

# Study on Incentive Mechanism of Grass-roots Management Team in Colleges and Universities

—Based on the Hierarchy of Needs Theory

Wei Yuan

Zhongnan University of Economics and Law  
Wuhan, China

**Abstract**—In order to improve the enthusiasm and creativity of college workers, and establish and improve the incentive mechanism in colleges and universities, scholars at home and abroad have conducted in-depth exploration from different perspectives, and made a lot of experiments and efforts. However, the research on the object of the grass-roots management team in colleges and universities is relatively poor. This paper attempts to start from the theoretical and empirical aspects, based on the actual situation of grass-roots management personnel in colleges and universities in our country, starting from the hierarchy of needs theory, using questionnaire and interview data to support the research and analysis of the existing study status, problems, learning from the successful experience of related ordinary university, clearing the grass-roots management team in colleges and universities in the work status and characteristics and finding out the effective way to solve the problem of the application in practice so as to explore the essence and objective laws of the grass-roots management team in universities in our country, construct and improve a long-term dynamic incentive system and provide constructive ideas and feasible suggestions for the future development of the work.

**Keywords**—grass-roots management team of colleges and universities, incentive mechanism, hierarchy of needs

## I. INTRODUCTION

The grass-roots management team of colleges and universities includes the personnel of the school management department and all the grass-roots units engaged in the management work, the combination of which forms the main force to serve the development of colleges and universities. Colleges and universities management is different from other types of management. It has many variables, and it is a dynamic management with many functions such as planning, coordination, and service. Whether colleges and universities can achieve innovation and continue to go up to a higher level are closely related to the level of the grass-roots management team, establishment of effective incentive mechanism and mobilization of enthusiasm of the grass-roots management team in colleges and universities.

## II. BASIC THEORETICAL RESEARCH

The theory of demand level is proposed by Maslow, a famous American humanistic psychologist. In his novel *The Theory of Human Motivation*, he first summarized human needs into 5 levels from low to high, which respectively are

"living needs, security needs, social needs, respecting needs, and self-fulfilling needs. Five kinds of needs are like ladders stepping up by levels" [1]. Among them, the former two are material value needs and the latter three are spiritual value needs.

The theory holds that people all have potential needs of these five different levels. However, at different stages of personal development, the urgency of various requirements is different, showing wave-like progression. When the demand of lower level is satisfied, the demand of higher level is generated and developed into a dominant demand. It becomes a motive force, which results in an incentive effect. This incentive is positively related to the intensity of its demand, and the stronger the demand is, the greater the resulting incentive is. The intensity of demand depends on its position in the level of individual needs and the satisfaction of lower levels of demand. "As individuals continue to develop, people's needs are increasingly higher, and as people's low-level needs continue to be better met, people's desire for higher-level needs becomes stronger and stronger. The resulting incentives have also continued to develop" [2]. Therefore, according to the hierarchy of needs theory, the positioning of this group in the professional development stage should be understood first, the high-level and low-level needs that belong to this group should be defined and the satisfaction level of its low-level needs should be investigated to establish an effective incentive mechanism for specific occupational groups.

## III. THE DEVELOPMENT STATUS OF GRASS-ROOTS MANAGEMENT PERSONNEL IN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

### A. The characteristics of the grass-roots management personnel in colleges and universities

The grass-roots management personnel in colleges and universities are responsible for a series of activities such as the management of various plans, research projects, and transfer of achievements of universities and colleges. They are different from full-time teachers and ordinary administrators. They have their own characteristics, and these characteristics will certainly have the unique characteristics of managerial staffs.

First of all, the grass-roots management personnel in colleges and universities are professional. Because of the

special nature of their management objects, they are different from ordinary managers, but have the professional nature of the characteristics of university management. They hold professional knowledge of management, such as a systematic scientific knowledge system, modern management scientific knowledge, and certain scientific research capabilities. Therefore, the grassroots administrators in universities are typical knowledge workers. Due to its higher level of education and culture, knowledge workers generally have a higher demand for spiritual values than general employees.

Secondly, the grass-roots management team in Colleges and universities should be stable. A stable management team is an important guarantee for the development of various careers in colleges and universities. If the mobility of the managers is too large and the staff of the management links appears to be faulting, it will inevitably affect the management level of colleges and universities reduce the transfer efficiency of scientific research results and the enthusiasm of personnel and thus affect the service quality of the entire school. From this perspective, the grassroots management personnel should be in an extremely important position, and colleges and universities should give them enough attention and respect.

As far as its professional environment is concerned, the work of the grassroots management personnel in colleges and universities will be affected by many factors such as the nature and division of administrative power, the development planning of colleges and universities, and the organization of schools. For example, management service is one of the three major goals of colleges and universities. The degree of emphasis on management services in universities directly affects the enthusiasm of management personnel. If colleges and universities attach importance to management services, the grass-roots management personnel in colleges and universities are likely to feel the recognition of the organization, and easily recognize their own value, improve their sense of responsibility and work enthusiasm, and thus promote the efficiency of university management. In addition, "the overall construction of the management team will also have an impact on the management of grass-roots institutions. If there is a lack of professional quality of managers in a certain part of the entire management process, it will lead to the poor connection of the whole team management and reduce the work efficiency." [3].

#### *B. The status quo of grass-roots management personnel in colleges and universities*

Although the grassroots personnel in colleges and universities play a decisive role in the healthy development of colleges and universities, after investigation, it is found that the status quo of current university management personnel does not reflect its important role in management.

First of all, from the perspective of the professional development of management personnel, most universities do not establish a training mechanism for grassroots management personnel, leading to serious "more arrangement and less training" phenomenon, resulting that grassroots management personnel cannot grow together with their own work and organizations. In the information age, knowledge is updated

very quickly. Knowledge-based workers can only adapt to personal needs if they update their personal expertise accordingly. "As a kind of special knowledge-based employee, university management personnel shoulder heavy responsibilities. The profession itself not only raises higher requirements for employees' own professional knowledge, but also requires them to understand the relevant professional knowledge within the service area." [4] Therefore, in the information age, the grass-roots management personnel in colleges and universities should update their knowledge in a timely manner through group training and self-learning, which will not only facilitate effective completion of management tasks, but also improve their competency and promote their career development so as to better achieve personal value.

Secondly, from the perspective of welfare benefits, the welfare structure of grass-roots management personnel in colleges and universities focuses on material welfare, and the level of spiritual welfare is relatively low. As mentioned above, the grass-roots management personnel in colleges and universities are knowledge-based employees and have a high level of education and culture. Compared with general employees, they generally have higher spiritual value needs. Therefore, the welfare structure that emphasizes material welfare cannot effectively meet the needs of the grass-roots management personnel in colleges and universities, and it is difficult to generate effective incentives for them.

Third, from the perspective of satisfaction of psychological expectations, the grass-roots management personnel in colleges and universities generally fail to obtain corresponding psychological satisfaction from their careers. The grass-roots management personnel in colleges and universities are one of the important subjects in the service of colleges and universities. Without effective management of management personnel, the efficiency and quality of colleges and university services will be affected. However, through investigations, it was found that "in many colleges and universities, the grass-roots management personnel are only treated as ordinary operational staff, and their important role in service has not received enough attention" [5]. Therefore, the grass-roots management personnel did not feel the recognition and respect they deserve from the school management, which greatly undermined the enthusiasm of the management personnel and affected the service quality as well.

Fourth, from the perspective of team building, grass-roots management personnel are used as an auxiliary role for various services and excluded from the main body construction in the team building. In fact, "the various service processes in colleges and universities are the process of coordination and cooperation between people at all levels and management personnel at all levels and are the result of joint efforts of many people" [6]. However, the survey found that grass-roots management personnel in colleges and universities have not received due attention on training opportunities and outcome sharing. Such unfair treatment is very easy to separate the communication and coordination between people at all levels and management personnel, and destroy the cooperation between them, resulting in unnecessary waste of resources and low service efficiency and quality.

#### IV. THE EXPERIENCE OF DOMESTIC COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

In view of the incentives of the grass-roots management team in colleges and universities, domestic universities and colleges have made more explorations in the establishment of incentive mechanisms, and provided some successful experiences. In summary, there are the following aspects:

##### A. *Improve the management mechanism of grass-roots management in colleges and universities*

Through the establishment of planning indicators, development of management regulations and methods, etc., we should clearly define the personnel changes, title assessment mechanisms, and responsibilities and objectives of grass-roots management personnel in colleges and universities, quantify the assessment of goals and tasks as much as possible and use administrative authority to ensure their implementation. This mechanism is conducive to the standardization and proceduralization of management, and institutionalizes the management of managers. It is a mandatory incentive and constraint mechanism. However, this incentive mechanism ignores the autonomy and initiative of the management personnel. Although it can ensure completion of the task, it can't fully mobilize the enthusiasm. Therefore, in the process of use, we should pay attention to its scope of action and use it with other means.

##### B. *Promote the reward mechanism for grassroots management*

"The reward and incentive mechanism can create a reasonable reward distribution system and a fair environment to motivate the work enthusiasm of grass-roots management personnel in colleges and universities through the adjustment of economic leverage." [7] However, a single fixed incentive mechanism does not play a good incentive effect since the marginal utility that such incentives bring to management personnel is diminishing, so the incentive effect it brings will have a saturation point. Above this saturation point, rewards cannot continue to provide better incentives. Therefore, the incentive of a single reward is short-term and non-sustainable. To make the reward mechanism really play a role in motivating management personnel, the combination of positive rewards and negative rewards, material rewards and non-material rewards, and external rewards and internal rewards should be emphasized in setting up the reward mechanism.

##### C. *Establish an evaluation mechanism for grassroots management*

In colleges and universities, the evaluation mechanism of full-time teachers is generally established in colleges and universities, and linking this evaluation with personal reward and support evaluation is a more effective incentive and restraint mechanism. Therefore, some researchers suggest that a mutual evaluation mechanism be established between researchers and management personnel. This mutual evaluation can understand the needs of both sides, improve the shortcomings, and thus improve the efficiency of scientific research.

#### V. THOUGHTS ON STRENGTHENING THE CONSTRUCTION OF INCENTIVE MECHANISM FOR GRASSROOTS MANAGEMENT TEAMS IN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

##### A. *Construct a good team relationship incentive*

Improving the communication and coordination between management personnel and researchers as well as among management personnel can maximize personal work effectiveness and maximize overall team performance. At the meantime, the principle of fairness should be followed and a sound and reasonable assessment system should be established to build a relaxed, efficient and convenient environment for the grass-roots personnel and achieve the maximum benefit of the whole system.

##### B. *Implement goal assessment and self-management incentives*

For the grass-roots management personnel in colleges and universities, different assessment goals should be established according to different positions and workloads to fully mobilize the enthusiasm of the members. The formulation of objectives should fully consider the individual differences of the objects. Incentive measures should be divided into the short-term, medium-term, and long-term, so that individual personnel have corresponding development goals, conscientiously serve the development of the school and fully realize the self-worth.

##### C. *Carry out incentive mechanism of combination of material and spiritual incentives*

According to Maslow's "hierarchy of needs theory", we should start with the needs of the management personnel and guide different levels of material and spiritual need from low to high so as to achieve the objective of further stabilizing the grass-roots management team in colleges and universities. In terms of material incentives, it can be aimed at the particularity of the work of the research object, appropriately raising wages, bonuses or strengthening benefits, paid vocation and other incentives. In terms of spiritual incentives, development incentives, promotion incentives, emotional incentives, and honorary incentives and other ways can be used.

##### D. *Develop training incentives that keep pace with the times*

From the characteristics of the grass-roots management team in the university, it is not difficult to find that training for this group is indispensable and should continue to develop. We can adopt different ways to carry out such as: use career planning to improve the spiritual needs of the research subjects, organize research objects in a planned manner to update knowledge, and improve management capabilities; employ relevant experts to conduct on-site instruction and training in the form of lectures, symposiums, questionnaires, on-site consultation, etc.; strengthen intercollegiate exchange and exchange advanced management experience in different forms; regularly carry out management and academic salon activities with different themes to discuss new laws and effective ways of management; select outstanding management personnel to study advanced management

experience in foreign universities designedly where conditions permit.

"Incentives are equal for everyone, but the forces are different. Due to individual differences in abilities, qualities, etc., it tends to bring out a Matthew effect" [8]. Relatively speaking, some people will have a greater pace, and those who are behind tend to redouble their efforts to maximize their own quality and innovative ability to catch up with the former. Under the competitive situation caused by the incentive mechanism of the grass-roots management team in colleges and universities, the overall management ability of the school will further improve, and the school's cause will continue to advance.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Stephen P. Robbins. Management[M]. Beijing: China Renmin University Press, 2006.
- [2] Kan Xinmin. Introduction to Human Resource Management (Third Edition) [M]. Beijing: Tsinghua University Press, 2005.
- [3] Herbert A. Simon. Management Behavior[M]. Beijing: Mechanical Industry Press, 2006.
- [4] Tang Sen, On the Quality Construction of Scientific Research Management Teams in Colleges and Universities, Journal of Ningxia Normal University, Vol. 28, No.2, March 2007
- [5] Chen Yafen. Study on Management Mechanism of College and University Scientific Research Based on National Innovation System, Science and Technology Management Research, 2009(3)
- [6] Sun Miantao & Kang Cuiping. New Diagnosis and Interpretation of Educational Mechanism Theory, Educational Research, 2006(12)
- [7] Innovation Mechanism and Innovation Model of Scientific Research Management in Universities and Colleges. China Harvard Paper Network
- [8] Maslow People's Potential and Value[M] Beijing: Huaxia Publishing House, 1987.