

# Reflection and Practice of Strengthening Undergraduate Specialty Assessment in Colleges and Universities

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**Abstract.** It is an important means for colleges and universities to carry out professional assessment in order to enhance the quality of undergraduate education and establish internal teaching quality control in colleges and universities. This paper explains the significance of undergraduate education assessment, analyzes the existing problems and reflects upon how to improve undergraduate education assessment.

## Introduction

In order to meet the needs of talents for China's economic construction and social development, higher education has conducted large-scale enrollment expansion since 1999. The pace of establishing new majors is accelerated in order to support the large-scale enrollment expansion. However, there is a lack of education resources, which results in some problems such as shortage of teachers, decline of overall quality, shortage of labs, equipment, books and practice base, rigid and backward training model and failure to meet the requirements of economic and social development. These hinder the improvement of teaching quality, and the Ministry of Education attaches great importance to it and started a five-year undergraduate education assessment. It can strengthen the connotation construction, establish long-term mechanism and improve training quality of talents through the comprehensive assessment of undergraduate education.

As the main task and key content of undergraduate education construction in colleges and universities, specialty construction includes the construction of teaching staff, teaching conditions and curriculum and reform of talent training model. It is the key content of undergraduate education level assessment. Strengthening specialty construction has become an important means to welcome the assessment of undergraduate teaching level and ensure teaching quality. Therefore, the colleges and universities begin to conduct intramural specialty assessment by the form of assessment. On one hand, they can conduct "rehearsal" for assessing the undergraduate teaching level so that the teachers and students can have a certain understanding of the work program and the contents. On the other hand, through the assessment of majors, they can understand specialty construction and help schools find the problem and "solve it specifically". It helps solve the problems existing in specialty construction. Meanwhile, the files and materials established during specialty assessment provide basis for the assessment of undergraduate teaching level<sup>[1]</sup>.

## Significance of undergraduate specialty assessment

Promote specialty construction and development

Undergraduate specialty assessment can help find out the main problems existing in specialty construction, make leaders, departments and schools pay more attention to specialty construction

and focus on specialty construction as an important task of teaching connotation construction, promote establishment and optimization of specialty teaching, help universities and schools further standardize and strengthen management of specialty construction, promote exchange and sharing of special construction experience and help improve specialty construction.

To promote the establishment and improvement of teaching quality control and assurance system

In a sense, undergraduate specialty assessment is the assessment of universities and schools. The assessment process can promote standardization of the work of universities and schools. The assessment results can greatly reflect the education condition and management level and promote establishment and improvement of teaching quality control and guarantee system.

Help specialties establish their own characteristics

Specialty varies from each other in educational foundation, positioning and key points of construction and development. Thus, it is difficult for them to develop their own characteristics. Undergraduate specialty assessment can discover the strengths and gaps of specialties, clarify goals of construction and help develop their own characteristics and the characteristics of subjects in colleges and universities.

Lay a foundation for accreditation of specialty

With the commencement of accreditation of specialty in China, the assessment of intramural specialty or new specialty has become a key means for colleges and universities to accelerate the pace of entering national specialty accreditation and win the recognition of society and industry. The implementation of intramural specialty assessment strives to be consistent with development objectives and some standards of national and governmental requirements and specialty accreditation, which lays a foundation for further achievement of specialty accreditation.

## **Analysis of existing problems in undergraduate specialty assessment in colleges and universities**

Imbalance of subject structure of assessment

Government, society and universities themselves are three main subjects of undergraduate specialty assessment in China's colleges and universities. Specific to undergraduate specialty assessment in colleges and universities, the government will organize human and material resources to carry out undergraduate specialty assessment based on the needs of management. Colleges and universities themselves are the carrier of undergraduate specialty construction and development. Problems existing in undergraduate specialty construction and development requires colleges and universities to have a deep understanding of themselves. Besides, the solving process is the process for colleges and universities to realize self-reform. In modern society, higher education entering social center needs to assume the function to meet social demands. The construction and development of undergraduate specialty needs to accept the supervision and accountability of the society. From the practical activities of undergraduate specialty assessment assumed by the government, society and universities, government and universities play a vital role in undergraduate specialty assessment. The low efficiency of society engaged in undergraduate specialty assessment reveals the imbalance of subject structure of undergraduate specialty assessment in China.

Imperfect assessment index system

Assessment index system is a basis for government, society and universities to conduct practices of undergraduate specialty assessment. A set of scientific and reasonable assessment index system can ensure the quality of undergraduate specialty assessment and promote the construction and development of undergraduate specialty. There exist the following problems by summarizing

the assessment index system followed by the assessment bodies in China to conduct undergraduate specialty assessment: First, the similarity of undergraduate specialty assessment index system among different colleges and universities is high. Second, assessment index system design is lack of specialty group concept. Third, the assessment results cannot meet the needs from different fields. Fourth, teaching level index focuses too much on the title of teachers.

#### Backward construction of assessment database

Backward construction of database is an obvious question faced by practices of China's higher education assessment. Undergraduate specialty assessment and even other assessment activities need to face complex data collection, arrangement and other work, which enhances the difficulty in carrying out assessment activities<sup>[2]</sup>. The assessment subjects are based on the current status of backward database construction. In the process of designing assessment index system, they may avoid the important and dwell on the trivial and give priority to easy access to data rather than the rationality and scientific nature of index system, which is obviously not helpful for ensuring the quality of assessment.

#### Uncoordinated internal and external incentives of assessment activities

External incentive plays a major role in practices of China's undergraduate specialty assessment, while internal incentive plays a minor role. External incentive mainly refers that implementation of assessment is driven by external administrative power top-down. Administrative power includes power of educational administrative department, such as the power of ministry, department and commission of education as well as the power of relevant management organizations and departments in universities<sup>[3]</sup>. The minor role of internal incentive means that grass-root faculties play a passive role in practices of undergraduate specialty assessment and they fail to bring their initiative, subjectivity and consciousness into full play. No matter how stronger the external incentive is, if the undergraduate specialty assessment cannot win the recognition and cooperation of relevant staff in grass-root faculties or make corresponding improvement and adjustment on this basis, the construction and development of undergraduate specialty will be affected in a negative way.

### **Countermeasures and suggestions of conducting specialty assessment**

Establishing a scientific, reasonable and operable index system lays a foundation for improving specialty assessment

Colleges and universities can organize and implement specialty assessment according to their own situation, develop assessment program and policies and establish assessment index system. Specialty assessment aims to improve quality of talent training. The development of specialty assessment system framework should measure and compare the important factors affecting quality of talent training, improve construction of specialty and improve quality of talent training.

Establishing perfect specialty assessment mechanism and organization is key to improving specialty assessment

Colleges and universities should establish the long-term mechanism of specialty assessment, improve establishment and adjustment of undergraduate specialty, establish predication mechanism of specialty establishment and strengthen the construction of characteristic specialties. Besides, they should continuously summarize specialty assessment experience, improve working level and promote construction of quality guarantee system of higher education<sup>[4]</sup>. In addition, they should improve specialty assessment organizations to ensure the effective implementation of specialty assessment. Moreover, they need to organize experts to discuss to further clarify the objectives of assessment, grasp the connotation of index, understand program and methods of assessment and

clarify specific tasks. They need to reach an agreement for measurement standards of elastic index and avoid ambiguity<sup>[5]</sup>.

Implementing self-assessment and self-construction of specialty is a key point to improve specialty assessment

The self-examination and self-assessment of specialty in faculties is the foundation and preparation stage of school assessment. Implementing self-assessment and self-construction of specialty is a key point to improve specialty assessment. Improving all the staff's understanding of specialty assessment is the basis for self-assessment and self-construction. In order to ensure the successful implementation of various tasks, universities should publicize to mobilize the teachers and staff in order to reach consensus, improve cognition, inspire and clarify their responsibilities. The leaders in the faculties should study and implement specialty assessment program and strive to clarify the work programs, contents and requirements, responsibilities of staff, implement strict quality standards and conduct supervision and examination<sup>[6]</sup>.

## Conclusion

Organizing and implementing undergraduate specialty assessment by colleges and universities is a key part of internal teaching quality guarantee and control system. Specialty construction quality assessment is a means to promote special construction. It can help various specialties lay a solid foundation for construction, improve teaching quality and training high-quality professional and technical talents for economic construction and social development.

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