

Factors Affecting the Institutional Motivational Orientation of Public University Teachers in China: Evidence From HUniversity

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ABSTRACT

Work motivation of employees can determine the work efficiency, which is a key factor affecting the success of an organisation in a competitive market. Compared to the employees working in business organisation, people who work public sector are not only affected by individualistic motivational orientation, but also affected by the institutional motivational orientation. Like western countries, the public sector has also undergone some significant changes with meeting the transformation of the economy in China. Therefore, it is necessary to explore if Public University teachers can keep their institutional motivational orientation under the background of privatisation trend of public sector in China and what factors can influence their institutional motivational orientation. Therefore, there is a merit in a systematic investigation of the institutional motivational orientation of public university teachers. This paper sought to fill this gap in the literature. Using a case of H University in China, this paper investigated what factors are closely related to the institutional motivational orientation of Public University teachers in three contexts: transformation context, education sector context and societal culture context. The findings revealed that the institutional motivational orientation of public university teachers is affected by both organisational factors happened in transformation context and societal culture context but is more influenced by the societal culture context. The demographic factors of public university teachers and their institutionalised beliefs in education have no effect on their motivational orientation.

Keywords: Employees, motivation, institution, organization

Journal of Advances in Humanities Research



Vol. 1, No.1, 2022

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INTRODUCTION

(Mullins (2016)) believes that the relationship between companies and their employees is largely influenced by whether employees can have enough motivation to work and whether they can be satisfied and rewarded from work (Barsoum, 2016). Although enhancing the motivation of university teachers can directly improve the quality of teaching practices, the status of some university teachers in China is still not optimistic (Tsang, Teng, Lian, & Wang, 2021). Professor Li Liguo of the School of Education of Renmin University of China pointed out: "Compared with international counterparts, the treatment of teachers in Chinese universities is generally low, and the proportion of school operating funds used for human expenditure is relatively low." Research on the survival status of teachers in Maxus University in 2018 shows that university teachers work an average of 48 hours a week, calculated on the basis of 5 working days a week, the average daily working time is nearly 10 hours. In addition, 88% of the interviewed university teachers felt that their work brought moderate to severe pressure (Tang & Sampson, 2018). More than 80% of university teachers are not satisfied with their monthly income and over 30% of teachers have zero salary increases in three years.

Based on these situations, I believe that institutional motivation orientation of public university teachers plays an important role in motivating the public university teachers to work (Steijn, 2008). A number of studies have explored the factors affecting the motivation of employees and examined the relationship between motivation and working behavior in the public organisation (Breaugh, Ritz, & Alfes, 2018). Although these studies have contributed to the understanding of how to improve the motivation of employees from the managerial perspective at the organizational level, it does not provide an adequate explanation to why the public university teachers can still be motivated when their individualistic oriented motivation are not met in the contemporary society (Tsang et al., 2021).

Therefore, it is necessary to explore if the institutional motivational orientation of public University teachers is affected by the recent changes happened in the public sector in China and what factors are closely related to the institutional motivational orientation of public university teachers in the contemporary China (Tang & Sampson, 2018). To be specific, does public university teachers with different demagogic features, such as age, gender, educational background and teaching experience will have different level of institutional motivational orientation? Will the organisational factors have a close relationship with the institutional motivational orientation of public university teachers in china? Are the

institutional motivational orientation of public university teachers affected by Chinese societal culture? Are the institutional motivational orientation of public university teachers influenced by their institutionalised beliefs in education sector? This paper sought to fill these gaps in the literature. Therefore, the primary objective of this paper is to explore the relationship between the demographic factors and institutional motivational orientation of public university teachers. The other related objectives of this study are to explore if the institutional motivational orientation of public university teachers is affected by the organisational factors; and finally, examine whether the institutional motivational orientation of public university teachers is influenced by societal culture and institutionalised beliefs towards education sector.

LITERATURE

Institutional motivational orientation in public Organisations

The concept of PSM arises from the work of (Perry & Wise, 1990) [ENREF 4](#). Their original formulation provided a typology of motivations associated with public service that includes rational (Policy-Making), norm-based (Public Interest), and affective motives (Compassion and Self-Sacrifice) (Stefurak, Morgan, & Johnson, 2020).

The Public Interest factor is centred on the desire to promote the common good and is fuelled by loyalty and a sense of duty to public. The two affective dimensions of Compassion and Self-Sacrifice reflect a sincere belief in the importance public service has on the lives of others and that serving others is a high form of loyalty and commitment to one's country and community. The Compassion and Self-Sacrifice factors, often viewed as the central feature of PSM, reflect an emphasis on altruism and prosocial values. The Public Interest and Policy-Making factors reflect an emphasis on public service and public institutions. Accordingly, there are four categories of institutional motivational orientation in this paper: policy-making orientation, public interest orientation, compassion orientation and self-sacrifice orientation.

The condition of academic profession in higher education in China

a. Transformational context in China

One of the different perspectives to appreciate the influence of organisational factors on public sector motivation on teachers in the public sector is to see it through the lenses of the new public management (NPM). NPM is a topical phrase to describe how management techniques from the private sector are now being applied to public organisation (Lane, 2000). In other words, NPM is one label to refer to all kinds of public sector reform. NPM is an approach used by public sector across many countries in the developing and developed

countries to adopt management practices from the private sector in order to increase efficiency in service delivery. NPM is a part of the managerial revolution that has gone around the world, affecting all countries, although to considerably different degrees (Lane, 2000). Given that researchers have discovered that management practice can influence motivation of employees (Barsoum, 2016). It is reasonable to expect the adoption of NPM will have impact on the institutional motivational orientation of university teachers in the public sector(Tsang et al., 2021).

Hypothesis 1: organisational factors are expected to have relationship with institutional motivation orientation of public University teachers in China.

b. Societal culture context in China

The Chinese culture characterised by collectivism, Confucianism, power distance, face and guanxi (Fang Lee Cooke, 2009). In china, Chinese traditional culture may show in various aspects: harmony, group orientation, leadership, guanxi (relationship)(Wenying Ma, 2012; Wanhua Ma & Wen, 2013). Affected by the Chinese traditional cultural heritage of Confucian of moral standards, Chinese normally believe that human being is a membership of family or society rather than an individual and the organization is seen as a big ‘family’, so they are more willing to commitment in the public interest than individual interest(Wanhua Ma & Wen, 2013). This argument is also in consistent with what (Hofstede, 2011) [ENREF 1](#) identified that China is a collectivist society. Group orientation make the Chinese believe that they should face and go through the difficulties together with other people (tongzhougongji). Therefore, Chinese are more likely to have the compassion orientation and sacrifice orientation (Steijn, 2008).

Hypothesis2: Societal culture factors are expected to have relationship with institutional motivation orientation of public University teachers in China.

c. Education sector context in China

Since the implementation of reform and opening up, the reform and development of higher education have made significant achievements. A higher education system with various forms, which encompasses basically all branches of learning, combines both degree-education and non-degree education and integrates college education, undergraduate education and graduate education, has taken shape(Steijn, 2008). Higher education in China has played an important role in the economic construction, science progress and social

development by bringing up large scale of advanced talents and experts for the construction of socialist modernization(Tsang et al., 2021).

Hypothesis3: Institutionalised beliefs in education sector are expected to have positive effect on institutional motivation orientation of Public University teachers in China.

METHODOLOGY

Sampling and data collection: This study used questionnaire to survey a random sample of 289 public university teachers from H University in China. The questionnaire covered a wide range of questions concerning the institutional motivational orientation of public university teachers. The questions are based on a five-point Likert scale, ratings from “1 strongly disagree” to “5 strongly agree”.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive statistics for all the variables are set out in Table 1. The data in Table 1 shows that many of the variables correlated with institutional motivational orientation of public university teachers. This suggests some preliminary support to our model. For example, there is significant relationship between organisational factors and institutional motivational orientation of public university teachers ($r=.584$, $p< .01$). Similarly, there is significant relationship between societal culture factors and institutional motivational orientation of public university teachers ($r=.690$, $p< .01$). There is also a significant relationship between institutionalised beliefs in education sector and institutional motivational orientation of public university teachers ($r=.463$, $p< .01$). There are no correlations between the demographic factors (age, gender, educational background and teaching experience) and institutional motivational orientation of public university teachers.

Variable	Mean	s.d.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 age	2.70	0.82	1							
2 gender	1.51	0.50	-.207**	1						
3 educational background	1.99	0.67	-.313**	.063	1					
4 teaching experience	3.01	1.11	.661**	-.112	-.251**	1				
5 Organisational Factors	4.03	0.51	-.130*	.048	.046	-.110	1			
6 Societal Culture Factors	3.82	0.64	.065	-.141*	-.039	.056	.573**	1		
7 Institutionalised Beliefs in Education	4.39	0.61	.022	-.050	.088	.101	.534**	.481**	1	
8 Institutional Motivational Orientation	3.94	0.55	.095	-.060	-.045	0.88	.584**	.690**	.463**	1

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

N=289

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.731 ^a	.535	.530	.38057

a. Predictors: (Constant), SCF, IF, OF

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.832	.196		4.245	<.001
	IF	.080	.045	.088	1.786	.075
	OF	.267	.057	.246	4.664	<.001
	SCF	.443	.045	.507	9.945	<.001

a. Dependent Variable: institutional motivational orientation avg

Table 2. Results of Multiple Regression Analysis for factors affecting the motivational orientation

The explanatory power of the factors influencing the institutional motivational orientation of public university teachers

The outcome of regression analysis between organisational factors and institutional motivational orientation offers the support to hypothesis 1 where this study expects organisational factors play a significant role in the institutional motivational orientation of public university teachers. This simply identify that some privatisation policies applied in the public organisation can contribute to the institutional motivational orientation of public university teachers. The analysis of the data also tested the moderating effect of societal culture (hypothesis 2). As predicted, societal culture has moderating effect on the institutional motivational orientation of university teachers. The hypothesis 3 concerning about relationship between institutionalised beliefs in education and institutional motivational orientation is rejected by the data analysis showed in the Table 2. The reason is might because orientation is more related to a specific behaviour, but beliefs is just the related to the attitude. Therefore, there is no relationship between institutionalised beliefs in education and institutional motivational orientation. The outcome of correlation analysis between demographic factors (age, gender, educational background and teaching experience) and institutional motivational orientation rejects the hypothesis 4.

CONCLUSION

This paper sought to identify the factor affecting the institutional motivational orientation of public university teachers in China. Our investigation has found that organisational factors happened in the transformation context and societal culture factors are the main contributors to the institutional motivational orientation of public university teachers.

Contribution to theory and Research implications

This paper has made some contribution to the literature in a number of ways. In the field of literatures regarding the motivation, we have investigated factors affecting the institutional motivational orientation in public sector instead of following the approach adopted by earlier researchers who focussed largely on the factors influencing the work motivation in business organisation. I believe that the Chinese public sector that have experienced changes should also be researched. Therefore, this paper contributes to the literatures in the field of motivation in the public sector with concerning the new public management applied in China. For example, Chinese societal culture is a significant reason why public university teachers can have institutional motivational orientation in the background of public sector reform. In addition, the institutional motivational orientation of

public university teachers is affected by the privatization policy applied in the public organisation. The institutional motivational orientation of public university teachers is not affected by their demographic factors and institutionalised beliefs in education sector. Moreover, most studies analysis the motivation from a managerial perspective at the organisational level, but this paper analysis the motivation in three contexts: transformation context, societal culture context and sector context. In this way, we can see how institutional motivational orientation can be affected differently in different context.

Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interests

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