

OPTIMIZATION STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM OF PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

Qianqian LIU¹

¹ Department of Educational Administration, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Thailand; 904986146@qq.com

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ABSTRACT

Establishing a systematic, scientific, and sustainable teaching quality assurance system has become an urgent necessity for private universities to achieve high-quality, substantive development. Based on policy contexts and existing research, this paper integrates Total Quality Management (TQM) theory to systematically analyze challenges in the conceptual, managerial, and operational dimensions of teaching quality assurance systems in private universities. It proposes a three-dimensional optimization framework—“Quality Culture Leadership—TQM Support—Resource Empowerment”—to provide practical guidance for private institutions in reconstructing their teaching quality assurance systems and achieving high-quality, intrinsic development.

Keywords: Optimization Strategies, Teaching Quality Assurance, Private Universities

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China has actively encouraged universities to cultivate a culture of quality characterized by self-awareness, self-reflection, self-discipline, self-inspection, and self-correction. It has worked to establish a robust undergraduate education quality assurance system with Chinese characteristics and world-class standards. The Implementation Plan for Undergraduate Education Review and Evaluation in General Higher Education Institutions (2021–2025) was issued, accompanied by detailed evaluation indicators designed to motivate universities to proactively enhance the quality of their teaching and education. The “Outline of the Plan for Building an Education Powerhouse (2024–2035)” sets the goal of establishing China as an education powerhouse by 2035 and proposes the development strategy of “comprehensively building a high-quality education system.” However, many universities' internal quality assurance systems currently remain confined to teaching management and operational requirements. Standards for educational activities and quality expectations are scattered across various notices and documents, lacking a necessary, systematic internal quality assurance framework to guide them (Zhang & Wang, 2025). Therefore, there is an urgent need to explore optimization strategies for teaching quality assurance systems in private universities. This research aims to provide theoretical support and practical recommendations for educational administrators and policymakers, thereby assisting private universities in enhancing teaching quality and achieving high-quality, substantive development.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a narrative literature review approach to synthesize existing research on teaching quality assurance systems in private universities, identify core problems, and propose a theoretical optimization framework. The literature search was conducted systematically across multiple academic databases. For Chinese literature, the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) was searched using keywords such as “民办高校” (private universities), “教学质量保障体系” (teaching quality assurance system), “质量文化” (quality culture), and “全面质量管理” (total quality management), combined with terms like “问题” (problems), “策略” (strategies), and “优化” (optimization). For English literature, searches were performed in Google Scholar and the Web of Science core collection using equivalent keywords: "private universities," "teaching quality assurance," "quality culture," and "total quality management." The inclusion criteria for this review were: (a) articles published in peer-reviewed academic journals or dissertations, (b) studies directly addressing the topic of quality assurance in higher education, with a preference for those focused on private institutions, and (c) works with clearly articulated research methodologies. A total of 19 representative publications were ultimately included for in-depth analysis. The analytical process involved more than a simple summary of the literature. The selected studies were critically examined by comparing their core arguments, methodologies, and findings. This approach aimed to identify key themes, areas of consensus and debate, and critical gaps within the existing scholarship, thereby establishing a solid foundation for the subsequent discussion and framework development.

CONCEPT DEFINITION AND PREVIOUS RESEARCH

The Concept and Theoretical Foundation of the Teaching Quality Assurance System

Although there is no unified consensus in the academic community regarding the definition of a teaching quality assurance system, its core elements are becoming increasingly clear. Early research viewed it as a series of activities centered on the teaching process (Li & Song, 2004). Subsequently, scholars have placed greater emphasis on its systemic nature, full participation, and continuous improvement, viewing it as a comprehensive management system that spans the entire talent development process. This system aims to ensure and continuously enhance

teaching quality, ultimately achieving talent development objectives (Zhao, 2019; Mustafa, 2023; Li, 2024). Although perspectives vary, there is a consensus that the teaching quality assurance system constitutes a systematic set of activities encompassing the entire teaching process. This paper defines it as a quality management system established by private universities to ensure their own teaching quality, spanning the entire teaching process. At the theoretical and practical levels, Total Quality Management (TQM) has emerged as the core framework for explaining and constructing teaching quality assurance systems. TQM emphasizes a quality-centered approach, full staff participation, process management, and continuous improvement. This philosophy has proven applicable to the field of higher education and has had a positive impact on the quality of educational services and student satisfaction (Becket & Brookes, 2008; Willis & Taylor, 1999). Scholars further note that the implementation of TQM helps integrate employer and societal needs into talent development standards, thereby enhancing graduate competitiveness (Sakthivel et al., 2005), and exerts a significant positive impact on universities' research and community service (Yahiaoui et al., 2022). Within this framework, Wang (2025) proposes that, with a quality culture at its core, the transformation of the quality assurance system should be driven across four dimensions—philosophy, actors, technology, and institutions—to achieve a virtuous cycle between culture and mechanisms.

Problems with the Teaching Quality Assurance System in Private Universities

Existing research has revealed, from multiple perspectives, prominent issues in the teaching quality assurance systems of private universities at three levels: philosophy, management, and operation:

In terms of philosophy, the concept of quality culture is weak.

Quality culture is regarded as the “soul” of the system, yet quality-building efforts at many private universities remain superficial. Research generally indicates that some institutions reduce quality culture to mere slogan-based publicity, failing to deeply influence the values and behavioral patterns of faculty and students. Consequently, quality assurance mechanisms struggle to establish an effective cycle of improvement (Wang, 2025). This lack of a supportive cultural atmosphere has led to a general lack of quality awareness among the entire campus community, making it difficult to meet the demands of high-quality development in the new era (Zhang et al., 2024). This indicates that the cultivation of a quality culture is far from adequate, and consequently, its guiding role within the system cannot be effectively fulfilled.

At the management level, the institutional framework is inadequate.

The quality assurance systems of private universities exhibit significant structural deficiencies. The primary issues include: a lack of clear goal-orientation in teaching quality, inadequate organizational structures, insufficient resource support, as well as insufficient scientific rigor in monitoring and weakened feedback mechanisms (Li, 2024). Although some institutions have established quality monitoring systems, their scope, evaluation entities, and indicators are often overly narrow, reflecting the characteristics of a transitional phase from “monitoring” to “assurance” (Qi, Liu, & Liu, 2021). This reveals that current institutional designs remain largely at the “control” level rather than forming a complete closed-loop system that supports continuous improvement.

At the operational level, multiple factors constrain effectiveness.

The effectiveness of the system is severely constrained by key resources such as faculty and funding. Weak faculty resources, particularly a lack of high-level talent, represent a common bottleneck hindering the improvement of teaching quality in private universities (Sun, 2022). At the same time, insufficient total funding and a single source of funding (Zhao, 2020) limit private universities' investments in faculty training and the upgrading of teaching facilities, trapping them in a vicious cycle of resource scarcity and stunted development. These factors collectively constitute real obstacles to the effective operation of the system.

Contributions and Limitations of Existing Research

In summary, existing research clearly outlines the core issues in the teaching quality assurance systems of private universities across three dimensions—philosophy, institutional frameworks, and resources—and generally acknowledges the value of TQM theory. However, most studies tend to describe these issues in isolation or apply TQM principles directly, lacking a comprehensive optimization framework capable of organically integrating these three levels of issues and systematically addressing their intrinsic interrelationships. For example, how can an abstract quality culture guide the development of concrete management systems? How can well-designed systems effectively mobilize and utilize limited resources? How can the TQM principles of “total participation” and “continuous improvement” be implemented in the context of resource-constrained private universities? Answering these questions requires an integrated perspective that transcends single dimensions.

DISCUSSION

Based on the above analysis of the limitations of existing research, this paper argues that a scientifically sound and effective teaching quality assurance system for private universities should not be a simple aggregation of individual elements, but rather a three-dimensional, synergistic system characterized by “a quality culture as its guiding core, the theory of total quality management as its supporting framework, and adequate resource allocation as its foundation for implementation.” The proposal of this framework constitutes a systematic response to the issues identified in the literature at the conceptual, managerial, and operational levels. First, by prioritizing quality culture, we address the issue of “vague concepts.” Du (2025) emphasizes that establishing a quality assurance system requires first fostering a quality culture. This perspective highlights that culture serves as the “core” of the system’s operation. Without a shared sense of values, any institutional framework risks becoming merely a formality. Placing quality culture in a leading role aims to internalize “quality”—transforming it from an external institutional requirement for faculty and students into a shared set of values and a conscious logic of action—thereby effectively avoiding the dilemma of institutional development that “prioritizes form over substance” (Wang, 2025). This constitutes the spiritual foundation for ensuring the system’s enduring vitality. Second, drawing on TQM theory, a “closed-loop management system” should be established to address the issue of “fragmented management.” Zhang & Wang (2025) demonstrated the core value of TQM in constructing an internal quality assurance standards system for private universities. The principles emphasized by TQM—quality-centered approach, process management, full staff participation, and continuous improvement—provide a scientific methodology for building a comprehensive closed-loop management system. It requires translating the principles advocated by a quality culture into management processes, evaluation mechanisms, and feedback channels that permeate the entire talent development process (Zhang & Wang, 2025). This integrates loose, ad hoc quality initiatives into a system with clearly defined responsibilities and efficient coordination, thereby overcoming the current shortcomings of an incomplete institutional framework and limited monitoring. Finally, leveraging resource support to address the issue of “ineffective operations.” Advanced culture and sound systems ultimately require human and financial resources to take root and become effective. Faculty and funding constitute the “hardware” foundation for the system’s operation. Existing research reveals that weak faculty resources (Sun, 2022) and single-source funding (Zhao, 2020) are common shortcomings among private universities. However, resource allocation is not merely a matter of piling resources on top of one another. Research also indicates that not all investments yield equal results: developmental evaluations are more effective than punitive ones in improving teaching quality (Liu & Chen, 2024); and simply increasing teaching incentives may have limited impact (Li & Tao, 2021). Therefore, the key to empowering through resource support lies in “precision” and “activation”: It is not only

necessary to raise funds through diverse channels (such as tuition, donations, and community service), but also to establish dedicated funds and allocate them precisely to key areas such as faculty professional development and the upgrading of teaching equipment. Furthermore, by establishing an evaluation system focused on the shared needs of faculty (Liu & Chen, 2024), it is possible to foster a sense of belonging and creativity among faculty, thereby transforming resource investment into an intrinsic driving force for improving teaching quality. In summary, the three-dimensional framework proposed in this paper is not a static structure, but rather a dynamic, synergistic system: quality culture provides the value orientation and spiritual motivation for the operation of the TQM system; the TQM system provides the normative framework and implementation pathways for the practical application of quality culture; and adequate and targeted resource support provides the material foundation and human resources necessary for the sustained operation of both culture and system. These three elements are interdependent and mutually reinforcing, collectively forming a comprehensive pathway for optimizing the teaching quality assurance system in private universities.

CONCLUSION

This paper focuses on optimizing the teaching quality assurance system in private universities. By systematically reviewing policy requirements and existing research, it identifies core issues at the conceptual, managerial, and operational levels, and highlights the limitations of existing research due to a lack of an integrated perspective. To address this, the study proposes a three-dimensional optimization framework: “Quality Culture as the Guiding Principle—Total Quality Management as the Supporting Framework—Resource Assurance as the Enabling Factor.” This framework systematically addresses existing issues by emphasizing that quality culture serves as the spiritual core, Total Quality Management provides scientific methodologies, and adequate and targeted human and financial resources form the foundation for implementation. Together, these three elements constitute a cohesive, dynamically optimized pathway. This study provides a reference framework grounded in theory and oriented toward practice, aiding educational administrators in reconstructing teaching quality assurance systems and promoting high-quality, quality-driven development in private universities. Future research may further validate and refine the effectiveness of this framework across different types of private universities through case studies or empirical analysis.

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