

Analysis of the Construction of the Internal Governance Model of Colleges and Universities Based on the Theory of Flat Management

Chunhua Lu^{1*}, Hailian Tan²

¹Guangxi Normal University, Guilin 541001, Guangxi, China

²Guilin University, Guilin 541006, Guangxi, China

*Corresponding author: Chunhua Lu, luchunhua521@163.com

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Abstract: The flattening of the internal governance of colleges and universities needs to follow the principles of democratic participation, equivalence of rights and responsibilities, and efficiency priority. The structural design should be comprehensively optimized and adjusted. The power distribution should follow the principle of coordination and balance between academic power and administrative power. The operation mechanism should focus on the scientificity and democracy of decision-making. The construction of supporting systems requires the improvement of the performance appraisal system as well as the incentive and supervision mechanisms.

Keywords: Flat management; Internal governance of colleges and universities; Academic power

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1. Introduction

Flat management initially entered the research field as a management reform phenomenon of modern enterprise organizations and is regarded as a new management structure that can improve organizational efficiency and market competitiveness ^[1]. Its core features include fewer management levels, a larger management span, a networked structure, decentralized power, an emphasis on efficiency, and people-oriented management ^[2]. This new management model that effectively solves efficiency problems has quickly been applied to the discussion of the management models of other organizations. In the process of internal governance of colleges and universities, implementing the theory of flat management can fully and effectively solve the drawbacks of the traditional governance model of colleges and universities, strengthen the management efficiency of colleges and universities themselves, and improve their management level. It is a good idea for colleges and universities to formulate their internal governance models at this stage ^[3].

2. Determination of the objectives and principles of the flattening of internal governance in colleges and universities

Constructing the internal governance model of universities based on the theory of flat management aims to achieve scientific, democratic, and highly efficient school management to meet the new situations and requirements of the development of higher education, and to enhance the comprehensive competitiveness and social influence of universities ^[4]. That is, in specific work, by reducing the number of levels, optimizing the allocation of power and functions, and scientifically refining rights and responsibilities, etc., the effectiveness of school decision-making and management is improved, enabling the school to more promptly respond to changes in the external environment and adjust its own construction and development strategies. At the same time, it also fully stimulates the subjective initiative, initiative, and creativity of grassroots teaching and research personnel and students, so as to promote academic development, improve the quality of talent cultivation, and create a good academic atmosphere and educational environment. Some principles need to be followed in the construction process of this governance model.

2.1. Principle of democratic participation

The principle of democratic participation emphasizes that school governance should respect the dominant position of teachers and students, and protect their right to know, right to participate, and right to supervise. A democratic management system such as the Faculty and Staff Congress and the Student Congress should be established and improved to widely listen to the opinions and suggestions of teachers and students. School decisions should fully reflect the will and interests of the majority of teachers and students. For example, major decisions such as school plans and teaching reform plans should be demonstrated by teachers and students' representatives and their reasonable suggestions should be absorbed; such as formulating talent cultivation quality standards and education and teaching quality evaluation mechanisms.

2.2. Principle of equivalence of rights and responsibilities

Under the management model of flat management, the responsibilities and rights among all levels, departments, and positions should be clearly defined, ensuring that there are corresponding powers for each position. Decentralize power to grassroots teaching and research organizations and personnel, enabling them to have independent decision-making power and organizational behavior power. At the same time, clearly define the responsible persons and the responsibilities they should bear to prevent irresponsibility and abuse of power. For example, in scientific research project management, the project leader is given the right to allocate scientific research funds and the right to deploy members of the scientific research team, etc. At the same time, the project leader is required to be responsible for the implementation progress of the project, the quality of the project results, etc., so that the scientific research project can be carried out smoothly.

2.3. Principle of efficiency priority

The key purpose of flat management is to improve management efficiency. In the construction of the governance model, the management process should be optimized, management approvals and cumbersome procedures should be reduced, and the efficiency of information circulation, transmission, and decision-making implementation should be improved ^[5]. By building an information management platform, real-time sharing and rapid transmission of information are realized, and work efficiency is improved. For example, through the online office system, online document approval and instant information communication are realized, avoiding the waste of time caused by the transmission of paper documents and meetings, and improving the management

efficiency of the school.

3. Structural design of the flattening of internal governance in colleges and universities

Under the flat management model, the internal governance structure of colleges and universities should be comprehensively optimized and adjusted to meet the requirements of flat management and achieve efficient and scientific school management.

3.1. Reducing management levels is a key measure of flat management

The multi-level characteristics of the traditional management model of colleges and universities lead to high management costs and reduce the speed of information transmission and the timeliness of decision-making. Therefore, the middle management levels of colleges and universities should be streamlined, and the traditional “pyramid”-type hierarchical management system should be broken, making the entire management structure simpler and more efficient. For example, merging several departments with similar management functions, streamlining unnecessary management levels, merging the Academic Affairs Office and the Teaching Quality Monitoring Center into the Teaching Management and Quality Monitoring Office, and carrying out teaching management and quality monitoring functions together to avoid the phenomena of function intersection, function overlap, and work duplication and improve the management level. At the same time, it is necessary to reduce the management levels of secondary colleges, and grassroots teaching and research organizations should have more direct management rights, enabling the grassroots to make quicker adjustments to teaching, scientific research, and other work ^[6].

3.2. Expanding the management span is an important feature of flat management

On the basis of reducing management levels, appropriately expanding the management span of managers allows them to directly manage more subordinate units or personnel ^[7]. That is, managers can directly manage more subordinate units or more subordinates, which requires managers to possess higher management levels and comprehensive qualities and be able to reasonably and effectively organize and coordinate the work of subordinates. For example, school leaders establish direct face-to-face contacts with multiple grassroots teaching and research units to understand the teaching and research work situation at the front line and provide timely guidance, coordination, and assistance; use information technology means, such as building a network communication platform and using project management software, etc., to improve the communication management efficiency and management effect of managers on subordinates, and ensure that managers can effectively manage and supervise subordinates under the condition of expanding the management span.

3.3. Constructing an organizational structure centered on the work process is the core requirement of flat management

The traditional management model of colleges and universities is oriented towards department function management, resulting in poor communication and coordination among departments and low work efficiency. However, flat management is oriented towards the work process, breaking the closedness among departments, optimizing resources, and carrying out work efficiently. For example, in scientific research project management, a cross-departmental scientific research team is established and oriented toward scientific research projects. Team members come from different disciplines and departments and are composed of scientific research

personnel, managers, technical support personnel, etc. Around the project objectives, tasks, and processes, team members jointly take charge of the project implementation, quickly communicate around the project implementation process, optimize and share project resources, and improve the efficiency and quality of scientific research project work. In teaching management, around the talent cultivation process, we integrate the links of enrollment, teaching, student management, employment, etc., form integrated teaching management, achieve efficient docking of each link, and complete each link of talent cultivation.

4. Power allocation and operation mechanism of the flattening of internal governance in colleges and universities

When constructing the internal governance model of colleges and universities based on the theory of flat management, a scientific and reasonable power allocation and operation mechanism is crucial, which is directly related to the efficiency and effect of school governance.

4.1. Power allocation should follow the principle of coordination and balance between academic power and administrative power

In the governance of colleges and universities, academic power and administrative power are the two most important types of power, and both are essential for the development of colleges and universities. Academic power includes the decision-making and management power of academic affairs, academic institutions, and academic personnel in school management for academic affairs, such as discipline construction, major setting, academic evaluation, etc. Its subjects are academic personnel and academic organizations, based on academic levels, professional knowledge, etc. Administrative power includes the power to manage school administrative management, resource allocation, logistics support, etc., and to play a protective management function. Its subjects are administrative management personnel, based on administrative positions, administrative rules, etc. However, influenced by traditional school-running habits, in the governance of colleges and universities, administrative power occupies a dominant position, and academic power is in a relatively disadvantaged state, resulting in a lack of sufficient academic participation in the decision-making of school academic affairs, weakening the driving force for academic development and reducing the quality of academic development.

To straighten out the relationship between academic power and administrative power, it is necessary to position and rationally divide their functions. Academic power should mainly play a role in school affairs, and academic organizations such as the Academic Committee and the Professors' Committee should be given more and broader rights and decision-making and management powers^[8]. For example, in discipline construction, academic organizations formulate discipline development plans, determine discipline research directions, and approve discipline construction projects, etc.; in major setting, the opinions of academic organizations should also be respected, and majors should be set scientifically and reasonably according to discipline development and the needs of the times. At the same time, administrative power should actively participate in the exercise of academic power, provide necessary support and guarantee for the exercise of academic power, give priority to academic development in resource allocation, ensure the smooth progress of academic research work, streamline administrative procedures in administrative management, improve service efficiency, and create a good working environment for academic personnel^[9].

4.2. The power operation mechanism should focus on the scientificity and democracy of decision-making

Flat management requires the formation of multi-level and diversified management subjects for decision-making so that decisions can fully consider the interests and demands of all parties. For major decision-making matters such as the school development strategic plan, after full investigation, demonstration, and listening to the opinions and suggestions of teachers' representatives, students' representatives, management personnel, etc., more groups can be involved in the decision-making through various ways such as holding the Faculty and Staff Congress, the Student Congress, and symposiums. At the same time, use information technology, and collect various information through the online decision-making platform to make the decision-making process more open and transparent.

When implementing decisions, it is necessary to clarify the division of labor, implement responsibilities, strengthen the mutual connection, cooperation, and communication among various departments and personnel, and ensure the implementation of decisions. It is also important to establish and improve the supervision system for decision implementation, conduct supervision and inspection of the decision implementation situation, and rectify problems in a timely manner. For example, the supervision department sets up full-time positions or establishes a supervision organization to conduct supervision and inspection of the implementation of various decisions of the school and hold the departments and relevant personnel with ineffective implementation accountable to ensure the authority and effectiveness of decision implementation.

5. Construction of supporting systems for the flattening of internal governance in colleges and universities

5.1. Improving the performance appraisal system is a key link to ensure the effective operation of the flat management model

In the construction of the performance appraisal index system, attention should be paid to focusing on the work achievements in teaching, scientific research, social services, etc. Teaching performance should not only use the evaluation of teaching style and learning style as performance indicators, but should set evaluation indicators around multiple aspects such as teachers' teaching effects, curriculum quality, teaching workload, curriculum construction, and teaching reform. For example, set corresponding indicators such as whether teachers' teaching courses or the teaching content in and out of class are innovative. Scientific research level should not use the number of publicly published papers and the level of scientific research projects undertaken as performance appraisal indicators but should focus more on the achievement level and actual transformation benefits of scientific research projects, such as whether the project results are transformed and whether they generate economic or social benefits, etc. At the same time, in terms of social services, it is also necessary to consider teachers' contributions to serving economic and social development, such as the actual achievements of teachers' scientific research work in serving society. For example, serving as a technical expert or professional instructor for an enterprise's R & D project, carrying out product production, installation, and commissioning operations on the spot in the factory, or providing professional consulting, technical guidance, solving specific technical problems in production, as well as conducting popular science or special lectures. After being recognized, corresponding performance points can be added.

In the performance appraisal process, it is necessary to ensure fairness, justice, and openness. We standardize and establish a perfect performance appraisal procedure, clarify the time and procedure of the appraisal work, and promote the orderly and organized development of the appraisal work. We should also

establish a supervision mechanism to do a good job in the supervision of performance appraisal and prevent problems such as personal subjective factors and favoritism and malpractice in the appraisal process. The performance appraisal results should be announced on time, and the supervision of the appraised personnel should be done well. For those who have doubts about the appraisal results, a timely appeal channel should be provided to ensure the protection of the interests of faculty and staff.

5.2. The incentive mechanism plays an important role in stimulating the enthusiasm and creativity of faculty and staff

It is important to link the performance salary with the assessment results, link the salary with the actual work performance contributions of the faculty and staff, and improve the salary treatment of the faculty and staff with outstanding work performance contributions. High salary treatment and good rewards are offered to the faculty and staff with outstanding performance, such as performance bonuses, scientific research achievement awards, teaching achievement awards, etc.; appropriately reduce the salary treatment such as performance salary income to establish a salary incentive and restraint mechanism for the working faculty and staff. In addition to setting material rewards, by giving play to the role of spiritual incentives, honorary awards such as the Teaching Master Award, the Outstanding Scientific Research Contribution Award, and the Excellent Service Award are also set up to commend the outstanding achievements and contributions of the faculty and staff emerging in various fields, so as to enhance the sense of honor and accomplishment of the faculty and staff; provide the faculty and staff with more career development opportunities, such as education and training, academic exchanges, job promotions, etc., to enhance the professional value of the faculty and staff and stimulate their work enthusiasm by providing attention and care ^[10].

5.3. The supervision mechanism is an important guarantee for ensuring the healthy operation of the flat management model

In terms of internal supervision, we give full play to the role of the discipline inspection and supervision department, strengthen the inspection and supervision of various school work, focus on supervising the operation of various school powers, resource allocation, financial management, etc., and put an end to the abuse of power and corruption; establish and improve the internal audit system, strengthen the internal audit work of the school's financial revenue and expenditure, economic activities, etc., and effectively ensure the safety and reasonable use of school funds; vigorously encourage the faculty and staff to carry out internal supervision, set up reporting mailboxes, reporting and complaint hotlines, etc., so that the faculty and staff can timely reflect the problems and suggestions in the school work. In terms of external supervision, we actively accept external supervision from government departments, the public, parents, and students. Government departments should regularly conduct inspections such as detection and evaluation of the school-running and management situation of colleges and universities and put forward rectification suggestions for schools with problems; the public, parents, students, etc. can conduct supervision and evaluation of the relevant work of the school through the Internet, media reports, etc. The school should respond positively to social concerns, continuously enhance its work ability, and strive to improve its level.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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