

# A Study on the Balance between Efficiency and Effectiveness in Tertiary Education Administration Management

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**Abstract:** *As higher education advances, balancing efficiency and effectiveness in university administration has become increasingly vital. This paper examines the current state of administrative management in tertiary institutions, explores the root causes of inefficiencies, and proposes targeted strategies. Despite progress in areas like information management and process standardization, universities still face challenges such as incomplete management systems, disconnects between decision-making and implementation, and limited faculty and student engagement. To address these issues, the paper recommends optimizing administrative structures, enhancing managerial capacity, judicious resource allocation, and strengthening oversight mechanisms. These strategies aim to balance efficiency and effectiveness, fostering the overall development and competitiveness of higher education institutions.*

**Keywords:** *tertiary education; efficiency; effectiveness; balance; management system*

## 1. Introduction

As societal expectations for the quality of higher education continue to rise, the administrative management of universities plays a crucial role in determining overall operational efficiency and the quality of educational outcomes. However, in today's rapidly evolving educational landscape, university faces numerous challenges, with the tension between efficiency and effectiveness becoming increasingly pronounced. While the widespread adoption of information technology has led to significant improvements in management efficiency, outdated management practices, a disconnect between decision-making and implementation, and limited engagement from faculty and students have severely hindered the effectiveness of management practices. Ryabchenko pointed that the development of the personal potential of academic staff and higher education applicants as an integrated criterion for the effectiveness and efficiency of university management <sup>[1]</sup>. Therefore, a thorough examination of the balance between efficiency and effectiveness in university administration, along with the exploration of scientific and effective management strategies, is essential for fostering the intrinsic development of universities and enhancing their competitiveness.

## 2. Analysis of the State of Management Efficiency and Effectiveness in Universities

In the higher education system, administration serves as a crucial support structure, with its efficiency and effectiveness directly influencing the operational quality and development pace of the institution. Demin and Shusharina basing on the analysis of human resource management mechanisms of universities in Western Europe, the CIS countries, and the Baltic states, the efficiency and motivation improvement model for administrative and managerial personnel is proposed <sup>[2]</sup>. This section will analyze the current state of efficiency and effectiveness in university, in order to identify and reveal the existing problems and their underlying causes.

### 2.1. Assessment of the Current State of Administrative Efficiency in Universities

The efficiency of administrative management in universities serves as a key metric for evaluating the speed and quality of management activities. It not only impacts the smooth functioning of daily operations but also directly influences the overall effectiveness and competitiveness of the institution. In recent years, with the rapid development of higher education and the continuous advancement of

information technology, the administrative efficiency of universities has been significantly enhanced. Disruptive technologies such as AI, Big Data, and the intersection of cloud, social, and mobile have major impact on higher education.

Firstly, management processes have become increasingly standardized. Many universities have clarified the division of responsibilities and streamlined workflows across departments by establishing comprehensive management systems and detailed operational procedures. Eremenko et al. found that Effective quality management implies the distribution of responsibilities and the delegation of powers as a part of an institution's administration This standardization has not only improved work efficiency but also minimized errors and disputes arising from human factors <sup>[3]</sup>.

Secondly, the level of informatization has continued to advance. The widespread adoption of information technology has brought transformative changes to university administration. Awulor et al. pointed that information technology provides excellent options for quick and qualitative manipulation to improve the standard of decision-making preparation by organising the best and optimal database <sup>[4]</sup>. The scientific research information system plays an essential role in improving management efficiency and promoting technological innovation in universities. By developing and refining information management systems, universities have achieved rapid data transmission and sharing, significantly enhancing the transparency and traceability of management activities. Additionally, information technology enables administrators to access various management data in a more timely and accurate manner, providing robust support for informed and scientific decision-making.

However, despite the advancements in administrative efficiency within colleges, several persistent challenges remain. First, the decision-making process is often protracted. In some institutions, the decision-making process is slow and inefficient due to excessive layers of bureaucracy and complex procedures. Second, interdepartmental collaboration is frequently hindered. The management system in universities is vast and intricate, often leading to conflicts in responsibilities and differing perspectives across departments. In the absence of effective communication and collaboration mechanisms, departments can become siloed, resulting in a waste of resources and duplication of efforts. Third, resource mismanagement is a significant issue. The waste of management resources is a problem that cannot be overlooked. Some universities lack scientific planning and reasonable allocation of resources, leading to either underutilization or overuse of certain assets.

## ***2.2. Review of the current situation of administrative management effectiveness in universities***

The effectiveness of administrative management in universities refers to the actual effect of management activities in realizing the development goals of schools and meeting the needs of teachers and students. It is one of the important standards for measuring the level of administrative management in universities. At present, with the deepening of the reform of higher education and the increasing diversification of the needs of teachers and students, the administrative effectiveness of colleges and universities is facing new challenges and opportunities.

On the one hand, the administrative management effectiveness of colleges and universities has been improved. By strengthening internal management, optimizing resource allocation and improving service quality, the administrative efficiency of colleges and universities has been improved to a certain extent. For example, some colleges have improved the satisfaction and trust of teachers and students through the establishment of a perfect service system for teachers and students and a feedback mechanism for complaints; and improved the level of teaching and research and academic influence by strengthening the management of teaching and research and optimizing the allocation of resources.

However, on the other hand, there are still many deficiencies in the administrative effectiveness of universities. First, the service consciousness is not strong. In some colleges and universities, managers are still accustomed to the traditional management mode, service consciousness and humanistic care is not enough. They tend to think from their own point of view, and ignore the needs and feelings of teachers and students. This phenomenon of weak service consciousness not only reduces the effectiveness of management but also damages the image of the school. Secondly, the innovation ability is insufficient. With the deepening of the reform of higher education and the increasingly diversified needs of teachers and students, college administration and management need to constantly innovate to adapt to the new situation and new requirements. However, in some colleges and universities due to backward management concepts, management mode is old and other reasons lead to a lack of innovation and innovation ability of managers. They often stick to the old rules and regulations, and it is difficult to adapt to the new requirements of higher education reform and new changes in the needs of teachers and

students. This lack of innovative ability not only limits the administrative efficiency of universities and constrains the long-term development of the school. Third, the allocation of resources is unreasonable. In the administrative management of colleges and universities, the rationality of resource allocation is directly related to the level of management effectiveness. Some departments or programs get too much resources while others are in lack of resources; Such irrational allocation of resources not only reduces management effectiveness but also wastes the school's resources.

### ***2.3. Case Study of Efficiency and Effectiveness Imbalance***

Using a university as a case study, the imbalance between efficiency and effectiveness in its administrative processes provides valuable insight into the broader challenges faced by higher education institutions. This imbalance not only hampers the institution's operational stability and development pace but also obstructs its progress toward achieving higher standards.

Firstly, there is an overemphasis on efficiency at the expense of effectiveness. While the university has made notable strides in enhancing administrative efficiency—such as by adopting advanced information management systems and establishing a digital campus platform to automate tasks in teaching, student, and financial management—this focus on efficiency has, to some extent, overshadowed the importance of effectiveness.

Secondly, the inadequacies of the management system present significant challenges. Despite the support provided by information technology, the university's management system remains flawed, particularly in its unclear division of responsibilities and excessive hierarchical levels. The ambiguity in departmental responsibilities often leads to shirking of duties and unclear accountability. These systemic shortcomings not only diminish management efficiency but also critically undermine its effectiveness.

Thirdly, the disconnect between decision-making and implementation is a critical issue. The university's administrative management suffers from poor alignment and interaction between decision-makers and implementers, largely due to an inadequate management system and ineffective communication channels. This disconnect not only leads to resource and time wastage but also places the university's administration in a state of inefficiency.

Finally, there is a notable lack of participation from faculty and students. As key stakeholders and direct beneficiaries of the university's administration, the limited involvement of faculty and students in decision-making processes is a significant concern. Without adequate participation mechanisms and communication platforms, it is difficult to fully incorporate the insights and suggestions of faculty and students into management decisions, leading to policies that may not fully reflect their actual needs and interests. This lack of involvement further exacerbates the imbalance between efficiency and effectiveness.

In summary, the imbalance between efficiency and effectiveness in the university's administrative management is a complex and deeply rooted issue. Therefore, it is imperative for the university to critically assess these issues and implement effective measures to achieve a harmonious balance between administrative efficiency and effectiveness.

## **3. Analysis of the Reasons for the Imbalance Between Administrative Efficiency and Effectiveness in Universities**

### ***3.1. Reasons at the System Level***

The administrative system forms the foundation of university management, and its design directly impacts both efficiency and effectiveness. Deficiencies in system design within some universities are key contributors to the imbalance between efficiency and effectiveness. Woelert research showing that administrative burden can impact universities' core activities not only indirectly but also more directly [5]. Firstly, an unclear division of responsibilities is a significant factor leading to diminished management effectiveness. In the vast administrative structure of universities, the lack of clearly defined roles and the absence of effective communication and collaboration mechanisms often result in departmental conflicts, with responsibilities being shirked and management resources wasted. Kayode and Naicker evident that administrative process intervenes in the correlation between distributed leadership and public university effectiveness. This lack of efficient collaboration not only reduces management efficiency but also leads to duplication of efforts [6]. Secondly, an inadequate incentive mechanism is a crucial factor that stifles the enthusiasm and creativity of administrators. This deficiency in motivation leads to a weak sense of

innovation among managers, significantly hindering the improvement of administrative management effectiveness in universities.

### ***3.2. Reasons at the Management Level***

Management concepts, models, and tools are critical determinants of the efficiency and effectiveness of university administration. Currently, issues in these areas within some universities contribute to the imbalance between efficiency and effectiveness.

Firstly, outdated management concepts are the root cause of weak service orientation. In some universities, administrators continue to rely on traditional management approaches, lacking a service-oriented mindset and people-centered care. This outdated management philosophy fails to engage the enthusiasm of faculty and students, thereby reducing management effectiveness.

Secondly, rigid management models are the primary reason for the lack of innovation. As higher education reforms deepen and the needs of faculty and students diversify, university administration requires continuous innovation to adapt to new circumstances and demands. However, in some universities, the management models are too rigid, lacking flexibility and innovation. Consequently, administrators often struggle to address new challenges effectively.

Thirdly, outdated management methods are also significant contributors to low management efficiency. In the information age, the level of digitalization is a key indicator of the quality of administrative management in universities. Strengthening digital infrastructure and improving the level of digitalization are necessary steps for universities to enhance administrative efficiency.

### ***3.3. Reasons at the Resource Level***

Resource allocation is a critical factor influencing the efficiency and effectiveness of college administration. Uneven resource allocation is a primary cause of lagging development in certain areas. In university administration, the allocation of resources directly impacts the development speed and effectiveness of departments and programs. However, in some institutions, uneven distribution of resources occurs frequently due to unsound resource allocation mechanisms and a lack of transparency. Resource wastage is another major factor limiting the improvement of administrative effectiveness in colleges and universities. In some institutions, poor management and weak supervision lead to widespread resource waste. For example, the redundant purchase of office equipment, frequent organization of conferences, and excessive use of public facilities all contribute to resource wastage. This waste not only increases the financial burden on the university but also reduces management effectiveness and operational efficiency. Inefficient resource utilization is a key reason for the lack of management effectiveness. In some colleges and universities, the absence of a scientific evaluation and supervision mechanism results in frequent instances of inefficient resource use. Some departments and programs lack proper planning and effective resource utilization, leading to idle or wasted resources, while others struggle to meet normal operational demands due to resource shortages. Therefore, establishing a robust evaluation and supervision mechanism and enhancing resource utilization efficiency are crucial for improving administrative efficiency in colleges and universities.

## **4. Strategies and Paths for Balancing Efficiency and Effectiveness in University Management**

### ***4.1 Optimizing the Administrative Management System***

It is essential to promote the reform and innovation of the management system. Optimizing the administrative management system is foundational to improving both management efficiency and effectiveness. To begin with, the responsibilities and authorities of management departments at all levels must be clearly defined to prevent overlapping responsibilities and the shirking of duties. This can be achieved by developing detailed job descriptions, clarifying the scope of work, setting task objectives, and delineating responsibilities for each department, thereby ensuring that management activities are conducted in an orderly manner. Additionally, the management hierarchy should be streamlined to reduce decision-making delays and implementation challenges caused by excessive layers of management.

Strengthening the participation of faculty and students and improving transparency in management are crucial. Faculty and student engagement is a vital means of enhancing the effectiveness of university administration. A robust mechanism should be established to encourage active participation of teachers

and students in the university's management and decision-making processes. By enhancing participation and transparency, universities can increase the recognition and support of their management decisions, thereby improving management effectiveness.

Establishing sound incentive and constraint mechanisms is key to stimulating the enthusiasm and creativity of managers. A scientific and reasonable salary system and promotion mechanism should be put in place to offer managers competitive compensation and ample opportunities for career development.

#### ***4.2. Enhancing Management Capacity***

Managers are the driving force behind effective university administration. Their professionalism and comprehensive abilities should be continually enhanced through dedicated training and learning opportunities. Managers should be encouraged to actively engage in management practices and research activities, integrating theoretical knowledge with practical experience to continuously improve their management competencies.

Advanced management approaches provide significant support for improving the effectiveness of university administration. Universities should actively adopt leading management concepts and models from both domestic and international sources, such as human-centered management, refined management, and performance management. These approaches can infuse new energy and innovation into the administrative management of colleges and universities.

Managers should be educated to prioritize service, cultivating a service-oriented approach that focuses on the needs and experiences of faculty and students. By addressing their concerns and providing high-quality support, administrators can significantly improve the overall campus environment.

#### ***4.3. Scientific Allocation and Utilization of Resources***

Effective resource allocation is essential for enhancing the effectiveness of university administration. A scientifically grounded resource allocation plan should be developed based on the actual conditions and developmental needs of the institution. A robust resource coordination mechanism should be established to facilitate communication and collaboration between departments, enabling the sharing and complementation of resources. By coordinating and sharing resources, universities can avoid duplication and waste, thereby improving both the efficiency and effectiveness of resource use.

A well-designed evaluation and supervision system is critical to ensuring the effective use of resources. This involves creating a scientific evaluation index system and methodology for regular assessments and feedback adjustments concerning resource utilization. The implementation of such an evaluation and supervision mechanism allows for the timely identification and resolution of issues and inefficiencies in resource use, ultimately promoting the optimal utilization of resources and maximizing their benefits.

#### ***4.4. Strengthening Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms***

This system should encompass both internal and external supervision. By effectively integrating internal and external supervision, universities can create a comprehensive, multi-level supervision system that ensures accountability and transparency in management activities.

As key stakeholders, teachers and students play an important role in both participating in and supervising university administrative activities. Their involvement in the management and decision-making processes should be actively encouraged. Mechanisms such as suggestion boxes for collecting feedback, satisfaction surveys, and regular teacher-student forums or hearings can be used to gather opinions and suggestions from the university community.

### **5. Conclusion**

In conclusion, this paper has conducted an in-depth analysis of the current state of administrative efficiency and effectiveness in colleges and universities, identifying the root causes of the imbalance between the two, and proposing corresponding strategies and pathways. The study demonstrates that optimizing the administrative management system, enhancing management capacity and capability, scientifically allocating and utilizing resources, and strengthening monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are critical to achieving a balance between administrative efficiency and effectiveness in

universities.

Moving forward, colleges and universities should continue to deepen management system reforms, advance digitalization efforts, and improve the transparency and scientific basis of management decisions. These efforts will not only address the current imbalance between efficiency and effectiveness in university administration but also lay a solid foundation for the sustainable development of higher education, enabling universities to thrive in an increasingly competitive environment.

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