

Evaluation of undergraduate majors in colleges and universities: problems, causes and countermeasures

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Abstract: Evaluation of undergraduate majors refers to the process of analyzing and judging undergraduate major education by using a certain index system. At present, the evaluation of undergraduate majors in colleges and universities mainly has problems such as formalism, backward management, and low social participation. The reasons for these problems include emphasizing the whole and neglecting the part, emphasizing evaluation and neglecting governance, and the evaluation system lacks corresponding legal basis. It is necessary to promote the healthy development of undergraduate professional evaluation in colleges and universities by transforming government functions, improving laws and regulations, and strengthening team building.

Key words: Evaluation of undergraduate majors; problems; countermeasures.

Evaluation of undergraduate majors, also known as assessment of undergraduate majors, is "the process of making value judgments on majors through qualitative and quantitative analysis using feasible evaluation methods according to evaluation standards, and is an evaluation of the quality of education and teaching in various majors in colleges and universities" [1]. Compared with developed countries in the West, Chinese education evaluation started late and the research foundation is weak, and the undergraduate professional evaluation in education evaluation, whether it is theoretical research or evaluation practice, needs to be further strengthened and improved. At present, sorting out the current situation and existing problems of professional evaluation in colleges and universities in China, analyzing the causes of the problems, and putting forward some feasible countermeasures are of great significance for promoting the evaluation of undergraduate majors in colleges and universities and improving the effectiveness of professional evaluation.

1. The current situation and problems of undergraduate professional evaluation in colleges and universities

In 1985, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China issued the "Decision on the Reform of the Education System", which for the first time took the evaluation of higher education as an important part of the reform of Chinese education system. Since the 1980s, Chinese educational administrative departments at all levels, undergraduate colleges and scholars have begun to pay attention to the evaluation and research of undergraduate majors.[2] In order to implement the requirements of "improving the teaching quality assurance system and improving the teaching evaluation of colleges and universities" put forward in the "Outline of the National Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development Plan" (2010-2020), Qinghai, Liaoning, Shanghai, Tianjin and other provinces and cities have successively Undergraduate professional evaluation work was carried out. In 2016, the Teaching Steering Committee of the State Council issued the task of pilot evaluation of undergraduate majors, and many provinces and cities responded positively and carried out the pilot work of evaluation of undergraduate majors.[3] Through the analysis of the pilot evaluation of undergraduate majors in these provinces and cities, it can be seen that at present, the evaluation of undergraduate majors in colleges and universities in China is mainly dominated by the government, and there are some problems in the process of evaluation implementation.

1.1 The existence of formalism

In China, the government is not only the main investor, builder and manager of undergraduate higher education, but also the proposer, organizer and implementer of educational evaluation. The entire educational evaluation is completed under the leadership of governments at all levels. "The evaluation work is mostly arranged by the Education Bureau and its undergraduate professional evaluation department of higher education institutions. The evaluation department is responsible for specific evaluation work, including carrying out evaluation training, establishing evaluation expert team, collecting and analyzing basic teaching state data, guiding the formulation of professional index system and the implementation of evaluation process, submitting recommendation report of evaluation conclusion to the evaluation committee, arbitrating disputes in the process of professional evaluation, etc.[4]

As the evaluation is conducted by the government and is manifested as an administrative management, it is mandatory. Usually, when professional evaluation is carried out, the evaluation instructions are issued by the superior government, and the evaluated universities can only passively accept the inspection of the superior government. For Majors in this state for a long time, their enthusiasm for evaluation participation is gradually weakened and their passivity is gradually strengthened. At the same time, the government evaluation pays more attention to whether the evaluation meets the evaluation objectives. The evaluation results are combined with administrative rewards and punishments. The evaluated colleges and universities do not improve the evaluation results enough in order to obtain rewards or deal with customs clearance. The universities under evaluation have not done enough to improve the evaluation results in order to obtain rewards or pass the test.

1.2 Relatively backward management

Undergraduate professional evaluation in colleges and universities requires professional evaluation organizations, therefore, professionalism is an important feature of professional evaluation. The professionalism is reflected in two aspects, one is the professional quality of professionals, and the other is reflected in the level of management. There are deficiencies in the evaluation of undergraduate majors in colleges and universities, both in terms of the quality of evaluators and evaluation management. The first is the composition of the expert group of professional evaluation. The professional composition of professional evaluation personnel is an important factor affecting the scientificity of assessment. At present, there are generally 3-5 members of professional evaluation teams in colleges and universities in China, and these evaluators are generally subject experts with relevant experience in their majors, and some are management experts with rich experience, but the number of evaluation experts is very small. Professional evaluation requires not only corresponding subject experts, but also management and evaluation experts. In terms of management, the construction of evaluation management in China is relatively backward. There is no unified standard for relevant evaluation management norms, and the evaluation standards of various regions and colleges are also very different, resulting in subjective and arbitrary evaluation. The relevant evaluation organization management also lacks corresponding standards, and there are no specific regulations on the qualification certification of evaluators.

1.3 Low social participation

The fundamental purpose of professional evaluation is to cultivate talents in all aspects of society. Therefore, professional evaluation must meet the needs of society, and social needs should also be an important part of professional evaluation. Since higher education of China is mainly government-oriented, the government also occupies a dominant position in the professional evaluation of colleges and universities. In 2015, the Ministry of Education issued "Opinions on Further Promoting the Separation of Education Management, Running and Evaluation, and Evaluation and Promoting the Transformation of Government Functions", which pointed out that "while doing internal evaluations, we should actively entrust third parties to carry out comprehensive, in-depth and objective

evaluations", [5] encourages the role of social evaluation organizations, that is, third-party evaluation agencies, but the actual situation is that the effectiveness of social evaluation is difficult to play. On the one hand, many private third-party evaluation organizations continue to make efforts in professional evaluation, and continue to conduct professional rankings and evaluations, but their influence is still very low compared with the official, although it provides people with a reference when making professional choices, but its authority is still questioned by many parents and students. On the other hand, third-party evaluation organizations lack relevant management norms. Third-party evaluation organizations are not only facing doubts about their authority, but also the scientific nature of their evaluations. The third-party evaluation organization not only lacks professionals related to evaluation majors, but also does not collect comprehensive information on the evaluated majors. Most of the information is collected from the official websites of the evaluated majors. The number of professional organizations collecting relevant information is very small, so its evaluation results are difficult to mobilize the public's attention and the enthusiasm of colleges and universities to participate in the evaluation.

2. Analysis of the causes of problems in the evaluation of undergraduate majors in colleges and universities

At present, there are problems of formalism, relatively backward management, and low social participation in professional evaluation in China. These problems have both historical and practical factors.

2.1 Emphasizing the whole and neglecting the part

Professional evaluation is an integral part of educational evaluation in undergraduate colleges and universities, and the two are part-to-whole relationship. Professional assessment itself evaluates the educational level of each professional, it is a part of educational assessment, but educational assessment cannot be equated with professional assessment. Professional evaluation has its own relative independence, which is reflected in the differences in evaluation standards, evaluation objects, and evaluation methods. Compared with educational evaluation, professional evaluation has a smaller scope, more detailed standards, fewer means, and more targeted evaluation.

Educational evaluation itself is a two-way process, and there is no separation between evaluating and being evaluated. However, the current professional evaluation in China is more like an evaluation conducted unilaterally by the government as an evaluator, and the serviceability of the evaluation is difficult to reflect. Professional evaluation serves the improvement of professional education, and one-sided evaluation will cause the evaluated major to have a coping psychology. This kind of coping psychology appeared before the start of the professional evaluation, and it was more obvious during the evaluation. Before the evaluation, the colleges and universities where the evaluated majors are located began to require leaders, teachers and students to conduct supplementary inspection of various homework and sorting out various materials, and the whole college invested huge human, financial and material resources; During the evaluation, the colleges and universities of the evaluated majors began to engage in forms never seen before, such as no mobile classroom, students participating in project research and other activities. This kind of equal status between the evaluation and the evaluated is completely strangled in the evaluation process.

2.2 Emphasizing evaluation and neglecting governance

The evaluation of undergraduate majors in colleges and universities is an important and complex project. The evaluation process is not only a process of government monitoring and guidance, but also a process of school self-education, self-management and self-development. Although some provincial and municipal education departments entrust provincial colleges and universities undergraduate professional evaluation expert steering committee to carry out independent third-party evaluation. Although the evaluation method is mainly quantitative, the evaluation in the qualitative

part is to select experts and professors from various universities in the province to form a team for evaluation. In fact, the evaluation comes from an official evaluation agency. However, there has been an anticlimactic phenomenon in the governance after the evaluation. For example, “The Fujian model adopts the method of school-by-school feedback, reporting the results of professional evaluation scores, grades, rankings and other results within a certain range. On the one hand, it effectively transmits the evaluation pressure and promotes professional benchmarking competition and quality catch-up. On the other hand, it appropriately protects the development environment of a few newly-built Majors in the development stage and vulnerable majors with poor regional location, which has been recognized by the participating universities and majors.”[6] For example, the professional evaluation results of the Education Department of Sichuan Province have also adopted the way of school by school feedback, holding the attitude that the family scandal should not be publicized, so that the problems found can be solved internally. Although this method has a certain protective effect on the majors with poor regional location and still in the development stage, it also has disadvantages.[7] However, in practice, some colleges and universities have weak awareness of quality assurance and coping psychology, which makes professional evaluation a mere formality, or fails to fully seize the opportunity of professional evaluation to optimize the professional layout, which affects the improvement of professional education to a certain extent.

2.3 The evaluation system lacks corresponding legal basis

Influenced by thousands of years of traditional culture in China, the social identity of the people mainly comes from the realization of legal effect. Whether the effectiveness of undergraduate professional evaluation is generated or not is related to the determination of relevant laws, although there are also legal or regulatory documents related to the evaluation of undergraduate majors in colleges and universities in China, such as the Ministry of Education has issued “Interim Provisions on education evaluation of ordinary colleges and Universities” and “Several opinions on comprehensively improving the quality of Higher Education” and “Opinions of the Ministry of education on further deepening undergraduate teaching reform and comprehensively improving teaching quality” and “Audit evaluation plan for undergraduate teaching in Colleges and Universities”, and other documents have made relevant provisions on the evaluation of undergraduate majors, but they lack a systematic and holistic approach. In addition, most of these documents are biased towards educational evaluation and teaching evaluation, involving less professional evaluation, and the legitimacy of professional evaluation is still questioned. In the evaluation of undergraduate majors in colleges and universities, there is a lack of corresponding regulations on the nature, rights, obligations, funds and other aspects of professional evaluation, which will inevitably lead to various drawbacks in professional evaluation.

3. Solutions to the problems of undergraduate professional evaluation in colleges and universities

The evaluation of undergraduate majors is related to the realization of the educational goals of undergraduate majors in colleges and universities, and it is also related to the construction of Chinese high-quality education system. Taking effective measures to effectively improve the problems existing in the evaluation of undergraduate majors in colleges and universities is conducive to talent training and connotative development in colleges and universities.

3.1 Transformation of government functions

In China, although the government is the main founder and investor of undergraduate colleges and universities, it is obviously unreasonable to let the government take the lead in professional evaluation. The government cannot be both an athlete and a referee. The government should streamline administration and delegate power, but how to decentralize administration, how much power should

be delegated, how to distribute the delegated power, and how to distribute these delegated powers to the society and schools are the problems we need to solve.

First, considering the national conditions of Chinese education development, it is unrealistic to completely change the government's dominance in professional evaluation. China's long-standing inertia of reliance on evaluation cannot be changed all at once. Therefore, the government should delegate part of the functions of professional evaluation to schools and society, rather than decentralizing it completely. "The separation of management, running, and evaluation gives all parties in the society the opportunity to participate in the evaluation of colleges and universities, and more and more third-party organizations play the role of a 'buffer agency' between the government and colleges and universities." [8] At present, it is necessary to develop third-party evaluation and internal evaluation, increase the support for the funds, talents, information and data of third-party professional evaluation organizations, Increase the autonomy of internal evaluation of undergraduate colleges and universities, and mobilize the enthusiasm of private evaluators and evaluators of undergraduate colleges and universities.

Second, reduce the government's administrative professional evaluation instructions and strengthen the active connection between undergraduate colleges and universities and external evaluation organizations. An important reason why undergraduate colleges attach so much importance to professional evaluation under the leadership of the government is that the reward and punishment system is linked to the evaluation results. Under the government-led professional evaluation, undergraduate colleges are contradictory, but they have to do it, and if the evaluation results are not good, the government's financial support for colleges and universities will be reduced. Under this circumstance, it is natural for undergraduate colleges and universities to cheat in order to obtain a good evaluation result. Strengthening the authority of private third-party professional evaluation, and using the data of private third-party professional evaluation as an important indicator of the government's later evaluation data for undergraduate colleges can increase the active connection between colleges and private evaluations. Undergraduate colleges and universities will naturally provide more evaluation data for private evaluation and strengthen the connection with private professional evaluation in a timely manner to reduce the evaluation error of private evaluation, which also enhances the authority of private third-party evaluation, so that private evaluation can be better for undergraduate colleges and universities, for themselves and for society.

3.2 Improve laws and regulations

"National power comes from the people, and power is confirmed through the form of law." [9] As an important reference factor to measure the credibility, scientificity and effectiveness of professional evaluation, whether the laws and regulations of professional evaluation are perfect is also an important guarantee to promote the continuous development of undergraduate professional evaluation in Colleges and universities.

At present, the laws and regulations for improving the evaluation of undergraduate majors in colleges and universities can be considered from the following two aspects. First, clarify the division of responsibilities among the government, schools, and social third-party evaluation organizations, and clarify the scope of their respective rights to ensure that the government will not infringe the self-evaluation rights of undergraduate colleges and universities themselves or private third-party evaluation organizations. Second, it is necessary to carry out the certification of the evaluation qualifications of undergraduate colleges and universities and third-party evaluation organizations to ensure that schools and third-party evaluation organizations have corresponding evaluation qualifications in accordance with the law, so as to ensure the realization of evaluation effectiveness and evaluation authority.

3.3 Strengthen team building

Undergraduate professional evaluation is a highly professional and systematic activity. The quality and professional composition of the experts participating in the evaluation play a leading role in the

entire evaluation system, and it is also an important guarantee for the success of professional evaluation. The evaluation team should be based on evaluation experts, including subject experts, education experts, profession experts, and evaluation experts. This expert structure is conducive to the formulation of scientific and systematic evaluation standards, the establishment of an evaluation orientation for social development needs, and the improvement and development of related majors.

The construction of professional evaluation team should not only optimize the internal composition of evaluation team, but also strengthen the examination and evaluation training of expert evaluation qualification. The selection of evaluation experts should consider whether the experts themselves have authority in the industry, and review the theoretical strength and practical ability of evaluation experts in different ways. Before professional evaluation, relevant experts should be trained in evaluation to strengthen the understanding of different experts from the industry on evaluation standards, evaluation contents and evaluation results. The team building of evaluation experts is also conducive to improve the practical ability of experts and promote the improvement of evaluation problems.

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