The Construction of the Practical Teaching Quality Assurance System in Colleges and Universities in the Post-evaluation Era: A Case Study of Nanjing University of Finance and Economics

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Abstract. In the post-evaluation era, colleges and universities have been trying to improve the quality of the practical teaching quality assurance system. Taking Nanjing University of Finance and Economics as an example, the advanced practical teaching quality assurance system is constructed. The authors argue that the new assurance system should extend the function of monitoring. The new system should emphasize on the guidance of auditing and evaluation system index for changing practical teaching concept, improve practical teaching system, strengthen the construction of practical teaching bases, train experienced teacher staff, and build optimized practical teaching management and evaluation system.

Introduction

Since 2014, the Ministry of Education has conducted undergraduate teaching evaluation for all colleges and universities across China, emphasizing on self-generated standards, self-evaluations, self-improvement of universities, and guiding universities to establish self-discipline mechanisms. Evaluation is indirectly targeted at the quality of education in colleges and universities by examining the construction and operation of schools’ internal assurance system [1]. Therefore, colleges and universities should play a dominant role in education, establish and improve self-evaluation system and quality assurance system.

However, the current internal quality assurance system in colleges and universities in China is mainly established under the requirement of the first-round undergraduate teaching level assessment, with the purpose of adapting to the requirements of external assessment [2]. The quality assurance system is constructed in accordance with the level assessment index system issued by the Ministry of Education. Therefore, during the period of auditing and evaluation, all universities have made pertinent adjustments, which in content reflect the common characteristics of the teaching quality assurance system in colleges and universities centered on the monitoring and evaluation of teaching quality, with the purpose of strengthening macro-management, directing classification, and pursuing education quality.

Practical teaching is a main vehicle towards innovative spirit and practical ability training. It combines students’ knowledge education, ability cultivation with scientific accomplishment to meet the demands of the orientation of talent cultivation through experiment, internship, curriculum design, graduation project (thesis) and social practice, which is an important representation of the quality of higher education.

Since the undergraduate teaching evaluation started from 2014, the practical quality system attracts lots of attention. However, the traditional practical teaching quality assurance is mainly focused on the monitoring function. Therefore, an advanced practical quality assurance system should be developed.

Post-evaluation Era Demands the Personalized Practical Teaching Quality Assurance System

During the period of auditing and evaluation, colleges and universities comprehensively examine
the internal teaching quality assurance system and optimize their own assurance system, by reviewing their achievements of talents cultivation objectives, adaptation of the school-running orientation and talents cultivation objectives to social needs, the assurance of teachers and teaching resources on talents cultivation, the operation of teaching quality assurance system and the satisfaction of students and employers. The crux of the auditing and evaluation is that colleges and universities take their own “rulers” to measure themselves, so self-examination is premised on what kind of “rulers” are used, where “rulers” come from and how to measure.

“Rulers” are chosen according to three dimensions: norm, benchmark, and target. By norm, we mean the average and standard deviation of a standardized sample, with the purpose of helping testers to understand the meaning of test scores. For colleges and universities, the auditing and evaluation index system is a norm. Benchmark refers to advanced and exemplary colleges and universities in the development process, whose function is to further refine the target based on the norm-referencing. The so-called target refers to short-term, medium-term and long-term development goals set by colleges and universities according to their status quo, economic and social development and other factors. Through various means of quality assurance, we use quality assurance tools to observe and evaluate teaching quality observation points to find out their distance to the norm, benchmark and target, further propose improvement methods and examine the improvement, forming a closed loop of quality assurance system.

According to the theory of interest community, the subject of teaching evaluation has changed in the post-evaluation era. The relationship between academic affairs office and teaching units has developed from the binary relations into the internal relations of interest community. The subject of teaching evaluation changes from the original academic affairs office to multiple subjects; the evaluation criterion of teaching quality shifts from single-dimensional to multi-dimensional, from consequential to procedural.

In the face of the series of changes of the subject and criteria of teaching evaluation, it is necessary for colleges and universities to establish and develop a suitable practical teaching quality assurance system based on solving the factors that reflect the changes in practical ability and their impact on the practical teaching quality, to be specific, forming a closed loop of quality assurance system through controlling and continuously optimizing the factors (including the orientation of talents cultivation, talents cultivation programs, support from schools (colleges), construction of teaching staff, curriculum system, supervision mechanism of practical teaching quality, etc. influencing the practical teaching quality, so that all of the practical teaching can be quantified, controlled, accounted, and improved [3].

**Talent Cultivation Requires Improved Practical Teaching System**

At present, the convergence of the school-running orientation in colleges and universities tends to be quite serious, leading to the loss of their own characteristics and the difficulty of taking advantages [4]. All colleges and universities take the auditing and evaluation as an opportunity. They fully tap the existing achievements and experience in the long history of teaching and scientifically and reasonably determine the direction of running a school and the target of personnel training according to its own actual situation and social needs [5]. The “ruler” should be suitable for the conditions of colleges and universities themselves, and a clear and detailed development plan should be made to gradually form the school-running characteristics, school-running style and mode of development that are recognized better by society. Nanjing University of Finance and Economics (NUFE) is clearly pointed out in the 13th Five-Year Plan that it is necessary to “cultivate multi-disciplinary and practical talents with profound foundation, strong ability and high quality, with all-round development of morality, intelligence, physique and aesthetic, having not only sense of social responsibility, innovative spirit and entrepreneurial ability, but also knowledge accomplishment of economics and management”. After the auditing and evaluation, NUFE places the cultivation of students’ practical abilities in an important position in talents cultivation based on the status quo of school-running characteristics and measures.
In addition, with the deepening of the reform of the employment system, employers increasingly favor practical graduates, therefore, it is more and more important to improve the quality of practical teaching and cultivate students’ scientific literacy and innovative ability. It has become an important task in colleges and universities to carry out researches on practical teaching evaluation and assurance and establish a scientific and rational practice teaching quality assurance system. Reasonable and effective practical teaching quality management and evaluation system play a
crucial role in regulating teachers and students in the practical teaching activities in order to ensure that the practical teaching is carried out in an orderly manner and to improve the quality of practical teaching.

In order to ensure the quality of practical teaching, NUFE designs a scientific and systematic multi-disciplinary, phased, hierarchical, modular and open new experimental teaching system with network structure, centered on the cultivation of students’ comprehensive practical ability and innovative and entrepreneurial ability. In addition, it focuses on strengthening the practical teaching system, reforming and innovating experimental practical teaching content and experimental teaching methods to establish experimental teaching system composed of basic experiments, comprehensive experiments, innovative experiments, research and scientific experiments and others. NUFE explores research-driven teaching mode, and injects research results and research thinking into experimental teaching, thus, helping broaden students’ knowledge vision, enhancing the spirit of cooperation and teamwork, cultivating scientific thinking methods, and improving practical ability of the students.

The Development of Practical Ability Needs to Strengthen the Construction of Practical Teaching Bases

Practical teaching is an important part of talents cultivation in colleges and universities, especially for practical talents cultivation, which is helpful for students to turn knowledge into ability and apply theories to practice. At present, poor practical experience and weak practical ability have become the biggest obstacles to the employment of college students. Therefore, it is inevitable to reform experimental training and strengthen the construction of practical teaching base.

Colleges and universities should provide good practical facilities. In the campus, in the aspect of hardware, NUFE has increased investment in professional laboratory and integrated hardware and software resources in order to improve laboratory efficiency, and to provide students with good internship conditions and environment. In terms of software, NUFE has constructed a new comprehensive experimental teaching platform for the disciplines of economics and management. The former attaches great importance to the integrated experimental platform to provide students with experimental environment of business operation which can be arbitrarily combined. The latter builds an experimental teaching system according to the internal relations between subject knowledge and professional competence, and anastomoses theoretical teaching needs with social needs through experimental teaching, so that students can experience the real environment business, like exposing themselves to the business process of economics and business management. Off campus, in order to train students’ practical ability, NUFE has taken various measures to develop high-quality practical training bases in accordance with the needs of students from various majors so as to ensure that every student can have a good practical training experience.

The Improvement of Practical Ability Requires Experienced Teaching Staff

To establish a sound mechanism for the introduction and training of practical teachers, on the one hand, NUFE introduces practical teachers with rich work experience and optimizes the faculty structure; on the other hand, teachers should be deeply involved in enterprises by ways of training, introduction, visit and encouragement, according to the specialty of experimental practical teachers and the long-term and short-term goals of construction of teaching staff. Taking business tutor as an example, NUFE hires teachers who have experience in entrepreneurship and leaders who have experience in business management as entrepreneurship tutors, forming a normalized training mechanism where tutor start business counseling in universities while students carry out the business practice in companies. At the same time, NUFE regularly employs well-known domestic entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship training experts to give invited lectures and presentations. Besides, some teachers are trained in the international platform by International Labor Organization, and so far, more than 30 teachers in NUFE have been accredited by the International Labor Organization (ILO) with entrepreneurship training teacher qualification certificate.
The Construction of Quality Assurance System Calls for Advanced Practical Teaching Management and Evaluation System

Talents cultivation is a systematic project, where forces and resources in all aspects should be employed. There are ubiquitous insufficiencies of monitoring on lots of dynamic elements, such as, the execution of the plan and the contents and methods of practical teaching. On these issues, the universities construct and improve corresponding management system, and give a feedback in the process of publicizing, discussing and operating management documents. In addition, we believe that the construction of practical teaching quality is regularized, institutionalized and scientific.

Monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching is the core of any quality assurance system, including those developed by key universities represented by Tsinghua University, those tried by regular universities represented by Guangxi Normal University, and those widely adopted by colleges and universities across the country in recent years. In the post-evaluation era, the universities pay more attention to the guiding role of teaching evaluation index system by introducing theory and method of total quality management into teaching quality management. The main parts of the practical teaching (including graduation design, experimental teaching, practice, training, curriculum design, etc.) are subsystems of the practical teaching quality management system. The practical teaching evaluation system controls all factors affecting the quality of main aspects of practical teaching, and manages in advance various factors, conditions, and working quality of all members in the process to ensure the quality of the process, and eventually, achieves the optimization of the overall quality. Finally, the quality evaluation system of each subsystem should be well established, and “summative re-evaluation” should be transformed into the combination of “formative re-evaluation” and “summative re-evaluation”, so that it can fully improve the efficiency of practical teaching evaluation.

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