

# The Influence of Rational Choice Institutionalism on the Construction and Management of University Teacher Team in China

Xiaoyue Liu, Jing Zuo

Central University of Finance and Economics, Beijing, P.R.China, 100081

---

**Abstract:** Based on the theoretical framework of rational choice institutionalism, this study proposes an analytical framework and suggestions from four aspects for the dilemma of teacher team construction in Chinese universities. Among them, this analysis framework is the main innovation point of this research, which has three dimensions of marketization, participation and institutionalization. It is used to analyze how Chinese universities apply institutionalism theory into reform practice and achieve high-quality development of teachers.

**Keywords:** Rational choice institutionalism; University teachers; Dilemma; Analytical framework

---

In the context of the reform that emphasizes market orientation and macro-control, the construction of Chinese university teacher team has made great progress in the output of scientific research results and talent cultivation, but there are still many constraints. University teachers not only lose the space for independent development in the system, but also fall into a more passive dependence on the organization, becoming the screws in scientific research activities. Therefore, in order to fully study and deal with the dilemma, using the rational choice institutionalism theory to wedge into the university teacher team to construct reform research, not only helps to enrich and broaden the research perspective, but also has strong practical value. But the first thing we should solve is: how to build an analytical framework for the construction and reform of Chinese university teacher team according to the theory of rational choice institutionalism.

## 1. Theoretical framework and concept of Rational choice institutionalism

Academic schools that take “institution” as the core concept to explain political, economic and social phenomena are collectively referred to as new institutionalism. As a school of new institutionalism, rational choice institutionalism mainly focuses on behaviors and decisions under institutional environment and believes that individuals’ behaviors and decisions under institutional environment are based on the results of individual rational calculation. Institutional rules and mechanisms will affect individual decision-making behavior. Its theoretical framework mainly includes: while advocating the hypothesis of rational man, it acknowledges the dilemma of collective action, and emphasizes the importance of institutional factors: it helps to reduce uncertainty and inequity, enhance trust and cooperation willingness, and establish the constraint and incentive mechanism in the repeated game by guaranteeing the information symmetry between participants.

Through this theoretical framework, scholars can make multi-level and multi-directional analysis and research on various types of public management systems by focusing on the application of contemporary economic theories and practical achievements, so as to achieve the effectiveness of governance through the active participation of various governance subjects in public affairs, the consistency of collective action and the cooperation among various governance subjects. Summarize the latest development mode and future direction of public management.

## 2. Difficulties in the construction of teachers in Chinese universities

Rational choice institutionalism believes that people will make different choices for different behaviors in a specific institutional environment, and these choices are often aimed at maximizing their own interests. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the influence

of institutional environment on the behavior choice of university teachers when analyzing the difficulties in the construction of talent team in Chinese universities.

## 2.1 Teacher incentive system exists unbalanced phenomenon

The development of higher education in China is unbalanced. Some high-level universities can get more teaching and research resources, while some local universities are short of resources. As a result, it is difficult to get effective support for the construction of teacher team and attract high-level talents. Especially as the recruitment of university teachers has tended to market-oriented competition, further aggravate the imbalance between universities. Correspondingly, the unbalanced incentive mechanism will also lead to brain drain: the relatively low salary of teachers in universities with scarce resources leads to some excellent teachers choosing to leave universities directly and turn to other industries or go abroad for development.

## 2.2 The teacher training and evaluation mechanism is not perfect

At present, the evaluation system of Chinese university teachers is mainly based on scientific research achievements. The performance evaluation system emphasizes the realization of goals and results, while ignoring the difficulties and challenges in the process, leading some teachers to sacrifice quality for the pursuit of quantity and ignore the overall development of teaching and research. In addition, some universities have not established a complete teacher training system, and pay too much attention to the number of published papers and journal impact factors, leading to many teachers lack in teaching methods and abilities, and ignore the basic quality of a knowledge disseminator.

## 2.3 The discipline structure system still needs to be optimized

In the modern economy, the professional setting and development of higher education should pay close attention to the needs of society and the market. However, in the construction of university teacher teams in China, the imbalance of discipline structure is quite common, which not only leads to the great difference in the quality of teaching and research, but also fails to adapt to the changes in social needs. In particular, the discipline construction needs long-term investment and continuous efforts. The current discipline construction pays too much attention to short-term benefits and lacks long-term planning and strategic layout. At the same time, the development of some disciplines is relatively backward, and some emerging disciplines develop slowly, which leads to the construction of teacher team difficult to get effective support.

## 3. An analytical framework based on rational choice institutionalism

In the practice of public management, rational choice institutionalism mainly emphasizes institutional reform and guides individuals to make the most rational decision by comparing the cost and benefit of choice in the face of various choices, so as to improve organizational performance. Therefore, based on this theoretical framework and the summary of management practice, we can construct a reform framework of university teacher team construction. This framework has three dimensions: marketization, participation and institutionalization, which represent the three directions of teacher team construction and reform respectively. The reasonable reform should be the balance between marketization dimension and participation dimension, and the level of institutionalization affects the flexibility of reform.

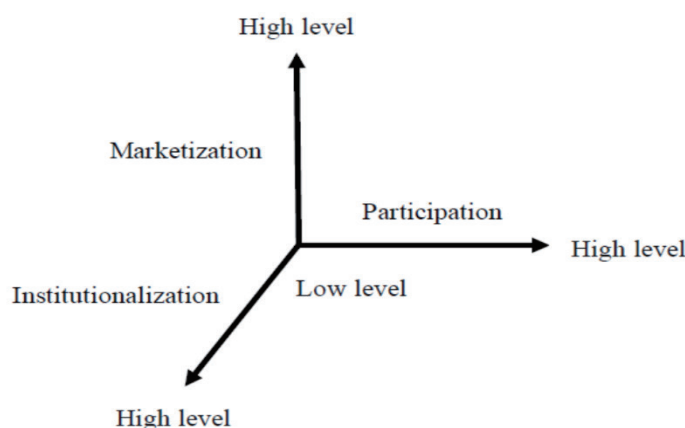


Figure 1 An analytical framework for the reform of Chinese University teacher team Building based on Rational Choice institutionalism

### 3.1 Marketization dimension

In order to strengthen the incentive measures for teachers, improve the competitiveness of teaching and research results, and attract more students and funds, the market-oriented mechanism is still necessary, and universities need to adopt a more market-

oriented operation mode. In order to further standardize the evaluation system, there should be clear performance evaluation standards to motivate teachers to work harder through the performance evaluation of teaching, scientific research, service and other aspects. At the same time, management efficiency and cost saving should be emphasized, and more efficient management methods should be adopted. Finally, the improvement of marketization level will help to enhance the introduction of high-level talents, increase teaching and research achievements, and make school construction more efficient.

### **3.2 Participation dimension**

Of course, if we focus solely on marketization, it may continue to lead to difficulties such as uneven resource allocation and disciplinary development. Therefore, we can reduce the adverse effects of marketization by increasing participation. For example, in the teacher team governance, the participation and communication of all stakeholders should be emphasized to promote the scientific and democratic teacher team governance. However, with the improvement of participation, it may lead to the decline of the operation efficiency of relevant institutions. Therefore, there is a relationship between the marketization dimension and the participation dimension.

### **3.3 Institutionalized dimension**

Finally, we should also recognize that high levels of institutionalization can lead to reduced flexibility in reform, and that institutional inertia can make it difficult for flawed systems to improve quickly until the losses are substantial enough. Therefore, we need to grasp the scale in the construction and reform of university teacher teams. When the balance between marketization and participation is reached, the construction of talent team enters a virtuous circle, and then further improve the degree of institutionalization. Otherwise, maintaining a certain degree of flexibility may make the reform more fault-tolerant.

## **4. Suggestions on the reform of university teacher team construction in China**

Combining with the summary of the dilemma of the construction of Chinese university teacher teams, the analysis framework based on rational choice institutionalism provides us with the following enlightenment, which can help Chinese university teacher team builders better understand the internal and external constraints of teacher behavior choice, and further promote the high-quality development of university talent teams.

### **4.1 Establish a scientific teacher incentive mechanism**

According to rational choice institutionalism, individual behavior choice is based on interests. Therefore, in order to attract and retain excellent teachers, it is necessary to establish scientific incentive mechanism, so that teachers can obtain reasonable returns and development space, including providing fair and transparent promotion system, reasonable salary level and competitive research funds.

### **4.2 Promote the reform of the comprehensive evaluation system for teachers**

Rational choice institutionalism believes that the restriction of individual behavior choice comes from external institutions and internal cognition, and the evaluation mechanism is an important link of internal and external restriction. Therefore, Chinese universities should promote the reform of comprehensive teacher evaluation system, establish an evaluation system in line with national conditions, and pay attention to avoid excessive dependence on evaluation indicators, so that excellent teachers can get fair evaluation and recognition.

### **4.3 Strengthen teacher training and development**

On the one hand, it is necessary to strengthen the training and development of teachers, encourage teachers to continuously improve their own quality in teaching, scientific research, educational management and other aspects, optimize the teamwork spirit and teaching innovation ability. On the other hand, it is also necessary to encourage teachers to cooperate with enterprises, society and other institutions to improve their social service level.

### **4.4 Improve the construction of internal norms**

Rational choice institutionalism believes that the regulation system can restrict individual behavior more than the external system. Therefore, Chinese universities also need to strengthen the construction of internal regulations, strengthen the professional ethics and norms of behavior of teachers, strengthen the organization, coordination and communication of teachers, at the same time, strengthen the protection of teachers' rights and interests, and create a good working environment and atmosphere.

## **References:**

- [1]Wang Li, Yu Shuibo, "Research on Improving Strategy of local university scientific research system from the perspective of new institutionalism" China Journal of Multimedia & Network Teaching, 2022(01):109-112.
- [2]Guo Yi, "New Institutionalism in Organizational and strategic Management: Theoretical Review and Examples in China" Shanghai: Shanghai: Gezhi Publishing House, 2009.