

# University Teachers' Management: Shift from Traditional Management to "Ecological Management"

Xiaoqiong Zhou<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Personnel Department, China West Normal University, Nanchong, Sichuan, China

Correspondence:

**Xiaoqiong Zhou,**

Personnel Department, China West Normal University,

No. 1 Shi Da Road, Nanchong, 637009,

Sichuan, China.

E-mail: zhyg007@163.com

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## **Abstract**

*Both teachers' scientific management mode based on the concept of the realization of an ideal goal needs a strict management system, laws and regulations and service-oriented humanistic management mode based on the concept of taking teachers' individual realization as the key objective run to two extremes whose binary opposition lacks of a global field of vision. The former is not conducive to improve teachers' enthusiasm and initiative because of their being put into a position of passive management; The latter could not solve the problem of how to realize effective collaboration between people and ignore the factors outside of "human beings" in the management. This study analyzes the disadvantages of the two traditional management modes, and puts forward teachers' ecological management mode on the basis of the core point of view of ecology such as "ecosystem" which regards the process of teachers' management as an ecological system made up of "ecological main subject", management tasks and ecological management environment. It insists on promoting teachers' safe, stable, harmonious and sustainable development management of ecosystem through optimizing all kinds of ecological factors and ecological environment. The core connotation of this kind of management mode lies in multiple levels such as emphasis on the role of the "whole" and "system", advocating decentralization management, suggesting environmental harmony, promoting interaction and seeking for the sustainable development and so on.*

**Key Words:** Scientific management; Humanistic management; Ecological management; Ecosystem, Ecological balance; Teachers' ecological management; Core connotation

## 1. Introduction

As a core component of human resource management, teachers' management in Chinese colleges and universities has experienced two stages: scientific management and humanistic management. The former regards "benefit" as the goal and generally considered to be a kind of "rigid" management means; The latter regards "teachers' development" as the goal, generally considered to a kind of flexible means in teachers' management. However, in practical teachers' management, both of them have exposed their defects which requires a "people-oriented", as well as a very "scientific" management style. Recent studies show that teachers' ecological management can make up for many defects in the traditional teaching management. For this reason, This article is trying to introduce "teachers' ecological management" concept, and explain its connotation on the basis of analyzing the defects of the traditional teaching management.

## 2. The Traditional View of Teachers' Management

Teachers' scientific management and humanistic management mode originated in scientific management and humanistic management paradigm. The former aims at solving problems such as the inefficiency and subjective judgment in experience management and prompting maximization efficiency of teachers' management. It emphasizes teacher's role as an economic man. However, the latter, as the opposite, aims at avoiding the problems of damping down the teachers' enthusiasm countering the former's regarding teachers as subservient to the standard and system. It emphasizes respect for human nature. Despite the two models respectively contain some beneficial factors to the teachers' management, but their inherent defects also can't be avoided.

### 2.1 "Rigid" and "Targeted" Scientific Management

Rigid scientific management which based on Frederick Taylor's (1911) scientific principle and Henri Fayol's (1930) management theory insists that the realization of the ideal goal needs a strict management system, laws and regulations within the organization. This management concept is embodied in relying on the management principle, system, method, plan, organization, allocation and control of the university's teachers to achieve the objectives of the organization effectively or efficiently. It has the following characteristics: firstly, the starting point and end-result lie in achieving the expected goal smoothly by the pursuit of efficiency and the targeted management; Secondly, To urge the staff to complete regulation of indicators relying on the scientific rules and regulations, work process and organization structure design. Thirdly, to carry on the quantitative management and assess the faculty's performance through the quantitative. For instance, teachers' academic post promotion needs prescribed number of papers published and some level of scientific research project should be applied for. Fourthly, the relationship between managers and staff is reflected in the form of "command--execution": on the one hand, managers, in the absolute authority, are responsible for the formulation, implementation and interpretation of rules and regulations; on the other hand, faculty members in an elaborate organization framework whose thoughts, personality are controlled, have to accept management passively. If we compare the whole management process to a game, then, the managers act as the organisers, executives and referees, yet the faculty as the athletes. The athletes' performance depend largely on some external factors such as the scientific nature of the organizational processes, game content and the fairness of the rules of a game.

It's evident that management by objective has its own advantages and disadvantages. As for the former, it's easy to operate. On the one hand, the operating process of the static and mechanical management is simple and convenient which can be carried out only by means of experience and common sense; On the other hand, the "rules-based" style of management can improve the work efficiency because it can reduce a lot of trouble in the process of management. In addition, in the management, institutionalized measures of supervision, rewards and punishment can bring convenience to realize the clear objective. However, this

kind of management mode is being increasingly criticized. The first, its lacks of human nature maybe does harm on teachers' feelings. For example, emphasis on the authority of the manager will put the staff in the position of "passive reaction". Being only regarded as a simple, arranged and placed subject of management, they have no chances to best interact with the managers. Therefore, their initiatives can not be inspired well. Secondly, only one-sided emphasis on rigid mandatory rules and measures of rewards, ignoring the lateral communication and coordination, it is not easy for the managers to make use of the incentive roles of emotional factors. Thirdly, quantitative appraisal way forces staff to face the objective passively and perhaps unwilling to participate in the construction of target with interests. Their performance could only focus on "quantity" and ignore "quality" because of the lack of enthusiasm and motivation. In addition, as complex mental labour, university teachers' work has its own features. So, setting a subjective goal does not necessarily accord with scientific rules. From the above, all these defects prompt managers to attach great importance to the factors about "human being" in the management.

## 2.2 "Soft" and "Humanistic" Management

The construction and development of "humanistic management" model is supported by George Elton Mayo's (2003) "theory of human relationships", Frederick Herzberg's (1959) "two-factor" theory and A. H. Maslow's, (1943) "hierarchy of needs" theory. Certainly, the birth of teacher's humanistic management also originated in critical response to human factors' ignorance in the scientific management. This model aims to improve the quality of all the staff by applying the theory of knowledge management in the development of intellectual resources. It advocates achieving the high level of work in the person's full-scale development through a variety of incentives to display the human's potentials to the limit.

Its main characteristics are embodied in: the first, advocating helping teachers to realize self value under this premise "everyone is valuable". Man is a dialectical unity with natural attribute, social attribute and spiritual attribute whose value is also presented in realizing them. According to the theory of Maslow's basic needs, human beings' highest requirements are embodied in the spirit level, especially for Mental workers. For this reason, humanistic management regards "satisfying human being' spiritual needs" as the starting point and end-result of mode construction. Secondly, Flexible approach is adopted in the management in order to get the recognition of the faculty and willing to accept the universities' management. The ultimate goal aims at improving the efficiency of management by means of the same willings and actions. Thirdly, managers' main role is to provide service in humanistic management which is very different from the one in "rigid management". They should not only create favourable conditions for cultivating teachers' sense of belonging to their university and best sense of ownership so as to make them be willing to put their hearts and soul into work, but also organize teachers' participation in construction of management system in order that a kind of loose and harmonious working atmosphere can be formed in interaction.

Evidently, "people-oriented" flexible humanistic management regarding the staff as the center of management activities, is a great shift of management concept. It is still popular since it has been introduced into colleges and universities teaching management. Firstly, it is beneficial to reduce the staff's resistance because it is based on full understanding of their psychological and behavior regularity and concerns about their emotional investment. Secondly, it is conducive to enhance the staff's active participation and work enthusiasm because of their human dignity is respected, work is recognized and personal value is achieved. Thirdly, flexible and dynamic management complying with the principle of intellectual labor can offer a harmonious environment and sufficient time for high quality results. Fourthly, in the long run, it is helpful to build a lean and efficient teaching staff and use less human resources to create as many as possible of the wealth of knowledge by making human's potential into full play on each link including staff employment, staff configuration, management incentive and education training and so on. However, its defects are also very clear. As some scholars point out, humanistic management is not conducive to achieve coordination of

individual and others, and individuals and groups. Although its emphasis on the human element, the functions of tissues and system get weakened. In other words, service-oriented management based on the concept of teachers' individual realization can't solve the problem of how to realize effective collaboration between people on the one hand; on the other hand, along the staff's liberation from the position of "materialization", their roles get overemphasized and at last run to another extreme in contrast to "rigid management" .

### **3. Ecological Management Concept**

From the analysis, these two kinds of teacher management thoughts mentioned above originate from the mind-set of binary opposition and lack of a global field of vision. Therefore, it objectively calls a symbiotic type management mode of sustainable development. Ecological management is just the new way of management which can avoid the shortcomings of traditional management, promote its advantages and surpass tradition in the inheritance.

#### *3.1 The Ecological System*

From the literal understanding, "ecological management" is the integration product of the ecology and management. The core term, "ecological system" can bring a lot of enlightenments to management work. It refers to "a kind of formed natural system which consists of the relationship between the biologicals and the surrounding environment". In other words, ecological system shows the function unity of the unit between biologicals and non-living components in nature. For example, forest community and its surrounding environment constitute the forest ecosystem; grassland and its environment constitute the grassland ecosystem. The natural ecological system consisted of biological and abiotic environment is one natural entity which has a certain size, performs a certain function, and can be self-sustaining. Within the system, material recycle, energy flow and information transmission spread all the time and a relationship of mutual connection, interdependence, mutual influence and mutual restriction is formed between different organisms and between biology and environment. When the term "ecosystem" is applied to social field, it describes the various levels of units formed by the relationship between people and natural environment or social environment. For example, as the main body of the classroom, teachers and students and classroom environment can form a teaching ecological system; Likewise, at a level of teachers' management activities, managers, the staff and the management environment can form an ecosystem of teachers' management.

#### *3.2 The Connotation of Ecological Management*

The core idea of "ecosystem" is to emphasize the integrity of the system, the interconnection of each element within the system, the interaction or coporation between biological individual and sustainable developmental in dynamic equilibrium. Based on all these, some scholars put forward concept of ecological management. For example, Grumbine, R.E. (1994) regarded it as a kind of method which aims at encouraging all stakeholders to participate in the formulation of sustainable solutions through their interaction with a living environment. Chen Xiangyang (2006) defines ecological management as " by making use of systematic, comprehensive and organic unity of ecology theory and thinking method to study the whole ecosystem management and law". She Zhengrong (1996) sums up the features of ecological management from four aspects: firstly, to emphasize on the balance and sustainable development between economic and ecological; Secondly, to use a loop of progressive management (also called adaptive management) instead of linear management; Thirdly, to emphasize the systematic, integrate , organic and complex relationship among every element within the system; The last, to emphasize the openness and extensive participation of management. In addition, Zhou jianping (2004) lists the features of ecological management from "integrity", "equality", "openness" and "symbiotic interaction".

It is not hard to see, all of the above scholars concern about the core ideas of ecology whether on defining the concept of ecological management or describing its features. What they discuss include at least the followings in common: one is to break from the one-way management thinking which only uses top-down method from the manager to the management object instead of democratic equal management concept; The second, the relationship between human and environment should also be considered in the process of management; Third, never-ending interaction among all the elements within the system is the basic mode of existence of management activities and dynamic harmony is regarded as the essential condition of helping sustainable development. The fourth, the integrity, systemic and regularity of the management activities should be taken into consideration seriously.

The concept of ecological management in macro ecological management has strong guidance for teachers' management. Managers, teachers, management tasks and environment also constitute a ecological system whin which all the elements' survival and development in the same system must depend on a dynamic and harmonious state. In this sense, the teachers' ecological management can be defined as "a process in which ecological concept is integrated in teachers management". In practical management, the optimization of various ecological elements and the ecological environment is quite important because it can promote the teachers' management of ecosystem secure, stable, coordinative and sustainable development.

#### 4. Structure and Connotation of Teacher's Ecological Management

Similar to the natural ecological system, the ecosystem of university teachers' management has its own structure and function in which every element plays a role in their niche. It also contains rich connotation.

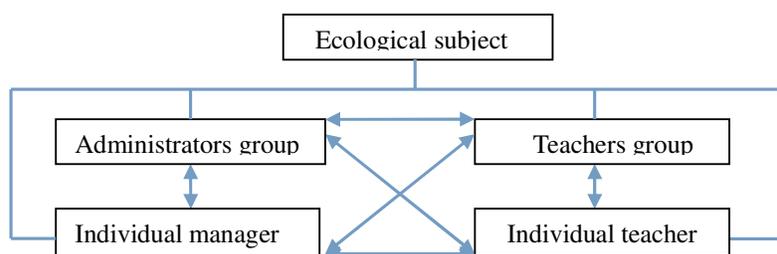
##### 4.1 Components of Teacher's Management Ecosystem

The Ecology system of teachers' management mainly consists of three parts: ecological subject, management tasks and ecological management environment.

##### 4.1.1 Ecological Subject

The subjects in teachers' management ecosystem are mainly divided into two types: ecological individuals and groups. The former is the basic composition unit of ecological subjects including individual manager and individual teacher; the latter refers to individual clusters from the same ecological subject including administrators group and teacher group, all of whom influence and restrict each other. (as shown in figure)

**Table1.** Figure of *Components of Teachers' Management Ecosystem*



(Arrow parts: information communication and circulation between each factor)

##### 4.1.2 Management Environment

The environment is the outside world which interacts with the main body and it refers to all the things which associate with the main body. Environment can affect the body and the main body also can transform the

environment. Environmental factors in the ecological system of teachers' management are reflected both in materials and in spirits, including the political environment, economic environment, cultural environment and so on. For the teachers, an ideal environment with equal status as managers in campus political activities, with enough materials in personal development, with institutional guarantee for fair treatment and with cultural harmony on mental stress, can stimulate the staff's work enthusiasm and thus promote the overall development of the school with their voluntary and active attitudes.

#### *4.2 Connotation of Teacher's Ecological Management*

The connotation of teacher's ecological management which contains the idea of ecology and also complies with the laws of education management shows further embodiment of the concept of ecological management. As a mixture of a high degree of unity of two concepts at the macro level, its connotations can be analysed from multiple levels.

Firstly, it acknowledges the role of the "whole" and "system" in management process. Teachers' ecological management is an organic system which is made up of different body form and environment. Administrators, teachers and management environment is an organic whole whose progress can be pushed by releasing the biggest potentials of all the elements. However, on the other hand, "the overall function is greater than the sum of individual features of each element". For instance, the best combination of elements within the system can be achieved through the macroscopic overall coordination in specific teaching management and more efficient function can be created through saving time or energy consumption depending on the transformation or feedback of the information in time.

Secondly, it is a kind of decentralized management. Various elements of ecological management system have their each unique value and they keep a equal and symbiotic relationship. As the main body with common interest in ecological management system, a kind of connection of coexistence and cooperation is maintained between managers and teachers on the basis of equal rights and personity. This kind of equal relationship which is built on basis of a fair principle not on different position is also kept between different teachers. Therefore, interests balance should be maintained among all the main body of the management system including the balance of interests between managers and teachers, teachers and teachers and individual and the collective. Obviously, it is different from "rigid" and "targeted" scientific management which emphasizes "all for the organizational goals" and also different from service-oriented management which emphasizes "all for the full realization of individual teacher's value", because each of the latter brokes the dynamic balance of ecosystem management by setting a center for management activities and causing a formed opposition between managers and teachers.

Thirdly, it seeks balance in harmonious environment. Any organism's dynamical balance and benign circulation must depend on their material, energy and information exchange with surrounding environment. Therefore, the surrounding ecological environment, both biological and abiotic, is very important and that they can adapt to each other between main body and the surrounding environment is the precondition of the existence of ecological system. Thus, teacher's ecological management should focus on providing a helpful environment for the main body's survival and development which includes both the physical and the mental environment. As the creator of the spiritual civilization, it is very important to provide the teachers with a kind of ecological environment which can make their body and mind cheerful on the basis of "Fairness" "respect" and "identity". "Fairness" is the foundation of prompting teachers actively to participate in the work, "respect" is external conditions to make sure the teacher's happy work and "identity" is a driving force of encouraging teacher's tireless work.

Fourthly, the interaction is the basic state of its existence. The secrets of the ecosystem why always full of vitality is that the state of constant communication is being maintained in various forms between ecological. Dialogue is the main communication way of each element in the system of teachers' ecological management.

A kind of sincere, equal and open dialogue can make the main body with different value perception, cognitive level, individual demand and ideal faith reach maximum consensus and take a concerted action for the same objective. Dialogue can also contribute to the main body's mutual promotion and mutual benefit in a kind of democratic and equal atmosphere by transferring, collision, sublimation and sharing of their information and experiences.

Fifthly, it regards "symbiotic" and "mutual benefit" as effective way of implementation of management. The symbiosis means analysis, understanding and management of various activities and phenomenon in teaching management of ecosystem on basis of this presupposition that all the things in a relationship of interdependent existence and positive cooperation. "Mutual benefit" means every factor can benefit from other factors or the whole management system. To be specific, its emphasis is not purely on teachers' development, also is not purely in pursuit of management efficiency for the purpose, but in the pursuit of realizing benefit balance between teachers development and management purpose. In fact, symbiosis and mutual benefit seek for different ecological body's suitability.

Finally, it regards sustainable development as the ultimate goal. Any balance of the ecosystem is not permanent, static, absolute and always develops by breaking balance constantly and constructing a new and more reasonable one. The teachers' ecological management also needs to keep building a "new balance" to reach the more reasonable structure, realize more efficient function and at last get better ecological benefits. For instance, a certain ordinary university gives special emphasis on teachers' scientific research quality because research bottleneck hinders its development. Eventually, it causes managers and teachers to attach great importance to the scientific research achievements and breaks the original ecosystem balance and promote the formation of a new equilibrium because of the proliferation of scientific research achievements. Of course, the principle of moderation ought to be adhered in breaking balance and teachers' pressure and their growing characteristics should be considered. Only in this way, can the entire ecosystem achieve sustainable and healthy development.

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