Monitoring the Quality of After-school Services: Theoretical Logic, System Construction and Implementation Mechanisms

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Abstract

With the introduction of the "double reduction" policy in 2021, China's after-school services have begun the historical process of germination, exploration, development and deepening. With the full coverage of after-school services, it is urgent to monitor the quality of after-school services, which is also in line with the requirements of the report of the 20th National Congress that "we should adhere to the people-centred development of education, accelerate the construction of high-quality education, accelerate the construction of a high-quality education system, develop quality education and promote educational equity". Monitoring the quality of after-school services is a systematic, process-oriented and cyclical practice. The construction of a monitoring system should systematically integrate elements such as government, headmasters, teachers and parents, and should establish a collaborative mechanism of multiple subjects with clear responsibilities, an innovative mechanism of testing tools driven by big data, and a comprehensive mechanism for the long-term operation of the testing system.

Key words: After-school service; Quality monitoring; Monitoring system; High-quality development

In July 2021, the General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the General Office of the State Council issued the Opinions on Further Reducing the Burden of Homework and Off-Campus Training on Students in Compulsory Education (hereinafter referred to as "Double Reduction"), which clearly proposed to improve the level of after-school services and meet the diversified needs of students. Subsequently, governments and schools around the world quickly launched various pilot schemes in terms of the content, form and resources of after-school services, and many distinctive models of after-school services emerged. However, after a period of open experimentation, whether we have high-level quality standards for after-school services, which can clearly and efficiently guide school practice and reduce the cost of repeated "trial and error", is crucial to enhancing the effectiveness of "double reduction", promoting high-quality development, facilitating students' It is more important to respond to social concerns and address parents' "urgent concerns and expectations" than to emphasize coverage, participation rates and visions of school construction, and to strengthen regulatory measures.

1. THEORETICAL LOGIC OF MONITORING THE QUALITY OF AFTER-SCHOOL SERVICES

1.1 Definition of Core Concepts

The definition of "after-school services for primary and secondary schools" in the Ministry of Education's document means that "after-school services are provided by public schools as the main body to provide free care services for parents of students who need them, mainly by arranging for students to do homework, independent reading, sports, arts and science activities, as well as

recreational games, extension activities, clubs and interest groups. The content of the service is mainly to arrange homework, independent reading, sports, arts and science activities, as well as recreational games, extension training, clubs and interest groups, watching child-friendly films, etc., and to promote free tutorial assistance for individual students with learning difficulties".

It is clear from this definition that the nature of after-school services as educational services dictates that the essence of after-school school services is that they are after-school 'learning' services, where care and custody accompany 'learning' and are transformed through 'learning'. "The form and content of after-school care and nursery services have a nurturing value.

1.2 Internal Logic

"Quality" is a historical and new concept. Not only does the definition of "quality" often vary in connotation depending on the perspective from which it is understood, but the development and expansion of the concept of quality is always influenced by economic and social development and technological progress. In general management theory, the understanding of the meaning of "quality" is often linked to specific products or services, especially in societies with low productivity, where quality is generally closely linked to physical products and the understanding of "quality" is limited to The understanding of 'quality' was limited to the requirement that products conform to basic production standards and specifications. As society progresses and the economy develops, the demands of the market become more pronounced and 'quality' is not only about meeting production standards, but also about meeting the needs of the market. As competition in the market becomes increasingly fierce, it is important to manage and control the various aspects of quality and to reduce costs in order to improve competitiveness. The definition of quality as defined by international standards organisations refers to the inherent ability of a product, system or process to meet the requirements of customers and other stakeholders. As can be seen, quality is a complex and all-encompassing concept. In other words, quality encompasses not only the 'product' itself, but also the 'process', i.e. the series of operations in which inputs are transformed into outputs, and the needs and expectations of the parties involved (Xue, 2015).

In the case of after-school services, I believe that 'quality' comes from 'management', and that improving the quality of after-school services in schools is essentially a management issue. Monitoring the key points that affect the quality of after-school services is an important attempt to repair the education ecology, promote balanced development of education and ensure the healthy growth of all students.

1.3 Overview of Research

The research on after-school services in the domestic academic community basically revolves around three dimensions: subject, theme and strategy. The main dimension focuses on schools and parents. One emphasises the active role of schools and teachers (Zhao, Nie, 2022; Liang, et al., 2022; Yuan, et al., 2022); the other emphasises the joint role of schools and society (including parents) (He, et al., 2022; Bian, 2021; Zhang, 2021). Research under the thematic dimension encompasses both domestic and foreign after-school services, with domestic after-school services-related research focusing on four research categories, including the gap between supply and demand (Xiang, et al., 2018), current situation responses (Yang, et al., 2022), case models (Deng, 2021), and functional analysis (Liu, 2018; Zhang, et al., 2021), while research on foreign countries focuses on developed countries' After-school service policy system (Zeng, et al., 2022; Guo, 2017), service model (Du, et al., 2022), functional analysis (Zhang, 2020), and effectiveness and inspiration (Jia, et al., 2021). The strategy dimension mainly emphasizes that after-school services should be integrated with children's living environment, such as science and technology museums, museums, and children's palaces in cities, and sericulture, hand weaving, and folk non-heritage in townships (Yang, et al. 2022; Liu, 2023; Liu, 2022).

Through literature collation, it is found that although after-school services have entered the academic horizon, the research on after-school services is still at the beginning stage, and there are still outstanding problems: Firstly, in terms of content, it mostly focuses on the summary and promotion of practical experiences of specific school cases, but fails to explore the inner mechanism of improving the quality of school after-school services, especially the lack of using the "double reduction "Secondly, in terms of methodology, most of the research has explored various innovative practices of after-school services at all levels and in all types of schools from a practical perspective, but there is a relative lack of systematic theoretical research and empirical design to support and verify them. Thirdly, in terms of structure, the practical framework and structure of the objectives, contents, and service models of after-school services are mostly proposed from the practical level of policy implementation, and there is a lack of refinement of research levels under the framework of education service capacity building system.

2. SYSTEM CONSTRUCTION FOR MONITORING THE QUALITY OF AFTER-SCHOOL SERVICES

2.1 Monitoring Connotation

Dr. Joseph H. Juran, a world-renowned expert in quality management, raised the issue of the weighting of responsibility for quality based on a large number of

actual surveys and statistical analyses. He believes that only 20% of the causes of quality problems come from implementation, while 80% of quality problems are due to top-level design.

The importance of top-level design-related elements in the international standard IS09000 is an objective confirmation of the general rule reflected in Dr Juran's '8020 principle'. Dr Juran's principle of "identifying the critical few, highlighting the critical few, and focusing on the priority few" is the theoretical core of the key point control method used in this study.

The critical point monitoring method goes beyond traditional empirics and combines scientific methods with empirical findings to achieve optimum results. Firstly, the key point monitoring method does not limit itself to isolated analysis from a single factor, but considers a project as a multifactorial, multi-level complex system, pursuing the maximisation and optimisation of overall effectiveness. Secondly, the key point monitoring method has the ability to control the actions that occur in order to achieve the goal, and can guide the whole implementation process by monitoring several key aspects, timely detection and correction of problems, and the successful achievement of the goal. Finally, the key point monitoring method focuses on a small number of easily quantifiable and easily observable key points, so it is not only easy to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses, but also to see the effectiveness.

2.2 Systemic Elements
Monitoring the quality of after-school services is a systemic project, not a one-man show by one or both government, schools, markets and families, but requires the active participation of multiple parties. Therefore, the governance of after-school services is pluralistic, and each governance body plays an important function in the process of governance (Liu, 2022).

First, the government acts as the "master designer" of after-school services. The government should formulate appropriate policies to encourage schools and the market to participate in after-school services, and regulate all aspects of the after-school service process through the system, including the formulation of project standards, process planning, resource allocation and the creation of service venues, so as to reduce the formalism of school after-school services and ensure the quality of after-school services. Secondly, the headmaster should be the "leader" of the after-school service programme. Headmasters are expected to lead all aspects of the project, including optimisation of teaching and learning, development of resources and guidance on homework design, in order to lead the development of quality after-school services. Thirdly, teachers should be the "implementers" of the after-school service programme. Teachers should have the awareness and ability to implement and improve the project, and be able to plan the overall development of the after-school service and classroom teaching.

Teachers should have the awareness and capacity to implement and improve the programme, to plan the integrated development of after-school services and classroom teaching, to enhance teachers' professional well-being and self-efficacy, and to ensure the quality of programme implementation. Fourthly, parents are the 'participants' in the after-school programme. Parents are expected to develop the correct educational philosophy, communicate with the school, understand learning potential and synchronise key knowledge, and actively collaborate with resources through the Internet to help improve the quality of the school's after-school programme.

Based on research and studies conducted at home and abroad, we have developed a model for monitoring the quality of after-school services in four dimensions: headmasters, teachers, parents and service programmes, so as to make a dynamic diagnosis of the quality of education services in schools in the context of "double reduction" and ensure that after-school services are accurate and efficient.

3. MECHANISM FOR MONITORING THE QUALITY OF AFTER-SCHOOL SERVICES

3.1 Clarify Responsibilities and Establish a Collaborative Mechanism of Multiple Subjects
In the monitoring system, the monitoring subjects include both the implementation subjects and the participating subjects(Zhang Qichun & Mei Ying,2020). The monitoring bodies should clarify their respective responsibilities and work together to improve and enhance the quality of after-school services.

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implementation. Fourthly, parents are the "participants" in the after-school programme. Parents are expected to sort out the correct educational philosophy, take the initiative to communicate with the school, understand the learning potential and synchronise key knowledge, and actively collaborate with resources through the Internet to help improve the quality of the school's after-school service programme in any way they can.

3.2 Establishing a Quality Assessment System to Ensure the High-Quality Development of After-School Services

The evaluation of the after-school service policy not only encompasses the assessment of the scientific and rationalisation degree of the formulation of the implementation plan, but also covers the monitoring of the effectiveness of the implementation of the after-school service policy (Liu, 2003). A quality assessment mechanism for after-school services is an inherent requirement for improving the quality of after-school services. On the one hand, the education administration should assess the rationality and effectiveness of policy formulation related to after-school services in accordance with the Ministry of Education's after-school services-related documents, promptly correct policy implementation deviations, and guide schools to establish systematic and scientific systems and implementation programmes. On the other hand, schools should build a risk monitoring and evaluation mechanism for teachers' after-school services and conduct dynamic and scientific monitoring of the effectiveness of the implementation of after-school services to ensure the quality of after-school services. Specifically, the focus should be on making good use of internet technology and information technology to carry out monitoring and evaluation. The whole process of after-school service can be monitored in real time with the help of a big data platform, and a digital portrait of teachers' after-school service can be recorded.

3.3 Comprehensive Consideration and Construction of a Long-Term Operating Mechanism for the Monitoring System

In order for the monitoring system to operate in the long term, it should follow the principles of balance and development. Balance refers to the need to pay attention to the balance between regions, urban and rural areas and schools when monitoring. Due to the vast size of China and the uneven socio-economic development, there is an uncoordinated allocation of resources and hardware and software facilities between urban and rural areas and regions, and the level of services varies greatly (Zhang & Mei, 2020). When conducting quality monitoring, it is important to consider the factor of balance, co-ordinate the differences in development between regions, urban and rural areas and schools, and carry out differential evaluation of the quality level of after-school services in the eastern, central and western regions and urban and rural areas. The principle of development means that monitoring concepts and quality assessment indicators should be constantly updated and kept up to date. Specifically, indicators that have already been achieved and have no room for further improvement should be removed, those that have room for improvement should be reset, and those that are not comprehensive should be supplemented, so that the indicators for assessing the quality of after-school services can be dynamically adjusted and gradually developed according to the requirements of the government and the needs of the public.

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