

THE EVOLUTIONARY LOGIC OF QUALITY ASSURANCE MECHANISMS IN SINGAPORE'S HIGHER EDUCATION FROM A HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONALISM PERSPECTIVE

Xizhe Yang^{1*}

¹ Master of Comparative Education, Nanning Normal University of China

* Corresponding Author, E-mail: 244232183@qq.com

Abstract: The transformation of Singapore's higher education quality assurance system is of significant importance in enhancing the quality of higher education. The transformation of Singapore's higher education quality assurance system has gone through stages of internationalization, marketization, and quality accreditation. Using historical institutionalism as an analytical framework, it is found that the logic of the transformation of Singapore's higher education quality assurance system is as follows: at the macro level, internal drivers and external influencing factors interact, revealing the deep structure of the educational quality assurance system; at the meso level, the self-reinforcing development mechanism of the higher education quality assurance system has profound impacts on various stakeholders and forms institutional path dependence; at the micro level, the demands and negotiations of different interests between third-party organizations and university entities shape the dynamics of system transformation.

Keywords: Higher Education, Transformation of Quality Assurance System, Historical Institutionalism, Singapore

Introduction

After entering the 21st century, the quality of education has become a highly concerned topic in educational development (Sheng et al, 2014). Achieving high-quality development in higher education has become a common expectation and goal pursued by countries worldwide. As the demand for excellence in education continues to grow, the need and mission for higher education quality assurance have also evolved. Quality assurance has become one of the key elements in each country's higher education policy. In the process of the marketization, internationalization, and popularization of higher education, the higher education quality assurance system plays an indispensable role. It is an essential tool for governments to improve the quality and efficiency of higher education development and to gain and maintain the reputation and status of higher education institutions in the international community. Therefore, the higher education quality assurance system plays a crucial role in enhancing

the quality and efficiency of higher education development.

Singapore's higher education is a model of world higher education with academic excellence, innovative research, and a global perspective. Singapore has many well-known universities and is renowned worldwide for its research level and innovation capabilities. According to the 2018 Global Competitiveness Report, Singapore ranked second globally, only behind the United States. In the 2019 QS World University Rankings, the National University of Singapore and Nanyang Technological University ranked 11th and 12th, respectively (Gong, 2019).

As of 2020, 90.1% of Singapore's population aged 25-34 had higher education qualifications, compared to the OECD average of only 45.9%. As a leading country in global higher education, Singapore's quality assurance mechanism has always been of great concern. Singapore's higher education quality assurance mechanism aims to maintain academic standards in higher education and enhance the quality of higher education institutions. The Education Quality Assurance Framework (EQAF) and the Committee for University Academic Quality (CUAQ) are the cornerstones of Singapore's higher education quality assurance system.

The former establishes the basic academic standards and quality goals for higher education in Singapore, while the latter protects the quality of education by assessing whether the higher education received by students meets the standards. However, with the rapid development of society, economy, and technology, Singapore's higher education quality assurance mechanism also faces challenges of transformation and reform. On one hand, traditional education quality assurance mechanisms may not effectively adapt to the ever-changing educational environment and demands, thus requiring transformation in the higher education quality assurance mechanism (Hoecht, 2006). On the other hand, traditional quality assurance mechanisms mainly rely on school self-assessment and internal audits, which can lead to information asymmetry and a lack of objectivity. By introducing more external institutions for supervision, the monitoring and assessment of education quality can be enhanced, thereby improving the overall quality level of education (Kis, 2005). Furthermore, transformation can promote innovation and development in education. Traditional quality assurance mechanisms may limit the flexibility of schools and teachers, making it difficult to adopt new educational methods and technologies. Through transformation, schools and teachers can be encouraged to engage in innovative practices and incorporate them into the quality assurance mechanism, thereby driving continuous progress and development in education.

At different historical stages, the transformation of Singapore's higher education quality assurance mechanism has shown various characteristics and priorities. These characteristics have had a positive impact on improving the quality of higher education, student experience, and institutional competitiveness in Singapore, which will help ensure the continuous development and success of Singapore's higher education. Therefore, to adapt to the ever-changing modern society and the global

educational environment, and to promote the progress and development of higher education, how to facilitate the transformation of the higher education quality assurance mechanism has become an important issue in the high-quality development of contemporary higher education. Over nearly half a century of continuous evolution, Singapore's higher education quality assurance mechanism has formed a unique, nationally distinctive system that has become a model for the construction of higher education quality assurance mechanisms worldwide.

Literature Review

Currently, research on higher education quality assurance mechanisms in academia is primarily characterized by a descriptive research paradigm. Under this paradigm, most scholars focus on the connotations, models, policies, and operational mechanisms of higher education quality assurance. Chen (2004) explored the importance, functions, basic models, and various components of higher education quality assurance. Additionally, he proposed several issues related to higher education quality assurance and conducted in-depth research on the evaluation theory, evaluation methods, and evaluation tools of Chinese higher education on this basis. According to domestic scholar Zhang, Zeng & Li (2008), higher education quality assurance is a planned, organized, and systematic activity process. Through a set of quality evaluation indicator mechanisms adopted by specific entities, and following specific processes and procedures, the quality of higher education is controlled, evaluated, and audited to promote the development of higher education and ultimately ensure its quality. According to scholars Zhang and Su (2014), higher education quality assurance is not only an ideology, technical means, and power but also requires establishing a quality culture centered on a new social contract of mutual trust. This quality culture transcends the traditional paradigm of higher education quality assurance and plays a crucial role in enhancing the quality of higher education.

In terms of higher education quality assurance mechanism models and policies, Zhang's (2007) research, based on the collection of a large amount of primary data, evaluated various aspects of British universities and proposed three models of higher education evaluation: external evaluation, internal evaluation, and student evaluation. Xiong (2001), in his research, suggested that four different models exist in European countries. The first is the British "multi-evaluation model", which consists of quality control, audit, evaluation, and social evaluation. The second is the French "centralized model", managed by national institutions such as the Higher Education Research Committee and the Evaluation Committee. The third is the Belgian "dual structure model", based on systems stipulated by government departments and laws. The last is the Dutch "external evaluation model", which established a public quality evaluation system. Huang (2010) pointed out in his research that before the 1980s, there were three main models of education quality assurance. The first is the "institution-led model", where teachers or students ensure education quality. The second is the "government-led model", where the

government uses administrative means to supervise university education quality. The last is the “corporate-led model”, where committees composed of higher education institutions and professional academic personnel are responsible for improving the quality of university education.

The operational mechanism refers to the rules that establish connections and interactions between the various basic components within the same mechanism to achieve unique functions (Min, 2002). Scholars have classified the operational mechanisms of higher education quality assurance based on common methods of quality assurance. Sanyal and Martin (2007) categorize higher education quality assurance mechanisms into three basic types: first, “quality audit”, which reviews the quality assurance systems or procedures of a college or university; second, “quality evaluation”, which assesses institutions or programs to determine if they meet specified standards; and third, “quality accreditation”, where external agencies certify whether a college or program has met key quality standards. According to Tang (2008), higher education quality assurance can be divided into four operational mechanisms: first, government macro-control; second, market self-regulation; third, school self-assurance; and finally, societal participation and supervision. These mechanisms involve interactions among the government, market, schools, and societal forces to ensure the quality of higher education.

Reviewing the aforementioned literature, it is not difficult to find that these viewpoints provide unique insights into the structure and functions of higher education quality assurance mechanisms, but they also show some deficiencies in explaining the framework structure. The operational characteristics during institutional transformation are diverse and complex, requiring more in-depth research and analysis. Therefore, it is necessary to establish a historical institutionalism analysis framework for this study on “how Singapore’s higher education quality assurance mechanism has transformed” and to deeply analyze the historical logic and operational mechanisms of the transformation of Singapore’s higher education quality assurance mechanism. This will not only enrich the research on the transformation of education quality assurance mechanisms but also help expand the scope of research on the transformation of education quality assurance mechanisms and provide valuable experience and references for the transformation of higher education quality assurance mechanisms in practice.

The rise of new institutionalism theory can be traced back to the 1970s, initially proposed in the field of economics and gradually applied to political science, sociology, anthropology, and law. In 1983, the American Political Science Review published an important paper by James G. March and Johan P. Olsen (1983), titled “The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors in Political Life”. This paper advocated that political science should focus on institutional research and proposed corresponding basic principles. This theory is crucial for understanding social organization and political behavior, and thus is considered to mark the rise of new institutionalism in political science. In the subsequent five years, in 1989, March and Olsen (2007) provided a more comprehensive and systematic theoretical exposition of new institutionalism in their book *Rediscovering Institutions: The Organizational Basis*

of Politics. As the field of new institutionalism research developed, internal factions also became increasingly diverse. Among them, historical institutionalism is an important branch of new institutionalism in political science. It combines history and institutional research, becoming a new trend in political science research since the 1980s. Its rise is a response to the group theory and structural functionalism prevalent in the 1960s and 1970s, and it attempts to transcend these two factions (Hall & Taylor, 1996). As a research paradigm and explanatory framework, historical institutionalism has been widely applied in the field of political science, especially in comparative politics. It has become the mainstream paradigm of comparative politics, replacing the positions of behaviorism and structural functionalism.

Historical institutionalism has distinct characteristics, with its research centered on “institutions”, combining historical analysis and institutional research. It aims to demonstrate the temporal sequence and trajectory of institutional change from a macro historical perspective. Historical institutionalism is primarily understood through the following three aspects: Firstly, it adopts an eclectic approach. Historical institutionalists believe that humans are both “rational actors” pursuing individual interests and “rule followers” adhering to social norms, thus requiring a comprehensive analysis that considers both individual and societal factors. Secondly, it is based on structure and history. Historical institutionalism excels in using economic, political, and cultural perspectives to analyze the interactions and relationships between institutions, interests, and ideas. Thirdly, it encompasses multiple levels of analysis. Historical institutionalism explains and analyzes the impact of institutional changes by examining the economic and political systems and cultural ideas at the macro level, the history and current conditions of institutional development at the meso level, and the power struggles among different actors at the micro level (Zhu, 2007). Historical institutionalism asserts that institutional evolution is the result of historical and political forces, not merely the influence of technical or economic factors. In the transformation of Singapore’s higher education quality assurance mechanism, historical institutionalism theory can help us understand the past policy environment, institutional design, and interest struggles, and how these factors have shaped the current higher education quality assurance mechanism.

Historical institutionalism is one of the important branches of new institutionalism, primarily focusing on the historical and comparative roots of institutional change to reveal the historical characteristics of institutions. Historical institutionalism proposes a meso-level organizational institutional analysis paradigm that combines grand institutions and individual behaviors, and on this basis, constructs an analytical framework of “macro structure - meso institution - micro actors”. Studying the transformation of Singapore’s higher education quality assurance mechanism from the perspective of historical institutionalism is quite appropriate, as its analytical framework provides a way to deeply study past institutional arrangements and the behaviors of participants (Zhou, 2010). Firstly,

by macroscopically analyzing the deep structures behind the institutions, it is possible to reveal the driving and influencing factors behind institutional transformation. Exploring the complex process of the transformation of Singapore's higher education quality assurance mechanism from the deep structure of the institution shows how the interaction between external environments and internal driving factors takes place. Secondly, path dependence refers to the enduring impact of past institutional arrangements on current and future decisions and development. In the transformation of Singapore's higher education quality assurance mechanism, path dependence can explain how previously established institutions and rules influence the current quality assurance mechanism. For instance, the higher education quality assurance mechanism in Singapore has developed different characteristics and structures in various historical periods, which may impact current reforms and development. By studying past institutional arrangements, one can better understand the evolution process of the current mechanism and reveal key turning points and inertia. Finally, the dynamic mechanism is a micro perspective of historical institutionalism, which believes that the pursuit of actors' interests achieves the concretization of goals and institutional change (Huang, 2010). In the transformation of Singapore's higher education quality assurance mechanism, the participants include the government, universities, educational institutions, students, and other stakeholders. By comprehensively analyzing the behaviors and interactions of these participants, one can gain an in-depth understanding of the evolution process of this mechanism and reveal the interaction of different factors in specific contexts. For example, government policy decisions, university competition strategies, and changes in student demands are factors that may influence the development of the quality assurance mechanism.

Considering the deep institutional structure, path dependence, and dynamic mechanisms comprehensively, historical institutionalism provides a comprehensive and in-depth perspective that helps scholars better understand the process and mechanisms of the transformation of Singapore's higher education quality assurance mechanism. By studying past institutional arrangements and the behaviors of participants, it reveals key nodes and driving mechanisms, providing valuable references and in-depth insights for future institutional reforms. This will help scholars better understand the development of Singapore's higher education quality assurance mechanism and provide valuable insights for future policymaking.

Internationalization Phase

The transformation process of Singapore's higher education quality assurance mechanism can be traced back to the 1990s. During this period, globalization had a profound impact on Singapore's higher education. The Singapore government adopted a series of internationalization strategies aimed at positioning Singapore as a global education network hub and a Southeast Asian education center. To achieve this goal, the Economic Development Board of Singapore launched two significant programs in 1998 and 2002, namely the "World-Class Universities Program" and the "Global Schoolhouse". By

introducing these top international universities, Singapore's higher education institutions were able to share resources, teaching experiences, and research outcomes with world-class institutions, thereby enhancing their teaching and research standards. The launch of the World-Class Universities Program attracted many internationally renowned universities to establish campuses in Singapore, such as the Cornell SC Johnson College of Business from the USA and Imperial College London from the UK (Qiao & Yang, 2018). These campuses not only provided Singaporean students with the opportunity to access world-class educational resources but also attracted numerous international students to pursue their studies in Singapore, further promoting cross-cultural exchange and academic collaboration. Local universities in Singapore, through their collaboration with international universities, established short-term degree programs. Local schools committed to meeting the teaching standards of international universities and accepted their performance evaluations. Additionally, universities signed performance agreements with enterprises and other partners, providing practical application environments for universities (Hou & Shi, 2019). These performance agreements granted universities greater autonomy, enabling them to better participate in the development of the international education market. This model of cooperation provided students with a more practice-oriented education and promoted innovation and development in higher education.

Marketization Phase

While Singapore's higher education was undergoing large-scale expansion and international development, it gradually formed a market-oriented governance model characterized by performance orientation. This governance model granted higher education institutions more autonomy and introduced market mechanisms to enhance the dynamism of university operations. To encourage the development and utilization of their unique strengths and advantages, an increasing number of Singaporean universities established partnerships with enterprises. Schools offered specialized courses based on market demand to cultivate talents that match societal needs. This market-oriented development mechanism prompted universities to focus more on improving teaching quality and student employability (Sam, 2016). On one hand, during the collaboration between local universities and overseas universities, an autonomous and cooperative market-oriented governance model was adopted. Schools managed autonomously around "key performance indicators", with local schools committing to meeting the educational standards of overseas universities and accepting their performance evaluations. Additionally, universities signed performance agreements with enterprises, which provided practical environments for universities, granting schools greater autonomy and better adaptability to the education market. On the other hand, the Singapore government, as the most important funding provider for higher education, required higher education institutions to adhere to principles of public affairs and financial accountability, institutionalizing quality assurance and audit systems, and conducting external reviews of institutional performance. The government mainly

participated in university governance through a model of “negotiating strategic indicators with universities and signing performance agreements”. Typically, each evaluation cycle lasts five years, during which universities commit to achieving predefined targets in talent cultivation, research output, policy implementation, and school rankings. Upon passing the evaluations, the government provides funding support (Huang, 2010). This performance-based mechanism laid a solid foundation for Singapore’s sustainable development and talent cultivation. It enabled the higher education mechanism to better adapt to societal needs and international trends, making positive contributions to the cultivation of practical and competitive talents. Through close cooperation with enterprises and market-oriented curriculum design, students could acquire knowledge and skills closely related to job requirements, enhancing their employment competitiveness. Meanwhile, government involvement and funding support also ensured the quality and efficiency of higher education institutions.

Quality Certification Phase

From the early 21st century to the present, Singapore’s focus on the quality of higher education has further intensified during the quality certification phase. This phase reflects on and improves the marketization phase, with Singapore establishing a private higher education certification system aimed at ensuring the quality of higher education in sustainable development.

In 1992, the Singapore government established the Singapore Accreditation Board (SAB), which was reorganized into the Singapore Quality Assurance Agency (SQAA) in 2004. The primary responsibility of SQAA is to develop standards and guidelines for higher education quality assurance and ensure these standards are implemented through the evaluation and certification of universities. It also oversees and guides universities in quality improvement and collaborates and exchanges with relevant international agencies (Ng, 2007). Additionally, the EduTrust Certification Scheme is another significant measure introduced by the Singapore government to strengthen the regulation of private education quality. This scheme was developed and managed by the Committee for Private Education (CPE) under the Ministry of Education (MOE) in 2009. The certification system regularly assesses the standards of private educational institutions in areas such as teaching quality, student support, and management operations. Through these assessments, educational institutions can achieve different levels of certification, including basic, intermediate, and advanced levels. This tiered certification approach helps enhance the quality of educational institutions, promoting continuous improvement and advancement. The implementation of the SQAA and the EduTrust Certification Scheme is crucial for safeguarding student rights and improving educational quality. On this basis, students can choose educational institutions that are assured, ensuring the quality of education and the recognition of their degrees. Meanwhile, the certification schemes encourage educational institutions to continuously improve, enhancing teaching quality and student support services to meet evolving educational needs and market competition (Wang, Peng & Zhang, 2021).

Discussion

Macro Level: Revealing the Deep Structure of the System through Internal and External Environments

Historical institutionalism focuses on the relationship between internal structures and external environments. In the field of higher education in Singapore, the transformation of the quality assurance mechanism is a complex and critical process involving the interaction of external environments and internal driving factors. External environments include policy changes, economic factors, social needs, etc., while internal environments encompass the organizational structure, management mechanisms within universities, and the behaviors of stakeholders. These internal and external environmental factors directly influence the development and evolution of the quality assurance mechanism.

Firstly, regarding the external environment, the investment policies of the Singapore government and the establishment of evaluation and accreditation agencies have a direct impact on the quality assurance mechanism of higher education. The Singapore government adopts a balanced approach, emphasizing educational diversity and innovation to ensure that higher education aligns with both global and local agendas. They reshape the higher education landscape through reforms in the quality assurance mechanism and implement neoliberal managerialism. During this process, the Singapore government audits both public and private higher education sectors and establishes new quality assurance mechanisms to regulate private higher education. This new regulatory regime reflects the importance of political factors in implementing neoliberal managerialism in higher education. Moreover, the design and implementation of policies and the establishment of evaluation mechanisms are crucial for the development and continuous improvement of the quality assurance mechanism. The policy decisions of the Singapore government directly affect the development and effectiveness of the quality assurance mechanism. To promote the continuous development and advancement of the quality assurance mechanism, it is necessary to adopt flexible policies and strategies and to foster the autonomy and innovation capabilities of educational institutions. Only with the support of policies and strategies can the quality assurance mechanism adapt and improve in the ever-changing educational environment (Lo, 2014).

Secondly, in terms of the internal environment, the organizational structure, management mechanisms, and behaviors of stakeholders within universities also have a profound impact on the operation and reform of the quality assurance mechanism. In Singapore, the government has made efforts to balance the needs for quality assurance and educational diversity and innovation. The government decentralizes power to schools to promote diversity and innovation, while simultaneously establishing quality structures to maintain control. This strategy poses challenges to schools, as they find it difficult to balance the pursuit of diversity with quality assurance. To address this dilemma, the Singapore government began introducing school rankings in 1992, which was an important

development for local accountability. Establishing a strong middle management team within schools marked a shift towards school-led accountability. This shift helps improve the operational efficiency and quality assurance levels of schools. Additionally, the behaviors of stakeholders within schools also play a crucial role in the development of the quality assurance mechanism. The active participation and contributions of stakeholders such as teachers, students, alumni, and industry partners can provide a solid foundation for the continuous improvement of the quality assurance mechanism (Ng, 2007).

Meso Level: Path Dependence Formed by Self-reinforcing Mechanisms

In the transformation process of Singapore's higher education quality assurance mechanism, historical institutionalism posits that once an institution is established, it forms a self-reinforcing mechanism. Over time, the cost of exiting this institution increases sharply, leading to the formation of path dependence (Cai, 2016).

On one hand, collective behavior increases the cost of exiting the mechanism. The collective nature of Singapore's higher education quality assurance mechanism means that participants adhere to the regulations and standards of the mechanism together, thereby increasing the cost of exiting it. The norms and constraints of this collective behavior make it more difficult to exit the mechanism. Exiting the mechanism could result in participating Singaporean higher education institutions losing funding support, reputation, and opportunities and resources for student enrollment (Lo, 2014). The Singapore government commissions agencies like the SQAA to conduct rigorous evaluations and certifications of universities' teaching quality, curriculum design, faculty strength, and other aspects. If a school does not meet the agency's requirements, it risks losing its certification and evaluation. This would lead to a loss of credibility and attractiveness, thereby affecting its enrollment and funding sources.

On the other hand, the constraints of the mechanism itself also promote increasing returns. The constraining nature of Singapore's higher education quality assurance mechanism ensures that regulations and standards are effectively implemented, incentivizing participants to improve their education quality and academic levels. The Committee for Private Education (CPE) registers and regulates private educational institutions to ensure they meet certain standards and requirements. These standards include teaching quality, curriculum design, student support services, and student protection. Private educational institutions must comply with these standards to be registered and enjoy government support and recognition. The registration status of institutions significantly impacts their reputation and enrollment capacity. Therefore, to obtain better returns and opportunities, private educational institutions tend to improve their teaching quality and service levels to meet CPE's requirements. By adhering to the rules and requirements of the mechanism, Singapore's higher education institutions can receive better returns and incentives, thereby promoting the improvement of higher education quality. These constraining regulations influence participants' behavior, making them inclined to pursue behavior that complies with the mechanism's requirements, enhancing the mechanism's effectiveness

and sustainability (Tremblay, Lalancette & Roseveare, 2012).

Micro Level: Dynamic Mechanisms Arising from Stakeholder Interests

Historical institutionalism posits that institutional transformation is driven by the interplay of interests among actors (Zhao, 2021). This perspective is equally applicable to the evolution of Singapore's higher education quality assurance mechanism. The driving forces behind the changes in the quality assurance mechanism primarily lie in the interests and interactions between third-party independent agencies and university entities.

Firstly, from the perspective of university entities: While being regulated by third-party independent agencies such as the CPE and SQAA, Singaporean universities seek to maintain a certain degree of academic autonomy, including independently designing curricula, admission standards, and teaching methods to ensure that their teaching and research adhere to the principles of academic freedom. They may perceive the intervention of the CPE and SQAA as a potential limit to their academic freedom. University entities also aim to enhance their reputation and competitiveness by providing high-quality education and research. At the same time, they may be concerned that the quality assessment mechanisms established by the CPE and SQAA are too stringent or unfair, potentially negatively impacting their reputation. Secondly, from the perspective of third-party independent agencies: Agencies such as the CPE and SQAA are responsible for developing and implementing the quality assurance framework to evaluate the educational quality levels of Singaporean universities. In this process, the CPE and SQAA aim to ensure that universities in Singapore adhere to certain quality standards to guarantee that students receive a high-quality education. They also strive for fairness and transparency in their evaluations to ensure that the quality assessments of universities are objective and accurate. Their primary interests revolve around quality assurance and standardization.

The entire quality certification process creates a conflict of interests and interaction between the universities and third-party independent agencies like the CPE and SQAA. In the development of the quality assurance mechanism, universities aim to enhance their reputation and competitiveness through evaluations and certifications from these agencies, while agencies like the CPE and SQAA need to ensure the fairness and professionalism of their evaluations and certifications. Third-party independent agencies typically establish evaluation standards and procedures and conduct regular evaluations and reviews of universities. Universities actively participate in the evaluation process and make improvements and adjustments based on the evaluation results. Conversely, universities also attempt to influence the standards and procedures of the evaluations to better align with their interests. This conflict of interests and interaction often becomes a key factor in the transformation of Singapore's higher education quality assurance mechanism.

Conclusions

Using historical institutionalism as an analytical framework reveals the institutional logic behind the transformation process of Singapore's higher education quality assurance mechanism. Through this theory, one can observe the impact of institutional continuity and inertia on reform, as well as how various interests and power dynamics shape this transformation process. In the field of higher education in Singapore, the transformation of the quality assurance mechanism is a complex and lengthy process. It is influenced not only by policymakers and educational institutions but also by historical traditions, social demands, and global competition. These factors interact to collectively shape the development path of the quality assurance mechanism. Over the past few decades, Singapore's higher education quality assurance mechanism has undergone several significant reforms. From initial self-regulation to subsequent external regulation, and now to a comprehensive quality assessment mechanism, each transformation has been aimed at adapting to the ever-changing educational environment and societal needs. However, the reform of the quality assurance mechanism is not a one-time effort. It requires long-term effort and continuous improvement. It is important to ensure that the reform process is transparent, fair, and sustainable to provide high-quality educational services for students and society. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to continuously improve and adapt the quality assurance mechanism. This means that we need to listen to the voices of all stakeholders, including students, educational institutions, and policymakers. Only through extensive cooperation and communication can an effective quality assurance mechanism be established to meet the needs and expectations of all parties. Additionally, attention must be paid to the impact of global competition. With the acceleration of globalization and the intensification of international competition, the higher education quality assurance mechanism needs to adapt to the ever-changing international standards and best practices.

Finally, we cannot ignore the importance of historical traditions. Compared to Singapore, our higher education system has a richer history and tradition; these traditions are our wealth and advantage. In reforming the quality assurance mechanism, we should respect these traditions and ensure that the reforms are in harmony with existing educational values and practices. To ensure the quality and sustainable development of higher education, we need to continuously improve the effectiveness and adaptability of the quality assurance mechanism. This requires recognizing the continuity and inertia of institutions and actively responding to social demands and global competition while respecting historical traditions. Only in this way can we provide high-quality educational services for students and society.

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