

# *Reflections on Improving the Quality and Ability of Higher Education Teaching in the Context of New Era Education*

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**Abstract:** The quality of education and teaching in universities plays a crucial role in the overall improvement of education and teaching management. Constructing a reasonable teaching quality assurance system is the key to ensuring normal teaching order and continuously improving teaching quality in universities. China's higher education has entered the popular Educational stage. In order to deepen the understanding of the popularization stage of higher education, solve the dilemma of teaching quality in higher education, and ensure and improve the quality of talent cultivation, under the principles of constructing a teaching quality assurance system, this article proposes several suggestions for constructing a teaching quality assurance system in universities.

## **1. Introduction**

In the Overall Plan for Comprehensively Promoting the Construction of Double First Class University Plan issued in October 2015, the state requires that the basic principles of "taking the first class as the goal, the discipline as the basis, the performance as the leverage, and the reform as the driving force" be adhered to accelerate the construction of a number of world class universities and disciplines. It is clearly pointed out that improving the quality assurance system, taking students' growth and development as the starting point and foothold, establishing a correctly oriented, scientific, effective, concise and clear evaluation system, and encouraging students to study hard and grow healthily. The achievement of the "Double First Class" construction goal in Chinese higher education institutions cannot be separated from the effective support of the teaching quality assurance system. However, there are still some issues that cannot be ignored in the construction of the teaching quality assurance system in Chinese universities, which are not in line with the requirements of the national plan to promote the "Double First Class" construction of universities. Ensuring and improving teaching quality is a prerequisite for universities to achieve the basic function of talent cultivation, and also the foundation for promoting the goal of "Double First Class" construction.

Therefore, building a high-quality education and teaching quality in universities is not only a need for universities to comprehensively implement basic education curriculum reform, but also a

need to accelerate education reform and development, and achieve efficient, healthy, and sustainable development. This article elaborates on three dimensions: raising relevant issues, interpreting and reflecting on the current situation, and providing targeted countermeasures and suggestions, hoping to provide inspiration and assistance for effectively improving the quality and ability of higher education and teaching.

## 2. Question Raising

Qian Xuesen, a famous scientist, once put forward: "Why do our schools always fail to train outstanding talents?" This question represents the contemporary society's expectation for the quality of our university education. Mr. Qian Xuesen believes that there is no university in China that can run a school according to the mode of cultivating talents of scientific and technological invention and creation. They are all parrots and generalists and have no unique innovations of their own. He stressed: "Today, we must have the scientific and technological innovation spirit of California Institute of Technology in running our school, and cultivate talents who can use their brains and have extraordinary creativity." [1]

Ensuring the quality of talent cultivation and improving the quality of education and teaching is an important guarantee for implementing the strategy of revitalizing the country through science and education and strengthening the country through talent development. In the past 15 years, China's education has achieved leapfrog development. In 2010, the Gross enrolment ratio of higher education exceeded 24%, and college students continued to increase at an annual rate of about 20%. The Outline of the National Medium and Long term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020) proposes that the Gross enrolment ratio will reach 40% by 2020, and higher education has been transferred to the popular Educational stage through the elite Educational stage. There is no clear boundary between elite education and mass education, but there are also certain differences: firstly, elite education is a selective education, with a high elimination rate highlighting the competitive component; Popular education also needs to be selected, but tends to have low competition and universal characteristics. Secondly, the quality of elite education is based on a limited number, marked by the low enrollment rate and small scale of higher education, and evaluated based on the input status of students, with results as a reference quantity for a single evaluation; The quality of mass education is a multifaceted evaluation that emphasizes diversity.

Elite higher education and mass higher education both need to have their own quality standards and guarantee systems, and mass education particularly needs to establish teaching quality standards that are suitable for the requirements of mass and universal higher education. After the expansion of enrollment in universities, the higher education system and student groups have shown a trend of diversification. On the one hand, the higher education system needs to meet the needs of society for different types of talents. The diversified and hierarchical higher education system poses new challenges to talent cultivation and student work in universities. Different types of universities have different educational concepts, positioning, and goals, and their organizational structures are becoming increasingly complex; On the other hand, the educational targets faced by universities are heterogeneous, as they are students with different family backgrounds, learning motivations, learning abilities, academic achievements, and employment goals. The rapid expansion of the number of students has put forward new requirements for higher education resources, educational methods, student training models, and educational levels. As a new driving force for promoting social change and development, universities should effectively respond to the challenges of the times, cultivate innovative talents, meet social needs, and maintain their own sustainable development.

Establishing a scientific and effective teaching quality assurance system is an important issue

facing universities. Through investigation, it has been found that there are still many shortcomings in the teaching quality assurance system of Chinese universities, mainly reflected in the following aspects.

### **2.1. Valuing Supervision Leads to One-Sided Management Objectives**

Management serves to achieve organizational goals. The goal of higher education and teaching management is to promote the professional development of teachers and managers, cultivate high-quality specialized talents that meet the needs of society, and ensure the healthy, harmonious, and sustainable development of students, teachers, and schools. This is the eternal goal of school management. In reality, some university managers often talk about evaluation, upgrading, applying for master's or doctoral degrees, and striving for famous brands, with a focus on equipment updates, multimedia classrooms, and the construction of buildings and venues. Of course, these are major events in the development of the school and should be taken seriously. However, in contrast, the education of students, the development of teachers, and the cultural construction of schools appear to be weakened and blurred, especially in the understanding of the development goals of students, teachers, and management personnel, there is a one-sided tendency. Regarding education and teaching, emphasizing teaching over education simplifies the educational nature of the teaching process.

In order to continuously improve the quality of teaching, most universities have established teaching supervision organizations, including two-level supervision organizations at the school and department levels. Supervision strengthens the supervision and inspection of teaching work through attending classes, conducting special research, inspecting teaching materials, and conducting symposiums. Supervision "includes two meanings: supervision, inspection, and guidance, and" supervision "and" guidance "are complementary and inseparable. However, in the process of supervising teaching work, supervisors often only attach importance to the supervision and inspection of the completeness of teaching requirements and student attendance of the teaching teachers, and do not pay attention to guiding the teaching work and situation of the teachers.

### **2.2 .Valuing Theory Leads to Aging Management Methods**

In the long-term process of running schools, various universities have formed a set of rules and regulations related to education and teaching management, playing a fundamental role in promoting standardized management of education and teaching. However, in daily management, due to many restrictions and regulations, the enthusiasm of teachers as the main body of the school to explore and break through teaching procedures, reform teaching methods, and update teaching methods is often suppressed, and the free space for students to explore innovation and develop their personalities is often limited. Under this constraint, educational and teaching activities lack vitality, and the effectiveness of educational and teaching management is affected. At the same time, we should also note that with the promotion of the popularization of higher education, a number of newly established undergraduate colleges and universities have rapidly developed. Among them, a considerable number of colleges and universities have not yet established a sound and scientific management system, and education and teaching management is not standardized enough.

Practical teaching is an important and indispensable link in the process of talent cultivation in universities, playing an irreplaceable role in theoretical teaching. It is one of the main ways to cultivate students' innovation awareness, innovation ability, and practical ability. The monitoring of practical teaching quality is an important component of the teaching quality assurance system in universities. However, currently, most universities focus on monitoring the classroom teaching process in the construction of teaching quality assurance systems, overemphasizing the monitoring

of theoretical teaching, while the monitoring of practical teaching is relatively weak, especially in the off campus internship process, which has basically become a blind spot for monitoring teaching quality in universities. In addition, there is a lack of targeted teaching quality monitoring and guarantee measures for each link of practical teaching; Due to the particularity of practical teaching, many quality monitoring methods suitable for theoretical teaching are no longer suitable for practical teaching.

### **2.3. Valuing Results Leads to Rigid Management Systems**

A scientific and reasonable teaching quality evaluation system is an essential and important component of the teaching quality assurance system in universities. However, the current evaluation index system for teaching quality in Chinese universities is still very imperfect, mainly focusing on result evaluation rather than process evaluation, and emphasizing link evaluation rather than overall evaluation. Secondly, the evaluation indicators are too standardized. The evaluation standards for teaching quality should have a certain degree of flexibility, leaving enough space for teachers and students to creatively unleash their creativity. However, currently, the evaluation of teaching quality in universities often uses fixed and programmatic indicators to measure teaching activities that should be full of individuality and characteristics. Using a unified and unique standard to measure all teachers neglects the differences between individual teachers, limits their autonomy in teaching, and is not conducive to the formation of their teaching style.

The existing evaluation indicators are too unified, neglecting the differences in teaching objectives and content focus among different module courses, making it difficult to accurately reflect the characteristics of various disciplines and majors. At the same time, the evaluation indicators are overly quantified. The evaluation index system blindly pursues quantification and neglects the scientific method of combining qualitative and quantitative analysis, making it difficult for the results to accurately and effectively reflect the essential characteristics of the evaluation object.

### **3. Realistic Interpretation and Reflection on the Quality of Higher Education and Teaching**

Professor Rick Levin, president of Yale University in the United States, pointed out that China's undergraduate education lacks both interdisciplinary breadth and critical thinking. Undergraduate education in China is specialized education, where students choose majors or even lifelong careers around the age of 10. The focus of teaching is mainly on mastering the key points of knowledge, and students are passive listeners and receivers who do not develop the ability to think independently and critically. This model makes it difficult to cultivate talents with leadership and innovative spirit. How can we change all of this? Professor Rick Levin suggested that universities should create courses and teaching methods that encourage creativity and independent thinking. Jaspers pointed out in his book "The Concept of University" that "a university is a community composed of scholars and students dedicated to the pursuit of truth. [2] Cai Yuanpei, the former president of Peking University, believes that universities are "institutions for joint academic research." College students should take academic research as their bounden duty and not take universities as the ladder for promotion and wealth. ". Mr. Li Dazhao also pointed out that "only academic development is worth commemoration of the university, and only academic achievements are worth cheering of Peking University", requiring Peking University to "prepare great souvenirs for the future from academic inventions". Wilhelm von Humboldt, the father of modern German education, clearly put forward that "universities are places to study knowledge and pursue truth, not vocational or technical training centers, nor institutions selling diplomas". Nigel Shrift, president of the University of Warwick, believes that universities should insist on "free and open exchange of

ideas, Academic freedom, no prejudice, and everyone working for the common interests". [3] The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's "Higher Education in the 21st Century: Outlook and Action" points out that universities "must undergo the most thorough transformation and innovation, so that our current society, which is experiencing a profound value crisis, can go beyond economic considerations and focus on deep-seated moral and spiritual issues".

In the history of human understanding, the idea of putting people first was first proposed relative to the concept of putting God or things first. In modern society, as a development perspective, human centered thinking is mainly different from material centered thinking and is relative to nature and society in the world of human life.

The essential attribute of universities requires that they adhere to the principle of putting people first. Schools are organizational structures that carry out systematic education in a planned and organized manner. School education is a purposeful and systematic social activity undertaken by full-time personnel and specialized institutions, with the goal of affecting the physical and mental development of the educated. Compared with general enterprises and institutions, school education is a delicate social activity of teaching and educating people. Educators not only need to master rich knowledge and skills, but also need to have noble personality and wisdom, and require communication and exchange between educators and learners in their hearts. In the group composed of school administrators, faculty, and students, people are both the subject and object of school educational activities, and the starting point and focus of the school management process are people. Therefore, school education and teaching management must adhere to the principle of putting people first. [4]

Higher education institutions are institutions that provide higher education to citizens and cultivate specialized talents. The fundamental purpose of higher education is to cultivate innovative high-level specialized talents. To meet this need, university teachers not only need to possess high-level educational qualifications, but also high-level professional knowledge and research abilities, providing guidance and assistance for students' professional development. The teaching of university teachers and the learning of students are both complex and creative mental labor, requiring a free academic atmosphere and a relaxed teaching environment, as well as a more humane management approach.

#### **4. Suggestions for Building a Teaching Quality Assurance System in Universities**

Building and improving a teaching quality assurance system is a comprehensive and comprehensive system engineering. Universities need to pay high attention to all aspects and stages of talent cultivation in this project, systematically and continuously supervise and control the process of talent cultivation and related implementation activities, comprehensively evaluate and improve the teaching process, and thus build a stable, efficient, and mutually coordinated quality management system. [5] In order to guide and mobilize all parties to actively participate in the monitoring of teaching quality, combined with the requirements of the overall goal of "Double First Class" construction in universities, this article proposes the following suggestions for building a teaching quality assurance system in universities, in order to further promote the continuous improvement of teaching level and quality in universities.

##### **4.1. Establishing a Correct Concept of Teaching Quality among Teachers and Students**

Universities need to combine the purpose of talent cultivation and teaching positioning, and implement teaching quality generation analysis on the entire process of talent cultivation in teaching work, in order to find corresponding guarantees and control the key points of improving teaching quality, in order to continuously enhance teaching achievements, improve the quality of university



teaching, and thus facilitate the cultivation of excellent talents in universities. [6] The teaching quality assurance system is closely related to the vital interests of teachers and students, as well as the work performance and interests of leaders at all levels, and has a significant impact on the overall level and reputation of the school. Building a teaching quality assurance system in universities requires university leaders and teachers to strengthen their learning of advanced educational concepts, deeply understand the significance and importance of the teaching quality assurance system, continuously update knowledge, and comprehensively improve the level of education and teaching. On the other hand, it is necessary to strengthen the cultivation of students' sense of responsibility. Through education, students can change their mindset and understand that objective and fair evaluation of teachers is not only a manifestation of their responsibility to the school, teachers, and themselves, but also an important way to enhance students' subjectivity, improve their ability to make independent judgments, and reflect their educational demands. [7] Students must carefully cooperate with the school's teaching evaluation work, adhere to a pragmatic attitude, overcome personal biases, and allow the teaching management department to collect real and effective information. The teaching management department will promptly feedback the evaluation information to the teaching teachers, prompting them to identify problems and make improvements.

#### **4.2. Establish a Smooth and Efficient Mechanism for Collecting and Providing Feedback on Teaching Information**

At present, many teaching management departments in universities have not properly processed the information collected from teaching quality evaluation, resulting in the collection of teaching information deviating from the initial goal of teaching quality evaluation [8]. Firstly, information feedback from the school and college supervision teams. The school and college level supervision teams collect and summarize various information about teaching activities through lectures, inspections, inspections, and symposiums, analyze and summarize common problems and hot topics of concern to teachers and students in the teaching process, and provide opinions and suggestions on the shortcomings of teaching style, learning style, and teaching management work, for reference by teaching management departments. Secondly, information feedback from leading cadres. School management cadres at all levels delve into the front line of teaching, adopting methods such as random lectures and patrols to promptly understand the teaching situation, and provide feedback to the teachers and relevant units on any problems found during the lectures. Thirdly, feedback from the teaching information officer. Select one student from each class as the teaching information officer, based on the class as a unit. The teaching information officer urges the students in this class to actively participate in student evaluation of teaching, participate in various teaching activities organized by the school and college's teaching management department, such as symposiums, teaching inspections, special research, questionnaire surveys, etc., and promptly reflect their opinions and suggestions on the school's teaching management system, teaching activity organization, and teaching quality management. Fourthly, feedback on teaching work meetings. Schools and colleges regularly hold teaching work meetings to report on teaching inspections, praise good aspects, point out existing problems, and propose specific requirements for future teaching work. In addition to the above feedback methods, teaching information can also be provided through teaching inspection reports, oral communication, online media, and other means.

#### **4.3. Improve Incentive and Constraint Mechanisms**

The incentive mechanism in teaching quality assurance is a management mechanism that mobilizes the enthusiasm of the subject and object of teaching activities. [9] The constraint

mechanism is a scientific and efficient management mechanism that ensures the improvement of teaching quality. In view of the serious problems commonly existing in colleges and universities, such as teachers' emphasis on scientific research, light on teaching and academic foam, colleges and universities urgently need to establish a scientific and effective incentive and restraint mechanism to maximize the potential of college teachers to promote the steady improvement of teaching quality. First of all, we should formulate the reward method for teaching work, organize activities such as young teachers' lecture contests, selection of excellent teaching plans, evaluation of excellent teaching quality courses, young teachers' Mentorship, and set up teaching achievement awards, excellent teaching team awards, key textbooks awards, graduation design (thesis) excellent instructor awards, excellent college students' innovative training plan project awards, and discipline competition excellent instructor awards. Develop a practical and feasible incentive system, adhere to the combination of material rewards and spiritual incentives, and guide teachers to enhance teaching autonomy, stimulate teaching enthusiasm and creativity. Secondly, in response to the problems that exist in the teaching process, corresponding methods for identifying and handling teaching accidents should be formulated. Teachers who experience teaching accidents should implement a "one vote veto system" in annual assessments, salary adjustments, job promotions, job appointments, and evaluations. Developing a user-friendly and rationalized restraint system is conducive to restraining the negative behavior and phenomena of faculty and establishing a good teaching order.

#### **4.4. Establish a Comprehensive Teaching Quality Evaluation Index System**

The guarantee and improvement of teaching quality in universities need to rely on feedback and exchange of information, and the most important source of teaching information is the evaluation of teaching quality. The formulation of teaching quality standards in universities needs to be based on educational innovation and teaching characteristics, continuously improving the quality of teaching in universities, strengthening their core competitiveness in the education market, and providing important guarantees for the sustainable and healthy development of universities. [10] Based on the current situation of the design and operation of the teaching quality evaluation system in Chinese universities, universities should further optimize the teaching quality evaluation index system and build a diversified, hierarchical, and comprehensive teaching quality evaluation index system to ensure orderly teaching operation. According to modern educational theory, higher education needs to prioritize student development as its core task. Therefore, one of the important criteria for evaluating the achievement of teaching quality goals in universities is to examine whether universities place student development at the core. [11] Firstly, implement a strict and lenient management and evaluation approach for students. The main body of student learning quality evaluation is composed of comprehensive evaluation by teachers, students' self-evaluation, and experts. Diversify assessment methods by combining exams, attendance, classroom participation, group discussions, homework assignments, and practical operations, increase the number of stage tests, supervise students' daily learning, and monitor their learning process and effectiveness throughout the process. In terms of assessment content, students' knowledge acquisition ability, participation ability, problem-solving ability, innovation ability, and team cooperation ability are comprehensively examined, fully leveraging their learning consciousness and initiative. Secondly, the evaluation of teachers' teaching quality adopts a multi subject evaluation model that combines leadership cadres, teaching supervisors, peer teachers, students, and teaching advisory group experts. Comprehensively evaluate the teaching attitude, process, and effectiveness of teachers in the three stages of pre class, during class, and after class. Finally, different evaluation indicators should be set for different majors and types of courses, such as theoretical courses, practical courses, physical

education courses, etc., and the weights of each indicator should be different.

## 5. Conclusion

To study the improvement of the quality and ability of education and teaching in universities in the new era, it is necessary to leverage teaching as the fundamental and key role for universities to fully utilize their talent cultivation and social service functions. Establishing a sound teaching quality assurance system is the key to ensuring the normal and orderly operation of teaching and continuously improving teaching quality. The construction of a teaching quality assurance system in universities involves various factors and aspects of teaching, and all teachers and students in universities should attach great importance to it and promote its implementation from top to bottom. Each university should continuously improve and improve its teaching quality assurance system based on its own curriculum and teaching characteristics, so as to ensure the long-term effectiveness of the construction of the teaching quality assurance system, thereby promoting the improvement of the quality system and promoting its sustainable development.

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