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Research on Human Resource Allocation Models of University Think Tanks in China (Postprint)

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Abstract

Abstract: [Purpose/Significance] As an indispensable component of China's new-type think tank development, human resource allocation is crucial to the construction of university think tanks. [Method/Process] Based on relevant data from the Chinese Think Tank Index (CTTI), this paper proposes four models for human resource allocation in university think tanks: first, the Star Professor Alliance model of the Nanjing University Zijin Media Think Tank; second, the university-level think tank operation center model; third, the school-supported independent entity think tank model; and fourth, the university think tank special zone model. [Result/Conclusion] Therefore, whether a university think tank has established a distinctive human resource model is a necessary condition for its success.

Full Text

Preamble

Research on Human Resource Allocation Models of University-affiliated Think Tanks in China

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Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] University-affiliated think tanks constitute an indispensable component of China's new-type think tank development, and the allocation of human resources is critical to their construction. [Method/Process] This paper, drawing on relevant data from the Chinese Think Tank Index (CTTI), proposes four models for human resource allocation in university-affiliated think tanks: first, the Star Professor Alliance Model

exemplified by Nanjing University's Zijin Media Think Tank; second, the University-level Think Tank Operations Center Model; third, the School-supported Independent Entity Think Tank Model; and fourth, the University Think Tank Special Zone Model. **[Result/Conclusion]** Therefore, establishing a distinctive human resource allocation model emerges as a necessary condition for the success of university-affiliated think tanks.

Keywords: university-affiliated think tanks, human resources, allocation model
Classification Number: C931.3

As of December 17, 2016, the Chinese Think Tank Index (CTTI) had included 490 source think tanks, among which 255 were university-affiliated think tanks, accounting for 52% and representing a significant proportion among all think tank categories [1]. The "Opinions on Strengthening the Construction of New-type Think Tanks with Chinese Characteristics" issued by the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council explicitly proposed building a new pattern for the development of new-type think tanks with Chinese characteristics and promoting the development and improvement of university think tanks. Talent constitutes the core resource of university think tanks, and many have made beneficial explorations into how to make full use of it, forming several human resource allocation models worthy of summarization. According to the latest list of national higher education institutions released on the official website of the Ministry of Education, as of May 31, 2017, China had a total of 2,914 higher education institutions [2]. Chinese universities possess a social science workforce of 630,000, gathering over 80% of social science researchers and nearly half of all academicians of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and Chinese Academy of Engineering. Most universities also have considerable numbers of doctoral and master's students, demonstrating that the talent support for university think tank construction is unmatched by other institutions or departments [3]. However, abundant talent resources do not equate to putting the right people to their best use. Many factors affect the effectiveness of human resources in university think tanks, among which the human resource allocation model serves as a key factor in enhancing the stability of think tank research teams, achieving effective personnel utilization, and promoting the maximization of output benefits and optimal development of university think tanks.

2. Human Resource Allocation Models of Chinese University-affiliated Think Tanks

Human resources refer to the sum of physical and mental labor within a country's or region's population that contributes to value creation and can be utilized by organizations [4]. Human resource allocation is a management activity that scientifically and rationally deploys human resources through certain forms and mechanisms according to the objective requirements of economic

and social development, thereby enabling human resources to combine effectively and efficiently with other resources to produce optimal work outcomes [5]. University-affiliated think tanks are academic research institutions such as research institutes or centers hosted by universities [6].

The allocation of human resources in Chinese university think tanks follows scientific and fair principles, employing management methods such as recruitment, training, and motivation to utilize people's strengths, ensure the right person does the right job, and achieve harmony between personnel and positions. This enables organizations to effectively utilize relevant human resources both internally and externally, meet current and future research needs, and maximize the realization of institutional goals and member development. Before conducting human resource allocation, think tanks must engage in rational planning based on changes in the internal and external environment, analyzing future human resource supply and demand to achieve rational allocation. Organizational structure, as the basic form of internal division of labor and coordination, facilitates job design and analysis and enables effective human resource allocation. The general organizational structure of most Chinese university think tanks mainly comprises two parts: first, the governing body, consisting of a board of directors with the chairperson serving as the institutional leader; and second, the permanent administrative office, led by the secretary-general and composed of an administrative system, research and consulting team, and technical development team (as shown in [Figure 1: see original paper]). Nevertheless, each think tank has distinct characteristics that require concrete analysis.

[Figure 1: see original paper]

In fact, how think tanks conduct research activities is primarily influenced by two aspects: first, the organizational methods for conducting research work, and second, the structure of research personnel. The complex interaction between these two factors shapes the organizational model of think tanks [8]. Referencing the MRPA evaluation reports of CTTI source think tanks, this study selected the top ten university think tanks from the "985" university think tank group, the "211" university think tank group, and the regular university think tank group as research subjects. Through comparative analysis of relevant personnel information, four human resource allocation models were identified: first, the Star Professor Alliance Model of Nanjing University's Zijin Media Think Tank, where research teams themed around star professors represent a major highlight; second, the University-level Think Tank Operations Center Model, which possesses substantial physical operational resources; third, the School-supported Independent Entity Think Tank Model, which has full-time research and operations teams; and fourth, the University Think Tank Special Zone Model, which enjoys significant policy and financial preferences from its parent university in think tank construction.

2.1.1 Model Characteristics

(1) Institutional Talent Team Construction

Zijin Media Think Tank implements a director responsibility system under the leadership of its board of directors. The think tank has established an academic committee, an administrative committee, and a multidisciplinary postdoctoral workstation. Since launching its “revolving door” program in September 2015, Zijin Media Think Tank has recruited four full-time researchers from provincial media outlets. To date, it has nearly 50 experts and scholars from sociology, political science, communication studies, information science, law, and economics, including 15 senior researchers, 10 researchers, and 8 Chinese and foreign academic committee members, plus 2 postdoctoral fellows and 3 full-time and part-time operations staff (as shown in).

Think tank personnel consist of two types: full-time and part-time. The table reveals that, first, Zijin Media Think Tank lacks full-time research personnel apart from a small number of full-time administrative staff, relying primarily on part-time researchers to conduct research. Second, the overall educational background and professional qualifications of research personnel are at a relatively high level, indicating strong research capabilities. This personnel structure facilitates the continuous infusion of new ideas on one hand, but on the other hand, the large proportion of part-time staff may impact the stability of the human resource model and the formation of a “think tank core.”

(2) Star Professor Research Group Alliance

Regarding organizational methods for research work, two models can be identified: the star model and the team model. In the star model, renowned and influential researchers typically bring their own research groups into the think tank to work independently. The team model usually comprises a core team that can obtain special assistance from other research centers and consultants within the think tank [9]. Zijin Media Think Tank undoubtedly belongs to the former. In November 2016, the think tank formally appointed 14 professors from Nanjing University’s School of Social and Behavioral Sciences, School of Government, School of Information Management, School of Journalism and Communication, and School of Law as senior researchers, forming a “star professor” alliance. Under the influence of these “star professors,” research is conducted with research groups as the basic operational units. Since these groups have long-term 磨合, they achieve relatively high work efficiency. The emergence of a social issue is typically caused by comprehensive factors including social, economic, cultural, and political elements, and corresponding public policy recommendations must therefore be comprehensive and diverse, requiring either generalist experts within the think tank or close cooperation among experts from various disciplines [10]. Naturally, research scholars’ spirit of cooperation and sense of responsibility are also indispensable. To compensate for the shortcomings of star professor research groups working independently, “Zijin” also emphasizes strengthening communication among scholars in daily operations, including establishing think tank scholar groups for daily information exchange, holding

biweekly meetings, and “Zijin Roundtable Discussions.”

2.1.2 Performance Analysis

(1) Formation of a “Self-generating” Mechanism

The level of fundraising largely reflects the success of think tank operations. For Zijin Media Think Tank, the strong academic influence and appeal of star professors, combined with their powerful networks, enable their research groups to obtain a considerable number of horizontal projects and secure project funding. Additionally, “Zijin” can compete for special government funds and solicit sponsorship from enterprises, foundations, and social welfare organizations, avoiding interference from certain power departments and economic entities, producing relatively objective and impartial analysis reports and policy recommendations, and accelerating the transformation of research outcomes to generate more long-term, stable revenue, thereby forming a “self-generating” mechanism [11]. According to the Zijin administrative team, the think tank has already achieved self-generating capabilities, with funds raised through research and consulting projects exceeding government allocations.

(2) Star Professor Alliance Promotes Interdisciplinary Resource Integration

Think tanks are inherently diverse entities. Only by advocating multidisciplinary integration can they take the lead in speaking out authoritatively on major, critical, and emergency domestic events and provide counsel for the introduction of major national policies. Multidisciplinary complementary support also prevents think tanks from speaking on subjects outside their expertise [12]. With Nanjing University’s five major humanities and social science departments as its main base, and relying on the integration of first-level disciplines including sociology, political science, law, journalism and communication, and information management, Zijin Media Think Tank grasps political development trends while improving disciplinary construction, continuously deepening intellectual collisions and exchanges among various disciplines with flexibility and efficiency. This achieves interdisciplinary integration, promotes resource sharing, and resolves the traditional isolation among university departments.

(3) Star Professors’ Domestic and International Academic Networks Promote Internal and External Think Tank Communication

In recent years, Zijin Media Think Tank has continuously intensified its efforts in external exchange and communication. In 2016, it had two opportunities for mutual visits with overseas think tanks and separately established one full-time position dedicated to international affairs to maintain partnerships with overseas collaborators. This position undoubtedly provides great motivation for internal researchers, facilitating intellectual exchange and integrating international elements. Additionally, “Zijin” actively convenes conferences of various scales, including 12 international-level conferences and 17 conferences at or below the departmental level. These conferences not only enhance the think tank’s visibility and reputation in the industry but also serve as rewards for

researchers with certain achievements, strengthening their sense of self-worth. Meanwhile, Zijin Media Think Tank vigorously promotes publicity through its official website and WeChat public account to enhance public understanding. The institution has been reported on by various media forms including online media, radio and television, and print media, involving multi-level publicity at national, provincial, and municipal levels.

2.2.1 Model Characteristics

(1) Integrating University-wide Research and Consulting Strength Through “Embedding Researchers in Teaching”

The main characteristic of the Fudan Development Institute model is using a strong administrative team to undertake administration, communication, and secondary development of research outcomes, timely identifying, harvesting, secondarily developing, and disseminating research and consulting achievements across the university. Apart from a few postdoctoral fellows, the institute has no full-time research personnel of its own. In personnel allocation, the Fudan Development Institute follows an “open” principle, as shown in .

Additionally, the Fudan Development Institute has a professional operations team divided into five departments: Academic Operations, Strategic Cooperation, Academic Development, Global Affairs, and Academic Consulting, with clear rights and responsibilities for personnel in each department. They all share the common name “FDDler.” The entire team is predominantly young, with an average age of 29. While focusing on China’ s national conditions, the Fudan Development Institute also actively goes global, with its operations team’ s work scope covering various countries and regions.

Within Fudan’ s active, free, and open academic atmosphere, any scholar with expertise or certain academic research capabilities can participate, effectively integrating research strengths across departments and giving full play to Fudan University’ s advantages in comprehensive disciplinary construction and talent mechanisms. Due to issues such as compensation and staff establishment for full-time administrative teams, the institute may face personnel loss, primarily to government-affiliated think tanks and enterprises, with some personnel also taking temporary positions in government departments. In fact, a certain level of staff turnover is not necessarily detrimental to think tanks, but excessively high turnover rates increase management costs because hiring new employees and providing onboarding training requires certain economic costs, and productivity relatively declines [9].

(2) Establishing Specialized Subordinate Entities to Perfect the University-level Think Tank Operations Platform

The entity operations model includes both the establishment of operational institutions and professional operations teams. As a platform-based research institution, the Fudan Development Institute aggregates and connects various research centers and part-time research personnel to conduct specialized

research through project planning and academic services. Currently, the Fudan Development Institute has formed a vibrant entity operations institution comprising a complex of university humanities and social science academic policy consulting that includes 11 research centers (including 3 overseas China research centers), 2 permanent large forum secretariats (China University Think Tank Forum and Shanghai Forum), 1 municipal think tank management institution (Shanghai University Think Tank Research and Management Center), and 1 quasi-social organization (China Financiers Club). Among these, the Academic Service Center undertakes all academic policy management services and administrative meeting organization for the Development Institute.

(3) Forming Positive Interaction with Shanghai and the Central Government as Fudan' s Think Tank Platform

Since its establishment, the institute has received high-level attention and support from relevant central departments and the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee and government. Relying on its comprehensive disciplinary advantages, the institute has assembled scholars with expertise and active thinking to conduct strategic countermeasure research primarily through team research, making important contributions to national and Shanghai' s external exchanges. First, multiple teachers have been invited to participate in internal meetings related to the mechanism for people-to-people exchanges between China and foreign countries. Second, the institute has undertaken the writing of multiple speeches and reference materials for discussions. Third, it has submitted high-quality internal policy consultation reports. Since 2013, the Fudan Development Institute has organized experts to write and submit 14 internal consultation reports directly related to people-to-people exchanges between China and foreign countries to the General Office of the CPC Central Committee, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and other relevant ministries.

2.2.2 Model Analysis

(1) Concentrating University-wide Resources to Promote Think Tank Internationalization

Think tank internationalization requires comprehensive support from experts, outcomes, finances, and networks—resources that a single university think tank often cannot possess alone. As a university-level think tank operations platform, the Fudan Development Institute is abundantly endowed with resources in all four aspects. Therefore, relying on the institute' s integrative promotion, Fudan' s think tank cluster has achieved remarkable internationalization accomplishments. On one hand, the Fudan Development Institute' s research fields are rich, extensive, and diverse, with research outcomes addressing international frontier dynamics and its operations team opening multiple product lines to continuously expand the international intellectual market and seize market share. It also actively conducts international cooperation, establishing friendly relations with the United States, Denmark, Germany, Poland, Azerbaijan, Russia, Japan, and other countries. On the other hand, support from the government,

university, enterprises, and domestic and international sources provides financial backing for the Fudan Development Institute, offering strong guarantees for its further development and promoting its “internationalization.”

(2) Prominent “Dual-crossing” Characteristics

The “dual-crossing” characteristic has two dimensions: crossing disciplines and crossing institutions. With “policy consultation” as its starting point and national demand driving disciplinary integration, the Fudan Development Institute leverages Fudan University’s comprehensive disciplinary advantages, focusing on disciplinary intersection and integration as well as research team construction and development. At the 2015 First Academic Symposium on “New-type Think Tank Construction,” Vice President Zhang Yi of the Fudan Development Institute proposed that high-level comprehensive new-type university think tanks should develop toward subjectivity, comprehensiveness, three-dimensionality, agglomeration, service orientation, cultivability, and connectivity [13]. In addition to university scholars, the institute also invites experts from central and provincial high-level research institutions to participate jointly, combining the university’s faculty strength with experts from external enterprises, institutions, and other universities.

2.3.1 Model Characteristics

(1) Stability of the IPP Talent Team

In talent cultivation, particularly in research team construction, the South China Institute of Public Policy (IPP) at South China University of Technology maintains its research level by building its own full-time team while continuously expanding part-time researchers across various levels. Although South China University of Technology does not provide establishment positions, it substitutes with professional title services, and the parent university recognizes IPP’s professional title evaluation results for research personnel, thereby reducing the loss rate of core researchers to some extent. Full-time administrative staff also provide support and guarantee services for researchers (as shown in).

IPP’s personnel consist of full-time and part-time members. The table shows that IPP has established a relatively stable full-time research team while also attracting part-time researchers, forming a complementary relationship between the two types of personnel. This structure maintains research continuity while incorporating external intellectual resources.

(2) Adequate Financial Support

The construction of the Institute of Public Policy would not have been possible without the generous support of outstanding alumnus Mo Daoming. As China’s reform and transformation continue to deepen, Mo Daoming intended to build a top-tier social think tank to provide more independent, objective, and effective policy solutions for the government and society. Consequently, Mo Daoming contributed 50 million RMB to jointly establish the South China Institute of Public Policy with his alma mater. Mo Daoming and the univer-

sity jointly planned the institute' s functional positioning, team building, and research systems, providing practical assistance and support.

(3) Independence in Research and Operations

The South China Institute of Public Policy (IPP) has a full-time research team, with Professor Zheng Yongnian serving as the chair of the academic committee and chief expert. Centering on Professor Zheng' s perspectives and wisdom, the team conducts research on China' s institutional reform, social policy, Chinese discourse power, and international relations. In 2016, the research team built the IPP Review English online platform to continuously attempt dissemination to the Western world from a professional perspective. Meanwhile, in management and operations, from the executive director to administrative staff, not a single member of the management team holds other social positions, forming a full-time operations team led by Professor Yang Mu with the intention of transforming IPP into an open platform for knowledge innovation and policy research, becoming a world-renowned Chinese think tank.

2.3.2 Model Analysis

On one hand, IPP' s independent legal entity status ensures the objectivity and scientific nature of think tank research. The institute established a Public Policy Research Center that conducts surveys through online, telephone, household, and street interviews to stay close to the people and delve into real-life situations. The institute also established the Public Policy Roundtable Forum, regularly inviting experts, scholars, government personnel, corporate executives, and social organization members to gather for brainstorming sessions to discuss problem solutions. The Public Policy Institute courageously shoulders the era' s heavy responsibility, always focusing on “providing policy recommendations for the central government” as its core positioning, grasping real problems, and focusing on applied and countermeasure research to provide decision-making departments with “intellectual products” such as policy reports, governance solutions, and policy recommendations, continuously enhancing policy influence. In the first half of 2016 alone, among the first batch of high-end think tank pilot units, 44 policy research reports were adopted by the central government, with IPP accounting for 6 of them.

On the other hand, as an independent legal entity not affiliated with South China University of Technology, IPP' s status affects its ability to effectively integrate university disciplinary and expert resources, slowing down its efficiency in “harvesting” relevant academic achievements within the university and the transformation of think tank outcomes. Additionally, IPP' s self-contained system prevents it from participating in talent cultivation within relevant university disciplines, which is not conducive to IPP' s exchange and integration within the university and may lead to isolation.

2.4.1 Model Characteristics

The Institute of China's Law Modernization Studies is built upon the Law School of Nanjing Normal University and maintains close ties with the university. The smooth progress of the institute's work depends on the university's full support. The special zone model refers to a small number of think tanks enjoying special status and preferential policies in think tank construction. Nanjing Normal University has adopted a "funneling all efforts into one channel" strategy for think tank construction, meaning "concentrating the entire university's strength to promote the development of personnel, talent, and materials." The university provides comprehensive support to the Institute of China's Law Modernization Studies in terms of funding, office space, and personnel, concentrating superior resources to promote the institute's rapid growth.

(1) Establishing a Stable Research Team Through the Law School

The institute has initially established a research team combining full-time and part-time members, with 1 full-time administrative staff member and 4 law PhDs serving as full-time research personnel. The university allocates approximately 10 postdoctoral positions to the institute annually, and so far, 3 post-doctoral fellows have been recruited (as shown in).

Currently, the institute has an office with 3 full-time (and part-time) administrative staff responsible for administrative and financial management, personnel management, research management, compilation of work communications and consultation bulletins, collection and editing of international rule of law information, database and website construction, public relations, and external cooperation, ensuring the coordinated operation of the institute's daily work. The entire research team setup facilitates the implementation of long-term, forward-looking research, enhances work vitality, and achieves positive institutional development.

(2) University's Preferential Policies Ensure Adequate Funding

Funding sources for the Institute of China's Law Modernization Studies include government, university, and social channels. On one hand, as an institute supervised by the Propaganda Department of the Jiangsu Provincial Party Committee, part of its operational funding comes from the department's allocations. Naturally, enjoying "special zone" treatment, Nanjing Normal University and the Jiangsu Provincial Party Committee's Propaganda Department adopt a "1:1 matching" approach to funding, providing equal amounts of financial support for the institute's development. Additionally, on May 18, 2016, Ding Shaohua, a specially invited researcher at the Institute of China's Law Modernization Studies and director of Jiangsu Fangde Law Firm, personally donated 10 million RMB to the institute to support its development.

(3) Creating a Relaxed Research Environment

A relaxed and comfortable research environment can be considered a form of non-material reward that promotes high-output work among researchers. A good working environment helps retain and motivate employees, enabling them

to work efficiently [9]. Therefore, in addition to considering the think tank's geographical location, exterior design, indoor crowding, privacy, and design rationality (whether it facilitates discussion and exchange among researchers), attention must also be paid to the provision of auxiliary facilities, including basic office tools, a series of advanced statistical and analytical software, network access efficiency, and relevant research literature, books, and materials to ensure smooth research progress. The Institute of China's Law Modernization Studies is located in Suiyuan Campus of Nanjing Normal University, one of China's ten most beautiful university campuses. The university has specially allocated nearly 600 square meters of space as office area, equipped with complete software and hardware facilities, bringing great convenience to research work.

2.4.2 Model Analysis

(1) The Think Tank's Rigorous Academic Authority Attracts Substantial Decision-making Consultation Demand from Practical Departments

As Nanjing Normal University's only provincial key think tank, the Institute of China's Law Modernization Studies has received comprehensive university support. Integrated with the Law School as two sides of the same coin, the institute has 6 research institutes and 1 research center, each employing a group of capable full-time researchers and a certain number of specially invited researchers. Through various forms such as employment systems and contract systems, it extensively recruits retired officials from party and government organs and rule of law departments as well as retired law researchers from higher education institutions. Consequently, the institute's academic authority and high-end positioning easily gain the trust of judicial practical departments, which provide a large volume of legal consultation and evaluation work.

(2) Formation of a Unique Think Tank Talent Cultivation Model

Due to the university's special preferential policies for doctoral and postdoctoral recruitment at the think tank, the Institute of China's Law Modernization Studies is the only think tank among Jiangsu's key and key-cultivation think tanks that can recruit and cultivate doctoral students in the institute's name. The university allocates a certain number of doctoral student recruitment quotas to the institute, with no quota restrictions for postdoctoral recruitment. This enables the institute to cultivate specialized think tank talents in legal public policy analysis according to the characteristics of think tank research. This also serves as an important incentive measure for doctoral supervisors who work part-time at the think tank. On April 9, 2016, the Institute of China's Law Modernization Studies signed a strategic cooperation agreement with the Second Circuit Court of the Supreme People's Court to jointly cultivate talent and explore a "university-practical department joint cultivation" model for legal talent. The institute also actively recommends researchers for temporary positions at the Second Circuit Court of the Supreme People's Court.

(3) Enhancing Flexibility in Personnel Management Mechanisms

On one hand, the Institute of China's Law Modernization Studies' human resource allocation has received strong support from the university, rapidly gathering a group of experts and scholars. On the other hand, because the university's human resources department must maintain the uniformity of university personnel policies and has strict academic requirements for hiring standards, this also affects the institute's human resource management. As a think tank, the institute requires comprehensive qualities from researchers, needing to balance academic and practical aspects, while the university generally emphasizes talent academic standards from a disciplinary construction perspective. Therefore, the institute should adjust relevant mechanisms to enhance flexibility in personnel management systems, considering both university and its own needs, and fully enjoying the university-provided policy of 20 researcher positions to cultivate research talent, expand research teams, and enhance research capabilities.

3. Recommendations

3.1 Enrich Entity-based Operations and Strengthen Research Team Structure

University talent resources are abundant, but their basic distribution characteristic is that they are allocated to different departments, schools, and research centers with little interconnection, forming isolated "talent islands." Even after individual research centers transform into think tanks, this situation remains unchanged. As talent-intensive organizations, the allocation and management level of human resources often plays a decisive role in university think tanks. Therefore, university think tanks must continuously deepen their degree of entity-based operations and establish research teams with rational division of labor and mutual coordination.

Based on the above analysis, the Zijin model is a consortium of professor research groups with diversified tasks, where allocation and command authority does not reside with the think tank. Consequently, the think tank may face certain challenges when undertaking major tasks with time constraints. Additionally, rationally allocating employee capabilities to promote organizational mission and goal achievement is crucial [9]. Therefore, even with a full-time research team, think tanks should improve team structure as much as possible to optimize think tank benefits. Although the Institute of China's Law Modernization Studies enjoys special zone status, it still needs to incorporate opinions from the university's personnel department in recruitment. The university personnel department often decides whether to approve think tank recruitment applications based on academic standards rather than think tank needs. The institute should comprehensively consider both university and its own needs, selecting think tank talent from multiple perspectives to enjoy university policies for its own benefit. In the process of entity-based operations, think tanks must establish a full-time researcher team with reasonable structure, mainly composed

of research fellows, consultants, and research assistants. When building teams, think tanks need to make choices in two aspects: first, between the star model and the team model, and second, regarding the degree of reliance on fixed researchers (i.e., how many fixed employees to select) [8]. In fact, regardless of the type, think tanks must first connect with their own development goals and actual conditions before making corresponding choices. Naturally, attention must also be paid to introducing and employing high-end external talent, adopting flexible talent mechanisms to achieve personnel mobility within university think tanks.

3.2 Increase Incentive Efforts to Enhance Employee Motivation

Motivation refers to creating certain conditions through management work to stimulate employees' enthusiasm, initiative, and creative spirit in achieving work objectives [14]. Therefore, a motivational process is a process of satisfying human needs, beginning with unmet needs and ending with satisfied needs [15]. In think tank management, certain incentive policies can be adopted, including material and spiritual incentives, to stimulate researchers' potential motivation and achieve both individual and institutional goals. In short, motivation means mobilizing people' s enthusiasm to enable them to work better.

3.2.1 Staff Establishment An organizational institution or its subordinate departments often manage personnel through staff establishment to guide work and constrain personnel by configuring internal staff. This method also applies to human resource allocation in university think tanks. In actual work, after obtaining approval and authorization from relevant departments, university think tank institutions must have clear configurations for internal setups, personnel quotas, structures, and positions to fulfill consultation and decision-making functions. This specifically includes four aspects: (1) establishing the number of staff positions; (2) defining position titles and specific leadership positions according to each think tank' s needs; (3) stipulating the proportional structure of various personnel types; and (4) setting quality requirements for specific personnel. By adopting staff establishment management, university think tanks can maintain a formally organized team to facilitate management implementation. In addition to providing university permanent positions for a few senior research fellows, university think tanks should diversify employment forms, flexibly utilizing personnel agency, labor dispatch, and contract employment. Maintaining a certain employee turnover rate to eliminate the old and bring in the new is essential. The Institute of China' s Law Modernization Studies should fully enjoy the university' s "special zone policy" of 20 think tank staff positions to build a research team with strong research capacity, competitiveness, and cohesion.

3.2.2 Professional Titles Professional titles (also called professional technical qualifications) generally refer to the rank designations for professional and technical personnel' s expertise, knowledge level, and work capacity, representing a person' s knowledge level and work performance. They indicate proof that

workers possess the necessary knowledge and skills for a certain profession and simultaneously represent society' s broad acceptance and recognition of their professional qualities. Universities should establish an independent think tank professional title series to recognize the labor, capabilities, and levels of think tank workers, which plays a positive role in enhancing their sense of responsibility and enterprising spirit, improving their social status, promoting the implementation of intellectual policies, stabilizing professional teams, discovering talent, promoting talent growth, and developing various undertakings. Otherwise, if universities manage think tank personnel and regular teaching/research personnel under the same professional title system, think tank personnel will inevitably measure their work by academic standards and lose interest in think tank research and consulting work. University think tanks can learn from IPP' s flexible recruitment and incentive mechanisms.

3.2.3 Salary In economic activities, salary refers to the compensation paid by employers in cash or cash equivalents, including wages, bonuses, commissions, allowances, and other forms of benefits that employees receive for their labor [15]. In daily work life, salary serves as the primary source of livelihood for workers and receives greater attention. Therefore, in human resource allocation, university think tanks must particularly grasp the impact of salary on think tank workers. In actual management, simpler salary schemes often yield better results [9]. Such simple forms present a stable and reliable salary structure to think tank workers, facilitating researchers' concentration on policy research, public release of research outcomes, and promotion of decision-making implementation plans, fully demonstrating the potential and advantages of university think tanks. In the university think tank environment, the "five insurances and one housing fund" constitute the guaranteed benefits that think tanks should pay to researchers. Meanwhile, bonuses can be incentivized when the following conditions are met: (1) the establishment of bonuses is reasonable and legal; (2) during major project implementation, management, coordination, and supervision costs increase but remain within acceptable ranges for university think tanks; and (3) the implemented incentive policies promote continuous optimization of work efficiency and achieve overall objectives.

3.3 Maintain Multi-channel Career Development for Think Tank Personnel to Consolidate Competitiveness

Some university think tanks lack systematic career planning for think tank personnel except for a few senior research fellows, leading to increased personnel turnover rates, affecting research team stability, and ultimately making it difficult to form core think tank competitiveness. For Zijin Media Think Tank, proactively planning career development blueprints for these outstanding current students and converting excellent graduate students into formal staff for "Zijin' s" use would both retain mature research capacity and avoid instability caused by personnel turnover.

For the Fudan Development Institute, full-time administrative staff are recruited through contracts, making it impossible to manage all based on staff establishment, and no promotion system has been established for administrative staff. To change this passive situation, other employment forms can be adopted to improve the status, such as establishing a position hierarchy of “general researcher—project manager—project director.” This would not only clarify career development directions for researchers but also further motivate institutional personnel and promote healthy internal competition. Along with position promotion, corresponding work guarantees should be provided, including salary, benefits, and career advancement space. Naturally, in real life, solving household registration issues is often a major factor in attracting personnel. Only by resolving these “hidden issues” for staff can their worries be eliminated, allowing them to work and research with peace of mind. In fact, most think tanks are located in first- and second-tier cities, so the dilemmas faced by the Fudan Development Institute’s personnel allocation model are largely universal.

For the Institute of China’s Law Modernization Studies with its special zone model, which primarily relies on Nanjing Normal University with most think tank personnel coming from the Law School, the institute is newly established and largely follows the university’s career planning system rather than generating its own, which may result in slightly insufficient think tank vitality. Although the think tank recruited few personnel in its initial stage, enhancing research strength and expanding institutional development is an inevitable trend. Therefore, to promote the maturity and growth of the Institute of Law Modernization Studies, it should gradually form its own career development path, make reasonable plans for think tank personnel, establish a sound promotion mechanism, enhance employee promotion space and opportunities, and create conditions for retaining research talent long-term to achieve the institute’s later-stage development.

In comparison, the South China Institute of Public Policy (IPP) performs commendably in this regard, demonstrating strong reference value and significance for other university think tanks by considering the importance of employee career development prospects in think tank management practice. IPP can evaluate professional titles for the institute’s full-time researchers, and these evaluations are recognized by the university, greatly motivating researchers and encouraging research team stability while reducing the loss rate of core teams. Meanwhile, the position progression from junior researcher to intermediate researcher to senior researcher not only establishes a clear work hierarchy but also provides superior work compensation and stable job security. It is precisely through this approach that IPP has enhanced its research team’s combat effectiveness and formed its own distinctive competitive core in a short time.

Currently, university think tank human resource allocation still has areas requiring improvement, including issues with think tank entity-based operations, insufficient internal incentives, and limited career development space for think tank personnel. Solving these problems is urgent and should receive sufficient

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Ding Yi: Data collection and paper writing;

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Abstract: [Purpose/significance] The allocation of human resources is important for the Chinese university-affiliated think tank that is a necessary part of the development of Chinese new types of think tanks. [Method/process] Based on the relevant data of Chinese Think Tank Index (CTTI), this paper put forward the following models for the allocation of human resources in Chinese university-affiliated think tanks: the first one was the model of the alliance of star professors of Zijin Media Think Tank in Nanjing University, the second one was the model of the school-level think tank operation center, the third one was the model of the independent entity think tanks supported by schools, and the last one was the model of the special zone for school think tanks. [Result/conclusion] Therefore, it' s a necessary condition of Chinese university-affiliated think tanks to establish distinctive human resource allocation models for success.

Keywords: university-affiliated think tanks, human resource, allocation model

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Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

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