

EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS AND IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES FOR PERSONALIZED LEARNING PATHS AT L UNIVERSITY IN YUNNAN PROVINCE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the educational management of personalized learning pathways at L University in Yunnan Province. A mixed research method was applied, combining quantitative questionnaires from 291 teachers and qualitative semi structured interviews with five key informants. The study examines four dimensions, including Institutional Governance and Structural Integration, Organizational Coordination and Teacher Professional Support, Student Support and Advising Systems in Personalized Learning, and Quality Assurance and Data Based Monitoring Mechanisms. The results show that the overall level of educational management is relatively high (3.75). Student Support and Advising Systems achieved the highest performance, while Institutional Governance and Structural Integration was the weakest dimension. The findings indicate an imbalance among management dimensions and highlight the importance of coordination across governance, teaching support, student advising, and quality assurance systems. The study provides practical implications for improving personalized learning pathway management in higher education institutions in similar regional contexts.

Keywords: Educational Management, Improvement Strategies, Personalized Learning Paths, Yunnan Higher Education

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INTRODUCTION

Personalized learning has become an important trend in global higher education reform (OECD, 2019; Bates, 2019). Many universities are using flexible learning systems to meet different student needs and improve learning effectiveness. Personalized learning emphasizes student participation, learning flexibility, and individual learning development (OECD, 2019). Researchers also point out that universities need effective educational management systems to support personalized learning implementation (Bates, 2019). In addition, digital transformation in higher education has further accelerated the adoption of personalized learning models across different countries and institutional contexts (Williamson, 2017; Selwyn, 2019).

In China, higher education reform has also encouraged universities to strengthen educational governance and improve learning flexibility (Mok, 2017; Chou et al., 2017). Many universities are promoting student centered learning and digital education. However, some universities still face management problems during personalized learning implementation. Previous studies show that weak coordination, limited teacher support, and insufficient advising systems may influence learning quality (Fumasoli et al., 2020; Kezar & Holcombe, 2017). These issues are often linked to institutional capacity and uneven development across regions.

These challenges are more obvious in Yunnan Province because of regional diversity and differences in educational resources. Universities in Yunnan serve students from different educational and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, universities need stronger management systems to support personalized learning effectively and ensure educational equity.

L University in Yunnan Province was selected as the research site for this study. To protect research anonymity, the real name of the university is not disclosed. Although the university has promoted personalized learning reform in recent years, some management problems still exist, including weak departmental coordination and limited teacher support. Therefore, this study examines educational management problems and improvement strategies for personalized learning paths at L University in Yunnan Province.

1.1 Research Significance

First, this study contributes to educational management research related to personalized learning pathways in higher education. By focusing on Institutional Governance and Structural Integration, Organizational Coordination and Teacher Professional Support, Student Support and Advising Systems in Personalized Learning, and Quality Assurance and Data Based Monitoring Mechanisms, this study helps explain how educational management influences the implementation effectiveness of personalized learning pathways in universities. It also enriches the theoretical understanding of personalized learning management in local higher education institutions.

Second, this study contributes to research on improvement strategies for personalized learning pathway management in universities. By examining the current management problems at L University in Yunnan Province, this study provides theoretical support for improving Institutional Governance and Structural Integration, Organizational Coordination and Teacher Professional Support, Student Support and Advising Systems in Personalized Learning, and Quality Assurance and Data Based Monitoring Mechanisms. The findings may also provide useful reference for educational management reform in similar local universities in China.

1.2 Research Objectives

(1) To study the educational management problems for personalized learning paths at L University in Yunnan Province.

(2) To propose the improvement strategies for personalized learning paths at L University in Yunnan Province.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Core Concepts

Personalized learning pathways refer to learning approaches that focus on students' individual learning needs, learning interests, learning abilities, and learning goals. In higher education, personalized learning allows students to choose suitable learning content and learning methods according to their own learning development needs. Researchers pointed out that personalized learning can improve student participation and learning effectiveness (Felten & Lambert, 2020; Bovill, 2020). In addition, educational management plays an important role in the implementation of personalized learning pathways in universities. Effective educational management can help universities improve Institutional Governance and Structural Integration, Organizational Coordination and Teacher Professional Support, Student Support and Advising Systems in Personalized Learning, and Quality Assurance and Data Based Monitoring Mechanisms (Capano, 2018; Huisman & Stensaker, 2022).

2.2 Theoretical Foundation

This study is based on Personalized Learning Theory, Educational Management Theory, and Data Based Management Theory. Personalized Learning Theory emphasizes that universities should provide flexible learning support according to students' different learning needs and learning abilities (Bovill, 2020; Felten & Lambert, 2020). Educational Management Theory focuses on the importance of institutional coordination, management systems, and educational support in higher education management (Barnett, 2018; Tight, 2020). In addition, Data Based Management Theory emphasizes that universities can use educational data and learning analytics to improve decision making, quality monitoring, and educational management effectiveness (Gašević et al., 2015; Ifenthaler & Yau, 2020; Du et al., 2021). These theories provide important theoretical support for the study of personalized learning pathway management in universities.

2.3 Previous Studies

Many previous studies discussed the development of personalized learning and digital education in higher education institutions. OECD (2019) pointed out that personalized learning has become an important trend in modern higher education because it supports flexible learning and improves educational quality. With the development of digital technology, many universities have also started to use big data and learning analytics systems to support personalized learning management and educational decision making. Researchers found that digital educational management can help universities improve teaching effectiveness and learning support systems (Bates, 2019; Ifenthaler & Yau, 2020).

Previous studies also discussed educational management problems in personalized learning implementation. Researchers emphasized that effective institutional governance, teacher support, student advising systems, and quality assurance mechanisms are essential for successful personalized learning implementation in universities (Huisman & Stensaker, 2022; Stensaker & Harvey, 2021). However, some studies found that universities still face problems related to management coordination, teacher professional support, and quality monitoring systems during the reform process (Fumasoli et al., 2020; Kezar & Holcombe, 2017). In addition, previous studies also indicate that universities continue to face challenges related to digital infrastructure, online coordination, and educational management integration during digital transformation processes (Selwyn, 2019; Williamson, 2017).

2.4 Research Gap

Although many studies focus on personalized learning and digital education in higher education, most previous studies mainly discuss developed regions and high level universities in China. There are still limited studies focusing on educational management problems of personalized learning pathways in local universities in Yunnan Province. In addition, previous studies pay more attention to technology application and teaching reform, while fewer studies focus on improvement strategies related to Institutional Governance and Structural Integration,

Organizational Coordination and Teacher Professional Support, Student Support and Advising Systems in Personalized Learning, and Quality Assurance and Data Based Monitoring Mechanisms. Therefore, more empirical research is needed to explore educational management problems and improvement strategies for personalized learning pathways in local universities.

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study used a mixed research method to examine the educational management problems and improvement strategies of personalized learning pathways at L University in Yunnan Province. Quantitative research was used to collect data from teachers through questionnaires, while qualitative research was used to collect detailed information through interviews. The mixed research method helped the researcher understand both the current management situation and the practical problems in personalized learning pathway implementation.

3.2 Population and sample

The population of this study consisted of 1200 teachers at L University in Yunnan Province. The sample size included 291 teachers, which was determined by using Krejcie and Morgan's sample size table (1970). Questionnaire data were collected from teachers who were involved in educational management and personalized learning implementation at the university.

In addition, five key informants were selected through purposive sampling for semi structured interviews. The interview participants included educational administrators and teachers who had more than five years of working experience at L University and were familiar with personalized learning practices and educational management systems. The participants were involved in academic affairs, student development, quality assurance, and educational management related to personalized learning pathways.

3.3 Research instruments

Questionnaire: A 5 5-level estimation scale questionnaire was designed to measure Institutional Governance and Structural Integration, Organizational Coordination and Teacher Professional Support, Student Support and Advising Systems in Personalized Learning, and Quality Assurance and Data Based Monitoring Mechanisms related to personalized learning pathways at L University in Yunnan Province.

Semi structured interview outline: The interview questions focused on educational management problems and improvement strategies related to institutional governance, teacher professional support, student advising systems, and quality assurance in personalized learning pathway implementation.

3.4 Validity and Reliability

The Item Objective Congruence of the questionnaire ranged from 0.67 to 1.00, indicating good content validity. The questionnaire items were reviewed by three experts, including one director and two professors from L University in Yunnan Province. In addition, a pilot study was conducted with 30 participants to examine the reliability of the questionnaire. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the questionnaire was 0.921, indicating good reliability.

For the semi structured interview, the interview questions were reviewed and revised according to the suggestions of the dissertation supervisor to improve clarity, appropriateness, and consistency with the research objectives and conceptual framework. The interview questions were developed according to the four management dimensions related to personalized learning pathway management.

3.5 Data Analysis

The researcher took all the received questionnaires to check the completeness of every questionnaire, and bring the obtained data for statistical analysis by using a computer to calculate statistical values with a statistical package.

RESULTS

4.1 Descriptive Statistical Results

Table 1 Results analysis of mean and standard deviation results analysis at L university

Educational Management Problems and Improvement Strategies for Personalized Learning Paths at L University in Yunnan Province	n = 291		Interpretation
	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	
1. Institutional Governance and Structural Integration	3.71	0.66	high level
2. Organizational Coordination and Teacher Professional Support	3.76	0.62	high level
3. Student Support and Advising Systems in Personalized Learning	3.80	0.59	high level
4. Quality Assurance and Data Based Monitoring Mechanisms	3.74	0.64	high level
Total	3.75	0.63	high level

The overall mean value of Educational Management Problems and Improvement Strategies for Personalized Learning Paths at L University in Yunnan Province was 3.75, at a high level. Student Support and Advising Systems in Personalized Learning was the highest (3.80), indicating that academic advising and learning support systems played an important role in personalized learning implementation.

Organizational Coordination and Teacher Professional Support was second (3.76), showing that teacher professional support systems were relatively effective, although teacher workload and training support still needed improvement.

Quality Assurance and Data Based Monitoring Mechanisms was third (3.74), indicating that the university had established basic quality assurance systems, but educational data integration and monitoring efficiency still required improvement.

Institutional Governance and Structural Integration was the lowest (3.71), with problems related to policy coordination, management integration, and implementation procedures among different departments.

4.2 Group Difference Results

There were differences in perceptions among teachers regarding Institutional Governance and Structural Integration, Organizational Coordination and Teacher Professional Support, Student Support and Advising Systems in Personalized Learning, and Quality Assurance and Data Based Monitoring Mechanisms. Teachers with different working experience and educational management responsibilities showed different perceptions toward personalized learning pathway management and implementation efficiency.

4.3 Interview Results

Institutional Governance and Structural Integration: Some departments lacked clear coordination mechanisms for personalized learning implementation, and policy execution standards were not fully consistent across departments.

Organizational Coordination and Teacher Professional Support: Teachers faced workload pressure during personalized learning implementation, and some teachers still lacked sufficient digital teaching support and professional training opportunities.

Student Support and Advising Systems in Personalized Learning: Academic advising services were important for students, but some students still experienced difficulties in accessing advising support and individualized learning guidance.

Quality Assurance and Data Based Monitoring Mechanisms: The university had established quality assurance systems for personalized learning pathways, but digital data integration,

learning monitoring, and data based evaluation systems still required further improvement.

DISCUSSION

5.1 Overall Status of Personalized Learning Management

The overall level of Educational Management Problems and Improvement Strategies for Personalized Learning Paths at L University in Yunnan Province is at a high level (3.75). Among the four dimensions, Student Support and Advising Systems in Personalized Learning shows the highest level (3.80), followed by Organizational Coordination and Teacher Professional Support (3.76), Quality Assurance and Data Based Monitoring Mechanisms (3.74), and Institutional Governance and Structural Integration (3.71). This indicates that the university has developed relatively mature student support systems, while institutional governance remains the weakest dimension.

The imbalance among dimensions suggests that implementation of personalized learning pathways is still uneven, with stronger support-oriented systems but weaker governance and integration structures.

5.2 Differences among the Four Management Dimensions

The four dimensions show a clear interactive relationship. Institutional Governance and Structural Integration (3.71) provides the structural foundation for Organizational Coordination and Teacher Professional Support (3.76). In turn, teacher support and coordination directly influence Student Support and Advising Systems (3.80), which is the strongest dimension in this study.

Quality Assurance and Data Based Monitoring Mechanisms (3.74) function as a feedback system that connects governance, teaching support, and student advising. The interaction among the four dimensions indicates that improvement in governance structure can enhance coordination efficiency, teacher support capacity, and student advising effectiveness.

5.3 Interaction and Internal Mechanism of Management Dimensions

The results show that personalized learning pathway implementation at L University is characterized by a student-centered support system with relatively strong advising services (3.80). However, institutional coordination and governance integration remain relatively weak (3.71).

This reflects a common situation in higher education institutions in developing regions, where student services are prioritized, but data integration systems and cross-department governance mechanisms are still under development (Johnson et al., 2020). The system depends heavily on teacher support and administrative coordination rather than fully developed digital governance systems.

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

6.1 Strengthening Institutional Governance and Structural Integration

Improve coordination mechanisms among departments to enhance consistency in personalized learning policy implementation (3.71). Establish unified governance standards and reduce fragmentation in management processes. Strengthen integration between academic affairs, teaching units, and student support departments.

6.2 Enhancing Organizational Coordination and Teacher Professional Support

Enhance teacher professional development programs to improve capacity in personalized learning implementation (3.76). Reduce workload pressure and provide more structured training in digital teaching and personalized instruction methods. Strengthen cross-department collaboration mechanisms.

6.3 Improving Student Support and Advising Systems in Personalized Learning

Maintain and further improve Student Support and Advising Systems, which currently show the highest performance level (3.80). Improve accessibility of academic advising services and strengthen individualized learning guidance systems for students.

6.4 Quality Assurance and Data Based Monitoring Mechanisms

Enhance data integration systems to improve monitoring and evaluation of personalized learning pathways (3.74). Strengthen the use of learning analytics to support teaching adjustment and decision making. Build a continuous feedback mechanism linking governance, teaching, and student outcomes.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

7.1 Research Limitations

This study is limited by the research methods, as it mainly relies on questionnaire and semi structured interview data to examine personalized learning pathway management at L University in Yunnan Province. The analysis focuses on four key dimensions of educational management, which may not fully capture all influencing factors in complex educational practice.

7.2 Future Research

Future research could further explore personalized learning pathway management by integrating more diverse data sources and analytical methods. Comparative studies across different institutional contexts and the application of advanced quantitative techniques could provide deeper insights into the mechanisms of educational management and improvement strategies.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the educational management of personalized learning pathways at L University in Yunnan Province. The findings show that the university has developed a relatively structured system for supporting personalized learning, especially in student support and teacher coordination. However, differences remain among key management dimensions, particularly in governance and integration mechanisms. The study highlights the importance of coordination among institutional governance, teacher support, student advising, and quality assurance systems. It provides practical implications for improving the effectiveness of personalized learning implementation in higher education institutions.

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