help identify whose interests are emphasized and prioritized in the decision-making process, and thus infer underlying beliefs and assumptions on the appropriate way of authority distribution in the university. Attention will also be paid to the alignment of the new procedure with previous *de facto* routines in order to examine changes.

Table 3: Indicators for cultural-cognitive pillar

Adaptation of cultural-cognitive element to authority distribution	Indicators
Cultural-cognitive institutionalization implies an increasing shared understanding of the legitimate authority in the undergraduate program introduction and the taken-for-grantedness of these new approaches and boosting their cognitive legitimacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The composition and status of Academic Committee • Previous <i>de facto</i> routines of decision-making in program introduction

Institutionalization is a product of the coincident development of the above three elements. Given that the three processes do not march in the lock step with each other, institutionalization of the new practice does not necessarily proceed in a linear manner. There could be instances of “both thorough and extensive or incomplete and partial institutionalization” (Colyvas & Powell, 2006, p. 346). Thus, a distinction can be made between low, medium and high levels of institutionalization, depending on how the three elements are aligned with each other in the work of creating and maintaining institutions.

According to Colyvas and Powell (2006), the low level of institutionalization implies that the legitimacy of 'new approaches' is primarily social-political. Changes in regulations are made and a formal structure is created to include external vocabularies, but they are not yet internalized by those within the organization (normative and cognitive aspects). Hence, roles are ambiguous, and procedures are neither standardized nor formalized. New practices are usually not considered a viable threat to the existing practice. When the level of institutionalization is medium, procedures and structures are consolidated. The ambiguity of roles and values decreases, and there is a shift from social-political legitimacy towards cultural-cognitive legitimacy (Colyvas & Powell, 2006). At the middle stage new practices can prompt debates and oppositions due to the reaction from incumbents, leading to a failed or very limited institutionalization (Colyvas & Powell, 2006). When institutionalization is high, 'new ways of doing things' become sufficiently theorized and objectified, thus there is decreasing need for explanation and articulation (Tolbert & Zucker, 1996).

The shift to cultural-cognitive legitimacy at the middle level of institutionalization brings forward the importance of belief systems in higher education. Clark (1983) identifies four basic types of academic belief: the culture of the discipline; the culture of individual university; the culture of the academic profession, as discussed in the first section; and the tradition of national higher education system. The belief systems involved in this study are the ones related to the academic profession and the individual university. The significance of institutional culture often becomes apparent in the institutionalization of new practices, particularly if the dominant institutional beliefs are threatened by these institutional works (Christensen et al., 2007), in this case the culture of academic profession. The professional beliefs are described primarily in normative standards, in relation to the norms and values the higher education field is expected to conform to: for substantive matters, the legitimacy for decision-making authority is provided primarily based on professional expertise (Clark, 1983; Mintzberg, 1983; Weick, 1976).

3 EMPIRICAL SETTING

In this chapter the empirical context of this study is described in detail. First, an overview will be given of the Chinese higher education system to understand the environment in which the case universities operate. Main focus will be given to the governance and funding of Chinese higher education from a historical perspective. Here the political, economic and social reasons that shape this system will be discussed in order to help interpret findings correctly. The second section discusses the influence of governance and funding reform on the objectives and introduction procedures for new bachelor's programs. In this section changes in the formal power distribution in relation to the undergraduate program introduction within and without the university will be examined. The final section gives an introduction to the case universities by providing information on profile, facts and figures and the organizational structure. Due to the anonymity requirement of the interviewees, the two universities are labeled as University X and University Y in the thesis. Most of the data and statistics are extracted from websites of MOE, universities and faculties. This thesis claims no liability for the data, as the only purpose is to reveal an overall trend.

3.1 The Chinese higher education system

Since the economic transformation from central-planned to market economy and the open-door policy started in 1978, China has adopted ideas and strategies along the line of neo-liberalism not only in economic reforms but also in the public sector restructuring (Christensen, Dong, & Painter, 2008; Mok & Lo, 2007). This also includes higher education sector, where the governance mode has undergone fundamental changes. In order to understand the current situation, it is necessary to take a look at the university governance in the period from 1949 to the late of 1970s before proceeding to the contemporary university governance at both national and institutional levels. Therefore, the next section will give a brief introduction to the pre-reform higher education governance in China.

3.1.1 University governance in the pre-reform period (1949-1977)

When the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) came into power and established the People's Republic of China in 1949, the state adopted the Soviet Union's model characterized by centralism to restructure the entire higher education system and transform the social, political

and economic system (Cai, 2011). In this centralized model the university was a subsidiary of the government. The central government assumed full responsibility for higher education policy formulation, resources allocation, intra-university management, student admission, study programs, curriculum and job assignment on graduates (X. P. Li, 2000). The aim of this complete restructuring of the entire higher education system was to place HEIs at the immediate service for national economic objectives (Liu & Shi, 2010). In order to achieve these objectives, the government required the HEI to model their internal governance structure after its bureaucratic control mode. As a consequence, the faculty level management was abolished. Instead, tangled and unwieldy administrative offices were established and became the loci of both administrative and academic decisions (Qi & Chen, 2000). Administrative officials and heads of department were appointed with a civil servant rank (Hao & Zhou, 2012).

The bureaucratic governance structure at both the system and institutional levels was strengthened during the period of political turmoil. The consolidated bureaucratic control completely denied the special identity of the university as an academic institution (Hao & Zhou, 2012). As a consequence, the university was understood mainly as a tool for national objectives. This phenomenon was later termed as ‘bureaucratization’ in China. The notion of bureaucratization in the Chinese university governance places an emphasis on the officialdom-orientation in the belief system of the university staff and the will of the administrators (Rothstein, 2015; Sun, 2006). At the system level, it refers to the heavy-handed governmental interference into the university affairs; at the institutional level, it denotes the questionable intervention of administrative authority into academic affairs through recourse allocation (Hao & Zhou, 2012).

3.1.2 University governance from 1978 to 2010

Governance change at the national level

When the country was recovered from turbulence in the political environment, the opening-up reform has transformed the centrally planning economy and set China on a more rational, market-oriented economy path to modernization (Mok & Lo, 2007). One of its primary tasks was to rebuild a higher education system suitable for economic development (Wang, 2010). It is in this new market-economy context that centrally controlled governance in the higher

education system was increasingly criticized and university autonomy began to elicit attention (Cai, 2011). In 1985 the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CCCPC) issued the Decision on the Reform of the Educational System (hereafter referred to as 1985 Decision), which marked the beginning of continuous governance reforms that aligned the higher education system with the newly emerging market economy (Mok & Lo, 2007). The 1985 Decision acknowledged that university autonomy was a priority. HEIs were delegated a certain degree of discretionary authority in dimensions such as personnel management as well as academic and financial decisions (CCCPC, 1985). Special attention needs to be given to the stipulation that “individual HEI may be given different autonomous rights in different situations” (CCCPC, 1985). Under this regulation, it became possible to differentiate HEIs in terms of the level of governmental control.

Following this guideline, a series of policies have been successively issued to further increase university autonomy. For example, the Program for Educational Reform and Development in China, which is jointly issued by CCCPC and the State Council in 1993, specified in Article 18 that university governance should be partly devolved from the central to the provincial governments. Today, at the level of central government, 73 regular¹ HEIs are administered by the Ministry of Education (MOE), and 40 by other ministries (MOE Statistics 2013). Among the 73 HEIs affiliated to the MOE, 39 are listed in “Project 985”, and 31 are in “Project 211”. There are 81 more “Project 211” universities, most of which are administered by other ministries. The two projects are governmental attempts to improve the quality of teaching and research in higher education. The “Project 985” is a construction project launched in 1998 with an aim to build a few world-class universities. “Project 211” started in 1993 and is the government’s endeavor to strengthen about 100 HEIs as a national priority for the 21st century. At the provincial level, 1661 regular HEIs are under the direct administration of governments of provinces, autonomous regions or municipalities (MOE Statistics 2013).

The establishment of “Project 211” and “Project 985” has differentiated Chinese HEIs vertically in terms of quality. According to the functions of academic features, HEIs can be classified into four types: research institutions, teaching and research institutions, teaching institutions and application oriented institutions. Based on the national priority of higher education development, Chinese HEIs are divided vertically into four layers, as shown in Figure 1. The first layer includes 39 project 985 universities that are considered as research

¹ The term “regular” is used to distinguish these institutions from adult higher education institutions.

universities in China. The remaining 73 project 211 universities are oriented towards both teaching and research and locate in the second layer. In the third layer there are about 668 teaching HEIs (mainly provincial). The last layer comprises of 993 higher vocational colleges.

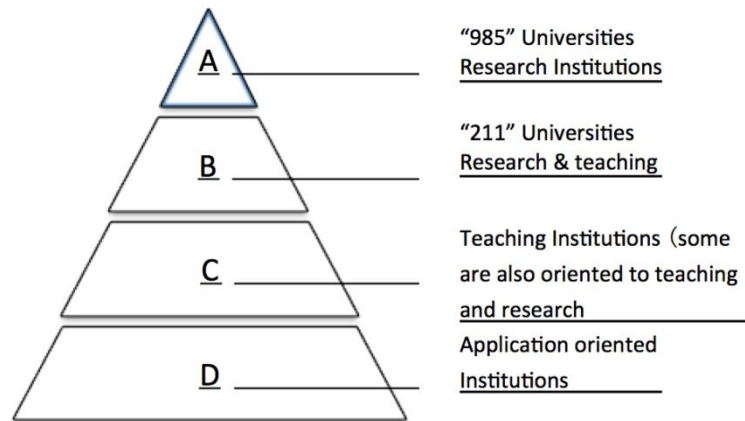


Figure 1 Pyramid of Chinese higher education institutions

Source: Cai, (2011).

This pyramid can also be used to illustrate the autonomy of HEIs. According to the 1985 Decisions, HEIs can be given different degree of autonomy based on their negotiation ability, i.e. the performance of the HEI. The stronger the university is, the more autonomy they have (Lin, 2012). Meanwhile, government leaders wholeheartedly support project 985 and 211 universities, as they are seen as a way not only to rejuvenate the nation but also to assert its soft power in the global world (Mok & Ong, 2014; Postiglione, 2014). Thereby, these universities could enjoy more informal autonomy than lower level HEIs.

The university autonomy was legalized by the Higher Education Law promulgated in 1998. Under this law, Chinese HEIs are legally recognized from their establishment, and shall have the autonomy in matters relating to teaching, research, program development, personnel management, resource allocation and international cooperation. The implementation of decentralization policies has resulted in a shift in university governance model from a state controlled model to a state supervised model (van Vught, 1988). According to a survey on institutional autonomy conducted in 2010, more than half of the respondents (55%) considered their institutions now enjoy much greater autonomy in teaching, research, personnel management and organizational structures (Zhang & Liu, 2012). Nevertheless,

despite that the 1998 law initiated reforms of de-bureaucratization² in the university governance (Hao & Zhou, 2012), the influence of path dependency was prominent. The heavy-handed state invention was relatively common in the university's personnel management, resource supply and program development, according to a survey on the bureaucratization in university governance (National Academy of Education Administration, 2012).

In 2010 a comprehensive reform proposal to modernize Chinese higher education was elaborated in the Outline of China's National Plan for Mid- and Long-term (2010-2020) Education Reform and Development. These reform proposals targeting on problems of bureaucratization in university governance, aim to build a modern higher education system with Chinese characteristics, in which universities are "run according to law, under autonomous governance and democratic supervision, and with public participation" (Government of China, 2010). This move, trying to enhance the performance and social legitimacy of Chinese universities, has significant potential to allow more room to maneuver for public HEIs.

Governance change at institutional level

The 1985 Decision indicates that the government plan to withdraw power from higher education institutions (HEIs) and to give more responsibility to the university president. However, the retreat was hobbled by the Tiananmen Square Affair in 1989 (Cai, 2011). Henceforth, a new responsibility system was introduced in 1990 to put university presidents under the leadership of the Communist Party Committee (Wang, 2010). This new presidential responsibility system was written into the Higher Education Law, which formed a higher education system with Chinese characteristics. The Communist Party Committee (CPC) acts as the governing board. According to Article 39 of the Higher Education Law, it excises unified leadership over university affairs, supports the president in fulfilling his responsibilities, and ensures the socialist orientation of the university by taking responsibilities of political education of administrators, academics and students. The president is the legal representative of the university and undertakes the over-all responsibility for teaching, research and administrative issues under the supervision of the CPC. This dual

² The de-bureaucratization refers to the elimination of inappropriate and illegitimate bureaucratic administration (National Academy of Education Administration, 2012).

leadership consists of a unique internal governance structure of all Chinese public HEIs, as illustrated in Figure 2. There are two heads of university leaders, the president and the party secretary. The fact that both of them have decision-making authority results in ambiguity in the decision-making locus at most Chinese HEIs. There have been reported cases of conflicts between them, despite that a joint administrative-party committee is set up to ensure their communication and collaboration (M. Li & Yang, 2014). The organization of the faculty and departmental governance follows the same dual leadership structure. Leaders at the top level (party secretary, deputy secretaries, president, vice presidents) are appointed by affiliated party-state.

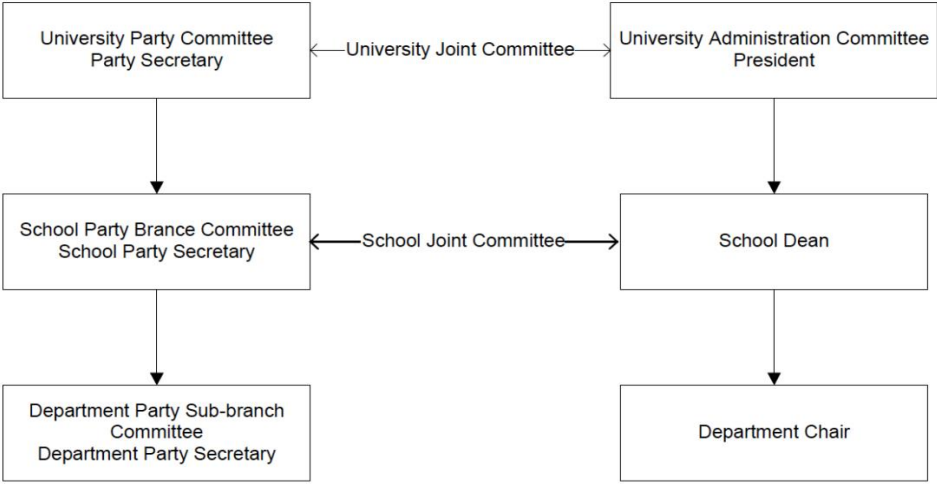


Figure 2 the internal governance structure of Chinese public universities

Source: (Jiang & Wei, 2011)

The Higher Education Law has also required the establishment of an academic committee dealing with academic matters, and a degree committee that decides the degree awarding and the requirements for being a supervisor. All public HEIs have established these two committees by 2005, and some have established other academic agencies such as teaching committee, staff promotion and evaluation committee, etc. (M. Li & Yang, 2014). However, functions of these academic agencies are not clear, and their relationship (parallel or hierarchical) varies across university to university. The ambiguity in the role of and relationship between academic agencies inevitably leads to restricted influence in the university governance. Moreover, these committees are composed of administrative officials (Ai, 2012; Shen, 2000), in which case, there was little difference between academic meetings and administrative meetings (Luo, 2014). Consequently, the power distribution between

academics and administrators changed little, and the increased institutional autonomy had in essence been integrated into the executive structure.

3.1.3 Funding of higher education institutions in China

With the management of most higher education institutions decentralized from the central to the local governments, the responsibility of financing them was also shifted from the former to the latter (CCCPC, 1993). Thereafter, the public universities have been funded mainly by the government to which they are affiliated. After the implementation of the expansion enrollment policy in 1999, the gross enrollment ratio has increased from 9.8% in 1999 to 34.5% in 2013, with the total number of student increasing by more than 30 million (MOE Statistics, 2014). In order to address the rapid expansion of student enrollment and provide sufficient financial resources, the government transformed the single funding channel dependent only on the government into a cost-sharing system with government appropriation as the principal source and private supports and other resources as supplementary sources. The allocation mechanism of the public funding system is a combination of student-based funding and performance-based funding. The latter includes earmarked funding for research and for special projects like “Project 211” and “Project 985” (Wang, 2008). The private funding sources include tuition and other fees, social donations and commercialization (Cai, 2011). Today, tuition and other fees are the second most important source of university income, soaring from 15.1% of the total income in 1996 to 31.5% in 2005 (Wang & Mok, 2014).

The allocation of public funding is unequal. For one thing, there is a big gap in the fund allocation for institutions affiliated with the central and provincial governments. The provincial governments are under greater financial burden, as they are responsible for all institutions located in their respective jurisdiction except for a few that are funded by the central government. This results in a big discrepancy in the funding allocated to the two types of institutions. Take the per-student expenditure in 2011 as an example. In 2011, the average public budget for per-unit cost in the universities subordinated to the local government was 11,980 *Yuan*, while that in the universities affiliated with the MOE was 25,427 *Yuan* (China Educational Finance Statistical Yearbook, 2012). Additionally, the distribution of performance-based funds is also unbalanced among universities under the management of the same government. The funds are centered on prestigious universities (Wang, 2008). For

example, between 2009 and 2013, the fund for project 985 and project 211 universities took up over 70% of the total research funding (XinhuaNet., 2014). In short, the inequity has led to a positive correlated relationship between the type of the HEI and the amount of fund it receives. The higher the HEI ranks in the pyramid of Chinese HEIs, the more funds it receives from the government.

The change in the funding mechanism of higher education system can have a direct influence on the behavior of HEIs (Preffer & Salancik, 1978). Despite the diversification of funding sources, HEIs in the lower level still rely heavily on public funds. Given that public funds are centered on the top-level universities, lower level HEIs are keen to upgrade their levels by following the model of research universities which usually offer a comprehensive range of degree programs. This in turn leads to a convergence upon a single organizational form (Hölttä & Cai, 2012).

3.2 Implications for the power distribution in the introduction of undergraduate programs

In the central-planned era, the establishment of new undergraduate programs was fully controlled by the government. With the degree of the overall university autonomy increasing and public funding decreasing after 1985, there has been a growing demand for autonomy in opening new undergraduate programs from inside the universities. This autonomy was granted to HEIs in 1998 with the promulgation of Higher Education Law. It is specified in Article 33 that HEIs are able to take their initiative in offering and readjusting fields of study and sub-disciplines. Higher Education Law also stipulates the institutional decision-making structure for approving new degree programs. According to Article 42, an academic committee shall be set up for deliberation. However, these regulations were not fully incorporated into Provisions on Opening and Readjusting Undergraduate Programs issued in 1999 (hereafter referred to as Provisions). Provisions is the particular regulation that regulates the establishment of new undergraduate programs. According to Provisions 1999, the discretionary power was still vested in the government. The introduction of new undergraduate degree programs required approval by the government, and sometimes the government would demand public HEIs to open a program closely articulated with the national or local development plans and strategies (Wang, 2010). The government also

controlled the total number of new undergraduate programs to be established in HEIs under its jurisdiction. The maximum number of new program one HEI can open in one year is three.

The role of academic committee was also understated in Provisions 1999, which stipulates that the Academic Committee should be called upon to *pingyi* the proposed undergraduate programs. According the *Xinhua Dictionary* (Chinese), *pingyi* means to comment through discussion. Academic committee with such role is not considered as a legal decision-maker, and it may or may not be consulted with in the decision-making process. According to a survey on bureaucratization, the faculty involvement in the decision-making process of program introduction was very limited (National Academy of Education Administration, 2012). In some HEIs the decision on the introduction of new study programs at bachelor level was made either by the vice president in charge of teaching affairs or director of Teaching Affairs Office without consulting or informing faculties.

In line with the principles of the Outline of China's National Plan for Mid- and Long-term (2010-2020) Education Reform and Development for modernizing Chinese higher education system, the discretionary power was granted to all HEIs with the revision of Provisions in 2012, allowing them to make their own decisions on introducing the first two types of new undergraduate programs included in Classification of Undergraduate Programs in Regular Higher Education Institutions (CUP). CUP is a list of instructional programs at Chinese HEIs. It was initially compiled by MOE in 1954 according to national division of labor (G. L. Zhou & Wu, 2009). Substantial revision and update was made in 1987, 1993, 1998, and 2012. The basis for classifying study programs has been shifting from the occupational classification to disciplines, and thus the number of programs has been reduced from over 1,300 to 502. Moreover, CUP 2012 divides instructional programs into three categories. The first category is foundation programs. The second category is specialized programs that are intended to meet the needs of national development. The third category is government controlled and distributed programs, for example, programs in security and medicine.

Now Chinese HEIs can autonomously introduce the first two types of undergraduate programs listed in CUP 2012. They no longer have to obtain approval of the government on the introduction of a new undergraduate program. Instead, they just need to get the approval of the program committee or academic committee at the institutional level, and publish their decisions online for one month. This step is added to improve transparency of the establishment. Then HEIs will send the documentation to the affiliated government for

verification. The purpose of government verification is to make sure that the information, such as the size of the faculty and facilities, provided by the HEI is true. If there is no fake information, the government will submit the documentation to MOE for filing. However, the introduction of the third type of programs or programs outside the CUP 2012 remains to be approved by the government. The power shift is accompanied with the changing role of the Academic Committee. Provisions 2012 stipulates that the role of the Academic Committee in the review process is *shenyi*. *Shenyi* means to approve or reject through deliberation. Academic Committee with the role of *shenyi* undergraduate program introduction is considered as a compulsory decision-maker. In other words, decisions on which new undergraduate programs to be introduced should be made jointly by the Academic Committee and the president.

In summary there is a shift of decision-making authority in the establishment of new undergraduate programs towards the faculty in reform policies. The influence of a small group of officials is reduced in favor of the Academic Committee. But how have these formal changes been implemented within Chinese universities? How do they affect the power distribution in undergraduate program introduction, especially in interaction with the consolidated administrative authority? In order to examine actual changes, the empirical settings where changes are taking place need be introduced first. Therefore, in the next section a brief introduction to the cases is given in order to get an understanding of how the cases look like before moving to the elaboration on the methodology used to examine changes.

3.3 The cases

3.3.1 University X

University profile

University X was founded in 1950. It was specialized in information technology, and provided service for both military (1950-1978) and the society. In 2000, under the governance reform in China, the university became governed and financed by the provincial government. Since 2006 the university, with its excellence in information science and technology, has gained financial support from the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology of China.

There was also a shift from the sole jurisdiction by the provincial government to joint jurisdiction between the central and local governments.

University X has grown into a comprehensive university which focuses on teaching and research. It plans to build itself into a teaching and research institution that not only plays a significant role in the domain of information and telecommunication, but also develops in the fields of engineering, science, management, and liberal arts.

Facts and figures

By 2014 the university has over 24,000 students, including more than 3,000 postgraduates. It has more than 1,600 academic staff, among which over 180 are professors, and around 400 are associated professors. There are 20 fellows who are honorary or part-time professors from the China Academy of Science and China Engineering Academy, in addition to 100 prominent overseas scholars as visiting professors. The University has 15 faculties, offering 47 undergraduate degree programs, 50 master's degree programs and 2 PhD programs.

The organizational and governance structure of University X

The Higher Education Law stipulates horizontal diffusion of power within universities, but it does not specify the internal structure of HEIs. This allows HEIs to decide their own organizational and management structure. The main governance process of the university X is presented in Figure 3. There are 9 university leaders: the party secretary who is the chairman of the standing committee of CCP, the president who is also the vice chairman of that standing committee, one deputy secretary, five vice presidents and one chair of Discipline Inspection Committee of CCP. The standing committee of CCP is the core policy-making agency at the university. It decides on the university reform and development, and appoints the intermediate leadership. Members of the standing committee include 8 university leaders who are all party members. Major decisions on academic and administrative matters are made by the Council of Presidents whose membership comprises all university leaders. In addition, there are three parallel standing academic units dealing with academic matters. The Degree Committee reviews and takes final action on the awarding of degrees. The Teaching Committee is responsible for evaluating and advising teaching activities in order to improve teaching and learning on campus. Both of the two standing committees are subordinated to the Teaching Affairs Office (TAO). In Chinese HEIs, TAO is responsible for all matters

pertaining to undergraduate education. The Academic Committee is subordinated to the Office of Science and Technology and has duties to review all matters relating to program development including establishment, modification and withdrawal, and make recommendations on policies regarding academic planning and professional recruitment.

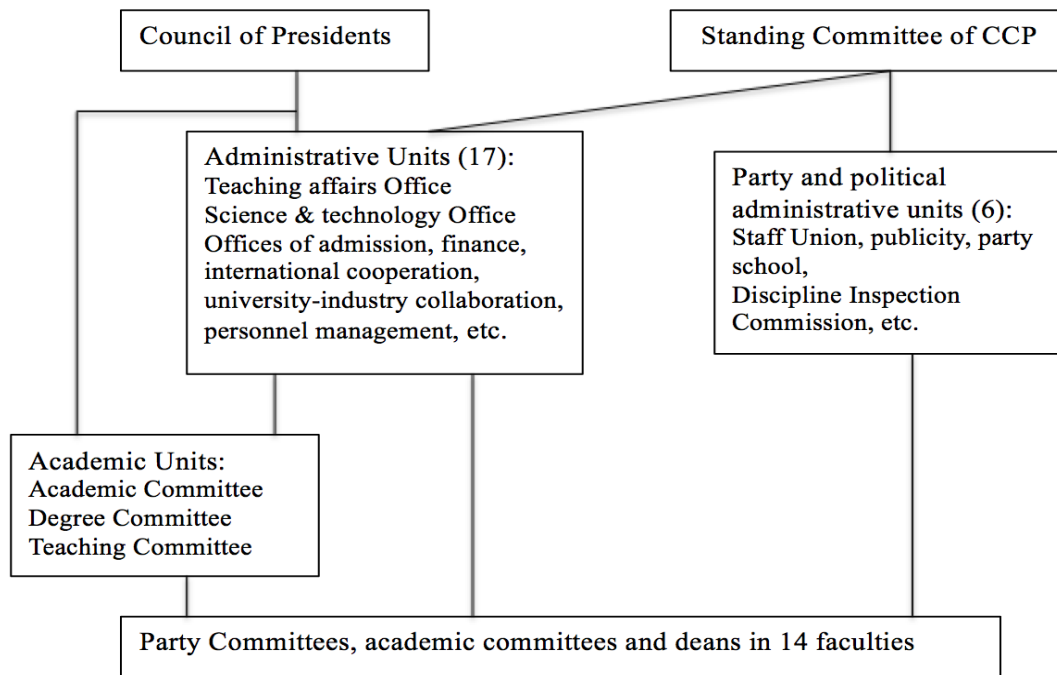


Figure 3 the organizational and governance structure of University X

Source: Based on the author’s analysis of university regulations

Profile of Faculty A

The faculty was established in 2001 and offers only one bachelor’s degree program of liberal arts. In 2013 the faculty introduced another undergraduate degree program, and in 2014 it established a Master’s degree program. As of September 2014, the faculty has 85 academic staff, among which there are 7 professors and 28 associate professors. As a teaching faculty, the major source of funding is the government allocation based on the enrollment numbers. The faculty is led by one party secretary, one deputy party secretary, and three vice deans, who are members of the Faculty Joint Committee. There are three subdivisions of institutional academic units in the faculty: Academic Committee, Degree Committee and Teaching Committee.

3.3.2 University Y

University Profile

University Y was established as a national polytechnic institution in 1953 in a reorganization that brought about Engineering Departments from five universities located in the same region. When the University was recovered from Cultural Revolution, it began to provide programs in selected areas of humanities and social sciences, and to integrate research with teaching. In 2000 it merged with three other institutions so as to be eligible to join “985 Project”. Now it has developed into a prestigious comprehensive university directly under the administration of MOE in China. One mission of the University is to build itself into a world-renowned research university.

Facts and figures

As of April 2015, the University offers a variety of degree programs in 12 disciplines, including 94 bachelor’s degree programs, 225 master’s degree programs, 184 PhD programs, and 39 post-doctoral programs. More than 3,000 faculty members instruct 32,863 undergraduate students, 22,775 graduate students (including PhD candidates) and 1,629 international students under the support of more than 3500 administrative staff.

Organizational and management structures of University Y

The Charter of University Y prescribes its main governance processes. The standing committee of CCP is the highest decision-making agency at the university. The committee is made up of twelve elected members: ten university leaders (the party secretary, the president, one executive vice president, three deputy secretaries, three vice presidents, and one chief accountant) and two senior professors. In terms of the academic and administrative affairs, the main decision-making body is the president with the assistance of the Council of Presidents and the Academic Committee. The Council comprises 15 members including all university leaders and five directors of administrative units. The Academic Committee is the supreme academic body at the university. It has a set of standing committees dealing with different academic matters. The Degree Committee shares the same duties with that of University X, while the Teaching Committee has authorities to deliberate all matters relating to undergraduate teaching including program development, evaluation, and curricula development. Figure 4 presents the organizational and governance structure of University Y.

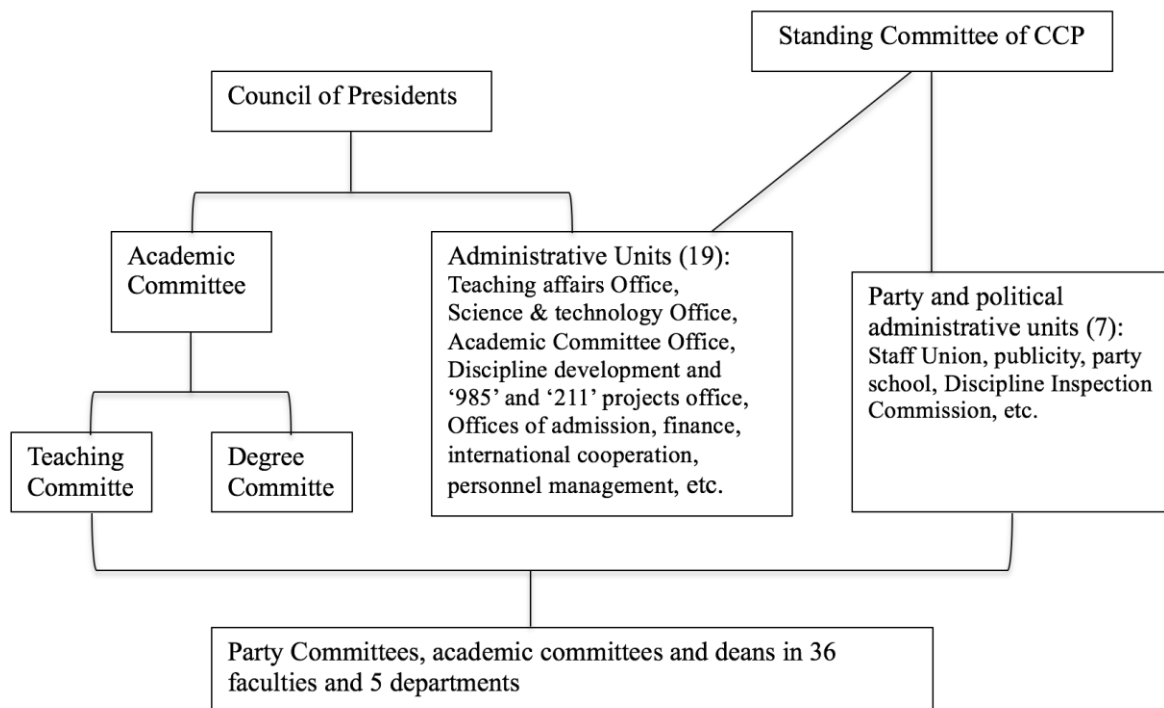


Figure 4 the organizational and governance structure of University Y

Source: Based on the author's analysis of university regulations

Profile of Faculty B

The case faculty has 3 departments, an experiential teaching center and 7 research institutes. The faculty offers 3 PhD programs, 10 master's degree programs, and 4 bachelor's degree programs including the one introduced in 2014. There are 110 faculty members, among which 78 are full-time. Now it has a total enrolment of approximately 700 undergraduates and 300 graduates. Being research oriented, the faculty receives about RMB 10 million research funds per year. Furthermore, the faculty has established long-term cooperation with many international universities and industry.

The organizational and governance structure of the faculty follows that of the University. The Faculty Executive Committee is made up of one dean, three vice deans, one party secretary and one deputy party secretary. The faculty has established three subdivisions of academic agencies: the Academic Committee, Teaching Committee, and Degree Committee, as required by the Bylaw of Academic Committee. It also has a Professor Committee consisted of all professors of the faculty. The committees involved in the program establishment process at this faculty are the Professor Committee and the Teaching Committee.

4 METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the plan of inquiry applied in this study. A case study approach has been used to investigate how the power distribution is changing in terms of the program introduction at the bachelor level and why it is changing in this way. The rationale for choosing this research design is provided through a brief discussion on the ontological and epistemological considerations. This is followed by the description of data collection tools and sampling procedures. This chapter closes with the evaluation of the research design and discussion of its limitations.

4.1 Research design and choices of cases

All research is based on some underlying ontological and epistemological considerations about what constitutes valid research and which research methods are appropriate (Creswell, 2009; Furlong & Marsh, 2010; Kleven, 2008). In order to conduct and evaluate this research, it is therefore important to discuss briefly the philosophical assumptions underpinning this study before an elaboration on the methodological approach is provided.

4.1.1 Ontological and epistemological considerations

The philosophical assumption underlying this study is critical realism. According to Maxwell (2012), such position combines ontological realism with epistemological constructivism. The ontological realist element of this position assumes that social phenomena exist independently of our interpretation and construction of them, while the epistemological constructivist element of the position acknowledges that since not all social phenomena are directly observable, all knowledge about them is partial, incomplete and fallible, grounded in our own perspective and worldview (Furlong & Marsh, 2010; Maxwell, 2012).

This has important implications for the theoretical and methodological considerations of this study. A critical realist position agrees that there are different valid perspectives on the understanding of the world. It argues for the legitimacy of causal explanation in explaining the interaction of the many elements and processes implicated in a given event (Maxwell, 2012; Sayer, 2000). This implies that a specific outcome is the resultant of many factors operating in their actual context, including the mental events and processes that can be the cause of behavior. Therefore, the explanation of how and why power distribution is changing

in this thesis unpacks this process into three elements (see chapter 2) and examines both their individual and combined effects in the Chinese context.

4.1.2 Research design

Given the above ontological and epistemological considerations, this study adopted a research design of a qualitative case study. According to Yin (2014), “*a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident*” (p. 16). The twofold definition shows that a case study is not merely a data collection method but comprises an all-encompassing method that is comfortable with using both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Bryman (2012) makes a distinction between the two methods according to whether the emphasis is on the number or words during the collection and analysis of data. This study is qualitative in terms of the type of data and methods of analysis it uses. The data were collected through public document and semi-structured interviews, afterwards they were analyzed based on thick description.

This study chooses a case study because it is suitable if the research interest is in process of monitoring or causal explanation (Merriam, 1998). According to Yin (2014), a case study should be considered when: a) the focus of the study is to answer “how” and “why” questions; b) the investigator has no control over events; or c) the contextual conditions are believed to be relevant to the phenomenon under study. This study is interested in exploring how the intra-university decision-making structure is changing with regards to program introduction at the bachelor level after the issue of policies such as Outline 2010 and Provisions 2012. In order to discover the extent to which the policy is implemented, the national and institutional settings has to be described, which affect the process of institutionalization of the new practice. Therefore, a case study was selected for addressing the research problem.

A case study can be conducted using one or more than one cases (Yin, 2014). This study wants to investigate the institutionalization process of the new program introduction practice in different universities, because the evidence generated from multiple cases selected from a heterogeneous population would be more compelling (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2014). It can be seen from Chapter 3 that Chinese universities are highly diversified. Though in the same national political and cultural environment, each university can have its very specific university culture in which the decision making structure was developed, especially those

located in different layers of the HEI pyramid. It would thus be impossible to capture a true picture of the decision-making structure without considering the local context within which it occurred. Hence, this study decides to compare the institutionalization process in more than one university. Each university is the subject of an embedded, single case study. Units of analysis involve both the institutional and faculty levels. However, as the extensive resources and time required by conducting a multiple-case study is beyond the means of the author, only two universities were selected, each with only one faculty as the subunit of analysis.

4.1.3 Rationales for the choice of cases

There are three reasons behind the choice of University X and University Y. First and foremost, both of them have opened new undergraduate programs since the issue of CUP 2012 and Provisions 2012. The University X established two new undergraduate programs in different faculties in 2013 and three new undergraduate programs in 2014. The University Y introduced two undergraduate programs in 2014. The second rationale is illustrated in the previous section. University X and University Y are different types of university, the former locating in layer C of the pyramid of Chinese HEIs (see Figure1 on p. 21) while the latter in layer A. The inclusion of the two different universities is expected to provide a relatively comprehensive picture of Chinese higher education system.

The third and very practically reason to choose these two universities lies in the comparatively easier access to the universities. China is a collectivist country, in which people are integrated early into strong and cohesive in-groups (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). If there is not a facilitated entry into the collectivist network, one may not be able to have access to the group and will not be able to get their trust. That is why *guanxi*³ is so important in social interactions. Without *guanxi* “one simply cannot get anything done” (Davies, Leung, Luk, & Wong, 2003, p. 43). This very different culture poses fundamental difficulty in gaining access which may not be experienced in the West when conducting participatory social science research in China (L. H. Zhou & Nunes, 2013). Aware of this difficulty, the author purposively chose University X where the author graduated. The decision to select University Y was made when the author obtained support of the dean of the case faculty under the help of a Norwegian professor. The dean recommended two leaders

³ *Guanxi* means intimate and reciprocal relationships among individuals in which favors and information are exchanged over time (L. H. Zhou & Nunes, 2013).

who are in charge of program development in the faculty and provided their personal contact information. However, this did not secure entry into the faculty as initially expected. As the author has no direct *guanxi* with the faculty or the university, only one leader agreed to participate, but refused to recommend more interviewees later. Without his recommendation, the author failed to gain consent from potential interviewees. Administrators and professors in China are not likely to volunteer readily or even agreed to be interviewed due to high levels of power distance and the lack of trust (L. H. Zhou & Nunes, 2013). The failure of gaining entry to enough interviewees in University Y may increase the possibility of misinterpretation, as the institutionalization process in this university could not be understood from a number of perspectives. This leads to the decision to treat University Y as a minor case. Inference on this case will be made based on the triangulation of the interviews with document analysis.

4.2 Sources of evidence

In order to identify how the power distribution in the introduction of undergraduate programs in our cases change (or not), we have to first focus on the formal changes, i.e. the legal framework, and then actual changes in the regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive aspects. Hence, this study is going to collect data from the following two sources.

4.2.1 Documents

A comprehensive collection of relevant documents was constructed from all the documents available on the official websites of MOE, universities and faculties. From this collection, documents dealing with the university governance and the processes on the undergraduate program introduction were selected. The analysis of these documents was done through comparison of episodes of documents at national and institutional levels. First, a comparison of episodes of policies on university governance reforms was made to examine formal changes in the establishment of undergraduate programs. For example, changes in structures that are responsible for various aspects of program introduction and their mutual relationships. Secondly, different versions of regulation on the governance and management of the institution were analyzed and compared to identify the extent of institutionalization of introducing undergraduate programs, including the clarification of bodies responsible for the decision-making as well as the formalization and standardization of procedures. Documents were also used to map the focus on the normative and cultural-cognitive aspects of program

introduction by examining changes in words and expressions on the status and responsibility of academic body. As most of these documents are of public interest, their authenticity and credibility can be considered to be high (Scott 1990, as cited in Bryman, 2012). Documents that have been used in this study are provided in Appendix 1.

4.2.2 Interviews

The interviews essentially serve to reveal how the process of setting up a new undergraduate program is taking place in practice. By interviewing university members involved in the decision-making process and members from the academic committee, it is also possible to investigate previous routines and informal aspects on the authority distribution in this dimension. Data collected from interviews will be coded in normative and cultural-cognitive categories in order to identify whether and how the new practice of program introduction resonates with the previous one in the organization in the normative and cultural aspects. Findings from interviews will be aligned with institutional document analysis to reveal how much the formal changes have been implemented in practice, i.e. the extent of institutionalization of practices for establishing new undergraduate programs.

Eight semi-structured interviews have been conducted with interviewees at both institutional (2) and faculty levels (6). The interviewees were selected through purposive sampling. First, the initial interviewee was identified through the analysis of documents, website research and recommendation. More interviewees were identified and added after knowing the *de facto* procedure and decision-making participants from the first interview. All of the interviewees are the key members involved in the decision-making process and members of the academic committee. They have also been active for a long time in the case university, which makes it possible to catch a cultural-cognitive change. The composition of the interviewees is shown in the following table. For the reason of anonymity, only information on the position of interviewees is provided.

Table 4 Composition of interviewees

Position	Level	Code
Dean	Faculty	UX-1
Vice dean	Faculty	UX-2
Academic committee member	Faculty	UX-3
Academic committee member	Faculty	UX-4
Academic committee member	Institution	UX-5
Academic officer	Institution	UX-6
Vice dean	Faculty	UY-7
Academic committee member	Faculty	UY-8

Each potential interviewee was initially contacted by email with an explanation on the research. The response rate was very low. Out of 13 contacted only one replied and agreed to participate. In cases where no response came, 8 phone calls were made and 7 were agreed to participate. Given the two universities are located in different cities and the lack of time and money, the face-to-face interviews were conducted only in University Y that is near to the residence of the author. The interviews with interviewees of University X were conducted through telephone. The author realizes the possible problem with the telephone interview (see e.g. Bryman, 2012), but interviewees of University X were quite expansive in their replies and there were no recording problems. The interviews normally took 30-60 minutes. All the interviews were held in Chinese with an interview guideline. The general interview guide was provided in Appendix 2, but it should be noted that the general interview guide was adapted to fit the interviewee according to his/her position. For one interviewee, some questions not on the list were also asked based on what he said.

All interviewees agreed to be recorded and were completely anonymized according to the written or oral consent. Right after conducting an interview, the record was transcribed in Chinese. The quotes used in this thesis were translated by the author who is a Chinese native speaker.

4.3 Validity and limitations of the study

4.3.1 Validity

The discussion of the quality of this research follows Kleven (2008), which shares the same ontological and epistemological position of this study. Kleven (2008) provides four types of validity relevant in qualitative research: construct validity that concerns the extent to which the indicators represent constructs, statistical validity concerning if a tendency is trivial or not, internal validity which concerns inferences to causal explanation between elements, and external validity that concerns the generalizability of inferences. As this thesis has assured that tendency identified is not trivial through literature review and research design, it only discusses construct validity, internal validity and external validity here.

Construct validity

Construct validity concerns the quality of conceptualization and operationalization of concepts being studied, thus it can be seen as the foundation for other tests of quality. In order to ensure the quality of conceptualization, main emphasis is given to the clear definition of relevant concepts, for example, the definition of academic authority and the relevant form of academic authority for this study. Another example is the conceptualization of institution in terms of regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive components and the related conceptualization of institutionalization through the alignment of these three components.

The study also clarifies how the concepts are operationalized. First, a number of indicators are identified in each aspect of the institution for authority distribution in Chinese universities based on the literature review on the governance of Chinese higher education. Second, the extent of institutionalization is explained in terms of three levels (see Chapter 2) to measure how much has changed in the authority distribution in case universities. Apart from the clear definition of concepts and clarification of their operationalization, multiple sources of evidence (document analysis and interviews) have been used in order to increase construct validity (Yin, 2014).

Internal validity

The issue of internal validity pertains to how far it is possible to make inferences from operationalized construct. The two major threats to internal validity of this study are the

quality of empirical data and the means to deal with these data. The latter threat is dealt with by developing a robust analytical framework and by discussing the adaptation of the elements of the analytical framework to identify changes in the authority distribution in undergraduate program introduction.

The first threat is taken care of by efforts to achieve conceptual equivalence when translating interview guideline. The interview guideline was designed in English and consulted with the supervisor. Aware of some nonequivalent translation between English and Chinese in certain concepts of university governance (see, e.g. Zhong & Hayhoe, 2001), the author verified the translation of concepts and terms by referring to Chinese publications on intra-university governance and by semi-pilot testing with two Chinese professors. This allowed removing potential terminological ambiguities and conceptual misunderstanding of interviewees. However, the author does acknowledge the possibility of misinterpretation due to the small number of interviewees. To improve the internal validity of inference, the University Y is considered as a minor case, simply used to provide a glimpse of the diversity of Chinese higher education system. As for University X, it remains to be highly centralized (more detail in Chapter 5). Not many people are involved in the decision-making in the faculty, and those who were involved were included in the sample. Therefore, it should be able to capture the real dynamics concerning changes in authority distribution in that case university.

External validity

External validity deals with the possibility of generalizing the finding of a case study to a wider context or other contexts. As mentioned earlier, Chinese public HEIs are diverse. It is thus problematic to produce general knowledge based on a study of two cases. However, the findings of this study can offer working hypothesis that may be appropriate for understanding other similar cases. This form of generalization is called ‘naturalistic generalization’, and it places the responsibility for making generalizations more on the reader than on the writer (Stake, 2009). To enhance external validity of inference, this study provided a thick description of the cases to allow readers to assess the degree of similarity between cases investigated and those to which the findings are to be applied.

4.3.2 Limitations of the study

Apart from the limitation of small sample size discussed above, there are two more limitations. First, this study only focuses on the authority redistribution in the establishment of undergraduate programs. It does not systematically analyze the changes in the internal governance structure beyond the program introduction at the bachelor level. The narrow focus of this study was seen as a necessary limitation, because it allows for a closer analysis on the effect of internal governance reforms in one particular dimension that directly affects the primary activities and the positioning of the university. Moreover, change in the locus of decision-making in this dimension is not a separate issue from organizational change of university governance. They are closely interlocked in the way that progress in one promotes the other. Therefore, the narrow focus of this study might be considered less problematic than it seems at first sight.

Second, the study is also limited in terms of the time period under analysis, as the implementation period is short in examining changes in higher education. Different choices on the cases have implications on how much changes will be identified, as the local contexts of the university are very diverse. Universities located in the same level of the pyramid of Chinese HEIs may have different degree of autonomy in this dimension in different provinces, and this affects the authority redistribution within universities, as indicated by an interviewee. Nevertheless, this limitation will be explicitly discussed in relation to the conclusions drawn and suggestions for future research in the Conclusion chapter.

5 FINDINGS

This chapter presents findings in two stages. In the first stage the actual establishment procedure at University X and Y will be examined in detail. The crucial questions to ask are: How is the proposal for new undergraduate degree program developed? Who are relevant actors? And how they interact with each other? In the second section, the establishment procedures at two universities are analyzed and discussed according to institutional indicators presented earlier in the conceptual framework in order to see how the power relation has been altered in the decision-making structure of program establishment. However, as data are collected only from Faculty B at University Y, the analysis and discussion is mainly focused on the faculty level. Finally, a comparison is made between the two universities in order to identify possible factors that affect their ability and willingness to implement reform policies.

5.1 Characterizing the Process of Undergraduate Program Establishment

5.1.1 Program introduction procedure at the bachelor level in University X

According to the Manual of Educational Management and complemented with interviews, the establishment of new undergraduate programs takes the following steps.

1. Planning and announcement

Purpose of the first stage is planning and announcement. TAO makes an annual development plan of undergraduate degree program according to the University's Five-Year Plan, which is approved by the University's CPC. TAO determines the number of new programs to be established in one year and informs faculties of the timeline and detailed procedures and requirements for establishing a new undergraduate program (UX-5).

2. Preparation for application at the faculty

Purpose of this stage is to make and approves proposals on new bachelor's programs. Usually proposals and decisions for new undergraduate programs are made within the faculty or department. After making decisions on which program to establish, the vice dean for educational matters needs to produce a report on the analysis of market demand and

assessment of faculty resources available for providing this program. This report is submitted it to TAO together with application forms (UX-3).

In Faculty A ideas for establishing new programs usually come from the faculty leadership (UX-2). When the Faculty planned to establish a new undergraduate program in 2013, the vice-dean for educational matters proposed two programs (UX-2). However, the two proposals were not known to faculty members (UX-4 & 5). The selection was made by the vice-dean alone after discussing privately with other deans and gaining their approval (UX-2). When the new program to be introduced is decided, professors and associate professors who are qualified to teach core areas were called upon to complete the application form attached to Provisions 2012 (UX-5). The application form asks for basic information about the degree program including a statement of purpose and need, expected enrollment size in each of its first five years of operation, the curriculum, and the availability of resources for the program, etc. The final application form is submitted to TAO together with other required materials for preliminary review.

3. Preliminary Assessment

When TAO receives the application from a faculty, it evaluates the general quality by examining for example whether the proposed curriculum meets national and institutional curriculum requirements and creates a pre-selection list of candidate programs (UX-1). The vice-dean and program director from qualified faculties will receive an invitation to the presentation at the oral defense. In practice this stage is where administrative intervention is most likely to take place in University X (UX-3). Faculty A had submitted its application twice in 2013. The application was rejected the first time simply because a vice president who was not charged with educational affairs found the materials presented in the forms unacceptable. However, when the almost same materials were submitted two months later, it was accepted and approved (UX-4).

4. Oral defense

The focus of the Oral Defense Committee is primarily on strategic aspects when reviewing program applications. Questions raised concern three aspects: the influence of the proposed program on the existing program structure of the university and its alignment with the University's strategic position; market demands; and facilities (UX-6). Membership of the

committee is dependent on the program to be assessed. University leaders and directors of relevant administrative units are permanent members of this committee. The other members are external experts (at least three) who are invited by TAO and work in relevant subject areas (UX-6). These external experts, whose presence is required by the local government, mainly concern themselves with the intellectual development in the relevant field (UX-1). According to the presentation of the candidate faculty, the Committee produces a list of those qualified.

5. Task of the Academic Committee

In this stage the Academic Committee of the University is called upon by TAO to review the result of the Oral Defense Committee (UX-6). The Academic Committee prepares an assessment according to specified criteria and categories. Members of the Academic Committee receive an abstract of the application and the list of review criteria from TAO (UX-5). They grade individually the application according to the criteria and fill out a comment form. The grading form and comment form are then sent to TAO for calculation. On the basis of their grading and comments TAO calculates the average score of each application and selects those getting the highest scores for final approval by the Council of Presidents.

6. Final decision

The Council of Presidents decides whether to accept or reject the recommendation. In practice “the review of the Council is now more of a formality”, and the Council seldom rejects the recommendation of the Academic Committee (UX-6). However, it should be noted that members of the Council overlaps with the oral defense committee. The Council is made up of all university leaders, while they are also permanent members of the oral defense committee.

According to the above examination, the following actors and their roles in the procedures of establishing new undergraduate programs have been identified and are presented in Table 5.

Table 5 Approval process for new undergraduate programs in University X

Sequential Procedure	Actors	Roles
<i>Proposal Development</i>	Vice-dean	Proposing and deciding the program to be offered
	Instructors	Completing application forms
<i>Preliminary Assessment</i>	Directors of Teaching Affairs Office	Preparing pre-selection by evaluating general qualification; Coordinating to relevant committees
<i>Oral Defense</i>	University leaders; Directors of relevant administrative offices; External experts working in relevant subject area	Reviewing and making selection based primarily on administrative considerations
<i>Selection Proposal</i>	Academic Committee	Reviewing the decision of the oral defense committee according to specified criteria and schema
<i>Final approval</i>	Council of Presidents	Endorsing the selection proposal

In the beginning, the vice-dean for educational matters reflects on possible undergraduate degree programs and makes decisions after consulting with other deans. Then instructors are called upon to prepare a detailed proposal and fill in application forms. Consequently, faculty members are rather attending actors than actual decision-makers. Completed application forms have to be vetted by TAO and approved by Oral Defense Committee, Academic Committee and Council of Presidents. The institutional approval focuses mainly on market demands and infrastructure (UX-2, 3, 5, & 6).

5.1.2 Program introduction procedure at the bachelor level in University Y

The establishment process at University Y is described in the chart Procedural Chart of Establishing New Undergraduate Degree Programs. Information on the departmental procedure part is primarily based on interviews. The whole procedure follows a similar routing process of University X.

1. Planning and announcement

The annual establishment of new undergraduate programs in the university is initiated when TAO announces the timeline for application on its website. The announcement also describes the general procedure of program introduction

2. Preparation for application within faculties

Proposals for new undergraduate degree programs are made by Faculty Executive Committee, but regular faculty members can make suggestions on what new program to establish (UX-7). The proposal must be sent to the Faculty Professor Committee for review and vote. After discussion on the historical development of the faculty and the relationship of the proposed program to existing programs within the university, the Professor Committee of Faculty B unanimously approved the proposal (UY-8). When the decision is made on what new program to introduce, the vice-dean for educational matters analyzes similar programs offered by other prestigious research universities at home and abroad, and produces a study report. After comparing the advantage and disadvantage of Faculty B in providing the proposed program, the vice-dean designed a training plan. Both the report and the proposed curriculum are reported to Faculty Executive Committee and the Professors Committee for preliminary review. Then the curriculum and other teaching issues must be vetted by Faculty Teaching Committee in consideration of comments from the above two committees. The completed application forms are then submitted to TAO for institutional approval.

3. Preliminary assessment

Purpose of this stage is to assist initiators in the inclusion of all elements required to the review by the Teaching Committee. TAO also assess the curriculum to see if the national and institutional curriculum regulations are adequately satisfied. The examination process can be iterative because TAO does not forward the application of the initiating faculty to the Teaching Committee until all required elements are included in the application package.

4. The task of the Teaching Committee

Purpose of the fourth stage is that the Teaching Committee produces a pre-selection list of candidate programs. The Teaching Committee is a subunit of the Academic Committee and is responsible for deliberating applications for new undergraduate programs. The Committee invites all initiating faculties and departments to the oral defense (UY-7). On the basis of the

presentation and discussion with the initiators the Teaching Committee makes a pre-selection of candidate programs and sends it to the president for final approval.

5. Final approval

The President decides which pre-selected applications to approved after the review of Council of Presidents on the grounds of suitability. As explained by the vice-dean, the Council’s review focuses primarily on issues including the availability of resources needed to establish the new undergraduate program as well as the compliance with the University’s rules and policies. The application package of selected programs has to be publicized on TAO’s website. An additional group of experts will be invited by TAO if there is dissent to that decision within campus. A copy of the approved application is then sent to go public for one month on the MOE’s website for feedbacks and MOE’s verification.

Based on the above reconstruction of the process of establishing new undergraduate programs, the following actors and their respective roles have been identified, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6 Approval process for new undergraduate programs in University Y

Sequential Procedure	Actors	Roles
<i>Proposal development</i>	Faculty Executive Committee	Proposing the program to be offered
	Faculty Professor Committee	Reviewing and approving the proposal
	Vice-dean	Market analysis which is reported to the Executive Committee and Professor Committee; Curriculum design
	Faculty Teaching Committee	Reviewing proposed curriculum and other relevant teaching and learning matters
<i>Preliminary assessment</i>	Directors of TAO	Examining the completeness of the application package; Evaluate Curriculum based on the national and institutional curriculum framework
<i>Oral Defense and assessment</i>	Teaching Committee	Producing a pre-selection list based on the presentation of and discussion with initiators
<i>Final approval</i>	President	Making final decisions; Endorsing approval within university

New undergraduate program proposals are usually made by Faculty Executive Committee and initially reviewed by the Professor Committee for approval. After the approval of Professor Committee, the vice-dean for educational matters designs the curriculum after consulting the Faculty Executive Committee and Professor Committee. The curriculum is then sent to the Faculty Teaching Committee for review and approval. The final application forms and other required material is then routed to TAO for campus review. When there is no problem with application materials, TAO send these applications to the Teaching Committee for pre-selection. The president makes final decision after consulting with the Council of Presidents.

By comparing the establishment procedures at University X and University Y, it can be seen that the locus of decision making at faculty and institutional level differs in the two universities. At the faculty level, the final authority to approve the proposed undergraduate program is lodged in administrators at University X, whereas this final authority is held by academics through Faculty Professor Committee at University Y. At the institutional level, there are three actual decision-makers at University X: TAO, Oral Defense Committee and the Academic Committee. However, there are two actual decision-makers at University Y: the Teaching Committee and the president. The responsibility of TAO is to assist the initiating faculty in the inclusion of required material. It has no right to reject the application. The share of influence of administrators and academics in these committees will be analyzed in the following section, after an in-depth analysis on the Academic Committee at the two universities.

5.2 Analyzing the Establishment of New Undergraduate Programs

5.2.1 Analyzing the Establishment of New Undergraduate Programs in University X

Institutionalization in the regulative pillar

The regulative institution deals with the standardization and formalization of procedures. Regulatory processes on institutionalizing power reallocation in undergraduate program establishment involve the formulation of rules that cover and apply invariably to all circumstances under which the establishment occurs, as well as the standardization of role

definition. The former is mainly demonstrated via changing regulations, while the latter is reflected in the clarity of formal power distribution at institutional and faculty levels.

- Change in regulations

Regulation concerning the establishment of undergraduate degree programs at University X is briefly described in the Manual of Educational Management that became active in November 2001. As the establishment process follows requirements in the Provisions 1999 and of the local government (e.g. the inclusion of external experts), this regulation only mentions two institutional reviewing agencies without enumerating their responsibilities: TAO and the Academic Committee. Detailed description on actors and their functions can be found on the undergraduate program establishment announcement published by TAO. In the Undergraduate Program Establishment Announcement published in April 2015, there is an exchange of order between the Academic Committee and the Oral Defense Committee. According to this year's Announcement, application forms approved by TAO will be sent to the Academic Committee for second-round selection, and then candidate faculties are invited to the presentation for recommendations on editing application forms. No radical formal changes have been introduced concerning decision-making locus inside and outside university, as the affiliated government still follows Provisions 1999 rather than Provisions 2012 (UX-6). The final decision-making power remains reside with the provincial government.

- Clarity on the allocation of formal authority

Concerning roles of relevant actors in the decision-making process, the University has been trying to define their responsibilities, especially those of administrative and academic units. In the University's 12th Five-Year Development Plan issued in February 2012 it states that "we should clarify responsibilities of university leadership, administrative offices and academic units, delegate more power to the latter in order to initiate their activity and creativity in issues such as teaching, research, disciplinary development and personnel management". However, according to the Annual Development Plan 2015 issued in March 2015, one mission of the university in 2015 is to "clarify roles and structures of administrative units and faculties and departments in order to improve autonomy of operating units." Over the past three years, the University has not published formal documents that define the authority of faculties and departments.

Available governing documents are centered on the power of the Standing Committee of CCP, the Council of Presidents. In 2012 the University revised bylaws of these two bodies, and published Interim Regulations on Decision-making Process for Important Matters in November 2014 as a direct response to state regulations that demand collective decision-making on important issues. However, there are conflicts in the locus of decision-making for teaching and research issues. According to the Interim Regulations on Decision-making Process for Important Matters, the Standing Committee of CCP is the steering core of the university, and takes responsibility for deciding the appointment for mid-level managers, resource allocation for vital projects, and major academic matters including program establishment, while the Council of Presidents is the top executer in charge of implementing decisions of the Standing Committee of CCP and day-to-day decisions. Whereas, functions of the Council of Presidents enumerated in the Bylaw of the Council of Presidents includes “studying academic issues such as teaching, research, and program development and making decisions.” Despite the revision and formulation of regulations, the available documents at University X are insufficient to provide clarity regarding the authority of stakeholders in the academic decision-making process.

Institutionalization in the normative pillar

The normative institution prescribes appropriate activities for particular individuals in specified positions through socially created norms and values. Institutional work on the normative aspects contains incorporation and outward reflection of socialized norms for modern university governance in university regulations.

- The socialized norms and values on the legitimate sources of authority in China in this dimension

Governance reform in Chinese HEIs has been guided by “rationalized myth” (Christensen, 2007) introduced from the west that fits the notion of university. As an academic institution that gives priority to education as an end to itself, the university is a normative organization and rich in ideologies. In terms of normative standards for university governance, the common understanding of roles of two major authorities in the university governance and management is that academics should have priority over academic matters, while managers and external stakeholders having priority over other matters. This norm is consistent with the

shared belief in professional organizations that those with expertise in an institution's core technologies should have some important role in governing them.

The above rationalized myth has been adopted and manifested in the Outline of China's National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020). The Outline stipulates that "full scope will be given to the role of academic committee in program establishment, academic evaluation and development", and "professors shall be given a full play in teaching, research and university governance". Since then, it has been an important agenda in university reforms to improve faculty participation in university governance. In 2011 MOE published the Temporary Provisions for the Formulation of University Charter, demanding all public HEIs to formulate their charters and get them approved by September 2015. The major aim is to augment formalization and standardization of internal governance structure. In 2012 Provisions 1999 was revised and published to change the role of academic committee from *pingyi* to *shenyi* in the review process of new undergraduate program applications. The role of the Academic Committee is further protected with the issue of Regulations on the Academic Committee in Higher Education Institutions in January 2014, which prescribes membership requirements and the status of the supreme academic body within universities. These calls to alter the governance structure in order to augment faculty involvement in academic governance demonstrate an acceptance of concepts of shared governance and collegiality.

- The common vocabulary on the university regulations on the authority distribution

None of the governing and managing regulations revised or formulated between 2010 and 2015 incorporate or manifest the above-mentioned concepts in the description of decision-making procedures. The only reflection of the new concept is in the University's 12th Five-Year Development Plan and Annual Development Plan 2015, with the same expression that calls to "strengthen functions of Academic Committee, Degree Committee and Teaching Committee in university governance, giving full scope to the role of professors in decision-making for teaching, research and program development issues." In short, University X has not adopted the rationalized myth on university governance yet, and thus shows little resonance with environmental norms and values.

Institutionalization in cultural-cognitive pillar

Institutionalization in the cultural-cognitive aspect contains the increasing shared conceptions of what are legitimate authority in program establishment, which is reflected in the changing composition and status of the Academic Committee and the increasing taken-for-grantedness of the new practice in the program establishment.

- The composition and status of the Academic Committee

Membership of Academic Committee was changed for the first time in June 2012. Current committee is composed of 35 members, as shown in Table 7. The president is the *ex-officio* chair of the committee, which is stipulated in the Bylaw of Academic Committee issued in 2007. There are two vice chairs, both of whom are vice presidents with one responsible for undergraduate education and the other for graduate education. According to the Bylaw of Academic Committee, candidates for vice chairs are nominated by the president, and elected by Academic Committee. However, they are actually nominated among vice presidents, which appears to be a consensus within the university, as UX-4 commented “the chair is the president, and the vice chair is *of course* the vice president. This does not need any explanation” (emphasis in original). The Bylaw does not prescribe the selection of regular members. According to UX-4, they are nominated merely by their faculty leadership and appointed by the president.

Table 7 Composition of Academic Committee at University X

Membership	Identity	Number
Chair	President	1
Vice chair	Vice president	2
Regular members	Pure professors ⁴	7
	Dean	10
	Vice Dean	3
	Director of administrative office	8

⁴ The term “pure professors” refers to full-time professors who do not have administrative title. As university leaders and directors of administrative offices are also full-time professors in Chinese universities, the word “pure” is used to distinguish between professors who have an administrative title and those who do not.

The Academic Committee of Faculty A comprises of 13 members, with 3 deans and 10 professors and associated professors. Member selection at the faculty is made by faculty leadership, elaborated by UX-3:

The University regulates that the chair must be the responsible person of the faculty. As for other members, I don't know how they are selected. I began to work in this university in 2008. It seems since then I have been a member of the Faculty Academic Committee, because they (deans) always invite me to attend meetings. I am not even quite clear how I became the vice chair. I was simply told by the chair in a meeting that I was the vice chair. There is no election in the committee or within our faculty.

This administrator-dominated composition and membership selection has a negative influence on the role of the Academic Committee in the university's governance. Despite the fact that presidents, directors and deans are senior professors at their faculties and still have tasks of teaching and research, they are not trusted by faculty members to act in their interests.

Directors and deans are appointed and have to report to presidents and party secretary, thus they will follow their leaders' instructions. Besides, they are different from pure professors. The former has power to allocate resources, while the latter does not. Although they have a title of professor, what they are playing actually is the role of administrators. The Academic Committee is expected to monitor the exercise of administrative power and prevent power monopoly at the university. The inclusion of too many leaders will jeopardize the real function of the Academic Committee, because they are too powerful and always set the tone for the meeting and thus decisions. Actually, most of the time we (pure professors) are obliged to act passively. (UX-3)

Professors with administrative title, due to their positions, are primarily concerned with management. They are representatives of administrative power. This does not necessarily mean that their decisions are not correct, but the inclusion of too many academic leaders inevitably leads to the neglect of faculty voice. (UX-4)

Administrators do not trust the ability of pure professors in university governance either.

Presidents, directors and deans are not only leading professors in their academic fields at the university, but also have more experience in university management and a better understanding of external environments. Their ability of making strategic, useful recommendations and suggestion is stronger than pure professors. The latter is good at making recommendations at disciplinary levels, but relatively weak at macro and institutional levels. (UX-6)

The lack of trust between academic administrators and pure professors suggests that there is no clear definition on the functions of the Academic Committee, leading to controversy about the legitimate authority in academic governance. The above membership change has not transformed the symbolic nature of the Academic Committee to being an integral part of the university. As such the Academic Committee retains to be subordinated to the Office of Science and Technology, which is responsible for providing secretariat and other support to the Committee, as illustrated in Figure 3 (P. 29).

- Previous *de facto* routines of decision-making in the undergraduate program establishment

Both documents and interview suggests that actual introduction procedure for new undergraduate degree programs has not been changed yet. In addition to the bottom-up procedures described earlier in this chapter, the University also adopts top-down procedures.

Faculties have some autonomy in opening a new undergraduate degree program. However, their autonomy is restricted by their lack of personnel and financial autonomy. The new program they can propose to set up is based on the existing resources that are available to support its implementation. For example, if the size and expertise of faculty members is not adequate to teach core areas of proposed program, the faculty has to give up because they cannot recruit teachers. Academic recruitment is controlled by Personnel Management Office. In situations where bottom-up decision-making procedure is not feasible, top-down procedures are adopted. (UX-6)

The maintenance of previous routines could be obstacles to improving faculty participation in the approval process of new undergraduate programs. On the one hand, the decision-making power at faculty level resides in the hand of deans, leaving little room to manoeuvre to faculty members. On the other hand, administrative intervention is likely to occur at the university

approval level due to the lack of coercive mechanisms. Moreover, the voice of pure professors is difficult to be heard in the Academic Committee dominated by powerful academic administrators, as there is no shared understanding on the functions of the Academic Committee and the appropriate way for academic leaders to behave in this agency.

The level of Institutionalization

It can be seen from the above analysis that the level of institutionalizing power redistribution in the decision-making process of undergraduate program establishment is very low. Changes in regulations have been made without incorporating socialized norms. These regulatory changes focus only on enumerating central powers. However, this has not led to increased formal power of the Academic Committee and faculties. The changes in the membership of the Academic Committee are more a direct response to Temporary Provisions for the Formulation of University Charter than a result of a shared commitment to the role of the academic committee in the new undergraduate program approval. As a consequent, the function and status of the Academic Committee remain unchanged.

The shallow level of institutionalization implies a poor implementation of reforms polices to increasing academic capacity in institutional governance. Hence, there is little redistribution of authority at University X in academic program approval. The central administrators continue to retain primary influence by maintaining control over the selection of administrators and members of the Academic Committee and budgetary matters. The fact that they hold a concurrent post in the Academic Committee also constrains input from pure professors in the absence of shared perception of legitimate power in the approving process.

However, the institutional work at University X is continuing. The University is now adjusting the ratio of pure professor to administrators to augment academics' influence, but this change is being adopted in accord with Regulations on the Academic Committee in Higher Education Institutions, which stipulates that number of pure professors should not be less than 50% (UX-6). It is also working towards a higher level of regulatory institutionalization. According to the interviewees, the University is drafting its Charter and revising Bylaws of Academic Committee in order to clarify roles of each actor and formalize decision-making structure.

5.2.2 Analyzing the Establishment of New Undergraduate Programs in University Y

Institutionalization in the regulative pillar

- Change in regulations

There is no radical change in the formal bottom-up procedures of undergraduate program introduction at faculty and institutional levels (UX-7). However, since part of discretionary power is shifted from MOE to the University in 2012, the University has been formulating/revising Bylaws of governing bodies and various committees at the university. On the basis of these new Bylaws, the University has developed charts to formalize decision-making procedures of Academic Committee and approval process of undergraduate program establishment in 2014. The procedural chart for approving undergraduate programs is presented in Appendix 3.

- Clarity on the allocation of formal authority

Before the formulation and revision of existing governing regulations, the power relation at the University was similar to University X. According to the University's Study Report on Establishing World-Class University⁵ published in April 2010, there were two problems in its governance structure. The first was the centralization of power, with administrative offices controlling the majority of financial and academic recourses. Linked to the first one was the failure of formulating adequate formal rules that clearly define responsibilities and accountabilities of every actor. To implement solutions given in the Study Report, the University restarted formulating its Charter (UX-8), and got it approved in 2014.

The Charter prescribes power distribution at horizontal and vertical levels. At horizontal level, power is allocated among three governing bodies: the CPC is the highest decision-making body at the university, responsible for decisions on vision and mission; the president is the top executer and decision-maker for specific administrative matters; while the Academic Committee is the supreme academic agency exercising right to make final decisions, deliberate, or provide advices in academic decisions. The bylaws of the three bodies further

⁵ Study Report on Establishing World-Class University includes two major parts: one is the analysis of characteristics of world-class universities and a comparison between the University and these WCUs in quantified terms such as publications and fund; the other part is the analysis of problems facing the University in building itself into a World-Class University and guidelines for future reforms.

enumerate their duties and prescribe the agenda setting and decision-making process. At vertical level, power is devolved to faculties, which empowers them to making their own development plans and rules, and deciding academic recruitment and recourse allocation. Within faculties, the Faculty Executive Committee is the decision-making agency for administrative matters. The Faculty Academic Committee or Professor Committee (if established) controls important academic matters under the guidance of institutional Academic Committee.

Institutionalization in the normative pillar

As socialized norms concerning undergraduate program establishment has been presented in the previous part, analysis here focuses simply on the common vocabularies on the University's written documents.

- The common vocabulary on the university regulations on the authority distribution

The new concepts of shared governance and collegiality are reflected in the new phrase added to the existing governance phrases in the University's Plan for Medium and Long-term Development (2011-2020): "professors control over academic matters" (*jiaoshouzhixue*). The addition of this new phrase is directly driven by the University's mission to build a WCU and national policies.

In 2010 our university conducted a study to analyze common features of some world best universities. We found that there are two primary principles for building a WCU. Both of them are concerned with internal governance. The first is let those who are most qualified to control. The second is decisions on certain matters should be made at basic level. But these international norms caused hot debate within university at that time, as it was not quite compatible with national regulations and culture. Some advocated to adopt those norms if the university was to build itself into a WCU, while the rest argued for building our own governance model. Later in the same year, MOE called for building a modern university system. When drafting Development Plan (2011-2020), the committee responsible for drafting took feedbacks from both sides into consideration. Finally, our goal of governance reform is defined as changing from a

bureaucratic dominated and highly centralized model to a shared, relatively decentralized model. (UX-8)

This new governing phrase is manifested in the changing status of the Academic Committee from a consultancy agency to “supreme academic agency” that “safeguards professors’ participation in academic governance”, as stated in the Charter. Such status has changed academic agenda setting process of the Standing Committee of CCP and the Council of Presidents. According to the Charter and Bylaws of these two governing bodies, academic agenda can be determined only after deliberation by Academic Committee if it has no final authority, such as the establishment of new undergraduate programs; they are set for meetings only after deliberation by Academic Committee.

Cultural-cognitive institution

- The composition and status of the Academic Committee and the Teaching Committee

The Academic Committee and the Teaching Committee at University Y were first established in 2001. The members, chair and vice chairs are nominated by the CPC and appointed by the president to serve for a two-year term which may be renewed in accordance with Bylaw of Academic Committee (2001). However, members had been reappointed only once in the following ten years, which suggests a poor implementation of the Bylaw. In 2011 Bylaw of Academic Committee was first revised which stipulates in detail requisite qualifications and the selection methods for membership, leading to the second membership change of the Committee. According to the revised Bylaw, members are nominated by their faculty Academic Committee and appointed by the president for a five-year term in consultation with the Council of Presidents. The chair and vice chairs are nominated by the Academic Committee and appointed by the president. The result of such selection for the current membership of Academic Committee is that among the total 40 members there are 14 academic administrators and 26 pure professors. Detailed membership identity is presented in Table 8.

Table 8 Composition of the Academic Committee at University Y

Membership	Identity	Number
Chair	Pure professor	1
Vice chair	Pure professor	8
	Executive Vice President	1
Regular members	Pure professors	13
	Dean	11
	Vice dean	2
	Honorary member	4

The composition of the Teaching Committee includes 34 members, as shown in Table 9. Among 29 regular members, there are 13 academic administrators. However, it is worth noting that almost all of these deans and vice deans are members of National Teaching Committee in their academic field of study.

Table 9 Composition of the Teaching Committee at University Y

Membership	Identity	Number
Chair	Pure professor	1
Vice chair	Pure professor	4
Regular members	Pure professors	12
	dean	8
	Vice dean	5
	Administrative director	2

The more democratic selection of membership indicates to some degree a power shift from university leaders to the Academic Committee. It provides a coercive solution to possible problems of administrative power dominating academic decisions, as “the reduction in the number of academic administrators has facilitated a relatively independent relation between administrative power and academic power” (UX-8). Consequently, the Academic Committee at University Y is not subordinated to any administrative offices, as shown in Figure 4. However, Bylaws of Academic Committee revised in 2011 and 2014 does not exclude

administrators from the Academic Committee, because as one respondent pointed out, there must be some administrators to serve as communication channels between administrative offices and the Academic Committee.

- Previous *de facto* routines of decision-making in the undergraduate program establishment

Actual decision-making process for undergraduate program establishment before 2012 was the same as described in the last section.

In 2011 our faculty established an interdepartmental undergraduate program. The procedure is almost the same with that in 2013, except that final decision was made by MOE. If there should be changes, it mainly takes place at the institutional level. However, institutional change has little influence on faculty procedures. In our faculty, program establishment has been following the same routing. (UX-7)

In Faculty B consensus has been reached among faculty leadership that decisions on undergraduate program establishment must be made collectively by all professors. As the UX-7 remarked,

We will not apply to open a new undergraduate program if the Professor Committee rejects the proposal. The implementation of a new program will lead to reallocation of financial and human resources, so all professors must be involved to express their opinions.

As a consequence, the final discretionary power resides in the Faculty Professor Committee within faculties. The delegation of power to pure professors and the complete alignment of previous *de facto* procedures with the new actual practice indicate an increasing shared belief in the legitimacy of faculty members participating in the decision-making process of undergraduate program establishment, at least at faculty level.

The level of institutionalization

Institutionalization of faculty participation in new undergraduate program approval at University Y is initiated by the conscious adoption of international standards. The spread and contextualization of these norms has resulted in regulatory changes that facilitate, supplement

and support normative intuitions, including the clarification of powers of faculties and Academic Committee and the formalization of decision-making procedures. The interaction and reinforcement between regulative and normative institutionalization is in turn promoting institutionalization in cultural-cognitive pillar by enhancing academics' influence in the Academic Committee. The robust institutionalization in regulative and normative pillars has led to a gradual transfer of parts of power from administrators to academics. At faculty level, the faculty exercises primary responsibility through the Professor Committee. At institutional level, the input of academics is assured through the increasing independence of the Academic Committee, a more democratic membership selection as well as increasing transparency of institutional decision-making. However, it is not clear if this division of power in the approving process of new undergraduate programs has become or will be more permanent and objectified, due to the lack of empirical data on the review process of Teaching Committee. What is clear from empirical data is that there is consensus within the university, especially among university leaders that faculty participation in university governance is a necessary condition for success. This consensus is likely to promote movement towards objectification of power balance between academics and administrators in approving new undergraduate programs.

5.3 Comparing the establishment procedures at University X and Y

Both of the two universities were established in the centrally planned economic era, and managed their academic affairs by focusing on centralized administrative power. However, despite the same starting point in the governance reform and the same cultural constraints, the two universities differ in the level of institutionalizing authority reallocation in the decision-making process of undergraduate program establishment. Such variation in institutional responses can be explained, at least in part by examining how the degree of institutional autonomy and logic of behavior affect their ability and willingness to implement formal changes in undergraduate program establishment.

5.3.1 Degree of institutional autonomy

University X and University Y vary greatly in the degree of institutional autonomy in undergraduate program establishment.

The autonomy in opening a new undergraduate program differs in universities managed by the central and provincial governments. For universities affiliated to MOE, when they decide which new programs to open, they only need to submit required documentation to MOE for filing. MOE does not participate in their decision-making process. While for HEIs affiliated to provincial government, there is little change. But for provincial universities located in Shanghai and Jiangsu, they also have the autonomy. The provincial government steers according to its fiscal conditions. In our province, the government still follows previous approval process despite the type of undergraduate programs. (UX-6)

In practice, University Y can make its own decisions concerning the new undergraduate programs to be opened even before the formal delegation of power.

For 'project 985' universities like ours, it makes little difference whether or not the new undergraduate program needs to be approved by MOE. MOE seldom rejects our applications. But we do feel at ease with the formal delegation of power (UX-8).

The strong negotiation ability of University Y with MOE enables it to make earlier and more active changes than University X. However, the increased autonomy is accompanied with increasing accountability for the quality of establishment and the quality of the new program. The quality of establishment can only be ensured if transparency and information flow exists. Therefore, formalization of decision-making procedures and standardization of roles are emphasized at University Y. The University also formulated decision-making procedure chart for Academic Committee, according to which the deliberation results must be publicized on its own website before they are forwarded to the president for final approval. The quality of the new program is evaluated every two years through internal quality assurance system, in which external experts are invited to be auditor rather than the government. However, the importance of quality and transparency is less apparent at University X, as there were little internal incentives for accountability under government-controlled program establishment (UX-5). Without autonomy, University X does not need to assume responsibility for the decisions taken.

5.3.2 Logic of behavior

Actors' logic of action affects the university's adoption behavior of new practice. Here the analysis focus is on the administrators' logic of action, as they are the one who are able to introduce changes in the university. To better understand their action, objective conditions, i.e. university culture must also be taken into consideration.

In University X, administrative and academic powers have in practice been held by administrators. This is attested by the great degree of overlapping membership in the Standing Committee of CCP, the Councils of Presidents, Academic Committee and other committees. This concentration of powers emerged and prevailed in the centralized government steering era has led to the formation of interest groups who control all the resources (UX-1). For these interest groups, the alteration of power relation, for example, increased number and influence of pure professors in decision making at meetings of the Academic Committee would mean the loss of control over academic resources. As administrators do not want to give up their vested interests, they "have been trying their best to postpone governance reform" (UX-3). This explains why changes that have been made so far fail to provide a clear separation of responsibilities between universities, faculties and Academic Committee. In the absence of clear regulations on the distributions of responsibilities among stakeholders, administrators are able to maintain their influence.

In contrast with administrators' resistance to power reallocation at University X, administrators at University Y is practical and open to change, and therefore administrators' behavior in the intuitional work is primarily guided by the logic of appropriateness. This becomes apparent by examining the history of conscious selection by university leadership of various western models regarded as successful for restructuring organizational structure. When the University was restarted after national recovery from the ravages of the Cultural Revolution, there was no external force guiding its daily operation. The then-president of the University took every opportunity to implement core values and practices he believed as essential for university leadership and development after studying universities in the United States, Canada and Japan (UX-8). The mimetic behavior is further encouraged by the goal to become a WCU after 2010. The combination of increasing pressure to imitate and the increase in institutional autonomy enables the University to bring about innovations predated national university reforms. In spite of national policies, both respondents have emphasized the increasingly important role of international standards in their university governance reform.

Reference to these international models provided a definition for appropriate governance, that is, university governance without faculty participation will never leads to success. This perception of institutional governance was incorporated in the reform measures included in University Plan for Mid- and Long-term (2011-2020) Development. Administrator's internalization of norms and values on university contributes to active withdrawal from the Academic Committee and employment of democratic selection of members. At the same time the Academic Committee Office has been set up so that the Academic Committee is not subordinated to administrative office. They also make continuing modification to Bylaws of the Academic Committee and other governing bodies to reduce inconsistency and ambiguity between regulations.

Hence, as can be seen from the above comparison, administrators guided by the logic of consequence will be impeded from incorporating rationalized norms. They prefer to preserve the existing division of power. While administrators guided by the logic of appropriateness tend to actively promote changes in regulations and Academic Committee which cements the institutionalization of power redistribution. Thus, the combination of the degree of institutional autonomy and administrators' logic of behavior can affect the university's ability to create a formal decision-making structure that provides solutions to problems of bureaucratized management and its willingness to translated this formal structure into actual changes.

6 CONCLUSION

The central focus of this research is on the division of power in the establishment of new undergraduate programs within Chinese universities. It examines changing power distribution in the approval process since 2010, using University X and Y as a multi-case study. The Chinese higher education system was characterized by a strong state and institutional leadership, and weak faculty members. When it comes to the establishment of new bachelor degree programs in China, administrative control played a substantial role. However, Chinese universities have been facing reforms of their governance structures which have also targeted the establishment of undergraduate degree programs. These reforms are advocating a division of power that would enable universities to enhance legitimacy of being an academic institution and improve the quality of higher education. In this respect, academics should get more control over substantive matters like the introduction of new undergraduate degree programs. This research sought out to explore how these reforms would impact the division of power in two different types of universities.

6.1 Research question and answer

The research question is how the power division is changing within Chinese universities regarding the introduction of new study programs at the bachelor level. To find out what would happen when administrators and academics meet in the establishment of undergraduate programs in the backdrop of a changing university governance structure, this research has focused on the establishment process at University X and University Y, both of which are research oriented institutions, however with differing degrees of institutional prestige.

The findings show that changes in the power relation between academics and administrators in the establishment procedures differ greatly in the two universities. At University X, which is under the direct management of the provincial government that steers the institution according to its fiscal conditions, there is little actual increase of academics' influence in the undergraduate program introduction as it was originally specified in the national policies. The discretionary authority remains with the administrators. The continuity of this power distribution is illustrated by the shallow level of institutionalizing the new role of academics in the establishment process. No regulatory changes have been developed to stabilize and legitimize the academics' authority in the decision-making procedures, leaving room for

possible administrative intervention. Moreover, the failure to incorporate and internalize socialized norms within University X contributes to the continuing conflicts between administrators and academics in terms of the legitimate resources of authority in the program introduction. The result is that the Academic Committee, which is the only agency that involves faculty members in the reviewing process, is still dominated by administrative appointees. Thus, every stage of program establishment is under the control of administrators. Proposals for new undergraduate program are usually initiated from deans or the university leadership, and reviewed by different committees mainly composed of administrators.

The implementation of the national reform policies at University X may be hindered by the lack of intuitional autonomy and university culture. As a provincial university, University X has no autonomy to introduce new undergraduate programs. The lack of adequate institutional autonomy constrains its ability to cultivate institutional identity and create a structure that can assure the inclusion of the faculty in academic decision making. The institutionalization of the new role of academics is further constrained by the reluctance of administrators to introduce changes that would reduce their control over resources, especially in the absence of internal incentives. Although University X is now modifying its governing documents and adjusting the composition and function of the Academic Committee, it is driven largely by coercive pressure (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). These changes are being made to demonstrate its compliance with national regulations.

Empirical data from University Y suggests that there is a power shift from administrators to academics in the program establishment process. Being affiliated to the MOE and perceived as one of the best universities in China, University Y enjoys more informal autonomy than promised by national policies. The increased autonomy and the spirit of realism empower university leadership to break with the past and make conscious adoption and innovation of internationally rationalized norms for university governance. Therefore, the institutional changes at University Y are made under a mix of coercive, normative and mimetic pressures, with the latter two dominating (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). To effectively internalize these norms, the University enacted both a mid- and long-term Development Plan, and modified the bylaws of committees such as the Standing Committee of the CPC, the Council of Presidents, the Academic Committee and the Teaching Committee. This has led to an increasing formalization of decision-making procedures for undergraduate program introduction, and a positive change in the status and composition of the Academic Committee and the Teaching

Committee. It can therefore be said that in the case of University Y the policy initiatives have reached their goal of improving the academics' control over the establishment of undergraduate programs, at least at Faculty B, where the Professor Committee has the final authority to approve the proposed undergraduate program.

The comparison of the two universities suggests that the combination of institutional autonomy and the prevailing logic of appropriateness that guides administrators' behavior can facilitate the institutionalization of a power shift from the executive structure to academic domains. The more prestigious the university is, the more autonomy it is likely to enjoy and the more present the sense of national and international competition that promotes the use of a logic of appropriateness in Chinese universities is. It could also be said that the university prestige is positively correlated with the level of institutionalizing power redistribution in introducing new undergraduate degree programs. This changing pattern could be expected in other public, research-oriented Chinese universities, due to the differentiated government steering and resource allocation. However, the extent of change in power distribution may vary across universities because of their historical development and provincial context.

The gradual development of an academic domain in the governance structure of a Chinese university following NPM-inspired reforms (Mok & Lo, 2007) seems to indicate to some degree a converging development in the governance and management structure with modern European universities identified by Fumasoli et al. (2014), albeit the power is shifting from the executive structure to academic structure in Chinese universities, while in the European context it is shifting in the opposite direction. However, the different speed of institutionalization at the University X and the University Y also implies there may be differences in the content of the academic domain in the two cultures, especially when one takes into consideration the Confucian tradition which emphasizes the importance of state responsibility and moral governance, and a scholar's responsibility in society and in relation to the state (see e.g. Hayhoe, 1999; Marginson, 2014; Zha, 2012). Although academic freedom is a universal value, the legitimacy of concrete practices of academic freedom may vary across cultures, which may lead to differences in the notions of academic duties and responsibilities. This also raises a question on how university autonomy and academic freedom derived from European traditions should be interpreted in other cultural environments. Therefore, in spite of the continuing modernization reforms that incorporated western norms on university governance, it remains to be seen how Chinese and European

universities will differ or converge in the content of academic domain under the impact of Confucian traditions.

6.2 Suggestions for future research

The intentional focus of this research is to study the division of academic and administrative power in the establishment of undergraduate programs more in-depth at University X and University Y through a case study. However, due to the problems encountered during the fieldwork, there is a lack of interviewees from the institutional level at University Y. The absence of data from institutional review agencies makes it impossible to investigate the informal decision-making process at the institutional level. Therefore, a follow-up research could be conducted to interview members of the Teaching Committee and the Council of Presidents. In doing so, it would be possible to evaluate the level of cultural-cognitive institutionalization and the share of influence of academics and administrators in the decision-making process at University Y, and thus capture a true picture of formal and actual changes in the power relation between academics and administrators.

Another limitation is the relatively short time frame of the study. Although the governance reforms focusing on de-bureaucratization in Chinese higher education started in 1998 with the promulgation of Higher Education Law, national policies for deep and comprehensive reforms were not issued until 2010. Thus the time frame is not long enough to study final changes in university governance, especially in universities where administrators are reluctant to implement reforms. As the implementation at university X is continuing, a follow-up research on the institutionalization of the power distribution can be conducted in order to investigate whether a modification of the rules made under coercive pressure will lead to actual changes in the power distribution in the introduction of undergraduate programs. Additionally, further faculties can be included to increase the transferability of findings and investigate whether disciplinary factors also influence the reform process.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: List of documents

National policy

Higher Education Law in People's Republic of China. (1999).

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University X

Annual Development Plan 2015 (March, 2015)

Bylaws of Academic Committee (2007)

Bylaws of the Council of Presidents (2012)

Bylaws of the Standing Committee of CCP (2012)

Interim Regulations on Decision-making Process for Important Matters (2014)

Manual of Education Management (2001)

The University's 12th Five-Year Development Plan (2011-2015)

Undergraduate Program Establishment Announcement 2015 (April, 2015)

University Y

Bylaws of Academic Committee (2001、 2011、 2014)

Bylaws of the Council of Presidents (2012, 2015)

Bylaws of the Standing Committee of CCP (2012, 2015)

Procedural Chart of Establishing New Undergraduate Degree Programs (2014)

Study Report on Establishing World-Class University (2010)

The Charter of University Y (2014)

The University Plan for Medium and Long-term Development (2011-2020)

Appendix 2: General Interview Guide

1. What is your role in introducing new BA study programs at the faculty? How do you end up in that role?
2. Where does the idea for introducing a new BA study program usually come from? The faculty? Or the university? Single professors?
3. When your faculty decided to introduce a new BA study program, were there any other alternative programs considered? If yes, why finally introduced this one? Who made the decision?
4. What are other actors and offices involved in the preparation at the faculty? What are their roles?
5. If there is an academic body involved in this process, what is its size and composition?
6. After the application is submitted to the university, which actors and organizations are involved in the decision-making process to introduce new BA study programs? What are their roles?
7. Did you receive any comments during the one-month publicity online? If yes, how were they dealt with? By which actors? At which level?
8. In your opinion, does the annual program evaluation have any impact on the influence of the academic authority in the whole process? If yes, in which ways?
9. What are your reflections on the whole decision-making process? Is it good? Does it work? Why do you think is the case?

Appendix 3: Procedural Chart for the Review of New Undergraduate Programs

