

Reform of University Teaching Management System Based on Power Checks and Balances

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Abstract: The establishment of a modernized university teaching management operation mechanism is an important element of the comprehensive reform of higher education. University teaching management is characterized by the weakening of academic power, the expansion of administrative power, and the lack of clarity in the responsibilities and powers of universities and colleges. To realize the modernization of the governance system and governance capacity of higher education, it is necessary to reconstruct the internal power structure and power operation mechanism of university teaching management, to make the teaching management organization shift to flattening, the power of the university ministry to the power of the faculties and departments vertically downward, and to form a governance mechanism of division of labor and collaboration between academic power and administrative power. A case study on the reform of the operation mechanism of teaching management was shared, which illustrated a teaching management model applied in University G. Through the Undergraduate “Faculty Committee,” “Teaching Working Committee” and the “Teaching Steering Committee,” a teaching management operation mechanism integrating the separation of powers of “legislative power, administrative power and supervisory power” was gradually constructed, and the implementation effect was good.

Keywords: Separation of three powers; Balance of power; Teaching management system; Reform

Online publication: July 28, 2025

1. Introduction

The fundamental task of colleges and universities is talent cultivation, teaching management serves talent cultivation, and efficient and orderly teaching management is a prerequisite and guarantee for cultivating innovative talents. Scholars generally agree that a modernized university teaching management system mechanism is an important means to realize the modernization of the governance system and governance capacity of higher education. Research has shown that there are many challenges in the operational mechanism of university teaching management in dealing with the balance of academic and administrative power, and the division of responsibility and authority between the university and the faculty^[1-3].

The core concepts of the operational mechanism of university teaching management include academic power, administrative power, power checks and balances, and the organizational structure of teaching management. Current research focuses on the following categories:

- (1) The relationship between academic power and administrative power, which focuses on the dynamic relationship between academic power and administrative power and its impact on university governance; Kezar studied the conflict and cooperation between academic and administrative power, and pointed out that the weakening of academic power and the over-expansion of administrative power are the prominent problems in current university governance ^[4].
- (2) The design of the organizational structure of teaching and learning management within the university and its impact on teaching and learning quality. Birnbaum put forward the theory of multiple models of university organization, and analyzed the adaptability of different organizational structures to teaching and learning management ^[5], while Mintzberg explored the balance between management efficiency and adaptability of the organizational structure.
- (3) Case studies on the operational mechanisms of instructional management ^[6]. Marginson *et al.* studied the reform of the management system in Australian universities, revealing the advantages and disadvantages of different management models.
- (4) Research on the power check and balance mechanism ^[7]. This type of research mainly explores how to establish an effective power check and balance mechanism within the university in order to realize the balance between academic and administrative power. Kogan *et al.* studied the governance structure of universities in the United Kingdom and put forward the model of “participatory management.” However, most studies are macro-level and lack implementation details, failing to provide actionable solutions for governance reforms.

Although the above studies have provided theoretical and practical support for the reform of the university teaching management system to different degrees, there are still some shortcomings:

- (1) The design of the power check and balance mechanism lacks details. Although the existing studies emphasize the checks and balances of academic and administrative power, they lack a detailed design of the specific power distribution mechanism, operation process and supervision mechanism. This makes it difficult to apply the theory in practice and the effect is not easy to guarantee.
- (2) The construction of the existing theoretical model of university teaching management organization lacks empirical validation in specific universities, which makes it difficult to provide direct guidance for the reform of the management system in reality.
- (3) Most of the studies focus on universities in developed countries in Europe and the United States, and lack in-depth analysis and empirical research on China’s higher education management system.

This leads to low applicability and operability of the research results in China. In view of the above research deficiencies, this paper intends to propose and study the following questions: how to optimize the power checks and balances, build an effective operation mechanism for university teaching management, and realize the effective division of labor and collaboration between academic and administrative powers.

1.1. The Chinese context

Teaching management is part of the management of higher education. Teaching management in colleges and universities includes teaching program management, teaching operation management, teaching quality management and evaluation, as well as the management of teaching infrastructure such as disciplines, majors,

curricula, teaching materials, laboratories, practice teaching bases, and teaching management systems. Therefore, the teaching management system is a micro-concept within the university, which is the study of the university's internal teaching power structure. It contains the teaching management organization of universities, and the power configuration between the subjects of teaching management power. According to the current subjects and powers of teaching management within Chinese universities, a three-dimensional power structure model of university teaching management can be constructed (**Figure 1**), which is characterized as follows.

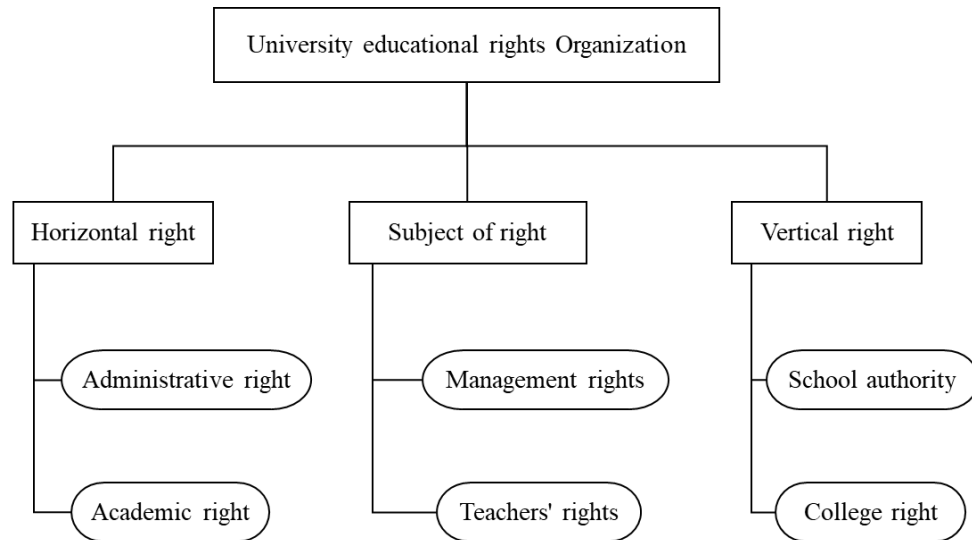


Figure 1. Three-dimensional structure model of university teaching management.

A university is an academic organization. Personnel training, scientific research and social services are more academic affairs. In the current academic atmosphere dominated by scientific research in colleges and universities, more people regard scientific research as academic work, and regard teaching management as administrative work. In terms of the relationship between the two levels of responsibility, the power of the two levels is not equal, and the teaching management department at the school level is used to arrange tasks by administrative orders, while the college generally believes that the school level belongs to the superior level and the non-academic relationship is equal. From the perspective of organizational structure, as a huge educational institution, a university needs a set of effective administrative management systems to ensure smooth daily operation, and teaching management, as a part of it, naturally has the color of administrative management. However, teaching is one of the core activities of academia, which is not only the transmission of knowledge, but also the innovation and development of knowledge. Therefore, teaching management should focus on this core to ensure that teaching activities can fully embody their academic value and promote the deepening and expansion of knowledge. Teaching management should respect teachers' freedom of teaching, encourage their teaching innovation according to the characteristics of the subject, and maintain academic justice and rigor.

The management system now adopted by the university is one based on Max Weberian bureaucratic management system that is constructed and operated according to the structure and operation mode of the administrative system. At the general school level, there is a vice president in charge of teaching, and a special administrative organization, the Academic Affairs Office or the Educational Affairs Department, is responsible for the personnel training, teaching schedule, teaching reform, and teaching quality monitoring of the whole school. The second-level college has a deputy dean and a teaching secretary who are specifically responsible for

teaching management. Administrative power not only determines the direction of daily administrative affairs in colleges and universities but also controls the direction of academic affairs through resource allocation and expert review. In the decision-making of teaching affairs, few grassroots professors can participate in full discussion and consultation. As the main functional department of teaching management, the Academic Affairs Office is not only responsible for the decision-making of teaching work, such as the formulation of various teaching rules and regulations, but also responsible for the implementation of various teaching tasks, and even responsible for the supervision of teaching quality. It can be said that the three powers are unified in one, and the administrative power exceeds the boundary, and the power expands. Administrators like presidents and deans now hold ‘academic authority’ across disciplines.

As a whole, the teaching management system of colleges and universities is a power structure in which administrative power dominates and academic power is dominated. At present, academic committees are generally set up in universities, but the academic committees generally do not have independent offices and personnel, and their functions are generally performed by relevant administrative departments such as the Science and Technology Department and the Academic Affairs Office. Most academic committees in colleges and universities do not directly make decisions on teaching affairs, but set up special academic institutions such as teaching steering teaching research, and so on. Academic committees and other academic institutions make decisions on teaching affairs to balance the interests of all parties, with a strong administrative hue, to a certain extent, it only reflects the symbolic significance of academic power. Academic power is the performance of duties under the control of administrative power.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Literature review

Among the research methods, literature review is one of the important contents of this study. Through the collection, collation, and analysis of relevant literature, it can provide theoretical support and empirical basis for the reform of the university teaching management system based on power balance. First of all, it is necessary to systematically sort out and synthesize the relevant literature on the theory of power balance and the reform of the university teaching management system to clarify the previous research context and results. Secondly, with the help of a literature review, the application of power balance in the field of teaching management can be deeply analyzed, and its practical effect and practical significance can be discussed. In addition, in the literature review, we should also pay attention to the research results in authoritative literature and academic journals to ensure the credibility and reliability of this research. In short, literature review is an indispensable part of the research method, which is of great significance for the depth and comprehensiveness of this study.

2.2. Case analysis

In order to deeply explore the practical effect of the reform of the university teaching management system based on power checks and balances, this paper adopts the research method of case analysis. First of all, the study take G University as the case object and conducts in-depth research and analysis on its teaching management system. By analyzing the management mode and reform measures of G University, the study can fully understand the influence of power balance on the reform of teaching management system. Secondly, by analyzing the problems and challenges in the case, it can be found out that the influence of power balance on the efficiency, fairness and transparency of teaching management. Through case analysis, we can grasp the actual effect of the reform

of university teaching management system based on power balance, and provide more practical support and reference for theoretical research.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Thinking of teaching management system reform amid modern university system reforms

Clark put forward the triangle theory of higher education system in his “Higher Education System-a Transnational Study of Academic Organizations: There is a triangular coordination model of administrative power, academic power, and market power in the higher education system, and he established a theoretical framework for analyzing the power allocation model of universities. Academic power can be divided into discipline-based power, institutional power, and system power. Among them, the power of secondary colleges is particularly important. Clark suggested that higher education administrators should pay attention to the grassroots level. Higher education management needs to understand the differences between disciplines and stimulate the enthusiasm of the grassroots level ^[7]. The teaching management system of colleges and universities mainly deals with two groups of power: administrative power and academic power, school-level power and second-level college power.

The de-administration of higher education is not only reflected in the relationship between universities and the outside, but also the internal management of universities ^[8]. University teaching management should be regarded as academic management, and a systematic teaching management system should be established, emphasizing academic value, academic freedom and the construction of academic community, so as to ensure that teaching activities can fully reflect their academic nature and promote knowledge innovation and academic development.

3.2 The reform path of the university teaching management system under the power division

Modern enterprise management theory holds that a hierarchical structure has the characteristics of multiple management levels and a small management scope, forming a pyramid shape. On the other hand, a flat structure has fewer management levels and a larger management scope. Flat management aims to improve efficiency by expanding management scope and reducing management levels ^[9]. A university is a kind of academic organization. In terms of organizational and management structure, it should pay attention to the development of a flat structure, reduce administrative levels, cut redundant personnel, and directly participate in decision-making, to make decision-making faster and more efficient, and promote the realization of a decentralized organizational structure with the management center moving down. It emphasizes system, simplification of management level, increase of management range and decentralization.

Implementing the autonomy of the college in running the school enables the university to develop a university-run university and becomes the direction of the internal management system reform of the university. Based on straightening out the relationship between responsibilities and rights of secondary management subjects, it is necessary to clarify the division of authority, and then realize the transfer of administrative management and academic management center to the college. The construction of the teaching management system should do a good job of vertical decentralization, that is, the school to the grass-roots department decentralization, to achieve the management focus down ^[11]. Through the scientific allocation of the teaching management power of the school and the college, the relationship between the school and the college is straightened out, and the enthusiasm

of the college is stimulated. The implementation of human rights and financial rights, the implementation of secondary management of the university's comprehensive budget system, an independent financial management system, manpower employment system.

Further implement the teaching and academic power of secondary colleges, and delegate academic issues such as the formulation of talent training programs, project evaluation of education and teaching topics, teacher teaching quality recognition, and degree awarding to secondary colleges for independent decision-making. After the reform, the school level is mainly responsible for formulating the overall teaching plan and development goals of the school, optimizing the allocation of educational resources, implementing inspection and supervision, performance appraisal, etc., and providing relevant service guarantees for the secondary college. While the secondary college bears clear responsibilities and obligations under the macro-control of the school, it is responsible for the school's performance, and has certain human rights and financial rights. Truly become a school running entity full of vitality. In teaching management, the academic power and administrative power should be reasonably regulated in their respective fields and scopes, so that they can establish an organic division of labor, cooperation, and restriction relationship in academic management activities. In the reform of the teaching management system, the key is to break the status quo of the three powers in the teaching administration department and build a power structure of separation and balance.

According to Montesquieu's theory of separation of powers, legislative power, executive power, and judicial power are independent of each other and check and balance each other in the political system of Western countries. The report to the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China put forward: "Establish and improve the power structure and operation mechanism in which decision-making power, executive power, and supervision power both restrict and coordinate each other." To establish a modern university system and build a scientific internal governance system, it is also necessary to change the current power structure model of the university academic administration department, which integrates decision-making, executive and supervision powers, and build a scientific power operation mechanism to achieve the basic goal of balancing the power of decision-making, executive and supervision.

3.3. Practical exploration of teaching management system reform in University G

University G is a local university with a strong industrial background. In the comprehensive reform, the school has cut down the power of the teaching management department, introduced academic management into teaching, and gradually built a teaching management system integrating "legislative power, executive power and supervision power." These three powers are implemented by the "Faculty Committee," the "Teaching Working Committee" and the "Teaching Steering Committee" respectively. Related structure responsibilities and authority are as follows:

- (1) The Faculty Committee, composed mainly of non-administrative staff, is a deliberative, decision-making and advisory body, which implements academic management and has the legislative power of undergraduate teaching. The Faculty Committee (the entrusted body of the Academic Committee) is composed of professors who have no administrative position. The power of personnel training program formulation, discipline and specialty planning, teaching achievement evaluation and appraisal, teaching level evaluation and approval are all returned to the professor committee, which avoids the possibility of teaching management leadership as the administrative power to interfere with academic power from the mechanism.
- (2) The Teaching Work Committee is mainly composed of the deputy dean of teaching, who is the teaching

management and executive body and exercises administrative power. The Academic Council mainly exercises the power of administrative execution to do a good job in teaching execution.

- (3) The Teaching Steering Committee is a supervisory body responsible for overseeing the operation and implementation of the teaching process. The three committees (**Figure 2**) have a clear division of labor, and each has its focus.

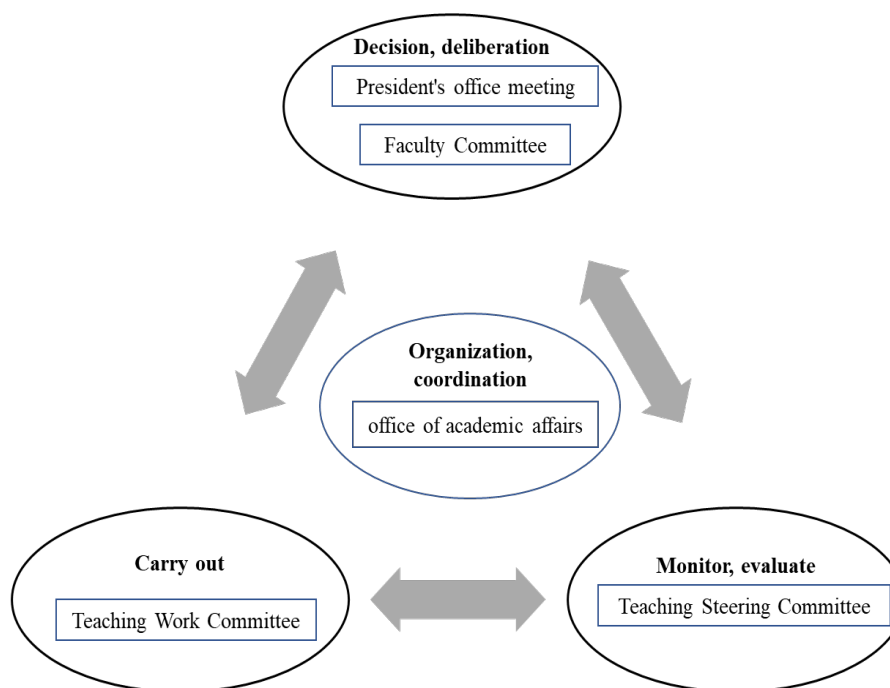


Figure 2. Structure and operation diagram of the teaching management system of University G.

The President's Office represents the highest organ of executive power, and the Undergraduate Faculty Committee represents the highest organ of academic power. In terms of objectives and tasks, we should cultivate high-quality talents around the school's talent training objectives. In terms of decision-making and deployment, the professor Committee is responsible for the decision-making and deliberation of teaching and academic affairs, the president's office decision-making, administrative affairs, administrative implementation. The Steering Committee is responsible for supervision, and the three systems are divided into their responsibilities and perform their duties. This teaching management system embodies three characteristics.

3.3.1. Academic power returns to university teaching management

The return of academic power to the committee of teaching and professors avoids the possibility of the teaching management leadership with executive power interfering with academic power from the mechanism, thus ensuring the relative independence of executive power and academic power. The Faculty Council became an academic body with decision-making power. Members are selected from the grassroots level of the college and have a deep understanding of education. The power of the school's talent training program development, discipline and specialty planning, teaching achievement evaluation and appraisal, teaching level evaluation and approval is returned to the professor committee, which avoids the possibility of the teaching management leadership as the executive power to interfere with the academic power from the mechanism, thus ensuring the

relative independence of the executive power and academic power.

3.3.2. Separation of management, operation and evaluation

In 2015, China's Ministry of Education issued Several Opinions on Further Promoting the Separation of Education Management, Office and Evaluation and Promoting the Transformation of Government Functions, requiring the establishment of a list of educational administrative powers and a list of responsibilities. Through the system design, the teaching management can return to the academic and realize the real balance of power. The Undergraduate Faculty Committee, represented by professors of various disciplines, represents academic power, exercises decision-making power, and supports the development of teaching and academic freedom. The Teaching Work Committee, organized by the Dean of Academic Affairs and the deputy deans of each school, represents the administrative power and exercises the executive power to implement the teaching systems and policies formulated by the Committee of Undergraduate Professors. The steering committee, represented by ordinary teachers, represents the supervisory power of undergraduate teaching in the university. It not only supervises the correctness and science of the decisions made by the Committee of Undergraduate teaching and professors, but also supervises the implementation of the teaching system by the Academic Affairs Office and various colleges, feedbacks teaching information, and monitors teaching quality. The school has realized the relative separation and independence of decision-making power, execution power and supervision power, ensuring scientific decision-making, smooth execution, and strong supervision.

3.3.3. Vertical decentralization, the Academic Affairs Office becomes a service institution

Through the reform, the teaching power of the secondary colleges has been strengthened, the teaching management leadership and teachers of the secondary colleges in the three major committees are the main body, the collective discussion system between the Academic Affairs Office and the secondary colleges has been established on major issues, and the school and the secondary colleges have become equal communities, jointly responsible for teaching decision-making and implementation, to mobilize the enthusiasm of the secondary colleges. After the reform of the new teaching management system, the Academic Affairs Office has become a functional department mainly responsible for the management, organization and implementation of school teaching and providing services for teachers and students. The Academic Affairs Office has transformed its management functions and made efforts to provide quality services, information management, and macro coordination of daily trivial affairs.

4. Conclusion

In the reform of the teaching management system, University G introduced academic management into teaching, promoted the scientific, democratic and legalized teaching decision-making, and gradually built and perfected a teaching management system integrating "legislative power, executive power and supervision power." The governance ideas running through it are "professor study" and "power balance and supervision," which are in line with the trend of modern university system reform and have certain reference significance for the improvement of the internal governance structure of Chinese universities.

Funding

Guangxi Education Science “14th Five-Year Plan” 2022 Special Research Project, “Exploration and Practice of New Engineering Construction in Ordinary Undergraduate Colleges and Universities in Guangxi” (Project No.: 2022ZJY2384)

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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