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Research and Practice on Optimization Paths of Academic Administration

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Abstract

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Keywords

Academic Administration; Optimization; Academic administrators.

1. Introduction

With the rapid development of China's economy and society, higher education has entered a period of vigorous growth. Universities are continuously exploring new paths for educational reform and development. Leveraging the trend of digitalization, various aspects of school management are gradually entering the digital era. Academic administration lies at the core of university management, and institutions are actively promoting scientific and standardized management models. As the strategies of revitalizing the nation through science and education and strengthening the country with talents deepen, the number of university enrollments has increased rapidly, and the scale of operations has expanded swiftly. The reform of the educational system is comprehensively shifting towards quality-oriented education, necessitating further optimization of academic administration.

Foreign scholars' research on academic administration in universities can be categorized into theoretical and practical dimensions. At the theoretical level, there is relatively little literature specifically addressing the theoretical study of academic administration processes in universities, while there is more literature at the practical level. Foreign academic administration emphasizes a "people-oriented" approach, stressing the service attribute. Pogodzinski, Ben (2016) [1]studied humanistic management in higher education from a human resources perspective, arguing that the core of higher education lies in service and that it is necessary to enhance student satisfaction and the institution's image by improving the service system. Robert B. Denhardt and Janet V. Denhardt (2000) [2]elaborated on the basic theoretical connotations of the new public service through seven principles. These principles were applied to optimize the academic administration processes of the studied universities, promoting a shift towards a service-oriented approach in internal public management. Foreign academic administration focuses on safeguarding individual rights and upholding the public interest. O Mizel (2018)[3] discussed the importance of the public interest in university management and how to protect the individual rights of students and teachers within the framework of new public management. FE Ashu (2018)[4] explored the importance of universities, as public

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institutions, in safeguarding the public interest and individual rights, and how university decision-makers need to balance these two aspects. Foreign academic administration emphasizes improving the quality of management personnel and fulfilling public management responsibilities. Valentine Owan (2018) [5]discussed how to enhance the capabilities and qualities of management personnel in modern university environments and the importance of emphasizing public management responsibilities. EE Iroegbu (2018) [6]suggested that federal and state governments should ensure adequate funding allocation for the education sector, as this would enable higher education institutions to provide students with most, if not all, essential services. Foreign academic administration promotes collaboration and enhances communication. MA Naser (2024) [7]explored the role of trust and collaboration in higher education management. Through case studies of two Canadian universities, the author found that trust and collaboration are crucial for effective higher education management, proposing solutions such as strengthening teamwork and communication, building trust relationships, creating a positive work environment, and empowering staff with authority and autonomy. Foreign academic administration also focuses on IT construction. F Caraffini (2024) [8]noted that student absenteeism remains a significant issue for schools globally and proposed a novel method to help schools improve attendance rates.

There is a substantial body of literature in China focusing on academic administration in universities, with a significant number of studies conducted specifically on local and private institutions. The primary aim of this research is to enhance the quality of public management and the level of public service within universities.

Domestic academic administration emphasizes a "people-oriented" approach and stresses the service attribute. Zhou Hongwei (2020) [9]from Huaqiao University presented a representative viewpoint, suggesting that by referencing the government's service-oriented management model and starting from the intrinsic requirements of humanistic management in the new public service concept, the focus should shift to service rather than control, valuing people and stimulating the initiative and proactiveness of administrative staff. Jiang Zhidong (2022) [10]from Yanbian Education College pointed out that academic administration serves as the "engine" of university education and teaching. Its essence lies in providing services for the university's educational activities, acting as a crucial bridge connecting leaders of various functional departments, teachers, and students. Since the subjects of academic administration are people, and the objects also primarily revolve around people, both the administrative staff and the university itself must highly prioritize the concept of humanistic management, ensuring the full protection of individual rights and public interests within management practices. Wu Yue (2021)[11] from Harbin Institute of Technology proposed that public management is a management philosophy and model formed to address issues and shortcomings in public sectors (e.g., government, non-profit organizations). It utilizes public power to maximize public interest or promote the stable development of public affairs. Introducing this concept into university management is crucial for enhancing its standard and quality.

Liu Mingming (2022) [12]from Heilongjiang University of Science and Technology believes that university management needs innovative ideas, and it is necessary to optimize management strategies and improve handling processes. Academic administration must serve the public interest, safeguard the legitimate rights of teachers and students, and respect the collective public interest. Domestic academic administration also focuses on improving the quality of management personnel and fulfilling public management responsibilities. Rao Peng (2021) [13]suggested that university administrators should fully consider the impact of the New Public Service theory on the construction of the university talent team. From a holistic service perspective, they need to balance internal demands for interests, skills, and experience, ensuring the smooth progression of transforming management processes towards a service orientation through talent team development. Zhao Fangyuan (2022) [14]from Fujian Open

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University proposed that academic administration, being the core of teaching management, requires administrators in the new era to comprehensively enhance their professional competence across multiple dimensions， which specifically include： strengthening ideological and political awareness, improving transactional processing capabilities, enhancing professional identity, and increasing IT application skills. Furthermore, domestic academic administration emphasizes collaboration and enhancing communication between departments. Dong Huanhuan (2022)[15] from Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics, through research, pointed out that academic positions play a vital coordinating role in fulfilling the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education and constructing a comprehensive, all-staff, whole-process educational system. Therefore, these positions should fully leverage their advantages, subtly influencing and shaping students' worldviews, outlooks on life, and values through high-quality service leadership and personal example, while collaborating with traditional ideological and political departments to create a new, integrated pattern of ideological and political education. Nie Yanghao (2023) [16]found that when facing complex collaborative processes, direct point-to-point communication is often difficult to achieve in academic administration. A lack of collaboration between different functional departments can lead to decreased quality of academic information exchange, thereby reducing the accuracy of data processing. Regarding IT construction in domestic academic administration, Wang Yuzhen (2020) [17]et al. from Jilin Agricultural University believe that accelerating the construction of university information management, and improving related systems, can effectively ensure the accuracy of system data and increase the success rate of process optimization. This is conducive to solving a series of problems arising from the expanding scale of universities and their increasingly complex public management.

2. Organization of the TextBasic Overview of Academic Service Management

To better understand the current state of academic service management, a targeted survey was conducted among academic administration staff and teaching faculty. 104 questionnaires were distributed, with full-time teachers comprising 92.31% of the respondents. The survey revealed that 67.31% of teachers use academic management services multiple times per week. Furthermore, 76.92% of teachers believe the academic management department designs service processes centered on the needs of students and teachers; 86.53% of teachers feel academic management services emphasize fairness and transparency; 84.61% of teachers are highly satisfied overall with the service philosophy of academic management; 88.47% of teachers agree that academic staff proactively respond to the needs of teachers; 86.54% of teachers are highly satisfied with the resolution efficiency of academic staff when encountering problems; 86.54% of teachers are highly satisfied with the service attitude of academic staff; 84.62% of teachers rate the professional competence of academic staff (e.g., system operation, policy interpretation) as good; 50% of teachers believe the academic team organizes regular training to improve service levels, 84.62% of teachers are satisfied with the overall quality of the academic team; 69.23% of teachers feel the stability of the academic management system (e.g., course selection, grade inquiry platforms) is good; and 78.84% of teachers are satisfied with the academic management equipment and technology.

3. Analysis of Problems in Academic Service Management

Through statistical analysis of the 104 questionnaires and feedback from student forums over the past three years, prominent issues in current academic service management have been identified in the following areas.

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3.1. Inadequate Information System Support and Technical Maintenance Deficiencies

Survey data indicates that 42.31% of teachers report frequent academic affairs system lag, crashes, or even breakdowns during peak usage periods. Particularly during course selection periods each semester, 34.62% of students have experienced system inaccessibility. These issues expose the following weaknesses: outdated system architecture struggling to handle concurrent access during peaks, lacking effective load balancing; insufficient database performance causing slow responses for operations like grade entry and data queries; maintenance lacks early warning mechanisms, often passively repairs problems after they occur. Additionally, poor mobile adaptation and unfriendly interface interactions significantly impact the user experience. Notably, 67.31% of teachers identified insufficient technical investment and maintenance as the most critical factor affecting service quality.

3.2. Unsound Cross-Departmental Coordination Mechanisms and Process Bottlenecks

38.46% of teachers pointed out that business processes involving multiple departments often suffer from buck-passing. Specific manifestations include: course scheduling requires repeated coordination between the academic department and various colleges, with a scheduling conflict rate of 21.15%; textbook selection and distribution involve multiple parties (Academic Affairs Office, colleges, bookstores), where poor coordination led to 7.69% of students reporting chaotic textbook distribution; practical teaching management requires coordination among academics, equipment, finance, etc., often delayed due to unclear responsibilities. The root causes lie in the lack of a unified business collaboration platform and insufficient information sharing between departments; low standardization of cross-departmental business processes, lacking clear division of responsibilities and timeline requirements; absence of effective joint meeting systems and collaborative supervision mechanisms.

3.3. Ineffective Policy Communication and Low Information Transmission Efficiency

32.69% of teachers believe policy communication suffers from "top-level enthusiasm but grassroots indifference," where important policies are only communicated within management levels and fail to reach teachers and students effectively. Student surveys show 32.69% are unclear about make-up exam and retake procedures. Specific problems include: dispersed policy release channels (websites, official accounts, notice boards coexist but lack integration), leading to unsynchronized information release; interpretation materials are overly technical, using extensive jargon lacking user-friendly visual explanations; insufficient consultation before important policy changes, and inadequate training/guidance post-implementation; lack of dedicated channels and responsible persons for policy inquiries, resulting in untimely and inaccurate responses to questions from teachers and students.

3.4. Unscientific Service Process Design, Needing Efficiency Improvement

26.92% of teachers reported that some business processes are complex and lengthy. For example, a routine teaching adjustment requires multiple steps: system application, paper-based approval, filing, etc. 9.62% of students mentioned delays in grade inquiries. In-depth analysis reveals issues including: process design not based on the user's perspective, involving repetitive form filling and multiple trips; parallel electronic and paper-based processes, requiring offline signatures even after online submission, adding unnecessary steps; lack of clear processing time commitments and progress tracking mechanisms, leaving applicants unaware of the status; imperfect exception handling mechanisms, lacking contingency plans for special situations.

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4. Research on Optimization Paths for Academic Administration

Based on the principle of problem-oriented approach, the following optimization paths are proposed to address the aforementioned prominent issues:

4.1. Strengthen Technical Support and Build a High-Availability Academic Platform

Increase hardware investment and software iteration frequency. Establish a real-time system health monitoring mechanism and conduct specialized optimization for high-concurrency modules such as course selection and grade inquiries. Implement regular stress testing and vulnerability repair mechanisms, organizing system stress tests before each semester begins and establishing rapid emergency response procedures. Introduce intelligent technical support, develop mobile service applications, and implement automatic reminders for important matters to significantly improve the user operation experience. Establish a technical operation and maintenance quality evaluation system, incorporating metrics like system stability and response speed into the performance assessment of the maintenance team.

4.2. Reengineer Service Processes and Establish Collaborative Operational Mechanisms

Conduct a comprehensive review and reengineering of business processes, eliminating unnecessary steps. Clearly define cross-departmental business contacts and responsibility lists, and establish a regular joint meeting system to break down departmental information silos. Improve matter tracking and supervision mechanisms, implementing a "First-Inquiry Responsibility System" to ensure that cross-departmental matters are "cleared case-by-case within a time limit." Establish a continuous process optimization mechanism, regularly collecting feedback from teachers and students to promptly adjust and optimize business processes.

4.3. Improve the Training System and Enhance Staff Service Capabilities

Construct a tiered and categorized training system for academic staff, focusing on strengthening training in system operation, policy interpretation, and communication etiquette. Establish a service standard assessment mechanism, incorporating service response speed and satisfaction rates of teachers and students into the performance evaluation index system. Implement a "Service Model" selection system， establish a positive incentive mechanism, and enhance the enthusiasm of staff in providing services.Conduct regular assessments of professional competence and implement a certificate-based employment system ensure that staff meet the required professional standards.

4.4. Innovate Publicity Mechanisms and Strengthen Policy Conveyance Effectiveness

Compile illustrated academic service guides and lists of frequently asked questions (FAQs), and disseminate them precisely through multiple channels such as official websites, official accounts, and class meetings. Before and after the release of important policies or system upgrades, conduct thematic briefing sessions or live operation training to ensure effective information delivery. Establish a dedicated "Academic Information Release Officer" position to unify the messaging platform, ensuring information is released timely, accurately, and understandably. Establish a policy interpretation feedback mechanism to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of policy publicity and continuously improve dissemination methods.

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5. Conclusion

The optimization of academic administration is a systematic project that requires coordinated efforts and multiple measures. Its core approach lies in: establishing a stable and efficient platform as the foundation by strengthening technological support; breaking down barriers to achieve business collaboration through service process restructuring; enhancing the professional service capabilities of personnel by improving the training system; and ensuring effective policy communication through innovative publicity mechanisms. Only through the deep integration and continuous improvement of technology, processes, personnel, and publicity across these four dimensions can the operational efficiency and service quality of academic administration be fundamentally enhanced, ultimately building a modern academic governance system centered on faculty and students, with rapid responsiveness and smooth operations.

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