Journal of International Education and Development
2025, VOL. 9, NO. 8, 173-175
DOI: 10.47297/wspiedWSP2516-250039.20250908

Research on Optimization of Budget Management in Colleges and Universities: Problems and Countermeasures

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ABSTRACT

Based on an in-depth investigation of the current situation of budget management in domestic colleges and universities, this paper systematically analyzes the main problems and their causes in current college budget management. The study finds that college budget management generally has problems such as unscientific preparation methods, inadequate implementation supervision, low informationization level, and formalistic performance evaluation. These problems mainly stem from imperfect management systems, lagging institutional construction, lack of professional talents, and missing supervision mechanisms. To address these issues, this paper proposes optimization countermeasures such as constructing a hierarchical management system, strengthening full-process supervision, promoting informationization construction, and improving the performance evaluation mechanism. The research shows that systematic reform can effectively enhance the level of college budget management, improve the efficiency of fund use, and provide strong support for the development of higher education.

KEYWORDS

College budget management; Performance evaluation; Informationization construction; Resource allocation

1 Introduction

With the rapid development of China's higher education and the in-depth advancement of the "Double First-Class" construction, the scale of college running has been continuously expanding, and the sources of funds have become increasingly diversified. Taking a "Double First-Class" construction university as an example, its annual budget scale increased from 1.5 billion yuan in 2015 to 2.8 billion yuan in 2023, with an average annual growth rate of 8.2%. The composition of budget fund sources has also changed significantly: the proportion of financial appropriation decreased from 60% to 45%, while the proportions of research fund income and social donation income increased to 35% and 10%, respectively.

Against this background, college budget management is facing new opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, the expansion of the budget scale provides more resources for the development of colleges and universities; on the other hand, the diversification of fund sources also puts forward higher requirements for the level of budget management. Currently, college budget management mainly faces the following challenges: first, the increasing demand for funds from multiple goals such as discipline construction, talent training, and scientific research innovation, which are competitive; second, the increasing requirements of government departments and the public for the transparency and performance of budget management; third, the new requirements of digital transformation for budget management methods.

2 Analysis of the current situation of budget management in colleges and universities

2.1 Budget preparation link

There are three prominent problems in current college budget preparation: first, the preparation method is not scientific enough. About 65% of colleges and universities still use the traditional "base plus growth" method, lacking accurate calculation of actual needs. A provincial key university simply increased the 2023 laboratory construction budget by 10% based on the previous year's budget, resulting in an 8 million yuan funding gap for equipment procurement in some new laboratories. Second, the participating subjects are single. Budget preparation is mainly responsible by the financial department, and the participation of business departments is insufficient. The survey shows that only 28% of colleges and universities have established cross-departmental budget preparation teams. Third, the prediction accuracy is not high. The deviation rate of research income budget of a ministry-affiliated university in 2022 reached 22%, seriously affecting the budget execution effect.

2.2 Budget execution link

The main problems in budget execution include: first, insufficient execution rigidity. Sampling surveys show that the average budget adjustment rate of colleges and universities is 12.5%, with a maximum of 25%. Second, inadequate

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supervision. About 60% of colleges and universities lack an effective budget execution monitoring system, and the violation rate of research project fund use in a university is as high as 18%. Third, unbalanced execution progress. A typical manifestation is "slow execution in the first half of the year and rush spending in the second half of the year," with the expenditure in December accounting for 35% of the annual expenditure in a university.

2.3 Performance evaluation link

There are obvious shortcomings in performance evaluation work: first, the evaluation indicators are not sound. 82% of colleges and universities still focus on financial indicators in performance evaluation, lacking scientific evaluation of educational effectiveness and scientific research output. Second, the evaluation method is single. It mainly uses qualitative evaluation, lacking quantitative analysis. Third, the application of results is insufficient. Only 15% of colleges and universities directly link the evaluation results with the next year ' s budget arrangement.

3 Analysis of main problems and their causes

3.1 Main problems

3.1.1 Insufficient scientificity of budget preparation

A university has not made substantial improvements in its budget preparation method within three years, resulting in a cumulative budget deviation of 45 million yuan.

3.1.2 Lack of supervision in the execution process

Due to inadequate supervision, a university had 12 cases of illegal use of budget funds within three years, involving 8.6 million yuan.

3.1.3 Lagging informationization construction

About 70% of colleges and universities have not established a unified budget management information system, and data processing is still mainly manual.3.1.4 Poor effectiveness of performance evaluation.

The performance evaluation results of a university have been similar for three consecutive years, failing to truly reflect the budget execution effect.

3.2 Cause analysis

3.2.1 Imperfect management system

The division of departmental responsibilities is unclear. Three departments of a university are respnsible for research fund management at the same time, leading to passing the buck.

3.2.2 Lagging institutional construction

About 60% of colleges and universities lack perfect budget performance management methods and implementation rules.

3.2.3 Lack of professional talents

Only 35% of college budget managers have professional qualifications, and the annual professional training is less than 20 hours.3.2.4 Missing supervision mechanism.

The internal audit force is weak. The audit office of a university has only 3 staff members, who are responsible for the entire university ' s audit work.

4 Optimization countermeasures and suggestions

4.1 Construct a hierarchical management system

Establish a three-level management structure of "university - college - project." After the implementation in a "Double First-Class" university, the budget preparation time was shortened by 30%, and the execution deviation rate dropped to 5%. The key points include:

The university level is responsible for strategic planning and resource coordination;

The college level is responsible for specific budget preparation and execution;

The project level is responsible for fund use and performance achievement.

4.2 Strengthen full-process supervision

Establish a "preparation - execution - evaluation" closed-loop management system. After implementing dynamic monitoring in a university, the fund use efficiency increased by 20%. Specific measures:

Improve the budget preparation demonstration system;

Establish a monthly execution analysis mechanism;

Implement tracking audit of key projects.

4.3 Promote informationization construction

Build a college budget performance management platform. After the system was launched in a university, the approval efficiency increased by 40%, and the data accuracy rate reached 99%. Key constructions:

Budget preparation system;

Execution monitoring system;

Performance evaluation system;

Decision support system.

4.4 Improve the performance evaluation mechanism

Establish a multi-dimensional performance evaluation system. After the implementation in a university, the input-output ratio of research funds increased by 25%. Specific contents:

Set up three-dimensional indicators of finance, business, and development;

Adopt a combination of quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods;

Strengthen the application of evaluation results and directly link them with resource allocation.

5 Conclusion

This study reveals the main problems and their deep-seated causes in college budget management by systematically analyzing the current situation of college budget management, and proposes targeted optimization countermeasures. The research shows that the reform of college budget management needs to be promoted from the following aspects:

First, change the management concept from "emphasizing distribution over management" to "whole-process performance management." A pilot university has achieved significant improvement in budget management performance within three years through conceptual transformation. Second, improve the institutional system and establish sound institutional norms for all links such as budget preparation, execution, and evaluation. It is recommended that the Ministry of Education issue the Implementation Measures for Budget Performance Management in Colleges and Universities to provide institutional guarantee for the reform.Third, strengthen capacity building, focusing on improving the professional quality of managers and their ability to apply information technology. It is recommended to include budget management training in the training system for college management cadres. Fourth, innovate technical means and make full use of new technologies such as big data and artificial intelligence to improve management efficiency. It is recommended to carry out pilot work on digital transformation of budget management.

Future research can further explore the relationship between budget management and the modernization of college governance, as well as the in-depth application of new technologies in budget management.

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