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**Administrative Power and Academic  
Resources Allocation in China**  
(中国高校的行政权力与学术资源分配)  
---An Empirical Study based on the National Excellent  
Doctoral Dissertations  
(基于“百优”博士论文的经验研究)

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# Research Background

## ❖ Over 100 years Marx Weber's Concerns :

“Complaisance of the German academic profession in its eager subservience to the authority of the state and the erosion of its moral rectitude”

“University faculty concessions to government and market imperatives take their revenge in the ultimate weakening of the moral authority of the faculties.”

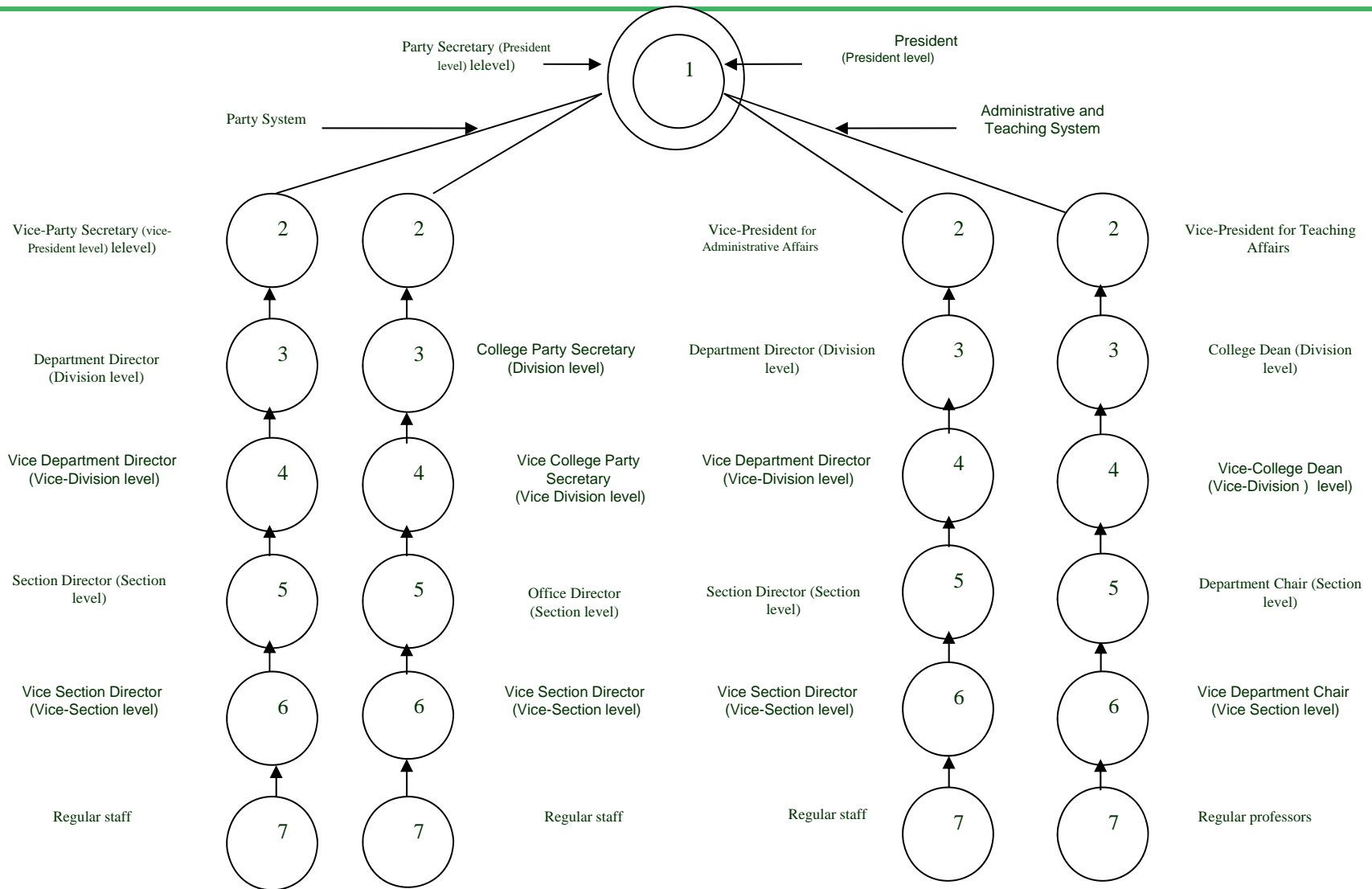
## ❖ Nowadays, in China:

The undue bureaucratization and unnecessary administrative intervention have become a major factor constraining the development and reform of higher education.

Higher education reform has been unsuccessful; and, as for the general public, universities are no less corrupt than other sectors.

“Last fortress of the planned economy”

# University Hierarchical and Administrative Structure



## Research Questions

- ❖ To what extent can bureaucratization impact the allocation of academic resources in China's higher education sector?
- ❖ In the causal relationship between administrative power and resources allocation, which determines which?

# Methodology

## ❖ Method:

This paper tries to quantify and recognize how bureaucratization (specifically, the administrative power) influences academic resources allocation by selecting the National Excellent Doctoral Dissertation Award (NEDD) 2003–2010 as research samples, both nominated and awarded, totally 417.

## ❖ Model:

Quantitative research with logit regression model

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Logit}(\text{Award}_{i,t}) = & a + \beta_1 \text{stuabil}_{i,t} + \beta_2 \text{schauth}_{i,t} + \beta_3 \text{stuabil}_{i,t} * \text{schauth}_{i,t} \\ & + \beta_4 \text{teaabil}_{i,t} + \beta_5 \text{sch985} + \beta_6 \text{Subject} + \beta_7 \text{year} + \varepsilon_{i,t} \end{aligned}$$

# Distribution of Disciplines and Years of Sample Data

Discipline	Year								Total	Proportion (%)
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010		
Philosophy	5	6	2	4	4	3	7	4	35	8.4
Economics	6	10	10	2	4	6	12	11	61	14.6
Law	9	8	8	5	4	7	11	7	59	14.1
Education	4	4	4	4	8	5	10	11	50	12.0
Literature	16	9	14	10	10	11	19	18	107	25.7
History	5	5	7	6	12	10	9	10	64	15.3
Management*	5	2	3	3	7	6	8	7	41	9.8
Total Samples	50	44	48	34	49	48	76	68	417	100.0
Proportion (%)	12.0	10.6	11.5	8.2	11.8	11.5	18.2	16.3	100.0	

# Dissertations Awarded and Nominated by Disciplines

Awarded or Nominated	Disciplines							Total
	Philosophy	Economics	Law	Education	Literature	History	Management *	
<b>Awarded</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>133</b>
<b>Nominated</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>284</b>
<b>Total Samples</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>417</b>
<b>Award Proportion (%)</b>	<b>28.6</b>	<b>32.8</b>	<b>31.0</b>	<b>33.3</b>	<b>34.6</b>	<b>31.3</b>	<b>26.8</b>	<b>31.9</b>

## Matrix of Important Variables

	Award	stuabil	teaabil	Schauth
Stuabil	0.243***			
Teaabil	0.089	0.368***		
Schauth	0.116**	0.069	0.162***	
sch985	0.045	0.047	0.091	-0.009

Notes: \* Significant at  $p < .1$  level

\*\* Significant at  $p < .05$  level

\*\*\* Significant at  $p < .01$  level

Values in brackets are Z scores.

The variable Award is positively correlated to the students' academic ability and advisors' administrative power, which shows that these variables are important in selecting dissertations. Students' academic ability is closely related to their advisors' academic ability, but it is not related to advisors' administrative power. Advisors' academic ability is positively correlated to their administrative power, and this demonstrates an old Chinese proverb that officialdom is the natural outlet for good scholars (学而优则仕).



# Advisors' Administrative Power (schauth) and Award Probability

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<b>stuabil</b>	<b>0.116***</b>	<b>0.108***</b>	<b>0.110***</b>	<b>0.234***</b>
	(3.82)	(3.51)	(3.58)	(3.65)
<b>teaabil</b>		<b>0.006</b>	<b>0.004</b>	<b>0.005</b>
		(0.92)	(0.62)	(0.86)
<b>schauth</b>			<b>0.155***</b>	<b>0.287***</b>
			(2.59)	(3.41)
<b>stuabil × schauth</b>				<b>-0.033**</b> (-2.13)
<b>sch985</b>			<b>0.179</b>	<b>0.183</b>
			(0.69)	(0.71)
<b>Year</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Constant</b>	<b>-1.432***</b>	<b>-1.514***</b>	<b>-2.110***</b>	<b>-2.541***</b>
	(-3.20)	(-3.26)	(-4.14)	(-4.91)
<b>N</b>	<b>417</b>	<b>417</b>	<b>417</b>	<b>417</b>
<b>Pseudo R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>0.074</b>	<b>0.077</b>	<b>0.089</b>	<b>0.098</b>

Notes: \* Significant at  $p < .1$  level

\*\* Significant at  $p < .05$  level

\*\*\* Significant at  $p < .01$  level

Values in brackets are Z scores.

## Advisors' Administrative Power (schauth) and Award Probability

- ❖ The coefficients of the advisors' administrative power (schauth) in the regression are all positive and they are statistically significant (.01 level). This means that, other variables being constant, the increase of the advisors' administrative power will increase their students' probability to win NEDD. Although there are no special terms and conditions for those advisors whose administrative levels are higher in the NEDD Selection Rules, in reality, if a candidate's advisor happens to assume the administrative office at a high level in his or her school, then the advisor's position will make the candidate better off in winning NEDD.
- ❖ More importantly, the coefficient of the interaction between the students' ability and advisors' power (stuabil $\times$ schauth) in the regression is negative, and the interaction is significant at the .05 level. This means that when a student's ability remains constant, as his or her advisor's administrative power gets bigger, the contribution of student's ability to win NEDD becomes less. So the influential factors are more administrative factors rather than academic factors.

## Are Good Students Inclined to Choose Powerful Advisors?

- ❖ Are the students with stronger academic ability inclined to choose to work with an advisor with stronger administrative power?
- ❖ If this is the case, it can affect our test results. We tracked the academic outputs of the awarded and nominated students before and after winning the award to find whether there are differences in the academic ability and potential for students in these two groups.
- ❖ There is no evidence to prove that there is significant correlation between the students' ability and the advisors' power. It means that the endogeneity issue we were concerned about does not exist, so the conclusion that the advisor's power is conducive to students' winning NEDD is solid.

# Are Good Students Inclined to Choose Powerful Advisors?

	Outputs Before Award	Outputs After Award	Difference with the Best Nominee Before Award	Difference with the Best Nominee After Award
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Schauth	-0.018	-0.014	-0.286	0.054
	(0.14)	(0.12)	(0.46)	(0.35)
Teaabili	0.054**	0.039***	0.024	0.065***
	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.04)	(0.02)
sch985	-0.981	-0.144	-0.671	-0.991
	(0.79)	(0.45)	(1.85)	(1.27)
Teaaward	-0.297	-0.116		
	(0.37)	(0.26)		
Award	2.163	1.671*		
	(1.44)	(0.95)		
Discipline Dummy	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year Dummy	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	1.629**	1.361*	1.913	-0.511
	(0.77)	(0.79)	(2.88)	(2.03)
N	262	262	99	99
R-squared	0.235	0.213	0.197	0.169
F	5.658	3.679	1.648	1.594

## Conclusion and Discussion

- ❖ The administrative power of doctoral advisors holding an administrative post has important influence on allocating academic resources. Specifically, even though a doctoral student's academic ability to win the award matters, the advisor's administrative power does play an important role in helping the student to get the award.
- ❖ In other words, the greater an advisor's administrative power, the lower the standard of evaluating his or her students' academic ability to win the award. This conclusion is particularly true for those highly bureaucratized disciplines or those with a high degree of officialdom.

## Conclusion and Discussion

- ❖ In fact, the root problem is not in Chinese universities per se, but in the relationship between universities and government. If the state remains a central player in allocating resources, appointing personnel, and conferring status on bases other than merit, what besets Chinese universities today will continue to do so tomorrow.
- ❖ Reforms are needed which imply a fundamentally new method of defining the relations between universities and the state.

## Conclusion and Discussion

“On the whole the state should not look to them (universities) at all for anything that directly concerns its own interests, but should rather cherish a conviction that, in fulfilling their real destination, they will not only serve its own purpose, but serve them on an infinitely higher plane, commanding a much wider field of operation, and affording room to set in motion much more efficient springs and forces than are at the disposal of the state itself.”

----Wilhelm von Humboldt, 1810

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Thank You !