

Research on the Optimization of Internal Guarantee Mechanism for Teaching Quality in Higher Education in the New Era

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Abstract: With the change in the nature of development for higher education in recent years, higher demands have been placed on the internal guarantee mechanism for teaching quality. Based on the definition of the connotation and composition of universities' internal guarantee mechanism for teaching quality, this paper will systematically investigate its organisational structure, operating procedures and actual forms, and identify prominent problems such as institutional fragmentation, lack of organisational cooperation, and delayed information feedback. The three types of reasons for the failure of the mechanism are institutional Design, organisational culture and information technology. A system of optimisation paths is proposed: raise institutional standards, improve organisational cooperation and strengthen data-driven governance. Organizational leadership, faculty participation and quality culture are all involved in building the implementation guarantee system. Therefore, the internal guarantee mechanism should move away from compliance-oriented inspection towards development-oriented empowerment, achieve the organic integration of quality assurance and quality generation, and provide a reference for the modernisation of teaching quality governance in universities.

Keywords: teaching quality; internal guarantee mechanism; continuous improvement; data-driven; quality culture

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Introduction

As popularised higher education has advanced further, the quality of teaching is now required by society and will directly affect the life and development of universities. The normalisation of external evaluations and accreditations has prompted universities to build relatively stable and effective internal quality-assurance systems. The actual purpose of "promoting construction through evaluation" is to motivate universities to improve their own quality voluntarily. Many universities have begun to set up institutional systems for the internal guarantee of teaching quality at present. However, there are still problems with their actual operation, such as nominal standards, information silos and broken improvement loops; thus, they cannot effectively perform their guarantee function. Therefore, in-depth studies of the internal logic and practical problems of universities' internal guarantee mechanisms for teaching quality, and exploration of optimisation paths suitable for the demands of the new era, have both theoretical and practical values.

1. Connotation and Composition of Universities' Internal Guarantee Mechanism for Teaching Quality

1.1 Definition of Basic Concepts

The internal guarantee mechanism for university teaching quality refers to a self-restraint system in which universities, as the main quality-responsible parties, continuously monitor, diagnose and improve all links in the teaching process through systematic institutional arrangements, organisational setup and operating procedures. At its core, it is about converting external quality demands into internal governance measures, and promoting the active participation and sense of responsibility among universities in quality creation. Unlike the periodicity and summative nature of external evaluations, this system will be integrated into daily teaching management and have the characteristics of continuity, development-orientedness and systematicness. In terms of the conceptual boundary, the internal guarantee mechanism covers observations of core elements such as teachers' teaching inputs and students' learning results, as well as reviews of structural components, such as curriculum provision and talent-training programs. Finally, it hopes to establish a flexible regulatory system that can address problems and correct defects independently.

1.2 Major Constituent Elements of the Mechanism

The four parts of the internal guarantee mechanism for university teaching quality are: the target-and-standard system, the organisational-operation system, the monitoring-and-evaluation system, and the feedback-and-improvement system. As the logical starting point, the target-and-standard system includes talent-training objectives, speciality teaching quality standards and course syllabuses, etc., providing clear references for quality-related activities. The organisation-operations system will distribute power, responsibility and cooperation among teaching-administration departments, faculty-level teaching units and grassroots teaching organisations, and thus determine how effectively the guarantee mechanism operates. Several instruments are used in the monitoring and evaluation system to collect data on educational quality, including regular teaching inspections, classroom observations and evaluations, student teaching evaluations, course assessments, and graduation achievement degree evaluations. A feedback-and-improvement system collects information and takes corresponding actions. Through the channels of teaching work conferences, quality reports and follow-up on rectification tasks, evaluation results have been transformed into specific teaching improvement measures, forming a full cycle from standard formulation and implementation to monitoring and adjustment.

1.3 Functional Orientation of the Internal Guarantee Mechanism

The purpose of the internal guarantee mechanism has changed from "supervision and control" to "developmental empowerment". First of all, it will help us identify problems in our work. Second, it provides high-quality early warning information. Set a threshold for some representative indicators, and then proactively identify possible teaching risks to prevent them. It can also be improved. Based on the evaluation results, adjust the curriculum and teaching methods, and provide support for students' studies; do not merely present the data. In addition, the internal guarantee mechanism will promote the development of a quality culture. Through continuous quality-oriented dialogue and reflection, administrators and teachers have formed a shared sense of quality, and thus quality assurance has been transformed from external pressure into an internal drive.

2. Status-quo Analysis of Universities' Internal Guarantee Mechanism for Teaching Quality

2.1 Organizational Structure and Operational Procedures

Most Chinese universities have established a two-tier university-faculty organisational system for teaching quality assurance. Most universities have established a Teaching Quality Monitoring and Evaluation Centre at the university level to plan, implement and evaluate university-wide quality-assurance work. At the faculty level, various quality-related activities are organised by the associate dean for teaching, specialty directors and grassroots teaching organisations. Most universities have established a regular work cycle for their operations, including pre-semester preparation inspections, mid-semester teaching-operation inspections, end-of-semester assessments, ad-hoc special evaluations and accreditations. However, there is a serious problem of disunity in the actual implementation despite the formal completeness of the organisation. Division of responsibilities among universities and faculties is often unclear or incomplete. Information reduction and distortion frequently occur in the procedure connection. Therefore, the work of quality assurance does not have a continuous and stable internal driving force.

2.2 Review of Main Practical Modes

In practice, the three general categories of internal guarantee models for university teaching quality can be roughly classified as standard-driven mode, evaluation-driven mode and technology-driven mode. The standard-driven mode is based on specialisation accreditation and national teaching-quality standards. Set up a specific quality-standard system and conduct individual-item benchmark inspections. Evaluation-driven mode uses several evaluation instruments, such as student evaluations of teaching, supervisor assessments and peer reviews, etc., to promote teaching improvement through the results of these evaluations. A technology-driven mode will use smart teaching platforms and information systems to automatically collect and visually present teaching data. The three

kinds are not mutually exclusive, and most universities have used a combination of them. However, generally speaking, the standard-driven mode is more likely to be formalised in practice. The evaluation-driven mode has problems with the reliability and validity of teaching evaluation, thus reducing the incentive for improvement. The Technology-Driven Mode is limited by the level of data infrastructure development. There is still a considerable gap in the deep integration and coordinated application of the three modes.

2.3 Major Existing Problems

Operational problems of universities' internal guarantee mechanism for teaching quality are shown as "four fractures". Firstly, there is a gap between the standard and its application. Although many universities have issued all-encompassing quality-standard documents, grassroots teaching organisations and frontline teachers are unaware of these standards and thus fail to implement them. Secondly, there is no connection between assessment and reform. A large amount of collected evaluation data has not been analysed or applied. The proposed optimisation measures lack specific implementation paths. Third is the fracture in organisational cooperation. There are information asymmetries among the Teaching and Affairs Office, the evaluation centre and the faculty-level teaching unit. Fragmented Administration leads to unclear accountability. Fourth is the gap between incentives and constraints. Quality-assurance work is not closely related to teachers' primary interests, such as title promotion and performance distribution, so their intrinsic motivation for quality improvement cannot be stimulated. These fractures are not isolated but overlap with each other, and together they reduce the overall effectiveness of the guarantee mechanism.

3. Analysis of Factors Influencing the Operation of the Internal Guarantee Mechanism

3.1 Institutional Design and Implementation Factors

The reason why the internal guarantee system has not been implemented effectively is due to a significant gap between good institutional Design and actual operation. Many universities aim for all-encompassing institutions in their construction but fail to coordinate them effectively or apply them practically; as a result, a complicated system with unclear priorities has been formed. Procedural norms are generally lacking in the institutionalisation process. Operating rules, responsibility division and time arrangements for quality assurance activities have not been specified, so it is difficult to implement the institutional requirements consistently. In addition, there is no change in the old institution. Talent training programmes and curricula change frequently, but the quality standards and assessment indicators have remained the same for a long time. Institutions do not meet the actual teaching conditions and are thus reduced to paper-based documents without practical value.

3.2 Organisational Culture and Human Resources Factors

The two reasons for why the internal guarantee system has not been realised are the organisation's culture and employees' skills. Administrators are generally responsible for ensuring the quality of life at the top level, and teachers may feel they are being overmanaged. Cognitive Mismatch leads to a perfunctory attitude and opposition, thus weakening the foundation of trust in the guarantee system. Teaching administrators have varying degrees of professionalisation in terms of human resources. Some do not have systematic training in quality assurance theory and data analysis, and are unable to handle complex information integration and decision support. At the same time, due to their busy schedules with teaching and research, teachers have little time and energy for quality improvement, and there are no supportive environments for implementing these improvements. The above human factors are relatively weak links in the system.

3.3 Information Feedback and Technological Factors

Timely, accurate and accessible information feedback directly affect the closed-loop effect of the internal guarantee mechanism. Universities have been collecting data, but there are still significant "last-mile bottlenecks" in information feedback. On the one hand, the feedback on teaching evaluation data is relatively late compared with the actual teaching process. End-of-semester evaluation reports do not help improve the current course and are out of

date. At the same time, the feedback information provided is too general and lacks detail; it is usually just a score or ranking without specific reasons. Teachers cannot get specific directions for improvement. Technological Reasons Also Exist. Dispersedly-built information systems and inconsistent data norms have created many information silos, thus obstructing correlation analysis and deep exploration of multi-source data. Insufficient development of intelligent quality-early-warning and decision-support functions fails to realise the full potential of the enabling effect of technology.

4. Optimization Paths for Universities' Internal Guarantee Mechanism for Teaching Quality

4.1 Improving the Institutional System and Standard Construction

The Foundation Project for Optimising the Internal Guarantee Mechanism is Institutional System and Standard-Building. First, the quality requirements need to be graded and feasible. National teaching-quality standards should be broken down into observable, measurable and evaluative specific indicators at the specialty level, and concise practical operation manuals should be provided to embed the standards in classrooms and teaching plans. Second, build a regular review and dynamic revision system for the institution. Quality Standards and Evaluation Schemes should be revised according to changes in talent training demands and teaching reform progress to prevent institutional rigidity. At the same time, reduce and consolidate institutions. Organise and simplify the current quality-management documents to remove redundancy, inconsistencies and conflicts. A reasonable, orderly and feasible institutional system will be established to provide clear and stable rules for the operation of the mechanism.

4.2 Optimise Organisational Cooperation and Operating Mechanisms

To solve the problem of organisational cooperation, responsibility-right division and process reengineering need to be carried out. Under the two-tier university-faculty management system, universities should focus on large-scale planning, standard-setting and quality supervision; faculties will handle specific implementation, process management and self-assessment; grassroots teaching organisations will concentrate on curriculum-level continuous improvement. The three levels will carry out their own tasks and remain in contact. Based on the above, organisational reform with "separation of administration and evaluation" will be promoted. Quality-monitoring functions should be separate from the daily teaching-administration functions to ensure the independence and objectivity of evaluation work. Standardised workflows centred around the closed-loop of "quality planning - process monitoring - outcome evaluation - improvement tracking" will be built for the operating procedures. Set clear time schedules, designate responsible persons and specify deliverables at all links to avoid procedural uncertainties and ensure orderly and traceable operations.

4.3 Strengthen Data-Driven Governance and Continuous Improvement

Data-driven governance will help improve the precision and timeliness of the internal guarantee system. An all-encompassing teaching-quality data centre at the university level should be built to collect various types of data on students' evaluations of teaching, supervisors' assessments, academic achievements and post-graduation employment outcomes. Break down the information silos to build a single platform for collecting, storing and analysing data. Educational Data Mining and Learning Analytics Technologies will be used to carry out dynamic monitoring and trend analysis of teaching quality, generate visualised analytical reports, and provide evidence-based support for teaching decision-making. In short, a closed-loop improvement path of "evaluation-feedback-improvement-re-examination" will be established. Problems found in each round of evaluation will be classified and graded, and responsible persons will be appointed to handle them within a specified time. Periodically observe the results of the improvements. At the same time, reduce the feedback cycle to introduce a series of immediate feedbacks and promptly adjust teaching based on this evaluation information for data-driven continuous optimisation.

5.Implementation Safeguards for Optimization of the Internal Guarantee Mechanism

5.1 Organizational Leadership and Conditional Support

The first line of defence for optimised internal guarantee systems will be the organisation's leadership. Teaching Quality Assurance will be added to the agenda of Party Committee meetings and University President's Office meetings at the university. A high-quality assurance leading group led by university leaders will be established to address serious quality assurance problems and coordinate across departments regularly. For the purpose of conditional support, special funds for teaching quality assurance should be allocated for information-system construction, evaluation-tool development, personnel training and quality incentives to ensure a stable supply of resources. Appropriate numbers of full-time teaching-evaluation staff need to be appointed to form a professional quality-assurance team with educational theoretical literacy, management experience and data-technology skills, providing strong human-resource support. Quality-Ensuring Institutions will also be given sufficient power to carry out the work of standard-setting, evaluation implementation and improvement supervision effectively.

5.2 Faculty Participation and Capacity Building

Teachers are both the producers of teaching quality and the core objects of internal quality assurance; therefore, their deep involvement is required for the effective operation of this system. Organise institutional arrangements to motivate teachers' intrinsic desire for quality improvement. Based on the results of teaching-quality evaluations, consider adjusting the criteria for teacher promotion, position assignments and performance bonuses. At the same time, a clear recognition system will be introduced to acknowledge teachers' efforts in quality improvement. Systematically organise training courses to improve the teaching quality literacy of teachers, cover curriculum design, teaching reflection methods and analysis of evaluation data. Teachers should be led to move away from passive acceptance of evaluation and engage in self-assessment proactively. Provide support for teachers to carry out scholarship of teaching and learning. Practical problems in the implementation of quality assurance can be converted into teaching-research topics. Action research will help us continuously improve our teaching and create a good environment for all students to learn well.

5.3 Quality Culture and Evaluation-Oriented Improvement

A good-quality Culture will provide the necessary support for the extended operation of the internal guarantee system. Cultivation needs to be promoted at all levels through ideas, behaviour and institutions. Universities should explicitly promote the school-running idea of "quality-oriented development". Teaching-work conferences, quality-month activities and excellent-case sharing can create a sense of quality and excellence in the organization, thus fostering a quality-conscious culture among teachers and students. Evaluation-driven improvement should shift the concept of evaluation from a summing-up judgment to a developmental dialogue. Emphasize the formative function of evaluation and reduce the harm caused by ranking-oriented assessment. Build a multi-subject consultation mechanism for evaluation, invite teachers, students, alumni and industry experts to participate in the quality assessment process, and strengthen the credibility and recognition of the evaluation results. At the same time, the effectiveness of the guarantee mechanism will also be evaluated periodically to monitor how well it has been operating and make continuous adjustments and optimisations; thus, a high-quality culture will continue to drive the development of the mechanism.

6.Conclusion

Optimisation of the internal guarantee mechanism for teaching quality at universities in the new era goes beyond partial institutional reform or technology upgrades. It is, in fact, a deep-seated change in the concept of governance, organisation ecology and institutional culture. The main reasons for the above changes are that we no longer rely on external regulations; instead, we have established an all-weather governance system based on data and fostered an internal quality consciousness. Only by incorporating quality standards into daily teaching, establishing

improvement loops, focusing faculty development efforts, and cultivating a quality-conscious culture throughout the organization can a dynamic and vigorous internal quality-assurance system be built to provide strong support for the high-quality development of higher education.

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