

Analysis of the Current Status and Enhancement Strategies for University Party Committee Supervision and Administration Work in the New Era

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Abstract: This research delves into the current circumstances and challenges faced by supervision and administration work in Chinese universities. It begins by identifying key issues such as the insufficient independence in the organization of supervision bodies, unclear division of personnel roles, and inadequate use of digital tools. Further analysis uncovers the fundamental causes behind the ineffectiveness of supervision work, notably the mismatch between supervision models and university characteristics, the so-called "Supervision Paradox" (the negative correlation between supervision frequency and governance effectiveness), and a shortfall in digital tools application. To tackle these challenges, the paper proposes effective strategies, including balancing the academic and administrative elements of the supervision system, utilizing various approaches to alleviate workload and boost efficiency, and advancing the digital transformation of supervision activities, all aimed at enhancing the modernization of university governance systems and capabilities.

Keywords: Chinese university; Supervision and administration; Supervision Paradox; Governance system upgrade.

1. Introduction

Supervision and implementation are key components of the Party's work. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, President Xi Jinping has repeatedly highlighted the significance of supervision, emphasizing the need for action rather than just planning [1]; without supervision, implementation is unattainable. He has called for increased resolve and vigor in intensifying the supervisory and inspection processes to achieve comprehensive execution within the Party [2]. The report from the 20th National Congress underscores the imperative to maintain and strengthen the Party's comprehensive leadership, ensuring its implementation across all realms and facets of the Party and state affairs. Amid the ongoing efforts to elevate the Party's leadership in universities, implement its educational directives, and achieve the essential task of fostering moral and talented individuals, the significance of supervision and management in universities becomes increasingly pronounced. However, in practical terms, due to the unique nature of university management compared to standard local government administration, the task of supervision and management in universities is more prone to deviating from its initial goals, due to the phenomenon known as "the paradox of supervision." [3].

2. The Current Status of University Supervision and Administration

University supervision and management are vital in driving the implementation of administrative decisions and strategies determined by university Party committees. These processes are crucial for ensuring effective policy implementation and boosting administrative efficiency, fostering comprehensive legal governance in universities, and promoting the modernization of the university governance system and its

capabilities [4].

According to a study by Han Mingkun of the Party and Government Office at Hefei University of Technology, based on a survey of 82 Chinese universities [5], 90% of these institutions have formulated methods for school supervision and management. Over 80% have established supervision departments, but less than 15% have set up independent supervision and management bodies. In terms of supervisory staff allocation and division of labor, 83% of the universities have staff dedicated to supervision, but a small fraction are solely focused on this task, with the majority juggling multiple roles. Regarding governance tools, the majority of universities rely on office automation systems for their supervision tasks, with only 30% developing specialized supervision and management information systems, and a smaller proportion having a complete digital supervision system in place. In terms of internal satisfaction with their own supervision work, 30% are very satisfied, 50% satisfied, 20% fairly satisfied, and 10% dissatisfied.

3. Main Reasons for Dysfunction

3.1. Mismatch of Supervision Model

The university supervision system should be grounded in the specific developmental characteristics of each institution, balancing academic and administrative elements. Presently, most university supervision models are adapted from government supervisory systems. [6] Both government and university structures are characterized by bureaucratic management, but universities have more pronounced academic and professional features. The bureaucratic model of sequential transmission and chain-like hierarchical structure fails to align with the practical needs of universities. A key consideration for university Party committees is how to balance academic and administrative aspects in supervision tasks that require specialized expertise and technical skills.

Compared to the administrative focus of university bodies, secondary colleges emphasize more on talent cultivation, discipline construction, and teaching research. University education quality evaluations highlight a multidimensional quality perspective that integrates academic achievement, academic training, and career development orientations. Some universities still rely on simple administrative orders or unidirectional power relations, lacking an appropriate understanding of the professional and academic nature of supervision. Ignoring the flexibility required by the academic nature in university supervision and adhering only to rigid, non-specialized rules can undermine the positive aspects of supervision and lead to issues like excessive supervision and lack of focus. As a link between policy decisions and implementation, if supervision cannot ensure effectiveness and objectivity, its advantage in governance within the policy hierarchy will transform into a force that distorts the interactions among different levels[5-7].

3.2. The Supervision Paradox

University supervision and management systems should not just inspect work results or evaluate performance but should identify the nature of the tasks and refine the work plans, forming a systematic, structured, yet "flexible" organizational and working mechanism. Supervision inherently involves administrative costs, such as the depletion of resources and the frequent interruption of lower-level units by higher authorities. The "Supervision Paradox" suggests that an increase in the frequency of supervision leads to numerous negative governance effects, with stronger supervision frequency resulting in greater tension between policy and its execution. This tension contributes to issues like widespread accountability, formalism, and conflicts between officials and the public. Research shows that despite most universities having a relatively complete supervision and management methodology with defined principles and processes, supervision work still faces significant issues of formalism, superficiality, proceduralism, uniformity of methods, and one-sided feedback. The cumulative top-down approach in supervision imposes a considerable burden on the grassroots, resulting in a dysfunctional supervision mechanism. In the face of intense accountability pressures, universities, as the primary front for talent cultivation, often opt for more rigid supervision rules, incurring substantial costs to minimize deviations in target implementation. Policy implementation is inherently a process of dynamic adjustment, particularly for academic supervision tasks in universities, which constantly change due to both internal and external factors. The inflexible, one-size-fits-all approach in supervision fails to meet the evolving needs of university development. A dysfunctional supervision system in universities cannot accommodate the objective laws and vast information of policy decision-making and execution, failing to identify major issues closely related to university development. Furthermore, some universities still experience a phenomenon of "oversupervision," where routine checks and research activities are all labeled as supervision, leading to a substantial increase in supervision frequency. Overlooking the substantive core of supervision tasks and relying solely on increasing the frequency of supervision further burdens the grassroots, leading to the "Supervision Paradox." [3,7].

3.3. Insufficient Application of Digital Tools

In the context of the transition from "Internet Plus" to digitalization, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council have advocated for the development of high-quality education with distinct Chinese characteristics and a world-class level, aiming to innovate the pattern of educational openness and enhance the cultivation of top-tier talents and their innovative capacities. In universities, supervision primarily focuses on monitoring the implementation of various internal policies. It necessitates both vertical integration across various levels and horizontal cooperation among different departments. However, research indicates that most universities face challenges such as unclear boundaries, poor communication, and difficulties in coordination with other functional departments in handling comprehensive tasks. Under traditional supervision models, the limited channels for information acquisition and transmission exacerbate information distortion and blockages. This results in supervisory institutions struggling with increasingly complex tasks, leading to fragmented and duplicated information. On one hand, many universities rely solely on report submissions for supervision assessments, employing a singular approach and underutilizing information technology tools. This lack of digital tools leads to information loss in the process of reporting and implementation, increasing verification costs and ultimately raising supervision costs while reducing efficiency. On the other hand, some universities have started replacing traditional supervision methods with IT development. However, most lack a coordinated approach in their IT construction, leading to issues such as "information silos" and "digital divides," which in turn weaken the authority and effectiveness of supervision to some extent[7,8].

4. Strategies for Enhancement

4.1. Balancing the Duality of the Supervision System

Supervision is essential in bridging policy decision-making and implementation, effectively serving as an integral part of the decision-making process. University supervision systems must balance the dual aspects of academia and administration, and should not simply mimic government models. Instead, they should develop strategies tailored to each university's unique characteristics and development plans. Firstly, establishing a well-defined supervision work system is vital to ensure efficient execution of tasks, achieving legal compliance and institutionalization. It is advisable for universities to create guiding supervision principles at the university level, while secondary units, upon clarifying their role and position, should develop supervision systems tailored to their specific needs. These units should establish rules that are both targeted and operational, fulfilling the requirements of higher authorities while maintaining a certain level of flexibility. Given the specialized nature of universities, their supervision systems should embody a combination of rigidity and flexibility, principles and adaptability. For instance, secondary colleges focusing on talent cultivation, discipline construction, and teaching research should achieve effective supervision through both internal self-regulation and external enforcement. Secondly, the establishment of dedicated supervision institutions and personnel is crucial. Current supervision models include embedded, stationed, mobile, and conventional styles. It is

recommended that universities primarily adopt an embedded model at the university level, where secondary units appoint supervision commissioners to optimize the supervision approach [9]. Embedded supervision concentrates on leading and coordinating critical objectives, ensuring the overall direction and organization of internal supervision tasks with a stable structure. Commissioners from secondary units are responsible for supervising specific tasks within their units, emphasizing professional expertise and local advantages, which helps eliminate information asymmetry and enables professionals to conduct regular, informed supervision.

4.2. Implementing Multiple Approaches

The "Supervision Paradox" in universities refers to the conflict between the frequency of supervision and its associated costs. Therefore, a new supervision system should take into account objective laws, respect the diversity and flexibility of policies, systematically identify and substantively assess supervision items, focus on the core issues, and categorize approaches accordingly. Reducing burden and increasing efficiency demand multiple strategies: firstly, minimize superfluous supervision tasks and concentrate on pivotal issues vital to university development. This approach will focus the efforts of supervision personnel on the main direction, alleviate the workload on secondary units, and ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of supervision. Secondly, improve the operational capability and professional expertise of the supervision staff. The execution strength of the supervision team directly affects the outcome of supervision and indirectly impacts policy implementation. The dual nature of university supervision requires staff to not only possess management skills but also professional expertise to enhance the precision of supervision and their ability to comprehend policy decision-making and execution patterns[9,10]. The emphasis of supervision should be on encouragement, with the key focus on inspection, necessitating deep involvement in frontline issues, addressing crucial matters for future university development, responding to concerns of teachers and students, and facilitating policy implementation. Supervision items of varying value should be matched with appropriate intensity and frequency, establishing a smooth supervision process to resolve the "Supervision Paradox." Finally, strengthening the diversity of the supervision system is crucial. Currently, multi-departmental joint meetings coordinating major issues exemplify diversified supervision. The nature of university management is suitable for shifting from a hierarchical structure to cooperative participation by various entities. The university's Party and government office could lead joint supervision groups, forming a consistent and stable supervision system through vertical and horizontal collaboration, facilitating information sharing, dynamic policy adjustment, and addressing the deeper aspects of supervision [11].

4.3. Empowering Digital Transformation

Utilizing information technology to address the concerns of teachers and students, universities can achieve more precise and timely policy feedback and adjustments, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of supervision. The national "Internet+ Supervision" platform launched by the State Council's Office showcases a mechanism where execution and supervision are conducted in parallel, placing equal emphasis on incentives and accountability, and integrating

technology with institutional frameworks. Currently, many universities have begun the initial stages of digital supervision but still have a significant gap in achieving a comprehensive intelligent transformation[8,12]. Most universities have integrated supervision tasks into their OA systems, relying on online circulation methods, resulting in limited channels and a lack of transparency. Building a digital supervision system requires a clear top-level design, ensuring that its intelligent operations align with the professional needs and talent cultivation goals of universities. By drawing on the advanced intelligent governance experiences of other universities and government departments, and leveraging the advantages of "Internet+", an effective closed-loop pathway for supervision can be established. The digital supervision platform should encompass modules for supervision initiation, item inquiry, responsible units, information submission, and time limits for handling, forming a fully transparent process from initiation to completion. This facilitates real-time sharing of supervision information on the digital platform, addressing the issue of overlapping supervision content. All departments and entities involved should be able to access relevant information at any time and dynamically adjust supervision items, reducing "information silos" and "digital divides," and achieving dynamic tracking and professional discernment throughout the entire supervision process[13]. Additionally, supervision should enhance preventive controls, initiating intervention from the stage of task decomposition following decision-making. Starting with objective management, task tracking, and the implementation of responsibilities, supervision should utilize technological means to reduce execution errors as much as possible. In the process of digital transformation, university supervision should address various elements such as objectives, conditions, and strategies, ensuring vertical and horizontal integration, as well as internal and external coordination. This approach aims to transform supervision from a frequent and time-consuming process to a continuous and dynamic one.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, to effectively enhance the efficiency of supervision and administration work in universities, the paper emphasizes the importance of understanding the unique characteristics of universities and building a more flexible and efficient supervision mechanism. This involves adjusting and optimizing supervision models to accommodate the dual nature of universities, employing diversified methods to alleviate the workload at the grassroots level and improve supervision efficiency, and strengthening the use of digital tools to modernize and refine supervision work. The implementation of these measures will help address the existing challenges and improve the overall quality and efficiency of supervision work in universities, thereby advancing the modernization of university governance systems and capabilities and supporting the long-term development of higher education institutions.

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