

Power List System: Dilemmas and Innovation Paths for Optimizing the Internal Governance Structure of Universities

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The power list system is significant in optimizing the internal governance structure of universities. However, during implementation, this system faces dilemmas such as unclear power boundaries, lack of effective supervision and checks on power exercise, and inadequate understanding among governance entities. The main reasons for these dilemmas are influenced by human factors and institutional inertia, imperfect supervision and feedback mechanisms, and differences in institutional culture. The innovation path requires universities to scientifically determine powers in accordance with laws and regulations, standardize power operation processes, disclose power list information, strengthen power supervision and restraint, and continuously optimize and dynamically adjust the power list.

Keywords: power list, list system, university governance, governance structure

The Meaning and Value of the Power List System in University Internal Governance

A power list refers to a document that clearly outlines the power scope and responsibilities of various management levels, departments, and individuals within an organization, laying the foundation for transparency and standardization of the organization's governance structure (Guan, 2015). The implementation of the power list system is an institutional arrangement that establishes diverse and collaborative governance by different types of development entities. In university internal governance, the core of the power list system lies in clearly defining the boundaries and exercise rules of various powers within the university, and making public the subjects of power exercise, exercise basis, exercise procedures, and supervision methods in the form of a list, subject to the supervision of all teachers and students. By implementing the power list, the exercise of internal powers within the university can be effectively regulated, preventing the occurrence of power abuse and power rent-seeking, promoting the process of legalization, enhancing decision-making transparency, and ensuring academic freedom.

Firstly, the power list system contributes to advancing the legalization process of universities. With the

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starting points of confirming, limiting, and supervising powers (Li, 2019), the power list system clarifies the sources, bases, and operating rules of powers, establishes and improves supporting systems and safeguard mechanisms, and makes power exercise more transparent. It is an inevitable choice for regulating administrative powers in universities, which is not only conducive to preventing power abuse and secret operations, protecting the rights and interests of teachers and students, but also helps to enhance mutual supervision and checks and balances among different management levels, promote the process of legalization, and realize the autonomy of universities.

Secondly, by disclosing power information and enhancing information transparency, the power list system enables teachers, students, and all sectors of society to promptly understand relevant information, which is conducive to building a streamlined, rapid, and efficient decision-making mechanism, enhancing the credibility of internal decision-making, promoting the process of democratization, ensuring that every decision is in line with the long-term interests of university development, and protecting the legitimate rights and interests of the university and its teachers and students.

Thirdly, by clearly delineating the boundaries between academic and administrative powers, scientifically and rationally allocating internal resources of the university, and avoiding excessive administrative intervention in academic affairs, the power list system provides strong support for academic freedom, helps to build an open, orderly, and efficient internal governance environment, creates a harmonious, free, and innovative academic environment, and effectively stimulates the innovative vitality of universities, laying a good environmental foundation for knowledge innovation and talent cultivation.

In summary, the power list is a means to promote the transformation of government functions and realize streamlined administration and delegation of powers, with the aim of regulating and restraining the operation of powers (Liu & Zhang, 2016). The introduction of the power list system clarifies the boundaries of powers and responsibilities of various governance entities within the university, helping to break the drawbacks of excessive power concentration and opaque decision-making in the traditional governance structure. Through list-based management, various types of powers within the university, such as academic and administrative powers, are clearly delineated, which not only guarantees the independence and freedom of academic research but also improves the standardization and efficiency of administrative management. It is conducive to enhancing the transparency and credibility of governance, strengthening the sense of participation and belonging of teachers, students, and staff, and laying a solid foundation for building a modern university governance system.

Difficulties and Cause Analysis of Implementing the Power List System in Local Universities

With the deepening of the modernization of the educational governance system and governance capacity, the power list system, as one of the important paths to optimize the internal governance structure of local universities, theoretically has many advantages. However, in implementing the power list system in local universities, there are still many challenges such as inadequate legal supporting systems, unclear boundaries of various powers, weakened democratic supervision, unclear management responsibilities at the university and college levels, and insufficient vitality at the grassroots level (Wen, 2016).

Firstly, the boundaries of power are not clearly defined. The core of the power list system lies in clearly defining the boundaries and exercise rules of power. However, in the implementation process of local universities, the issue of unclear power boundaries is prominent. Due to historical reasons and institutional inertia, the internal

power division in local universities is not clear, and there are cases of power crossover, overlap, and ambiguity. For example, in teaching management, there are ambiguous areas in the scope of power between the teaching affairs office, secondary colleges, and teachers, leading to phenomena such as responsibility shirking or power struggles in curriculum design, teaching reform, and other matters. Similarly, in student management work, the power definition for some specific affairs between the student affairs department, counselors, and various colleges is not clear, affecting management efficiency and educational effectiveness. How to scientifically and rationally divide power to ensure that it is not overly centralized or overly dispersed is a technical challenge.

Secondly, the exercise of power lacks effective supervision and checks and balances. The supporting systems and safeguard mechanisms related to the power list system are not yet complete, resulting in unclear and nonspecific definitions of power boundaries and difficulty in forming an effective power restraint mechanism. On the one hand, the formulation and implementation of the power list exhibit a top-down, administratively dominant logical characteristic. The administrative agencies of universities have significant discretionary power (Sun, 2020), and internal oversight bodies lack independence and authority, making it difficult to conduct comprehensive, timely, and fair oversight over the exercise of power. On the other hand, the channels for teachers and students to participate in oversight are not sufficiently open, and there is a lack of effective information feedback mechanisms, making it difficult for oversight to play its due role. For example, in the use of research project funds, although there are clear power regulations, there may be loopholes in the actual oversight process, resulting in improper use of funds that is not timely discovered and corrected.

Thirdly, some faculty and staff have insufficient understanding and comprehension of the power list system, and there are deviations in the implementation process. Some individuals may be accustomed to traditional management methods and do not attach sufficient importance to the power list, making it difficult for the power list system to be effectively implemented in actual operations. For example, when handling affairs, some administrative personnel still rely on past experience and subjective judgments, neglecting the procedures and authorities stipulated in the power list, thereby causing confusion and irregularities in work. Additionally, due to inadequate publicity and training on the power list system, some faculty and staff have insufficient understanding of its role and are unable to correctly use the power list to safeguard their legitimate rights and interests.

In the implementation process of the power list system in university governance, a series of obstacles and challenges are encountered. The main reasons are as follows.

Firstly, the clarity and specificity of the power list are often influenced by human factors during implementation. The inertia of the traditional management system often leads to resistance in the formulation and implementation of the power list, and some managers may resist reforms due to concerns about power restrictions. For example, in some universities, due to ambiguous power boundaries and entangled interests, there are issues of subjective interpretation and arbitrary exercise in the implementation of the power list, leading to obstacles in the exercise of power listed in the list and even abuses of power and *ultra vires* acts, seriously affecting the fairness and efficiency of university governance.

Secondly, the supervision and feedback mechanisms in the implementation of the power list are inadequate. The lack of effective oversight mechanisms not only weakens the authority of the system but also may lead to concealed operations of power, making it difficult to guarantee the implementation of the power list. At the same time, the lack of open feedback channels also leads to difficulties in timely identifying and resolving issues. It is necessary to flexibly adjust the implementation methods of the power list and establish effective supervision and

feedback mechanisms in response to different issues and situations.

Thirdly, the implementation of the power list system in university governance also faces obstacles related to institutional cultural differences. Different universities have differences in governance concepts, organizational structures, and cultural traditions, which lead to varying degrees of effectiveness in the implementation of the power list system across different universities. Therefore, when advancing the power list system, it is necessary to fully consider the actual situation of each university and formulate and implement the list according to local conditions to ensure its effectiveness and feasibility.

In response to the obstacles and challenges in implementing the power list system, we not only need to further improve the clarity and specificity of the power list and reduce the influence of human factors but also establish and improve the supervision and feedback mechanisms for the implementation of the power list system to ensure that the implementation of the power list is effectively guaranteed. At the same time, we should further strengthen the development of institutional culture and promote exchanges and integration in governance concepts, organizational structures, and cultural traditions among universities to create a favorable environment for the implementation of the power list system.

Pathways for the Innovation of Internal Governance Structures in Universities Based on the Power List System

The power list system, as an important measure for modernizing government governance, has achieved good results in practice. However, considering the nature and functions of universities, as key institutions for education and cultivation, universities possess unique characteristics distinct from enterprises and governments. Academic exploration is inherently uncertain (Liu, 2020). Although the power list system encounters some difficulties in its implementation within universities, the role of this system in optimizing internal governance structures and enhancing governance efficiency in universities cannot be underestimated. To overcome these difficulties and achieve effective implementation of the power list system in university internal governance, it is necessary to establish a complete set of operational mechanisms.

Firstly, define power boundaries and formulate a power list. Administrative power has an inherent tendency to expand; thus, it is necessary to restrain this “wild horse” through the power list system. Currently, the diverse and collaborative governance structure of universities provides a realistic foundation for clarifying the boundaries of different power entities and implementing the power list system (Li, 2018). Universities should comprehensively review the legal authorities of various departments and positions based on laws, regulations, and university bylaws, clarify the management boundaries between the university and its schools/departments, and clearly delineate power scopes and responsibility contents to ensure that every power has a legal basis and can be exercised according to rules, thereby regulating and supporting the autonomy of schools/departments (Zhang, 2021). For example, in academic matters, clarify the core powers of academic committees in academic evaluation, discipline development planning, etc., while also clarifying the responsibilities of teaching management departments in curriculum design and teaching quality monitoring. Based on the review of legal authorities, compile a directory of administrative authorities for each department, solidify the authorities of administrative departments in the form of a list, and clarify elements such as the name, category, exercising entity, and exercising basis of each authority. Additionally, establish a position responsibility system based on the principle of appropriate separation of decision-making, execution, and supervision. Reasonably divide the responsibilities, authorities, work procedures, and target specifications of the leaders in charge and internal

departments, clarify the responsibilities and obligations of each position, and assign them to specific positions and individuals to avoid management chaos caused by overlapping powers and unclear responsibilities.

Secondly, standardize power operation processes and disclose power information. The specific processes for exercising power should be reviewed and reconstructed. It is necessary to establish a power operation process mapping institution composed of experts from inside and outside the university, representatives of teachers and students, etc., scientifically draw power operation flowcharts, clarify the order, steps, time limits, and supervision methods for exercising power, ensure that the power operation processes are scientific, rational, smooth, efficient, and widely recognized, and enhance the transparency and controllability of power exercise. The flowcharts should be concise and easy to understand and operate. For example, in the approval of scientific research projects, specify the specific steps and participants from application, preliminary review, expert evaluation to final decision-making to ensure the scientificity and fairness of decision-making. The soul of the power list system lies in information disclosure (Cheng, 2014). Universities should utilize modern information technology and comprehensively disclose the power list and power operation flowcharts through various channels such as the campus network and bulletin boards to accept supervision from teachers, students, and all sectors of society and enhance the transparency and credibility of power exercise.

Thirdly, strengthen power supervision and restriction. Establish and improve the internal supervision mechanism, clarify the supervision subjects, contents, and methods, and strengthen the supervision of the whole process of power exercise. Discipline inspection and supervision, auditing, and other departments should fully perform their functions, conduct regular inspections and special audits on the exercise of power, and promptly correct any issues found. In the process of supervision, there may be information asymmetry and insufficient supervision, so it is necessary to introduce external supervision forces such as social supervision and public opinion supervision, broaden supervision channels, and enhance supervision effectiveness.

Fourthly, improve the mechanism of responsibility investigation and rewards and punishments. Enhance the interpretation of the power list system, identify key areas for its implementation, and establish a functionally well-defined, reasonably divided, consistent with powers and responsibilities, and efficient system in accordance with the law. From comprehensive review to adjustment and cleanup, and then to review and publication, ensure scientific, standardized, and orderly progress (Yan, 2017). Give recognition and rewards to departments and individuals that exercise power and perform their duties according to the law; seriously deal with departments and individuals that exercise power in violation of laws and regulations. Through the mechanism of rewards and punishments, form effective constraints and deterrence on the exercise of power.

Fifthly, continuously optimize and dynamically adjust the power list. Establish and improve the dynamic adjustment mechanism of the power list, regularly evaluate and summarize the implementation of the power list system, and make timely adjustments based on the needs of internal school governance and changes in the external environment to maintain the flexibility and adaptability of the system. Actively listen to the opinions and suggestions of teachers, students, and all sectors of society, strengthen communication and interest coordination, and continuously improve the feedback mechanism of the power list system.

In summary, as an important institutional innovation, the power list system has far-reaching significance and value in exploring the optimization of the internal governance structure of universities, balancing power conflicts among different stakeholders, promoting academic freedom and innovation, and enhancing governance effectiveness. However, in the process of implementation, it is necessary to confront problems and challenges directly, and at the same time, clarify the nature and positioning of the power list to prevent it from transgressing

the law (Shen, 2015). Its basic function is to achieve openness and transparency of power. By constructing a scientific and reasonable operational mechanism, it can fully exert its effectiveness, effectively enhance the level of internal governance of universities, promote the high-quality development of local universities, and facilitate the modern transformation of the university governance system.

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