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Abstract

In this qualitative study, the form and features of institutional governance in private universities in China are investigated. Using a comparative case study approach, it focuses on two private universities, each with differing institutional histories and forms of governance. It draws on thematic analysis of extensive documentation relating to the governance of private higher education and data from in-depth interviews with 26 senior managers on 38 separate occasions. Through the lenses of principal-agent and stewardship theories, the roles of the Council, as the governing body, and the University Committee, as executive team, in the institutional governance of private universities are explored. The principal features of the two governance forms relating to autonomy and control of shareholders and managers are identified. The paper fills a gap in the study of the institutional governance of Chinese private universities in English literature. As such, it provides insight into practice for policymakers, senior managers, and academics in the field of governance of private universities. HRK / Abstract übernommen)