A Comparative Study on the Faculty Performance Evaluation Systems of Research-Oriented and Application-Oriented Universities

Yujie Gao

Guangxi Normal University,Guilin Guangxi 541000

Abstract: Based on literature review and policy text analysis, this paper compares the faculty performance evaluation systems of research-oriented and application-oriented universities, identifying significant disparities in school-running orientation, evaluation orientation, indicator weight allocation and method selection. Research-oriented universities, governed by academic logic, suffer from the "scientific research indicator dilemma", with their reform focusing on breaking the "publication-only" quantificational worship and returning to academic reputation and quality orientation. Application-oriented universities, driven by market and community logic, emphasize practical competence and social service yet face "academic drift" and the difficulty of quantifying practical performance. Under the "breaking the five obsessions" policy, this paper constructs a theoretical framework of task, contextual and learning performance, and proposes reform paths featuring classified evaluation, multi-subject participation and developmental evaluation.

Keywords: Faculty Performance; Evaluation System

DOI:10.12417/3029-2328.26.03.012

1.Research Background and Problem Statement

University faculty, as core bearers of higher education’s three fundamental functions, have their performance directly linked to higher education quality and the goal of building a strong education nation. The faculty performance evaluation system, a core human resource management institution, acts as a critical "baton" for guiding faculty behavior and realizing school-running orientation. However, long-standing homogenization in China’s university evaluation systems misaligns with the developmental needs of different university types, leading to a disconnect between evaluation orientation and talent cultivation goals and weakened evaluation effectiveness.

Research-oriented and application-oriented universities are core components of China’s higher education system: the former centers on academic innovation, undertaking knowledge innovation and high-end talent cultivation; the latter is guided by industrial demands, focusing on application-oriented talent training and regional social-economic service. Their inherent school-running differences demand distinct evaluation logical paradigms and value orientations. A unified evaluation standard causes severe problems: application-oriented universities mechanically copy academic-oriented evaluation models, deviating from practical teaching and social service and falling into "publication-only" involution; research-oriented universities, due to over-quantified indicators, exacerbate the research-over-teaching imbalance, running counter to academic innovation laws.

In recent years, the state has attached great importance to higher education evaluation reform, issuing policies such as the *Overall Plan for Deepening the Reform of Education Evaluation in the New Era* that explicitly propose "breaking the five obsessions" (publications, academic titles, professional ranks, educational background, awards) and advocate a classified and hierarchical evaluation system, providing policy guidance for optimization. Nevertheless, both university types face practical predicaments in reform, including common institutional barriers and unique challenges. Common problems include strong institutional inertia and path dependence of quantificational, administratively led evaluation models; a single evaluation subject and excessive administrative tendency, with academic organizations and industrial enterprises failing to play full roles; and utilitarian application of evaluation results, overemphasizing rewards and punishments while neglecting developmental and diagnostic functions. Unique challenges: research-oriented universities are trapped in "academic quantificational worship", facing academic-administrative power imbalance and cross-disciplinary evaluation difficulties; application-oriented universities suffer from "academic drift" and unquantifiable practical performance, with vague evaluation criteria for

"double-qualified" faculty.

Against this backdrop, sorting out evaluation system differences, analyzing practical predicaments and exploring school-running-aligned reform paths has important theoretical and practical significance for optimizing higher education evaluation, improving faculty team quality and advancing connotative higher education development. This paper adopts comparative study, literature research and logical analysis to construct differentiated reform paths, providing references for perfecting China's university faculty performance evaluation systems.

2.Theoretical Foundation and the Divide in School-Running Orientation

2.1 Core Connotation of Faculty Performance and the Three-Dimensional Performance Theoretical Framework

Faculty performance is a multi-dimensional, comprehensive concept whose connotation has expanded with higher education development and evaluation theory advancement. Early evaluation focused solely on teaching task completion, later expanding to scientific research and social service, yet the traditional model fell into "quantificational worship", neglecting teaching quality and teachers' ethics and leading to utilitarian faculty behavior.

Recent academic circles have shifted from a "single task-oriented" to a "comprehensive development-oriented" cognition of faculty performance, regarding it as an organic unity of task, contextual and learning performance—a framework that breaks the limitations of traditional evaluation. Task performance refers to explicit achievements in teaching, scientific research and social service, characterized by high explicitness and quantifiability, and is the core (but not sole) dimension of traditional evaluation. Contextual performance covers non-task behaviors promoting organizational goals, such as interpersonal cooperation, academic mutual assistance and public affairs participation, which is vital for academic atmosphere and organizational cohesion yet long a "short board" in evaluation. Learning performance focuses on professional development and sustainable growth capacity, embodied in knowledge structure update and professional skill improvement, and is an important prerequisite for higher education quality that should be incorporated into both university types' evaluation systems.

2.2 The "Indicator Dilemma" in Evaluation Systems and Theoretical Reflection

The "indicator dilemma" is a core problem in university faculty evaluation reform, referring to universities over-relying on quantificational indicators for convenience and operability, simplifying complex faculty work into numerical figures, leading to the alienation of evaluation standards and deviation from educational essence. Essentially, this "indicator fixation" is the erosion of educational essence by technical rationality, resulting in three consequences: "goal displacement", where faculty prioritize measurable indicators over unquantifiable core values such as teaching quality and academic innovation; the tyranny of "meritocracy", turning faculty into "indicator slaves" and making academic behaviors utilitarian, counter to academic and educational laws; and damaged academic ecology, exacerbating vicious competition and weakening team cooperation and academic mutual assistance.

The formation of the "indicator dilemma" is closely related to higher education evaluation's institutional logic and management model. Influenced by the new public management movement, university management has become increasingly administrative and quantificational, with evaluation serving as a management tool rather than a developmental means. For research-oriented universities, the dilemma manifests in the quantificational worship of scientific research (publications, projects, awards); for application-oriented universities, it appears in blind copying of academic indicators or simplifying practical performance into funds and patents, falling into new evaluation misunderstandings. Breaking the "indicator dilemma" and returning to evaluation's educational essence is a common mission for both university types.

2.3 The Divide in School-Running Orientation and Evaluation Logic

A university's faculty performance evaluation system is an institutional reflection of its school-running orientation and educational goals. The essential differences in school-running orientation and core functions between

the two university types lead to a core divide between academic logic and market logic in their evaluation systems.

Research-oriented universities take "knowledge innovation, academic excellence and high-end talent cultivation" as core orientation, with the mission of achieving original breakthroughs in basic and cutting-edge research, cultivating high-level innovative talents and providing intellectual support for national scientific and technological innovation. This determines their evaluation system is dominated by academic logic, with academic innovation capacity and reputation as core evaluation criteria. Under academic logic, evaluation focuses on academic innovation (with scientific research as core weight), emphasizes quality over quantity of research achievements, and takes peer review as the core scientific research evaluation method. While this orientation is rational for guiding high-level original research, it risks a research-over-teaching imbalance and utilitarian academic ecology. Under "breaking the five obsessions", its evaluation logic is transforming from "single academic quantification" to "laying equal stress on academic quality and comprehensive contribution", with academic logic remaining core.

Application-oriented universities center on "serving regional economic-social development, cultivating application-oriented talents and promoting industry-education integration", with the mission of aligning with industrial demands, cultivating practical talents and providing technical and talent support for regional industrial upgrading. This determines their evaluation system is driven by market and community logic, with practical competence and social service contribution as core dimensions. Market logic emphasizes alignment with industrial and market standards, measuring performance by contributions to teaching, technical services and achievement transformation; community logic highlights university-regional society symbiosis, incorporating regional development contributions into evaluation. Driven by both logics, evaluation should feature practicality, applicability and service orientation. However, in practice, they face "academic drift"—blindly emulating research-oriented universities, taking papers and vertical projects as core criteria and neglecting practical teaching and social service. This leads to a disconnect between evaluation and school-running orientation, making it hard to motivate faculty to improve practical competence and cultivate market-oriented talents.

3.Evaluation Indicators and Weight Allocation

Based on the three-dimensional performance framework and the academic-market logic divide, the two university types show significant differences in evaluation indicator selection and weight allocation across performance dimensions, with teachers' ethics as a common core dimension for both.

3.1 Task Performance: Quality-Oriented Scientific Research vs Contribution-Oriented Application

Task performance is a basic evaluation dimension for both, but with essential differences in focus and indicators. In scientific research evaluation: research-oriented universities center on "quality orientation, academic innovation and original contribution", emphasizing academic value and influence, with traditional quantificational indicators (publication number, project funds) replaced by qualitative ones (representative achievements, peer review, academic influence), and show disciplinary heterogeneity (science/engineering/medicine focus on experimental and technological breakthroughs; humanities/social sciences emphasize paper ideological content and policy consulting reports). Application-oriented universities focus on "application orientation, practical contribution and industrial alignment", emphasizing research practicality and transformation value (horizontal projects, achievement transformation), yet in practice fall into "academization" by taking paper number and vertical project level as core standards, disconnecting research from industrial demands.

In teaching performance evaluation: research-oriented universities focus on "academicism, innovation and high-end talent cultivation", emphasizing teaching-research integration and cultivating academic thinking/innovation capacity (indicators: curriculum academic cutting-edge, teaching reform, postgraduate cultivation quality), yet face a research-over-teaching imbalance with low teaching weight in professional title promotion. Application-oriented universities center on "practicality, applicability and professional competence cultivation", emphasizing teaching-industrial practice alignment and cultivating practical skills (indicators: practical teaching ability,

"double-qualified" quality, student employment quality), yet their practical teaching evaluation is formalistic with no scientific standards for measuring actual effects.

In social service performance evaluation: research-oriented universities focus on "high-endization, think tank construction and academic leadership", providing intellectual support for national strategies (indicators: policy consultation, academic communication, major strategic service); application-oriented universities center on "localization, practicality and industrial alignment", serving regional industry through technical services and talent training (indicators: technology promotion, social training, community service).

3.2 Contextual Performance: Contributions to the Academic Community vs University-Enterprise Collaboration

Contextual performance has long been marginal in both evaluation systems, yet its importance is rising, with evaluation focuses adapted to school-running orientations. Research-oriented universities focus on "academic community contributions" (indicators: academic team building, young faculty training, academic ethics maintenance), vital for academic ecology yet with low weight due to quantification difficulties and vague standards. Application-oriented universities center on "university-enterprise collaboration contributions" (indicators: industry-education integration, university-enterprise cooperation promotion, professional ethics maintenance), directly related to industry-education integration depth yet without a sound indicator system and insufficient value recognition.

3.3 Learning Performance: Tracking Academic Frontiers vs Improving Practical Competence

Learning performance evaluation focuses differ based on faculty capacity development demands. Research-oriented universities center on "tracking academic frontiers and improving innovation capacity" (indicators: academic visits/exchanges, research method update), as grasping academic frontiers is prerequisite for original achievements. Application-oriented universities focus on "improving practical competence and updating industrial technology" (indicators: enterprise practice training, professional skills training, industry horizon expansion), as aligning with industrial practice is key to cultivating application-oriented talents.

3.4 Evaluation of Teachers' Ethics

Teachers’ ethics is the primary evaluation criterion and a common core dimension for both, with a "one-vote veto system" for unethical behavior. Evaluation content includes ideological and political quality, teaching responsibility, academic/professional ethics and social responsibility. Evaluation methods combine qualitative and quantitative approaches, with multi-subject participation (self, peer, student, organizational evaluation). However, current teachers’ ethics evaluation faces common problems: vague standards, unscientific operational methods and subjective results.

4.Reconstruction of Reform Paths

In view of the practical predicaments of both evaluation systems, based on the three-dimensional performance framework, this paper proposes differentiated reform paths with core ideas of classified evaluation, returning to educational essence and developmental orientation, to construct school-running-aligned evaluation systems, break the "indicator dilemma" and stimulate faculty intrinsic motivation.

4.1 Adhere to Classified Evaluation and Optimize Differentiated Evaluation Systems

Classified evaluation is the core principle for breaking evaluation homogenization and the primary reform task. Education competent departments should improve classified evaluation policies, endow universities with greater evaluation autonomy and guide them to formulate differentiated standards based on school-running orientations. Research-oriented universities should construct an "academic quality orientation, comprehensive contribution equal emphasis" system, breaking quantificational worship through improving representative achievement evaluation, balancing teaching-research weight, strengthening academic-oriented contextual/learning performance evaluation

and perfecting professional peer review. Application-oriented universities should build a "practice orientation, application contribution core" system, breaking academic drift through establishing practice-oriented core indicators, reducing academic indicator weight, constructing enterprise-participated practical performance evaluation mechanisms, strengthening practice-oriented contextual/learning performance evaluation and perfecting "double-qualified" faculty evaluation standards and incentives.

4.2 Return to the Essence of Evaluation and Reshape Evaluation Functions and Models

First, combine qualitative and quantitative evaluation: quantificational indicators for objectively measurable performance (teaching workload, patents); qualitative evaluation for unquantifiable core values (academic innovation, practical contribution). Research-oriented universities should reduce reliance on formal quantificational indicators and increase qualitative weight; application-oriented universities should avoid simplifying practical performance into numbers and use enterprise evaluation to measure practical competence. Second, strengthen evaluation's developmental function: shift from "rewards/punishments over development" to a balance, establish feedback mechanisms and provide targeted training for faculty based on evaluation problems. Third, construct a multi-subject evaluation mechanism: break the single administrative evaluation model, involving universities, academic organizations, students, enterprises and the public. Research-oriented universities should strengthen academic organization and peer evaluation and attach importance to student evaluation; application-oriented universities should establish in-depth enterprise-participated mechanisms and take enterprise evaluation as core basis for practical performance.

4.3 Strengthen Institutional Guarantee and Consolidate the Reform Foundation

First, strengthen top-level design and policy guidance: education departments issue classified evaluation implementation guidelines, improve resource allocation mechanisms based on school-running orientations and reform effects; universities formulate specific plans and solicit multi-stakeholder opinions. Second, promote evaluation informatization and data governance: build a comprehensive evaluation data platform with big data and artificial intelligence, break data silos, realize automatic data collection/analysis, ensure data authenticity/accuracy/security and protect faculty privacy. Third, cultivate a sound evaluation culture: publicize the "breaking the five obsessions" policy, guide the establishment of correct evaluation concepts and abandonment of quantificational worship; create a culture respecting academics, valuing practice and encouraging innovation; strengthen academic and professional ethics education to maintain a good academic ecology.

5.Policy Recommendations and Future Prospects

5.1 Policy Recommendations

Based on research conclusions, the following policy recommendations are proposed to improve China's university faculty performance evaluation systems:

(1)Advance classified evaluation reform: education departments issue more operable policies, clarify evaluation orientations/paths for the two university types, endow greater evaluation autonomy and forbid unified standard-based ranking and resource allocation; universities formulate differentiated plans based on school-running orientations.

(2)Improve representative achievement and third-party evaluation mechanisms: research-oriented universities fully implement representative achievement evaluation and perfect peer review; application-oriented universities establish enterprise-participated third-party evaluation and take enterprise/industry recognition as core basis for practical performance.

(3)Strengthen contextual and learning performance evaluation: education departments guide universities to incorporate the two into evaluation and clarify dimensions/standards; research-oriented universities focus on academic community contributions and academic frontier tracking; application-oriented universities center on university-enterprise collaboration and practical competence improvement.

(4)Guard against the new "indicator dilemma": strengthen reform supervision to prevent "breaking the five obsessions" from becoming "establishing new five obsessions"; research-oriented universities avoid "high-impact factor papers only"; application-oriented universities avoid "patents only" for practical performance.

(5)Promote evaluation informatization and data governance: education departments build a unified evaluation data platform; universities use big data to improve evaluation scientificity/efficiency and reduce faculty administrative burdens.

5.2 Future Prospects

Under the "breaking the five obsessions" policy, China's university faculty performance evaluation system is undergoing profound changes. In the future, research-oriented universities' evaluation will further return to academic essence, shifting from "quantificational worship" to "quality orientation" and emphasizing academic innovation, teaching scholarship and comprehensive contribution. Application-oriented universities' evaluation will shake off "academic drift", shifting from "academic emulation" to "practice orientation" and focusing on practical competence, application contribution and industry-education integration.

With in-depth reform, the two university types will form differentiated, school-running-aligned evaluation patterns. Evaluation functions will shift from "management and control" to "development promotion", becoming an important means to guide faculty professional growth and improve higher education quality. Evaluation culture will respect academic laws, educational essence and diverse talent growth paths, creating a relaxed, inclusive and innovative academic ecology.

However, evaluation reform is a long-term, complex systematic project. Future practice will face new challenges: improving peer review to avoid human relationship interference, scientifically measuring practical performance application value, and balancing evaluation fairness and efficiency. Solving these problems requires joint efforts of the government, universities and society. Through continuous reform, a scientific, reasonable, fair and impartial Chinese characteristic university faculty performance evaluation system will be constructed, providing solid institutional support for building a strong education nation.

References:

[1] Ma Jianyun.The Generative Logic of Faculty Evaluation in Higher Education Institutions:Motivational Mechanisms,Rational Directions,and Implementation Paths[J].Inner Mongolia Social Sciences,2025,46(04):195-203.

[2] Ou Yangguang,You Zihuan.Evolutionary Logic and Reform Approaches of Teaching Evaluation for University Teachers in China from the Perspective of Teaching Academia[J].Higher Education Development and Evaluation, 2025,41(04):1-10+129.

[3] Sun Lizhi.Research on the Reform of University Teacher Evaluation Based on the Perspective of Teachers'Teaching Investment[J].China Higher Education,2025,(10):60-64.

[4] Zhang Jihé,Zhou Wenwen.Indicator traps and governance strategies in university faculty evaluation under performance accountability system orientation[J].Heilongjiang Higher Education Research,2025,43(04):68-75.

[5] Zhang D,Shi D.Reflections on and Transcendence of Performanceism in University Faculty Evaluation[J].Inner Mongolia Social Sciences,2025,46(04):186-194.

[6] Shao Liuguo,Kong Xiangxu,Li Huijun,et al.Do university teachers themselves abandon the"Five Onlys" evaluation:A text analysis of peer expert review for professional title promotion in high-level research universities[J].China Soft Science,2025,(09):1-11.

[7] Zhu Laibin.Exploration of Construction Pathways for"Dual-qualified and Dual-skilled"Faculty Teams from the Perspective of Transformation in Local Undergraduate Universities[J].Academic Exploration,2016,(12):149-152.

[8] Wang Yan,Tang Zhisong.Has the evaluation of representative works by university teachers been truly

implemented?A textual analysis based on the professional title evaluation methods for university teachers[J].Education Development Research,2025,45(01):67-75.

[9] Zhu Yanjun,Zhang Jun.Why is the implementation of teacher evaluation reform policies hindered in higher education institutions in the new era? — A case study of a local university's reform[J].Education Development Research,2025,45(19):74-84.

[10] Wang Honghong.Exploration of Development Pathways for Professional Practical Teaching Competencies Among Young Faculty in Applied Undergraduate Universities[J].Western Quality Education,2025,11(22):124-127.

[11] Huang Jingfeng,Yan Lei,Wan Jiaxin,et al.Research on Evaluation of Scientific Research Competence of Teachers in Applied Undergraduate Universities:A Case Study of Zhejiang Wanli University[J].Journal of Zhejiang Wanli University,2025,38(06):98-105.

[12] Xue Xinghua,Yang Jiewei.Research on the Construction of"Dual-qualified"Faculty in Sports Programs at Applied Universities under Digital Transformation[J].Tianzhong Academic Journal,2025,40(05):143-147.

[13] Bao Yongqiang,Wang Mulan,Liang Ruiyu,et al.Research on Evaluation of Research Competence for Applied University Teachers Based on GFMG-SVM Model[J].Electronic Devices,2019,42(05):1081-1084.

[14] Wang Cheng.Competency Research of Teachers in Applied Undergraduate Universities under Multifaceted Academic Perspectives[J].Education Review,2017,(01):48-51.

[15] Li Xingzhou,Tang Wenxiu,Wang Zhiyong.Teaching evaluation literacy of university teachers:connotative characteristics,practical challenges and cultivation pathways[J].Journal of Nanjing Normal University(Social Sciences Edition),2024,(04):47-57.

[16] Qin Yifan,Zhang Xinping.Path dependence and its breakthrough in the teacher evaluation system of Chinese higher education institutions[J].Modern University Education,2024,40(02):86-92.

[17] Gao Jinyong.Quantitative Dimensions in University Faculty Evaluation and Their Correction[J].Jiangsu Higher Education,2024,(03):44-52.

[18] Mei Xiongjie,Ji Guojun.Teaching Evaluation System for College Teachers in the New Era:Humanistic Reflection and Reconstruction Directions[J].China Higher Education Research,2023,(12):40-47.

[19] Boyer,E.L.(1990).Scholarship Reconsidered:Priorities of the Professoriate.Princeton University Press.

[20] Thornton,P.H.,Ocasio,W.,&Lounsbury,M.(2012).The institutional logics perspective:A new approach to culture, structure,and process.Oxford University Press.

[21] Shulman,L.S.(1987).Knowledge and teaching:Foundations of the new reform.Harvard Educational Review, 57(1),1-23.

[22] Daniel,B.(2015).Big Data and analytics in higher education:Opportunities and challenges.British Journal of Educational Technology,46(5),904-920.