

# The Theories on School Management of Princeton University

**Wang Fang-guo**

The Communist Youth League of China West Normal University,  
Normal Road No.1,  
Shun Qing Area, Nanchong City,  
Sichuan Province, People's Republic of China  
E-mail: [40455429@qq.com](mailto:40455429@qq.com)

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## **Abstract**

*The purpose of studying the theories on school management of Princeton University—one of American key universities is to unveil the deep reasons why worldwide key universities deserve the honor especially its theories on “small but excellent” which totally overturn the school operators' traditional theories and, in turn, enlightening our viewpoints to the construction of modern universities.*

**Key words:** University; The theories on school management; Princeton University

## **Introduction**

While the development of universities is affected by so many factors: from the external factors like the importance of politic and economic environment, we can tell that different universities under same external environment have distinguished standards of development. Through investigating the history of American key universities' development, it is clearly that the key point of development is the creation of the theories on school management, whether the universities have a long history or not. The fact of historical development of American universities successfully illustrate what a worldwide key university should be like;

it is an academic holy land where converges big potatoes; it is an academic sphere where excellent talents born. Studying and learning their theories on school management as well as the practice can correct the blind pursuits to the big goals and ambitions of nowadays the development of higher education, and encourage the improvement of the realization of the disciplines of higher education development, the construction of high-standard universities, and the formulation of the theories on school management that keep line with the standards of economic society development as well as to the school itself.

Princeton University was established in 1746, developing itself from the beginning as The College of New Jersey where educated Priests and Clergyman to nowadays comprehensive research university with 226 years history composed of thousands of men of literature and writing as well as the giant minds of science. Throughout Princeton University's alumni and alumnae, we find it is productive in cultivating famous people: 33 Nobel Prize winners, 2 American Presidents, and 44 American governors of a state. The last life of Albert Einstein, 22 years was spent here; Master of game theory Nash, great poet Eliot and a large number of great minds once studied, investigated, and lived here. Moreover, Princeton University is dubbed as "the mountain university" , because it is a special mix of countryside and the city, which have partial locating between New York and Philadelphia and population of 30 thousand people.

### **1. A "small but excellent" school policy**

When it comes to the international well-known universities, people often tend to describe them with four adjective ---- "high" (advanced research production), "old" (historic), "big"(the large size), and "comprehensive" (complete subjects). However, by lacking of many disciplines, Princeton University is not "comprehensive", there is no business school, law school, medical school, even isn't "big" in the United States of the famous "Ivy League". In terms of the number of students from Princeton University, it can be called "mini-university." However, based on the principle of "seeking for excellence but not size, quality but not quantity", Princeton University successfully runs out of its own characteristics. Its "small but excellent" educational philosophy revolutionized the traditional concept of the Operators and successfully became one of the world's top universities. According to the comprehensive rankings of American University in American magazine "US News and World Report", the rank of Princeton University always stably maintains the previous three. It even achieved champion over the past decade. From the rank published in September 2011, Princeton University and Harvard University tied for first. On undergraduate education, Princeton and Harvard are sharing the similar level. As for academic reputation and achievements, Princeton University exceeds Harvard University. The total number of papers in leading journals and their humanities journals published of Princeton University was in the first row of the nation. The size of this university is very small. In all kinds of nearly 6,000 US universities, Princeton is not really even medium-sized for less the number of students. The total number of students currently in Princeton University is about 7494 people, including 2450 graduates and 5044 undergraduates. It is indeed a "mini- university." However, the first female president of Princeton Tillman said: "small and academic failure happens to be our advantage." Not only seeking for size and comprehension, not blindly following the trend of educational philosophy made it perfect of the strict undergraduate education and very academic graduate education.

## **2. Being proud of the undergraduate education**

Undergraduate education has been a prominent position at Princeton University as well as having a great influence on higher education in the United States, which makes itself feel so much proud. In order to constantly improve and consolidate its level and quality of undergraduate education, Princeton is very strict with undergraduate admissions. It depends on the students' academic performance on the one hand and students' ability and character, students' thinking and consciousness, students' aspirations and ideals, and students' future development potential also account for a large portion. Four indicators have been applied in investigating the students in this university. One is mind quality, including mental condition, learning ability and creative ability, etc.; the second is about character quality, including the consciousness of responsibility, value concept, judgment, etc.; thirdly, it also considers the students' ability to make contributions to the university. The last one is about the students' potential to have leading function in their major. The excellent teaching quality of this undergraduate education flows from the high quality of the entrance. What's more, training measures further promotes the education level. The student-faculty ratio of undergraduate education in Princeton is 1:6, as is quiet rare among the university in the United States. Due to the very low student-faculty ratios, teachers have plenty of time and energy to guide the development of students, to pay careful guidance on students' works, which is beneficial to mine and exert the potential of every student. There is a practice guiding system for Teachers' teaching, namely the students, almost 100 to 150 ones, take foundation courses in the auditorium every week. After that, all the students take part in the 10 to 15 people small-class teaching, led by professor or the assistant, to review the courses and make discussions mutually just for a further understanding about the knowledge that have newly learned. This is a unique feature of teaching of Princeton University. Another feature of the high quality teaching of Princeton is that students of grade three and four need to do research independently, with the one to one guidance of professors. At Princeton University, clear regulations are made that all teachers have to bear the undergraduate teaching task and a freshman can receive teaching made by big potatoes in professional field with the direct and lifelong impact on students. At the same time, Princeton has a unique style in cultivating students' character, which is "being honesty". There is no teacher supervision to the students during the test; as a result, the phenomenon of breaking the rules is getting much rare.

## **3. The respected master concepts and Academic Freedom**

Although the scale is small and the number of students is not much, Princeton University has created pride of undergraduate education, the formation of a more class academic research at the same time. Scholars have published papers in leading academic journals and humanities classes per capita ranking first in the nation of almost any professional universities are among the best in the nation. Small universities have no impact on Princeton research center, and now, Princeton Plasma Physics Research Center has nearly 400 world-class researchers. These achievements are derived from Princeton respected master concepts and academic freedom. Princeton master gathered teachers with high quality as many as any other nations' universities. Currently within the Professors who are in office, 22 of them are MacArthur Scholar Award winner, as well as 7 Nobel Prize winners. Princeton with the historical facts developed a successful interpretation for the word "big" in world-class universities: the "Master" casts a "university" rather than a building; the "Master" achieves "first-class", rather than the size.

As the president of Peking University Mei Yiqi said: “The so-called universities, non-building that also that there is, there is a master of that also.” Under the guidance of the “master achieving first-class” concept, Princeton University adheres to the principle of academic supremacy, quality and theory.

This concept of master and respected academic freedom creates a good space for Princeton University. This freedom is not only reflected in the eclectic ideology as well as in the profit-oriented thinking and extreme tolerance for talents. Nash, the mathematical genius, has not been excluded in Princeton for his weird character. Even after he had paranoid psychosis, the school still gave him great tolerance and caring, which enabled Nash to gradually recover. In 1994, he won the Nobel Prize in economics. Einstein once sighed here: “I’m comfortable like a hibernating bear. In my whole destitute life, there is never a place which is like home as here!”

#### **4. The establishment and improvement of the safeguard mechanism**

Effective management system features prominently in the success of Princeton University. Besides that, the establishment and constantly improvement of the safeguard mechanism also contributes a lot to help Princeton achieve such great accomplishments, making its running philosophy carry out easier. What the main principles of the mechanism include are as follows:

Firstly, diversified entrance system----the diversity of students’ source and diversified admission standards. Undergraduates in the Princeton University come from over 60 and regions in America and all around the world. And the amount of overseas students account for 9% in the undergraduate community. The diversified entrance system broadens the channel for both teachers and students to understand and accept others with different races, cultures, background and experience, making progress by learning from each other.

The second, accommodation system--- all undergraduates are accommodated in this school. Every “college” is equipped with its own cafeteria, lounge, computer room and an administrative organization composed of college supervisors, head teachers, living assistants (senior students) and college counselors.

The third, tutoring system---- apart from taking common required course, students in the university are grouped into some tutorial classes with 10-12 members in each class. Professors are taking individual tutoring for students. And it bears noting that the majority of social and humanities courses are preceding 2 lectures and 1 project planning each week.

The fourth, freshmen seminar system---- freshmen are staged multi-disciplined seminars when they first enter this school, which can nourish the talents of these freshmen.

The fifth, overseas learning system----Princeton University encourages actively students to gain international experience by taking overseas courses, and gradually, it has become one important part in the school education system.

The sixth, independent research system----undergraduates are asked to carry out independent scientific research. Papers of many undergraduates already have had extremely high level and quality. Recent years has witnessed that the first author of these papers published in the authoritative academic journals, such as *Science and Nature*, are Princeton university undergraduates.

Lastly, distinctive and centuries-passing honor examination system----from 1893, Princeton University has been carrying out the honor system. No test monitor when students are taking examinations. Students

there have made a pledge, which is as follows: "I swear on my honor that I would never offer any help to others nor gain any from others during the examination.

### **Conclusion**

As university is a holy place for the cultivation of talented people and the cradle for the pursuit of truth and the inheritance of culture, the development of the modern universities indicates that the continuing motivation and power for its development is school idea, without a specific and clear one being a successful university is difficult. In the deeper process of higher education reform, some issues loom largely. How to develop a university? How to identify themselves? Where to head in? How to function in a good way? What kind of people should be cultivated and how to? The continual criticism from society focus on these problems remained in the development process of universities, especially the lack of characteristics, the lost of its spirits and the decline of its energy and attraction. These external and inner issues are closely relevant with school idea, which are caused by the ignorance of the systematic research of school idea and the lost of the leading by advanced school idea. The lost of school idea results in the lost of the practice. The specific features of Princeton University will undoubtedly set an example for the reform and development of the higher education in this new period, and it will also undoubtedly lead us to review and set up a more scientific school idea.

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