THE MECHANISMS OF EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE OF UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION IN CHINA

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Abstract. External quality assurance is crucial for the quality of higher education. However, there are few studies on quality assurance procedures for higher education in China. This paper explores the main mechanisms of external quality assurance in China, especially at the institutional and program level. It includes, institution evaluation, teaching status data monitoring speciality accreditation or evaluation, and international accreditation, respectively. Qualitative methodology by document analysis is used to obtain data from various secondary sources related to the study. It has been found that all evaluations and accreditations have pros and cons in China. The government is the leading participant in external quality assurance, and the third-party evaluation agency and all other associations can't exert too much influence on external quality assurance. The repetitive operation in external quality assurance, regardless of the program or institutional level, makes HEIs invest too much time in different external quality assurance mechanisms. Numerous HEIs and programs must be evaluated or accredited differently according to their different characteristics. This paper provides an overview of the mechanisms of EQA in China, exploring its main procedures, advantages, and drawbacks. The findings offer evidence for policy-making and practical improvements to enhance EQA mechanisms, aiming to contribute to the overall improvement of teaching quality and program standards.
Keywords: *external quality assurance, mechanisms, evaluation and accreditation, undergraduate education, China*

Introduction

According to Trow (2007), if the gross enrolment exceeds 50%, higher education in the country will enter the universal stage, higher education in China reached a universal phase in 2019 when the gross enrolment reached 51.6% (Lin and Zheng, 2021). In 2020, there were 3012 higher education institutions of all levels and types in China, with a total enrolment of 40.2 million students of all kinds of higher education and a gross enrolment rate of 54.4% in higher education. The expansion of higher education and globalisation leads to multiple types of higher education. It must adapt to the development of the local, the country, and the globe. The need for external quality assurance (EQA) becomes increasingly imminent and significant to ensure the quality of HEIs (Han and Zhang, 2021). Past research express EQA means regulations, policies, and practices are implemented at the national level to safeguard the quality of higher education programmes and institutions. Liu et al. (2020) highlights that the establishment of the EQA system was not long in China; it mainly includes institutional evaluation and program evaluation or accreditation. While the scope and mechanisms of EQA are enormous, the system is complicated, and the overall study is still limited, it is necessary and imperative to figure out the overview and mechanisms of EQA in China to discover its pros and cons. This paper mainly focuses on the overview of EQA in China to explore the systematic mechanisms, the pros and cons in main types of

evaluation or accreditation. It provides an overview of EQA, helping researchers and policymakers develop policies or strategies to enhance the EQA mechanism

Materials and Methods

This paper mainly utilised qualitative research in the background of China, and qualitative research encompasses a wide range of research approaches and techniques geared toward elucidation and interpretation of meaning in the data collected and analysed (Noble and Smith, 2014). To find, organise, and provide insight into the patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set, thematic analysis is a method that is always used in qualitative research (Braun and Clarke, 2012). Research questions, environment, and theoretical framework all play a role in determining which themes are relevant to a study's emphasis and research question (Roberts et al., 2019). The research was conducted by the themes of mechanism in EQA in China, meanwhile, the study was analysed by document analysis, the documents included policies from the Ministry of Education (MOE) or other Chinese official websites, articles from different journals, and theses.

Results and Discussion

The mechanisms of EQA in China

The mechanism is a way of doing something planned or part of a system. It is also a natural or established process by which something occurs or is brought about. According to government institution, the primary EQA mechanism in China includes institution evaluation, teaching primary status/ state data monitoring, programmatic evaluation or accreditation, and international accreditation, and it constructs the main framework of EQA in China. The following will explore the four mechanisms.

The institutional evaluation in China

The institutional evaluation includes two main mechanisms, namely, the qualified teaching evaluation and audit, both evaluations are carried out from the level of higher education institutions implemented by the Higher Education Evaluation Centre of MOE (HEEC).

The development of institutional evaluation

To guarantee the quality of higher education, the government started to intensify the strategies of EQA. The Ministry of Education issued a file named Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) on the Reform of the Education System in 1985, firstly and formally regulated that the education sectors should regularly evaluate the level of HEIs-running, give honour and funding support to the colleges with outstanding achievements, rectify and suspend the universities with poor performance. This document initiated the first round of evaluation. From 1985 to 2004, MOE drafted a program for teaching evaluation, organised the experts to discuss and research it, and carried out pilot evaluations through some selected universities. In August 2004, HEEC was formally established, which is responsible for undergraduate teaching evaluation, higher vocational college teaching evaluation, independent college teaching evaluation, and joint professional/ programmatical evaluation or accreditation

with relevant industry associations, which means it formally started the evaluation to the colleges and universities. In 2011, the govenment released a policy called Opinions of the MOE on the Undergraduate Teaching Evaluation of General Higher Education, and it started two types of evaluation at the level of the institution. One is for a new round of eligible/qualified teaching evaluation aiming at the newly built colleges to comprehensively ensure the quality of higher education, which suggests that the evaluation should be a "Five in One" method, namely, a combination of self-evaluation, status data monitoring, institution evaluation, speciality/program accreditation or evaluation, and international evaluation. The other one is the audit evaluation, which was determined to evaluate the university with a long-built history that also passed the first eligibility evaluation. In 2013, HEEC carried out its pilot audit evaluation via several universities. Also, the policy stated that all the universities can combine with different bodies to evaluate, including the third-party evaluation agencies, and carry out the provincial-level evaluation. In 2021, MOE issued the latest policy, Implementation Plan of the Audit Evaluation of Education and Teaching in Colleges and Universities, which crucially elucidates the classification evaluation of the HEIs.

According to the Opinions of the MOE on the Undergraduate Teaching Evaluation of General Higher Education, the institutions undertaking qualification evaluation are mandated to supply statistics on graduates within a minimum five-year period. This requirement mandates that universities sustain sufficient teaching capacity and resources to facilitate timely student completion of studies and successful graduation and employment, should the higher education institutions fail to meet the benchmark. If a school does not satisfy the criteria for graduate quality or graduation rates within five years, the Ministry may enforce restrictions, including the reduction or suspension of enrolment quotas.

Institutional evaluation indicators in teaching qualification evaluation

Teaching qualification evaluation regulates the evaluation objects and conditions, the evaluation organisations, the procedures and tasks, and the discipline and supervision. MOE released a new version of indicators, with seven first-level indicators, 20 second-level indicators, and 39 observation indicators. The *Table 1* is as follows.

Table 1. *The indicators of undergraduate teaching qualification evaluation.*

Category		
College-running and leadership	1.1 College orientation	1) College orientation and planning
	1.2 Leadership role	2) Leadership ability
		3) Teaching centre status
	1.3 Talent Cultivation Mode	4)talent cultivation thoughts
		5) Industry and college cooperation education
Academic staff construction	2.1 Quantity and structure	6) Student and teacher ratio
		7) Team structure
	2.2 Education teaching ability	8) Teacher morality level
		9) Teaching level
	2.3 Cultivation and training	10) Cultivation and training
Teaching condition and utilisation	3.1 Teaching basic infrastructure	11) Lab, internship site construction, and utilisation
		12) Library and campus network construction
		13) Dormitories, sports site, activity site construction and utilisation
	3.2 Funding investment	14) teaching funding investment
Major and curriculum construction	4.1 Major construction	15) Primary setting and structure adjustment
		16) Cultivation scheme
	4.2 Curriculum and teaching	17) Teaching context and curriculum source construction
		18) Classroom teaching and study evaluation
	4.3 Practical teaching	19) Experimental teaching
		20) Internship
		21) Social practice

		22) Thesis design and comprehensive training
Quality management	5.1 Teaching management team	23) Structure and quality
	5.2 Quality supervision	24) rules and regulations
		25) quality control
The academic atmosphere and student guidance	6.1 Academic atmosphere construction	26) Policy and measures
		27) Study atmosphere
		28) Campus culture activity
	6.2 Guidance and service	29) Organisation guarantee
		30) Student service
Teaching quality	7.1 Morality education	31) Political education
		32) Morality
	7.2 Professional knowledge and ability	33) Professional basic theory and skills
		34) Professional ability
	7.3 Physical education and aesthetic education	35) Physical education and aesthetic education
	7.4 Internal and outside campus comments	36) Teachers and students' comments
		37) Social comments
	7.5 Employment	38) Rate of employment
		39) Employment quality

The role of institutional evaluation organisations at the government level

The Notice on the Teaching Qualification Evaluation of Undergraduate Teaching Work in General Higher Education Institutions issued by MOE (hereinafter refereed to as qualified evaluation) regulated the different roles of the organisations. MOE coordinates the work of conformity evaluation, formulates the overall scheme and plan of conformity evaluation, and establishes expert committee for Undergraduate Teaching Qualification Evaluation of Regular Institutions of Higher Education. The expert committee is mainly responsible for guiding and supervising the evaluation of conformity, deliberating the evaluation report submitted by the specialist group on university and college visits, making evaluation conclusions, accepting disputes and arbitration, etc. The local administrative departments of education and the competent departments of education under the ministries and commissions shall coordinate the qualification evaluation work of HEIs, formulate the qualification evaluation plan of newly established undergraduate colleges and universities within their respective regions and departments, guide the colleges to carry out the evaluation and construction work and inspect the implementation of the college's rectification work. HEEC is to organise the implementation of qualified evaluation, including organisation evaluation training, building evaluation experts team, collecting and analysing teaching primary status data, organising experts for college inspection, etc. and shall submit the evaluation-related materials to the expert committee.

Audit

The core of the audit evaluation is to evaluate the achievement of the university's talent cultivation objectives and cultivation effects. The focus is on the degree of adaptation of the HEIs' orientation and talent training objectives to the needs of national and regional economic and social development, the degree of guarantee of teachers and teaching resources, the degree of effectiveness of the operation of the teaching and quality assurance system, and the degree of satisfaction of students and social employers. Regardless of qualified evaluation or audit evaluation, it includes self-evaluation, expert evaluation, review of conclusion, and report. According to principles and standards in self-evaluation, the evaluation of the subject is a process of self-diagnosis, self-research, self-perfection, and self-development of the self-evaluation unit, and form report based on self-evaluation. However, it is the first time for most

undergraduate colleges to carry out the self-evaluation, the evaluation standards are not specific and strict, the self-check time is insufficient, the method of self-evaluation is simple, the content of self-evaluation is based on the existing conditions, they even falsify the accurate information to get a sound and qualified self-evaluation report. From the perspective of expert evaluation, HEEC arranged a team of experts to inspect and evaluate the colleges by on-site. Based on a “review of the college self-evaluation report” and “the basic teaching status data analysis report,” the expert group conducted an impartial and objective evaluation of the college's teaching through in-depth interviews, lectures, material review, and discussion, and so on, resulting in the expert group evaluation report and recommendations based on the evaluation conclusions.

Regarding the conclusion review and release, the committee of experts will consider the recommendations of the expert group evaluation on-site at the college. There are three types of evaluation conclusions: "pass," "suspend," and "fail" (Tu and Fang, 2016). HEEC formally issues the evaluation conclusions based on the expert committee's deliberations. Regarding the utilisation of results, the passed college enters the next round of audit evaluation of ordinary HEIs. After passing the qualified evaluation for five years, the HEIs must participate in the audit evaluation. For a college with "suspend" and "fail," the rectification period is two years and three years, respectively. During the rectification, the college will apply for re-evaluation. These colleges will be limited in student enrolment and suspend significant applications during that time (Chen, 2020). Colleges that pass the re-evaluation will be allowed to enter the next round of audit evaluation. Colleges that fail to pass the re-evaluation will be considered low-quality education and teaching and punished according to the relevant laws. There are more than 1,000 ordinary undergraduate colleges and universities in China, distributed in different disciplines and regions with different histories, levels, and types. However, when designing evaluation indicators, these colleges and universities applies a unified evaluation plan and index to carry on unified measurement to all levels and all kinds of colleges and universities. Some colleges have a high social reputation, the talents cultivated have made significant contributions to society, and the colleges have made essential contributions to regional economic development, which are often overlooked. The traditional manual evaluation mode does not fully utilise advanced information science and technology to create a comprehensive database system for specific statistics, archives, personnel departments, and other data types. Due to the evaluation implemented by the government without participation from different social forces, the government's excessive administrative control of colleges and universities is the root of the quality crisis of higher education.

Teaching state/status data monitoring

The teaching state data monitor database reflects a university's teaching process and quality, and it is an integral part of the quality assurance system (Lin and Zhao, 2014). It can directly reflect the basic situation of universities (Xu et al., 2012). At the end of 2007, MOE began establishing a national database of the primary state of higher education. In June 2011, MOE officially launched the state data collection work of undergraduate colleges and universities (Wu and Wang, 2019). The platform uses information and network technology to reflect the primary state of teaching and learning in HEIs nationwide and provides data collection and services online. The platform data is organised according to the HEIs every year, and the content is divided into seven categories: Basic university information and conditions, staff information, disciplines

and specialities, talent training, student information, teaching management, and quality control. Moreover, the data platform comprises a "data filing system" and "analysis and utilisation." The "data filling" is the basis of the platform, and "analysis and utilisation" is the key to teaching evaluation from MOE (Wu and Wang, 2019).

Once this basic information has been collected and collated, the national data platform system will automatically generate the annual Undergraduate Teaching Data Analysis Report. This report is essential for evaluating undergraduate teaching work in general HEIs (Lin and Zhao, 2014). The report can provide accurate and detailed data for MOE's evaluation, allowing MOE and evaluation experts to monitor teaching and learning regularly, make correct evaluations, and accurately diagnose various problems in college and university development (Lin and Zhao, 2014). According to Qin and Hu (2020), the four functions of database monitoring are as follows: The first is to serve HEIs by promoting the informatisation of teaching management and the establishment of a permanent monitoring mechanism for teaching and quality. The second is to serve the government by providing data support and policy advice to the educational administration for scientific decision-making and promoting higher education reform and quality assurance. Thirdly, it serves the public by providing information on higher education quality and promoting public understanding and support for higher education. Fourthly, it serves evaluation by accumulating data and information through the database, which helps simplify the evaluation process and reduce the burden on HEIs. It also allows experts to determine the focus of their work and write evaluation reports (Qin and Hu, 2020).

The database can also be conducive to the newly built colleges' self-diagnosis, increase investment, standardise management, improve quality, and promote information construction. It is worth noting that the newly-built HEIs have been built since 2002 (Bai et al., 2020). Meanwhile, it can be used in programs, accreditations, and audit evaluations (Qin and Hu, 2020). However, monitoring data's scientific nature and effectiveness need to be improved. Since the expansion of HEIs and the lack of investment in domestic higher education, the evaluation focuses more on constructing educational conditions, such as student-to-teacher ratio, investment in funds, equipment, and books per student (Bai et al., 2020). Moreover, the data is only filled in to respond to the evaluation, which makes the data filling in distorted. It lacks awareness and understanding of data-filling work through training and learning. For most colleges, data supervision is characterised by a lack of quality monitoring atmosphere, unclear objectives, lack of targeted content, inadequate systems, and outdated monitoring methods (Li, 2015). Insufficient attention is paid to the results of data analysis, and the results are not fully utilised to guide and promote the work and promptly identify gaps (Cheng, 2021).

Specialty/programmatical/professional evaluation

Program/speciality/professional evaluation is a highly comprehensive evaluation that uses indicators, practical evaluation tools, and relevant evaluation methods to make qualitative and quantitative judgments about the value of a speciality (Jiang, 2021). Speciality evaluation is a compulsory evaluation if required by MOE, and all the specialities in undergraduate colleges and universities must be evaluated. It is also a vital part of "Five in One" in teaching quality evaluation. The program evaluation aims to assess the level of professional/speciality/programmatical teaching in HEIs and whether it aligns with the predetermined objectives of college running. It is a form of

supervision exercised by the educational authorities. It is subject to the direct leadership of the government and the activities currently carried out in China by the government (Fan, 2007). Program evaluation can be helpful for each program to know their achievements and the problems to be solved (Xu, 2020). It can also be conducive to continuous improvement. Program evaluation faces several evaluations. The authority typically uses the same evaluation method, which doesn't consider differences and diversity among HEIs (Liu et al., 2021). As undergraduate colleges and universities in China vary significantly from one another, with different development in the same region and even at the same level, there are also differences between public and private colleges and universities and between majors that have been in operation for a long time and new majors, etc. Thus, choosing the same evaluation model is difficult due to the differences in professional development among undergraduate colleges and universities (Zhang, 2020).

Domestic specialised/programmatic/professional accreditation

Professional accreditation is an accreditation of professions closely related to issues such as medicine, health, engineering, law, teacher training, etc. Practitioners' professional competence in these professions must have definite quality assurance, i.e., a professional degree accredited by a rigorous professional education (Fan, 2007). Professional accreditation is obtained through quantitative and qualitative comparative analysis data, which can be conducive to "continuous improvement" (Xie et al., 2021). According to Hu (2016), professional accreditation is a quality assurance method voluntarily adopted by HEIs themselves under the conditions of the market economy, which evaluates the quality of education of some programs through professional third-party accreditation agencies based on specific professional standards and provides professional qualifications that meet the requirements of professional accreditation standards, including accreditation of program setting, curriculum, faculty and student development, etc. Two leading domestic accreditations in China, teacher training accreditation and medical accreditation, were initiate. 2017 MOE issued the Implementation Measures for the Accreditation of Teacher Training Programmes in General Higher Education Institutions (Provisional). The document regulates three-level measurement for teacher training programmes. There are also five types of teacher training, including preschool education, primary education, and middle school education, and three-level accreditation has been implemented. The other two types of teacher training are vocational and technical teacher education and special education speciality accreditation. These two teacher training programs do not need accreditation.

In three levels of teacher training, the first level takes the form of data collection on a web-based platform to supervise, evaluate and analyse without an on-site survey, which is compulsory accreditation supervised by MOE. After passing the first level of accreditation, the HEIs can apply for the second and third levels of accreditation. The second and third levels take the form of on-site examinations by experts in HEIs to conduct periodic certification of the teaching quality of teacher education programmes, which is voluntary. The document also points out the standards and procedures: The second-level local colleges and universities shall submit accreditation applications to education evaluation agencies entrusted by provincial education administrative departments. HEIs affiliated with central departments shall submit applications for accreditation to HEEC. HEEC shall conduct an audit according to the acceptance conditions, and HEEC accredits all the third-level HEIs. By the end of 2019, HEEC had

carried out first-level monitoring of more than 4,000 teachers' specialities nationwide, granted second-level certification to 188 teachers' specialities, re-evaluated 26 pilot specialities in the early stage according to second-level certification standards, and granted third-level certification to six teachers' specialities.

However, some problems are faced by the accreditation of teacher education. For example, the enthusiasm for college participation in the certification is deficient; the standards are difficult to meet fully; due to the accreditation process's rashness, the accreditation achievement is not apparent (Xu and Yang, 2021). Moreover, the student-centred accreditation concept has not yet been effectively translated into teaching behaviours; the elements of the quality assurance system are structurally missing or weak; some of the indicators related to accreditation standards are missing; there is a lack of quality culture (Ma and Zhou, 2021). Regarding medical accreditation, in 2002, with the support of the MOE, the Medical Education Committee of the Chinese Higher Education Society and the Faculty of Medicine of Peking University jointly organised the International Symposium on Medical Education Standards, which introduced international medical education standards. The Medical Education Committee implements all the undergraduate medical education accreditation. Professional accreditation can effectively promote the QA in HEIs and strengthen the continuous improvement of the quality of undergraduate talent cultivation. Meanwhile, it involves many stakeholders, including schools in HEIs, HEIs, disciplines, majors, staff, students, graduates and employer (An, 2020).

However, professional accreditation, as part of the QA system of higher education, is well-established in developed countries of higher education, and a more comprehensive model of accreditation has been created (Yang, 2020). The update of programme settings in HEIs in China typically lags behind the developing of new programmes. The update of the programme setting depends on the programme accreditation but not the development of industries. The accreditation context can’t catch up with the speed of the market and industries’ development, so the HEIs pay more attention to accreditation but not improvement (Ding, 2022). Moreover, the number of accredited specialities is still not too much. There is a gap in the quality of our talent cultivation compared with that of developed countries. Therefore, improving quality is the main task, and continuous quality improvement is the value of professional accreditation. Furthermore, professional accreditation does not come directly from industry qualifications and experience in the field. If so, obtaining industrial cooperation resources that match the professional disciplines is challenging, and accreditation is difficult to achieve the construction goal of serving regional economic development. That is to say, the accreditation can’t largely promote industry and college cooperation.

International evaluation/accreditation

International accreditation of programmes in HEIs refers to the process by which a specialised international accreditation agency recognises HEI's programmes according to the appropriate standards (Bao, 2018). There are three major international accreditation systems worldwide, namely the Washington Accord, the Sydney Accord and the Dublin Accord, of which the Washington Accord has become the most comprehensive, international and authoritative international accreditation system for engineering professions in the world. Professional certification allows global talents to be recognised for their degrees and qualifications. It will enable transnational talent to gain equal and fair recognition for their professional degrees and qualifications (Zhang,

2013). Meanwhile, this enhances the opportunities for international talent mobility and promotes the dissemination of culture, knowledge, and skills. The China Engineering Education Accreditation Association (CEEAA). Industry associations and professional societies lead the accreditation of engineering education professions in China in collaboration with education experts and industry experts. The international accreditation is mainly for engineering accreditation in China. By 1998, China had begun to go on the road of international accreditation. In 2016, China became one of the members of the Washington Accord. Washington Accord, signed in 1989, is a multi-lateral agreement between bodies responsible for accreditation or recognition of tertiary-level engineering qualifications within their jurisdictions who have chosen to work collectively to assist the mobility of professional engineers. Following the requirements of the Washington Agreement, China has established the CEEAA based on the former National Expert Committee on Engineering Education Accreditation; the CEEAA is in charge of the Ministry of Education and is a group member of the China Association of Science and Technology , The association is the only legal organisation to carry out engineering education accreditation work in China. At the end of 2019, 1353 programmes in 241 HEIs were accredited based on the Washington Accord.

Washington Accord focuses on Outcome Based Education (OBE). In OBE, the curriculum includes programme objectives (PeOs) and programme outcomes (POs), which students should have achieved by graduation. Non-technical abilities, such as communication, teamwork, and a commitment to lifelong learning, are also addressed in these PeOs and Pos etc. (Alias and Bhkari, 2007). Learning outcomes provide verifiable statements of what learners are expected to know, understand or be able to do (Rao, 2015). The rapid development of transnational higher education has placed new demands on higher education assurance systems, with increased global mobility of talent and internationally recognised quality accreditation systems becoming a focus of higher education in all countries (Yang, 2020). Professional accreditation has promoted curriculum reform, increased investment in practical teaching construction, strengthened university-enterprise cooperation in training talents, improved education and teaching management, and started the construction of accredited teaching materials (Jiang, 2019). Meanwhile, qualified professional accreditation is conducive to standardising all aspects of engineering education, attracting more excellent students to devote themselves to corresponding majors, enhancing the reputation of HEIs, and shaping comprehensive qualified engineering and technical talents (Zhang, 2019). While the main problem with international accreditation in China is that the participation of Chinese HEIs is low, the number of participating universities is small, and the period of involvement is relatively short. Only some significant universities have passed international accreditation, but most of the universities still do not participate in international accreditation (Bao, 2018).

The mechanism of external quality assurance including teaching qualification evaluation and audit, and teaching basic status data from institutional level, the speciality/ programmatical/ professional evaluation at domestic level and international level. It is evident that the history of EQA formation is quite short, all evaluations or accreditations in China possess both advantages and disadvantages. The government is the primary entity in EQA, and third-party evaluation bodies and other groups have limited influence over the evaluation or accreditation processes, including the international accreditation is administered by governmental entities. Within the same organisations, there exists considerable redundancy in evaluation and accreditation processes, irrespective of the program or institutional tier. Colleges and universities

must allocate excessive time to various mechanisms of EQA, resulting in a misallocation of human resources. However, to attain recognition and prestige, they are compelled to engage in different evaluation, which adversely affects the quality of teaching and programs. Although there are different higher education institutions and programs, the standards of evaluation are unified which seriously impede the autonomy of HEIs and different characteristically development of HEIs. Meanwhile, the other stakeholders like the industries, the third party agencies, and students, can not participate in EQA to improve the quality of higher education.

Therefore, we emphasize the importance of involving different stakeholders in various EQA mechanisms, supported by legislation to ensure their participation. Simplifying administrative evaluations can alleviate the pressure and workload on HEIs) enabling them to exercise their autonomy to improve teaching and management quality through internal quality assurance. Third, HEIs should establish their own quality assurance frameworks and standards, with evaluations tailored to their classifications. Finally, active participation in international accreditation is essential for enhancing and recognizing the quality of teaching and the overall operations of HEIs. This paper provides an overview of the mechanisms of EQA in China, exploring its main procedures, advantages, and drawbacks. The findings offer evidence for policy-making and practical improvements to enhance EQA mechanisms, aiming to contribute to the overall improvement of teaching quality and program standards. However, this paper only focuses on existing literatures and policies, it needs empirical studies to confirm the advantages and disadvantages to different EQA mechanisms. The future studies can adopt quantitative or qualitative empirical study to further explore this aspect.

Conclusion

This study explores the mechanisms of EQA in China, which is significant to the quality of higher education. It includes teaching qualification evaluation and audit, and teaching basic status data from institutional level, the speciality/programmatical/professional evaluation at domestic level and international level. The researchers respectively discuss the merits and demerits of each different EQA mechanisms, which provides evidence of policy making, practice, or legislation to improve the EQA mechanisms, and finally improve the quality of teaching, program, and HIEs running. Due to the limitations in this paper, we advocate the qualitative and quantitative empirical studies in future.

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Conflict of interest

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest involve with any parties in this research study.

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