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## A Humble Opinion on the Architectural Construction of University Learning Organizations

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### Abstract

It is an important researching task for the higher education to change the traditional and purely rationalistic management ideas in the universities, to activate and strengthen the development energy. From the angle of changing the organizational model this paper researches the basic strategy of constructing university learning organizations; in another word: The organizational structure should be networking, and be oblater, opener and lexibler; and gives the architectural model of the learning organizations in the universities.

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Basically the university is an academic organization system which is organized by many academic communities in different subjects and majors. The relationships between different departments and institutes are loose and relatively independent. Since the reform and opening up, the common universities started to pay more attention to manage the institutes and departments with law; however influenced by the patriarchy and the official standard the institutes and departments in the universities trend to bureaucracy management in the governments. The defects of the bureaucracy management could not be ignored any longer after several decades of practice. The Operating mechanism and the Management structure internal the universities have to be adjusted and changed, which will provide the continuous power for the development of university and higher education.

## 1. The Character of the Current Organizational Architecture in the universities.

The current organizational constructor in the common universities of china is a pyramidal and bureaucratic constructor in multi-level which is characterized by power basing on hierarchy, and which realizes its organizational goals by the system and the forms of power. The bureaucracy system pays attention to that the organizational system is scientific and systematic, that the influence of the people's action is excluded in the organization, that the systemically organizational system is founded to manage. This management model is efficient for the management of departments and institutes, but in the practice to realize the organizational goals for different organizations, the merits and demerits of the bureaucracy system are fifty-fifty. These demerits are more obvious for the universities with the mission of cultivating talents. These demerits are that the universities' self-determination is poor because of the intervention from the government; that the internal management is not unhindered because of the unscientific power structure; that the teachers' value orientations are executive because of the serious consciousness of official standard; that the contests between the members are furious because of the behindhand evaluation mechanisms; that the power of development is restrained because of the universities' closeness and singleness; that the waste is serious because of the unreasonable resources collocation; that there is no a corporate goal because of the hindered internal communication.

## 2. The Strategies on constructing the university learning organization

### *A. Making the horizontal Organization Oblater to Increase the Communication Efficiency*

Currently, many universities are in the model of four-level structure: the university-the institute-the department- the teaching and research office. This model was born from universities adjusting their structure of departments and institutes in the 80 years 20th century to improve the structure of the academic organizations. The powers and responsibilities of the departments and institutes that are two classes in the middle are fuzzy, which could result in the unclear responsibilities, the power offside and the power losing, and the departments and the teaching and research offices of each major are tangled, so are the functions and effects of a teaching and research office. So the organization in multi-level decreases the efficiency and beats the positivities of the principal of the grassroots organizations. The particularity of the organizational structure of the universities is true of Michael Cohen and James G.March' s theory: Organized anarchy and Karl E.Weick' s theory: Loosely Coupled system on the common educational organizations. A academic organization — a loose combination organized by some different subjects and majors in the universities is a classic knowledge-intensive organization that the foundation of living and development is the innovation and breakthrough on the scholarship, so it exclude from the bureaucracy management model, exclude from the model of absolute obeying and commanding, of controlling and being controlled because of the character of its technicality and the character of its staff, it prefer the academic standard of “more strength more power” to the administrative instructions of “more power more strength”.

In the universities the organizational members' activities are of high intelligence and relative independence, and their teachings and researches are highly professional, which decides the teachers' job in greater freedom and internal normativeness, so the teachers prefer that the external restrictions are seldom, that the organizational structure is oblate, that the management ranks are reduced, that the self-management is implemented. The oblate structure of the learning organization perfectly satisfies the internal requirement of the organizations in the universities with the features of low management-barycenter, flexibility, interaction between the upper and lower, easy cultivating the learning ability and exerting the innovation ability. The learning organizations try their best to hand the decision-making

power to the lower level, and the lowest unit has the enough power to make decision and it will be responsible for any results, then the oblate organizational structure that the locality is the principal is formed, which ensures the organizational cells to carry out the creationary labor with enough power of self-decisions in a great free room. It helps to make decisions rapidly that the span of the oblate organizational structure with few management levels is larger, that the relationships between the internal members in the organizations are close, that the flowage of information and knowledge is convenient, that the relationships, the interactions and communications between the inside and outside could be responded in time.

#### *B. Making the Close Organization Opener to Increase the School Vitality*

Currently, the phenomena of “closed school” exist in many universities. Each university runs a closed school that lacks of contacts with outside. The majority of universities in china are of the state mechanism. As the occupant of state-owned assets and the main delegate of advanced science and technology and advanced culture the universities could not be separated from the development of the regional economy. It is responsible and liable for universities to make contributions to the development of the local economy and construction the learning society. The new situations demand the universities to adjust their functions, effects and self-development approach. The universities’ role of broadcasting the knowledge is weakening; on the contrary, their multi-functions of leading the economy, integrating the culture and creating the thoughts are strengthening increasingly. Any idea of managing a university in a closed status is a wishful thinking. Only if the universities run the school openly, actively participate in the competition between universities; take part in the economic construction and society development, closely focus on the trend of the educational development of the world, actively face the educational challenges after china’s joining in the WTO, boldly draw the world’s advanced experience of running a school and management, strengthen the international academic communications and educational cooperation, can the universities continuously adapt to economic and social development, make the level of teaching and research to be improved endlessly, grow their strength and enhance their international reputation. To consolidate and develop the university education the universities should make full use of the existing educational resources and update and extend new ones as soon as possible with the help of opening, thus the comprehensive strength of the universities are improved ceaselessly, the flexible education system that could calmly deal with various changes are set up, and the universities will win forever in the contests.

#### *C. Making the Rigid Organization Flexibler to Improve the Flexible Abilities.*

The compulsoriness and irresistibility of the rigid management make the supervisors and the supervisees have their rules to follow. The supervisees could act freely unworriedly and hopefully in the frame of the system as long as they do follow the rules, but the supervisees would be punished if they disobeyed the rules or orders. Actually with the development of the society the teachers and students become more and more bardian and assertive, the trend of self-actualized is formed rapidly, so it is more and more difficult to manage. The organization become flexible that means the organization could adapt various changes of the environment and response suitably in time to any changes. The features of the flexible management are that: internality is better than externality, psychology is better than physical, example is better than precept, certainty is better than negation, encouragement is better than control, and practice ideological guidelines. Basically the flexible management is a “people centered” management that the flexible manners should be used to manage and exploit human resources. Regarded “humanity” as a symbol, based on researching the psychological and behavioral rules, adopted a non-mandatory approach, produced a potential persuasion in people’s hearts, the flexible management turns the

organization's will into people's conscious action. The flexible management advocates that the supervisees should be educated and influenced to reasonably and emotionally understand and accept the proposals and will. The flexible management makes up for the shortage of the rigid management. Therefore, the relationship of the flexible management and the rigid management is complementary and interactional. Today in the conditions that people's awareness is increasing, the people's inherent qualities are enhancing, the realm of thought is increasingly perfect, and our society is more harmonious, the flexible management is the best way for the future development of education.

#### *D. Changing the Linear Organization into a Networking One to Improve the Ability of Innovation.*

Because of cultural differences between different disciplines in the organizational structure of universities although the differences in portrait and spatial distribution are small, the differences in landscape orientation are large and the transverse complication is in a high degree. The realization of innovations and breakthroughs in many fields base on breaking the barriers between various disciplines, so the interdisciplinary cross, colligation and collaboration has become the basic guarantee of innovations and breakthroughs. As an academic organization, a university's the living foundation and core value is the innovation and breakthrough on the scholarship. The joints of network are the teams of researching, the workstations, the teams of various tasks and projects. The new knowledge could be broadcasted rapidly via network, which means that the knowledge could be shared; the organizational actions should be nurtured and self-regulated. The gaining knowledge and communicating experience enhance the increasing innovations of the networking hierachical organization, and the new code of conduct and behavior are promoted. In the networking hierachical structure, the management center organize information, collect, process and broadcast knowledge, and make the basic policies with the help of various communicated channels instead of directly distributing and coordinating the activities of subordinate units by power, which enhances that the values and the codes of the conduct which is included in the material culture, spiritual culture and Institutional culture are accepted rapidly by work units, and become the basic standards of behavior choices to improve management efficiency and management effectiveness.

### **3. The Architectural Model of University Learning Organization**

According to statistic, there are several organizational types in the world as following: the functional system, the division system, the matrix system and the network system. The functional system adopts the management way of specializing according to functions; the management principles of the division system is "centralized policies, decentralized management"; the organizational structure of the matrix system are made up by two sets of management system: one is a vertical functional system, the other one is a horizontal system which is created for a certain task; the teams and work groups are the network joints in the network system. The majority of joints are equal and nonrigid. Scholars James I and Card even carried out a Comparative Study on these organizational structures above. (Table 1 and table 2)

TABLE 1 THE COMPARISON OF SEVERAL ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The type of the organization	The functional system	The division system	The matrix system	The network system
The division of labor	(by inputs)	(by outputs)	by inputs and outputs	by knowledge

The coordination mechanism	The hierarchical supervisor, planning and process	Dividing the general manager and the staff	double-report relationship	The cross-functional teams
The Decision-making power	Highly centralized	Separation of strategy and implementation	sharing	Highly decentralized
Boundary	Core / periphery	Internal and external market	Multiple interfaces	Infiltration and changes
The importance of informal organization	low	General	Higher than general	high
The political	Between the various functional departments	Between the Headquarters and the branches or between the branches	Along the dimension of the matrix	The changing joint
The basis of the authority	professional knowledge of the position and the duty	The responsibility and ability of general management	Coordination skills and abilities	Knowledge and ability to cope

TABLE 2 THE ANALYSES ON THE MERIT AND DEMERIT OF VARIOUS ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The type of the rganizational structure	The functional system	The division system	The matrix system	The network system
The efficiency of resource use	best	bad	general	good
The time efficiency	bad	good	general	best
ability to cope	bad	good	general	best
The responsibility	good	best	bad	general
The most suitable environment	The stable environment	The variety environment	The omplex environment of Multifaceted needs	The variable Environment
The best strategy choose	The concentration / low-cost strategy	The diversification strategy	The reactive strategies	The innovation strategy

Some researches on the practice of various organizations in the world discover that the organizations that adopt the functional system, the division system, the matrix system and the network system encountered many problems in the era of knowledge economy. Now more and more organizations especially some high-tech enterprises adopt the network organizational structure. Drucker the management master think that the network structure will be a new organizational structure in the future world.

Referring to the research results of some relevant scholars the authors of the paper boldly try to propose a new model of organizational architecture for the management of modern universities.(see diagram 1)

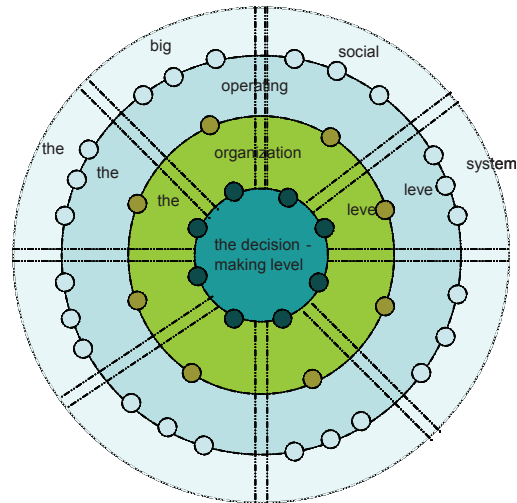


Diagram 1 the architectural model of university learning organizations

- ( ● ● ● Representing in proper order: the decision-making level, the organization level, the operating level that various teams for different affairs)

The organizations of university make up of the network architecture: the decision-making level, the organizational level and the operating level. (1) the decision-making level( the senior leaders of universities) is the core and guide, the emphases for members of this level are to establish appropriate values, to make the Orientation of running the school, and to make the Orientation for the organizations. (2) The organizational level (the middle managers) is the backbone that transmits messages to play the role of communication; the emphases for members of this level are to develop good work ethic, to have the new knowledge and the abilities of innovations and to work scientifically. (3) The operating level (the teams of teachers) is the actor, the emphases for members of this level are law-abiding, aggressive, healthy of physical and mental, to have good philosophy and moral values, to have good abilities for position work, to be able to study and make a progress constantly, and to adopt the changing work environment.

The internal development trend of science is interdisciplinary incessant cross; integration and fusion, thus some new subjects and fields are born. Founded the grassroots academic organization in form of "Outstanding subject leaders + creative team" benefit to the development and creative research of the subject, resolving actual issues and enhancing the development of education and teaching. In the course of action, the subject organization in which the task teams are the basic units could be composed, in another word, the organic integration of the subject system and project system. The subject leaders manage the verticality directed by the subject; the project managers are in charge of the horizontality managing the project, thus the responsibilities are clear, the efficiency is handsome and the flexibility is great, furthermore which benefits to collocating resources and interdisciplinary cross development.

The architecture of university learning organization cracks centralized leadership model in the bureaucracy management system, weakens the negative impact of strong hierarchy, realizes the sharing the power in the organization, changes the staff's old work model and relationship model, enhances the relationship of upper and lower members of the organization changing from "contractual relationship" to "partnership-type relationship", provides the room for the organization members to display their abilities, a systemic guarantee for them to exert their initiative and creativity, and a systemic guarantee for their self-growth.

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