University Government Society: Multidimensional Guarantee of Higher Education Quality

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Keywords: Higher Education Quality, Quality Assurance, Quality Assessment, University, Government, Society.

Abstract. It is essential to establish a multi-element quality assurance entity consisting of government, society and school. As the entity of running school, universities shall arouse the education and teaching enthusiasm of teachers, stress student-orientated and highlight students’ experience and feeling, plays the management staff’s role of system guarantee and condition guarantee. Government shall change the management function, reduce the authorization and approval matters for universities’ running of school, mainly play the roles of “navigator”, “controller” and “patron”, start the building of national higher education quality assurance data information platform, legally ensure the financial investment in higher education. Society shall fully play roles of “supplier”, “direction instrument” and “supervisor”, build accountability system and relatively independent intermediary organizations of education assessment, utilize public opinions to urge and promote universities to put the problems reflected by public opinions on the agenda and solve them. This paper can not only provides basic information for other theoretical research, and provides theoretical guidance for practical exploration, but also provides basic information for the international comparative study of the quality assurance of higher education.

With the establishment and improvement of socialist market economy system and the deepening of higher education management system reform, the mode that the higher education quality was fully guaranteed by government in the past has not met the need of new situation. Accordingly, “it is essential to establish a multi-element quality assurance entity consisting of government, society and school”[1] and “establish a new mode that the macro-quality control by government, quality regulation by society and quality management by universities organically coordinate with each other and run smoothly.”[2]

University Dimension

“It is the premise of and key to the assurance of higher education quality that universities establish their own quality assurance system.”[3] Because the quality of higher education is finally formed in the process of education activities. [4]

(1) Teacher level. Specialty construction needs the support of courses, teaching materials and experiment conditions, while courses and other material things need to be activated by teachers and teaching administrative staff. Thus, teachers and teaching are the final determinants of talent training quality.[5] In order to give play to the role of teachers in higher education quality assurance, on the one hand, it needs the internal consciousness and self-discipline of teachers. On the other hand, it needs external pressures and impetus. That is, it is essential to try every means to arouse the education and teaching enthusiasm of teachers. Firstly, it is essential to seriously study and analyze the institution root of why teachers’ enthusiasm is not high. That is, it is essential to study the institution root of improper incentive, rather than just focusing on the formal requirement of teaching management. Only when those institutions and regulations regarding improper incentive are
eliminated can the enhancement of teaching management have the expected effects. Secondly, it is essential to seriously study and analyze the overall institutions for the internal management of universities and their relationship. The design of some institutions which seem to have no direct relevance with teaching may play a negative incentive role in arousing teachers’ teaching enthusiasm. In the investigation of the design of universities’ internal institution, it can be found when a teacher can obtain the utility from project application and paper publishing far larger than that he can obtain from teaching work, there are no participation constraint conditions for teaching incentive consequently. Furthermore, in terms of promotion of administrative posts inside universities, what decisive is still the scientific research achievements of teachers, rather than teaching achievements, which also indicates the crux of the problem. [6]

(2) Student level. It is essential to help students to build the quality awareness, making them realize the significance of self-quality improvement and forming the idea that everybody is responsible for the quality assurance, fully arouse students’ enthusiasm for participation in quality assurance and make the quality awareness internalized as the guide of schools and promote the students’ all-round development.[7] “In the process of implementing higher education quality project, we must do a dimension compensation work. That is, we shall stress student-oriented, introduce the students’ perspective and highlight students’ experience and feeling.”[8] “It is essential to implement three-pronged strategy. That is, besides government accountability and society accountability, it is essential to have student accountability!” [9]

(3) Management level. The management dimension mainly plays the role of system guarantee and condition guarantee. University must establish corresponding functional departments to intensify teaching service and support. Through the cooperation with individuals and departments, functional departments supply personalized service and support to gradually turn the traditional teaching management to teaching service and support. The teaching service and support items include the following: supply consulting and guidance for teaching and learning; supply support for improvement of classroom teaching; supply support for teachers’ professional development; supply consulting service for teaching and learning; develop related resources regarding school-based instruction research for teaching staff and students; stimulate interest in teaching; supply guidance to students with learning difficulties. [10]

Government Dimension

(1) Change functions. “The foundation of strengthening the higher education quality construction lies in the change of relationship between government and university and the change of university institution that government undertakes everything and manipulates everything.”[11] Therefore, “it is essential to change the management function of government in terms of higher education and universities firstly so as to solve the common problem that universities run school oriented to government.”[12] With the change of government functions, it is inevitable that social forces and market forces will intervene and then there is a possibility that such issues as the accurate positioning of universities, classification and shunting, as well as running schools with characteristics and enhancement of quality will be solved. Thus, it is essential to restrain and reduce the authorization and approval matters for universities’ running of school by government and set up a higher education management system and operation mechanism based on market competition and market resource allocation so as to truly build universities into legal entities facing to society and legally running schools and enable universities to achieve self-running, self-restraint and self-responsibility in market competition. “Only by this can universities deeply realize that the improvement of education quality is the core of universities in school running and is the life line concerning the existence of universities in severe market competition.”[13]

(2) Implement control. Government shall mainly play the roles of “navigator”, “controller” and “patron”. As a “navigator”, government shall master the development direction of higher education,
formulate basic quality policies, determine the emphasis of quality development, give guidance to the guiding ideology and political orientation of schools’ running and the implementation of the country’s education policies and guidelines, specify the basic training objectives of higher education, guide the training objectives of all specialties of universities and talent quality specification and ensure that higher education develops towards active and healthy direction. As a “controller”, government shall, through the macro-adjustment and control of higher education operation, supplement the shortcoming of market mechanism, rectify the anomic of market mechanism, effectively prevent and overcome various disadvantages brought by marketization, realize the unification of higher education scale, structure, quality and efficiency and promote the sustainable, steady and harmonious development of higher education. As a “patron”, government shall, through the establishment of perfect law and regulation system, standardize various quality activities of higher education, ensure orderly operation and provide support conditions such as fund, information and expert service for higher education quality assurance.[14] Government shall, at the time of straightening macro-control, specially note that “it is essential to change the previous administrative instruction supervision mode to supervision service mode.”[15] The supervision service functions are as follows: standardize the higher education quality assurance behaviors through legislation; formulate the basic education quality standard of the nation; guide, plan, coordinate and inspect teaching quality assurance activities of universities; carry out overall evaluation (including qualified, optimal and random) on education and teaching quality of universities and establish the institution of acceptance period; build an expert team and information network of higher education quality assessment; guide and give play to the active roles of social intermediaries of educational assessment; organize the personnel training of higher education quality assessment; promote the higher education quality assessment research and facilitate the academic exchange at home and abroad.

(3) Enhance support. It is necessary to start the building of national higher education quality assurance data information platform. The platform shall include the following contents: i. Universities shall provide “unified data” to the platform at fixed period; ii. The platform shall release the annual report of higher education development of every province at fixed period; iii. The platform shall provide calculation templates of higher education expenses; iv. The platform shall release the indexes of personal and property safety inside universities at fixed period; v. The platform shall provide the online reading and download link of research reports of which the project has been approved; vi. The platform shall provide a set of norms and standards for statistical information. [16] It is also necessary to legally ensure the financial investment in higher education. Under the condition that our country’s financial investment is insufficient, it is essential to further improve the establish the system mainly relying on financial allocation and supplemented by raising of higher education fund through many other channels stipulated by the higher education law, “effectively solve the problem that higher education expenses are seriously insufficient in virtue of market forces and by use of market mechanism and effectively improve the basic conditions for running school of every universities.”[17]

Society Dimension

(1) Basic roles. Besides that government plays the roles of “navigator”, “controller” and “patron” in higher education quality assurance, it is also essential to pay attention to the roles of “society” as “supplier”, “direction instrument” and “supervisor” in higher education quality assurance. “As a supplier, on the one hand, society provides the investment in such resources as personnel, property and material required by the sound development and quality assurance of higher education; on the other hand, society also selectively accepts the talent trained by higher education and the social service provided by higher education and guides the higher education to train well-liked talents so as to make education serve society. No matter investment or acceptance, they are not unconditional, and quality is the premise of investment and acceptance. Higher education needs vigorous vitality and
only when readily marketable products are produced according to the social needs can more excellent talents be attracted to join and can more funds for school running and scientific research be obtained and can the products provided be accepted by society, and thus, talents can make contribution to the social and economic development. As a direction instrument, society mainly raises basic quality requirements for higher education and feeds back the degree of conformance of the operation of education to the quality requirements. Society is the major service object of higher education; social needs are the external requirements of higher education quality and it is the specific embodiment of higher education quality to meet social needs. Higher education is like a vehicle at high speed, among which the steering wheel is controlled by the government and the engine is universities and the direction instrument is social factors. As a supervisor, society mainly supervises the operation of higher education through news media, social opinion, mass psychology and assessment, gives the early warning of behaviors deviating from the correct track and guides the higher education to develop towards the sound and orderly direction.”[18]

(2) Accountability function. In terms of the role “supervisor” that society shall play, the “accountability” function is worth stressing. The core of social accountability system is the university accountability by the accountability subject composed by stakeholders inside and outside universities; the operation mechanism is the integrated university accountability institutions arrangement that government is responsible for guidance, coordination and authentication and government and other social assessment agencies are responsible for classifying organization, while stakeholders of universities take effective part in the whole process. The factors of social accountability system of universities mainly include accountability subject, accountability object, accountability content, accountability method and accountability procedure.

(3) Intermediary organizations. “In terms of external assurance, it is essential to build relatively independent intermediary organizations of education assessment with certain academic authority between universities and government to adjust the contradiction between universities and government and guarantee the objectivity, fairness and scientificity of education assessment work.”[19] On the one hand, social intermediary organizations will provide the level of running school and the information of talent training quality to society; on the other hand, intermediary organizations will feed back the requirements of society for talent training, the employment status of graduates and other related information to universities so as to ensure that the higher education quality will develop towards the direction needed by society.

(4) Public opinions. In the aspect of the role “supervisor” that society shall play, the role of supervision by public opinions shall not be underestimated. Public opinions are the barometer of education quality and represent and reflect the requirements of the age and the voice of the masses. Through broadcast, newspaper, TV and other media, public opinions reflect and spread the viewpoints and opinions of the masses on the phenomena and problems in higher education field and the opinions on the solution of such problems, making such problems become hot topics that the masses generally concern and the concern of society. That is a pressure and driving force for education, urging and promoting universities to take all measures and steps to put the problems reflected by public opinions on the agenda and solve them, which is supervision on quality. What’s more, “once public opinions are formed, with fast transmission and wide scope, they can seize the minds of people and attract public attention. Thus, public opinions work effectively and play a great role in supervision, and they can rapidly play the role of driving or restraining in an education phenomenon. Under the condition that the current society becomes more and more open, the communication means become increasingly developed and the contact between people increases, the supervision by public opinions has increasing impacts and roles on education quality, and it is an important means which shall not be neglected by the modern society to master the formation rule of public opinions and consciously use the active roles of public opinions to implement quality assurance.”[20]
Conclusion

Quality is unification degree of the inner adaptability and outer adaptability of entities. It is the essential question of development of higher education. Facing the target of comprehensive guarantee system of higher education quality, it is essential to establish a new mode that the macro-quality control by government, quality regulation by society and quality management by universities organically coordinate with each other and run smoothly. As the entity of running school, universities shall arouse the education and teaching enthusiasm of teachers, stress student-orientated and highlight students’ experience and feeling, plays the management staff’s role of system guarantee and condition guarantee. Government shall mainly play the roles of “navigator”, “controller” and “patron”. Society shall fully play roles of “supplier”, “direction instrument” and “supervisor”.

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