INSTITUTO
UNIVERSITÁRIO
DE LISBOA

Quality assurance of transnational higher education cooperation: The case of Chinese-foreign Cooperation in Running Schools

OU Weiyan

Doctor of Management

Supervisor:
PhD Nelson José António, Professor,
ISCTE University Institute of Lisbon

July, 2023

BUSINESS
SCHOOL

Marketing, Operations and General Management Department

Quality assurance of transnational higher education cooperation: The case of Chinese-foreign Cooperation in Running Schools

OU Weiyan

Doctor of Management

Supervisor:
PhD Nelson José António, Professor,
ISCTE University Institute of Lisbon

July, 2023

BUSINESS
SCHOOL

Marketing, Operations and General Management Department

Quality assurance of transnational higher education cooperation: The case of Chinese-foreign Cooperation in Running Schools

OU Weiyan

Doctor of Management

Supervisor:
PhD Nelson José António, Professor,
ISCTE University Institute of Lisbon

July, 2023

INSTITUTO UNIVERSITÁRIO DE LISBOA

Quality assurance of transnational higher education cooperation: The case of Chinese-foreign Cooperation in Running Schools

OU Weiyan

[This page is deliberately left blank.]

Abstract

Chinese-foreign Cooperation in Running Schools (CFCRS) is shifting from an extensive development stage characterized by scale expansion to a stage with quality at its core, in which quality management plays a vital role. However, the quality of Chinese-foreign cooperative education is currently uneven and despairing mainly due to the absence of a quality assurance and evaluation system. From the perspective of the stakeholder theory and employing a qualitative approach, this is the problem that this thesis aims to address by developing an analytical framework and identifying the factors that influence the quality of CFCRS and its assurance.

Data were collected in different stages. First, a questionnaire was administered to 26 CFCRS management experts in two rounds using the Delphi technique of expert consultation with the purpose of identifying the key stakeholders to be involved in the quality assurance system of CFCRS and to design semi-structured interviews to be addressed to them. Then, the case study method was adopted for in-depth understanding of the problem. The interviews were complemented with document analysis and a multi-stakeholder quality assurance framework for CFCRS was constructed attempting to explain three aspects: who the subject of the assurance is, how and what to assure.

Results show that the top six core stakeholders of CFCRS are national government/ ministries/ accreditation agencies; host municipalities (local government authorities); partners; senior university management (the dean's team, general board, council of deans); students; and teaching/research staff. Secondly, to build a quality assurance mechanism conducive to stakeholder participation, four factors play an important role: (1) the construction of quality culture; (2) the establishment of trust; (3) communication, cooperation, and engagement among stakeholders; (4) cross-cultural management. Finally, during the whole process of input-process-output of educational resources, three main issues need to be considered: (1) the input of education resources should highlight the level of internationalization; (2) the education process should focus on management services and communication support; (3) the evaluation of education output needs to be emphasized.

Keywords: CFCRS; Quality Assurance; Transnational Higher Education.

JEL: M10

[This page is deliberately left blank.]

Resumo

Após um intenso período de expansão em larga escala, a Cooperação Universitária Sino-Estrangeira (CUSE) está agora a centrar-se na preocupação com a qualidade. Contudo, esta é desigual e nem sempre corresponde ao desejado, e uma das razões para que tal aconteça é a falta de um sistema de avaliação e garantia da qualidade. Com base na teoria dos *stakeholders* e utilizando uma abordagem qualitativa, esta tese pretende contribuir para a resolução deste problema através da identificação e análise dos fatores que influenciam a qualidade e a sua avaliação no âmbito específico da CUSE.

A recolha de dados para a realização de entrevistas fez-se através de um questionário a 26 peritos envolvidos na gestão de projetos deste tipo de cooperação utilizando a técnica Delphi. De seguida adoptou-se o método de estudo de caso para se entender as preocupações dos *stakeholders* e como envolvê-los no desenvolvimento de um sistema de avaliação da qualidade. Para tal foi feita análise documental e entrevistas semiestruturadas com *stakeholders* chave. Este estudo permitiu conceber um quadro analítico para garantia e avaliação da qualidade da CUSE envolvendo múltiplos *stakeholders* e procurando explicar três aspetos: quais os sujeitos da garantia, como e o que garantir.

Os resultados mostram que existem seis *stakeholders* principais na CUSE: governos nacionais/ministérios/agências de acreditação, autoridades locais, universidades parceiras, gestão dos programas, alunos e docentes. Em segundo lugar, na construção de um mecanismo de garantia de qualidade com a participação dos *stakeholders* são necessários quatro fatores: (1) uma cultura de qualidade; (2) o estabelecimento de confiança; (3) comunicação, cooperação e compromisso dos *stakeholders*; e (4) gestão transcultural. Finalmente, no que respeita aos recursos educacionais a CUSE deve focar-se (1) no nível de internacionalização; (2) no apoio à comunicação e serviços de gestão; e (3) na avaliação dos resultados da educação.

Palavras-chave: CUSE, Garantia de qualidade, Educação superior transnacional
JEL: M10

[This page is deliberately left blank]

Acknowledgements

Five years of coursework and thesis writing are drawing to a close, and I find myself filled with emotions.

I am most grateful to my supervisor, Professor Nelson Antonio. Throughout the past five years, Professor Nelson has offered me patient and timely guidance for my doctoral thesis and has frequently provided me with affirmation and encouragement in my work. Professor Nelson is a humble, knowledgeable, and rigorous professor who has set an example for my future learning, work, and scientific research.

Simultaneously, I would like to convey my heartfelt gratitude to Professor Virginia Trigo and Professor Zhao Di. In 2018, with the encouragement and assistance of these two professors, I was fortunate to become part of the doctoral program at Iscte, embarking on this journey of learning. Professor Virginia is a divine presence in my mind since she is elegant, wise, compassionate, courageous, knowledgeable, and beloved. Also, Professor Zhao Di is a leader who is efficient in work and a poet full of sentiment in life. They serve as my mentors, leaders, family members, and lifelong role models for learning. Without their selfless help in my learning and work, and their continuous encouragement, I would not have been able to persist until completion.

During the culmination of my doctoral thesis, I received assistance from many individuals. I sincerely thank the 26 industry managers who participated in the expert consultations, as well as the 23 professors/doctors/managers of the DMH program who took part in the interviews. I am thankful for the significant convenience provided by Southern Medical University and Iscte for my research and interview endeavors. I value the support and guidance I received from Professor Wang Dong and Professor Zhang Chichen from the School of Health Management, Southern Medical University, for my research.

I am appreciative of the guidance and boundless tolerance demonstrated by my leaders and colleagues throughout my academic years.

I express my thanks to my parents, family, and dear friends for their support in my studies and their meticulous care in daily life over the years. Faced with numerous challenges and difficult moments, they have embraced my negative emotions and provided unwavering support and encouragement.

Lastly, I wholeheartedly thank the members of the thesis defense committee for taking time out of their busy schedules to offer feedback and suggestions on my thesis.

[This page is deliberately left blank.]

Contents

[This page is deliberately left blank.]

List of Table

[This page is deliberately left blank.]

List of Figure

[This page is deliberately left blank.]

List of Abbreviations

CFCRS: Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools

ENQA: Quality Assurance in Higher Education

GATE: Global Alliance for Transnational Education

HEIs: higher education institutions

INQAAHE: International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies

MOE: Ministry of Education

MOOC: massive open online course

OECD: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

QA: quality assurance

QACHE: Quality Assurance of Cross-border Higher Education

TNE: transnational education

TNHE: transnational higher education

TQM: total quality management

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

WTO: World Trade Organization

[This page is deliberately left blank.]

Chapter 1: Introduction

In modern society, due to reciprocal demand, interdependence, and cooperation among countries, the internationalization of higher education has become an integral part of the inevitable trend of economic globalization (Liu, 2007; Qiang, 2003; Urbanovicˇ & Wilkinsb, 2013; Van Der Wende, 2007). Since the 1980s, transnational higher education (TNHE) has been on a steady upward trend through the mobility of students, academic staff, programs/institutions, and professionals (UNESCO, 2005). Nowadays, cooperation in transnational education (TNE) is deemed vital in the era of higher education internationalization (Hu et al., 2019; Hu & Willis, 2016; Mok & Han, 2016).

These forms of TNHE offer increased opportunities for improving the skills and competencies of students, help raise the quality of national higher education systems, and serve as an engine for innovation and capacity development, provided they aim at benefiting the human, social, economic, and cultural development of the receiving countries (OECD, 2010; OECD & WorldBank, 2007). Developing TNE programs is also an approach for higher education institutions (HEIs) to diversify their internationalization strategies as well as position themselves in new ways in a globalized context (Stafford & Taylor, 2016).

From an academic perspective, higher education internationalization enriches a country's HEIs and drives the development of its academic programs and research (Stella, 2006). From the cultural point of view, it facilitates the understanding of other cultures. Possible ties among the political and economic elites of the sending and host countries formed through internationalization activities in higher education can enhance mutual understanding and strengthen social cohesion in increasingly multicultural societies (Stafford & Taylor, 2016; Stella, 2006).

Asia is the region with the most active participation in TNHE (Bentley et al., 2017; Huang, 2007). According to a study carried out in Australia, it is projected that by 2025, approximately 70% of the worldwide demand for international education will be attributed to Asia (Mok & Han, 2016; Yang, 2008) cited from IDP, 2002). There are multiple factors contributing to this phenomenon. These include the imperative to adapt to evolving professional prerequisites, the imperative to reconfigure academic programs into ones with greater interdisciplinary emphasis, a surge in student requisites, and appeals to refine the delineation of specific degree programs

as well as academic prestige (Hou et al., 2016). Asian universities manifest a propensity to engage in partnerships with foreign research-oriented universities, with a pronounced inclination towards esteemed institutions in the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom (Hou et al., 2016; Huang, 2007).

Within Asia, China and India are identified as the world's two most promising markets and China has been well-documented as one of the world's largest education importers (ChinaYouthDaily, 2015; Xiong, 2019; Yang, 2008). TNHE emerged in China in the mid-1980s, went through some adjustments from the late 1980s to the early 1990s, and revived after Deng Xiaoping's famous southern tour in 1992. The expansion has exhibited swift growth, propelled by a multitude of catalysts encompassing economic restructuring, the shift from a centrally planned economy to a market-oriented one, and notably, the pervasive impact of economic globalization coupled with the challenges presented by the World Trade Organization (WTO) (Huang, 2003; Mok & Xu, 2008; Yang, 2008).

TNHE has thus thrived over the past three decades in China (Mok & Han, 2016). As a national strategy, China's higher education needs more exchanges and cooperation with international education, science, technology, and culture in order to provide new talents with a global perspective and advanced technical support for China's economic development. The internationalization of education is about meeting the requirements of China's socio-economic opening-up and cultivating a large number of international talents with a global perspective, who are familiar with international rules and can participate in international affairs and competition (Ministry of Education of China [MOE], 2010). Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools (CFCRS) as a form of TNHE in China, plays an important role. It is of great significance to accelerate China's education development, cultivate all kinds of talents for China's socialist development undertakings, train high-level international talents, promote international cooperation and exchanges, accelerate diversified development of higher education, and enhance comprehensive national strength (MOE, 2010).

With the internationalization and development of higher education, institutions providing and hosting TNHE are facing great challenges in maintaining standards and quality across borders and cultures (Damme, 2001; Dragut, 2011; Hou, 2020; Hou et al., 2016; Hu et al., 2019; Ryan, 2015; Stafford & Taylor, 2016; Stella, 2006; UNESCO, 2005; Zwanikken et al., 2013). The major issues in the field shared by many countries, especially host countries, are how to realize the quality assurance of TNHE on the other (Hu et al., 2019; Hu & Willis, 2016; Wang & Fang, 2014; Yang, 2008), as TNHE normally involves several institutions and multiple national accreditation procedures (Hou et al., 2016). It is commonly believed that organizing

TNHE programs is complicated and entails relatively high operational risks (Stafford & Taylor, 2016). For example, the programs could be developed by one institution in compliance with a specific political framework as well as specific national regulations and procedures. It could be designed to meet the needs of the domestic economy and culture (Damme, 2001). But now it is to be delivered in another country; teaching, coaching, and supervising are often undertaken by the faculty of the partner; local conditions, including methods and language of delivery, students' expectations, political context, management mode, and legislative framework, may be very different from the host country where the institution is based (Stafford & Taylor, 2016).

Across numerous nations, the domestic capability to address these exigencies is circumscribed (Damme, 2001; Stella, 2006). Even in jurisdictions where robust quality assurance structures are in place, best owers of TNHE do not consistently fall under the purview of external quality assessment mechanisms, and the capacity of respective nations to supervise TNHE exhibits variance. The disparate advancement of national capacity has engendered a void in global collaboration pertaining to the quality assurance of TNE, resulting in a schism within academia regarding the approach to confronting these challenges (Stella, 2006).

Quality assurance of CFCRS has also been an issue in China. On April 6th, 2007, the Ministry of Education (2007) issued a further notice to regulate joint higher education programs, expressing strong concerns about the quality control of joint education programs. It decided not to approve any further programs, in principle, until the end of 2008. Indeed, it even shut down 64 joint programs in Shanghai (Qian & Jiao, 2007). In 2016, the Ministry of Education terminated 308 Chinese-foreign cooperatively-run institutions and programs. And in July 2018, China's MOE issued the Notice on Approval of Termination of Some Chinese-Foreign Cooperatively-run institutions and programs and terminated 234 such institutions and programs at undergraduate and higher levels (Chinese Youth Online, 2018). Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools encounters considerable challenges and problems moving forward. And most of the problems could be traced to quality problems (Shi, 2017).

In response to the imperative of ensuring the caliber of Transnational Higher Education (TNE) endeavors, certain international entities, including the OECD, UNESCO, the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies (INQAAHE), and the Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN), have formulated directives or compendia outlining the parameters for ensuring the quality of TNHE (UNESCO, 2005). However, these guidelines are voluntary (Zwanikken et al., 2013) and are mainly provided to governments (UNESCO/APQN, 2009) and quality assurance institutions (INQAAHE, 2003; QACHE, 2015) as suggestions. Not all quality assurance institutions can adopt the suggested methods in the toolkit to establish

cooperation with others to the same extent. The broader regulatory and quality assurance frameworks within which different institutions operate may limit their ability to share data, information, and intelligence on TNE and its quality assurance, to recognize each other's quality assurance decisions, or to participate in joint review activities (Trifiro, 2018). Besides, some scholars (Stella, 2006; Tsiligiris & Hill, 2021) argued that the prevailing guidelines for quality assurance are primarily designed to uphold and affirm the prestige of conferred qualifications and the standing of higher education establishments on a global scale. In this regard, they advocate for the emulation of the standards of the 'home' institution in overseas settings. Nonetheless, it is imperative that quality assurance mechanisms for TNHE also incorporate considerations of the cultural and contextual nuances pertinent to the host country.

Many issues regarding TNHE remain unresolved (UNESCO, 2005), particularly where quality assurance (Jiang & Jin, 2009; Stella, 2006; Zwanikken et al., 2013).

Although the quality management of higher education has been the research focus in the field of higher education over the past few decades, the quality research of TNHE has a relatively short history. Literature focusing on the quality assurance of TNHE only has increased since around 2000 (Stafford & Taylor, 2016).

UNESCO / OECD (2005) states that the quality of a country's higher education department as well as its assessment and monitoring work is not only critical to the country's socio-economic development but also a decisive factor affecting its international status in higher education. Establishing a quality assurance system is essential for not only monitoring the quality of domestic higher education but also participating in running international higher education activities.

This assertion holds relevance in the context of China as well, where the CFCRS assumes a significant role in the advancement of higher education. The practice has shown that CFCRS involves the interests of diversified parties, including not only Chinese and foreign cooperators but also the government, schools, society, and other parties. Therefore, cultural diversity requires higher education to be more open and inclusive in management concepts and achieve independent innovation. Meanwhile, an effective unified assessment system is the key to ensuring quality (Zong, 2015).

Some experts pointed out that quality is the lifeline of CFCRS (Lin, 2018). Thus, quality assurance has become the core task of this form of school running. And it is of practical significance to pay attention to and study its quality.

1.1 Transnational higher education in China

Distinct local contexts and regulations generally result in host countries having particular local terms for TNHE, some of which may even entail different meanings. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2005) Guidelines, the term "cross-border higher education" pertains to higher educational scenarios wherein elements such as educators, learners, curricula, institutions/providers, or educational resources traverse national jurisdictional boundaries. This category of higher education encompasses both public and private, as well as not-for-profit and for-profit providers. It encompasses a diverse spectrum of modalities, ranging from traditional face-to-face instruction to remote learning, encompassing branch campuses, franchise arrangements, articulation programs, twinning initiatives, corporate-sponsored endeavors, online learning platforms, distance education curricula, and study abroad initiatives (GATE, 1999). The terms "cross-border higher education" and "TNHE" are frequently employed interchangeably within scholarly discourse (Hu et al., 2019; Stella, 2006; Zwanikken et al., 2013). Therefore, the two terms will be used interchangeably in the study as well.

In China, foreign institutions can only provide education services to Chinese students by cooperating with Chinese HEIs (The State Council, 2003). Therefore, TNHE in China, in principle, must be in the form of Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools. At present, two types of TNHE institutions or programs in collaboration with foreign countries can be identified in China: those with authority to award foreign degrees; and those permitted to provide only non-degree programs, issuing foreign diplomas and certificates (Huang, 2003).

In this study, we only focus on the institutions and programs established in cooperation with foreign partners with the authority to award foreign degrees, namely Chinese-foreign collaboration in running schools (CFCRS). There are two main types of school-running bodies, including Chinese-foreign cooperation institutes (Chinese-foreign cooperation universities or Chinese-foreign cooperation second-tiered colleges) and Chinese-foreign cooperation programs.

These joint institutions/programs should meet the requirement of "four one thirds". To be specific, the foreign courses and specialized core courses introduced shall account for more than one-third of the total courses and core courses of the CFCRS, and the number of specialized core courses taught by teachers of foreign education institutions and their teaching hours shall account for more than one-third of the total number of courses and the total teaching hours of the CFCRS (MOE, 2006).

1.1.1 The emergence of CFCRS in China

Since the Reform and Opening-up, the development of CFCRS can be roughly divided into 4 stages, the exploration and start-up stage, the accelerated development stage, the standardized development stage, and the quality and efficiency improvement stage. Understanding its development is also helpful in understanding the background of its quality assurance development.

(1) Exploration and start-up stage (1978-1994)

The Reform and Opening-up policy adopted by China in 1978 has created opportunities for the reform and development of various industries in China as well as various forms of exchanges and cooperation. Exchanges of education in China have been fully restored and initially developed. By the end of 1982, 125 countries had established formal diplomatic relations with China, including not only most developing countries but also major capitalist countries across the world (Zhang & Guan, 2018). China's diplomatic development made it possible to introduce high-quality education resources and learn advanced school-running experience from foreign countries, especially capitalist countries.

In September 1984, China, as one of the contracting parties, signed the *Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas, and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific* and began participating in international education cooperation (Zhang & Guan, 2018). CFCRS started its exploration process.

In 1986, China's State Education Commission issued the *Opinions on Strengthening the Development of Chinese-foreign Cooperation in Running Schools* for the first time to standardize the management of education cooperation projects. In 1987, Tianjin Institute of Finance and Economics (now Tianjin University of Finance and Economics) and Oklahoma City University jointly held an MBA program, becoming the first case of CFCRS in higher education (Liu, 2007).

It is proposed in the remarks made by Deng Xiaoping during his southern tour in early 1992 that efforts should be made to accelerate the reform further. The 14th National Congress of the Communist Party of China set the goal of reforming the socialist market economic system and proposed to open it wider. In 1993, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council promulgated the *Outline of Educational Reform and Development in China*, according to which foreign educational exchanges in such forms as CFCRS should be treated as a whole and comprehensively planned to promote implementation. It proposes to "open further in education, strengthen international exchanges and cooperation in education,

and boldly absorb and learn from the successful experiences of development and management education in all countries of the world" and "promote international cooperation in running schools in accordance with relevant national laws and regulations". The release of this document prompted the issuance of relevant policy documents, including the *Notification on the Cooperation of Running Schools by Overseas Institutions and Individuals in China*, which clearly states that "multiple forms of educational foreign exchanges and international cooperation are an important part of China's Reform and Opening-up policy" and "it is acceptable for overseas institutions and individuals to run schools cooperatively in China".

By the end of 1994, more than 70 Chinese-foreign joint programs had been approved by the MOE of China, forming a landscape of a small number of schools and a relatively low development speed.

(2) Accelerated development stage (1995-2002)

Having accumulated the initial experience from cooperation in running schools, coupled with the massive demand for social development, governments at all levels and schools were more motivated to participate in CFCRS (Zhang & Guan, 2018). In 1995, China's MOE issued the first comprehensive regulation on CFCRS, namely, the *Interim Provisions on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools.* It clarified specific provisions on the establishment and operation of CFCRS, formulated the basic framework for the policy of CFCRS, provided a feasible policy basis, and clearly stated that "CFCRS is an important form of China's educational exchanges and cooperation, and is a supplement to China's education industry". The relevant policies changed from "accepting" to "encouraging", and CFCRS flourished.

During the same period, a number of laws and guiding opinions were issued, and more specific regulations were made on cooperative education activities. The status of CFCRS was confirmed. *The Education Law of the People's Republic of China* and *the Vocational Education Law of the People's Republic of China* promulgated by the State Council in 1995 confirmed the status of CFCRS at a higher legal level.

On November 10th, 2001, China joined the WTO and signed the Protocol on the Accession of the People's Republic of China. In the Protocol, a commitment was made on trade in education services, which involved contents with regard to CFCRS. The contents were additions to national compulsory education and special education, and foreign education institutions were allowed to cooperate with Chinese education institutions to host educational activities mainly targeting Chinese citizens. Moreover, it allowed foreign parties to obtain majority ownership in cooperative educational institutions; other WTO members willing to provide educational services in the form of commercial presence in China can only achieve this

goal through cooperatively-run educational institutions but not independent schools or other forms of educational institutions within Chinese territory.

After this, the scale of CFCRS expanded quickly. From 1998 to 2004, the number of approved joint institutions and programs increased rapidly. By the end of 2002, CFCRS had covered the entire education system, as there were a total of 712 joint institutions and programs approved by the MOE, ten times higher than that of 1994. In the wave of the market economy, CFCRS played an active role in attracting foreign investment into Chinese education. It also played a positive role in transforming the traditional Chinese teaching and management model, promoting healthy competition among different schools while improving schooling quality and efficiency.

(3) Standardized development stage (2003-2015)

In order to further increase educational exchanges and cooperation and regulate CFCRS, China released the *Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools* and *Measures for the Implementation of the Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools* in 2003 and 2004 respectively.

These two documents provided the legal basis for CFCRS and a strong policy guarantee for its healthy development. Among them, *the Regulations* make it clear that "CFCRS" is an integral part of China's educational undertakings. At this stage, the scale expansion of CFCRS slowed down relatively, and the number stabilized. The most eye-catching achievement was the launch of the CFCRS evaluation work with the purpose of improving the schooling quality and standardizing the schooling order. Through the establishment of a quality assessment mechanism, the essential contents and links of the CFCRS, such as schooling philosophy, asset management, teaching quality, teaching staff, social evaluation, and internal and external benefits, were evaluated and supervised, thus strengthening the government's standardized management of CFCRS, promoting school-running according to law, and improving CFCRS and the sustainable development ability.

During the following more than ten years of development, the Chinese government successively promulgated and implemented a number of planning outlines and guiding opinions to further perfect systems and institutional mechanisms and improve CFCRS. It is certain that CFCRS in China has evolved from an informal, incidental, and rather laissez-faire activity into a systematic and regulated endeavor (Huang, 2003; Mok & Han, 2016) and is also undergoing a transition from scale development to quality improvement (Sun & Chen, 2018).

(4) Quality and efficiency improvement stage (2015-now)

The radiation effect of CFCRS has become increasingly prominent, and the recognition by Chinese society and the influence in the international community have gradually emerged. According to statistics, by August 2021, the total number of CFCRS entities established with approval had reached 2,356 nationwide, including 1,340 institutions and programs at the undergraduate level or above (Ministry Of Education Of China, 2021). The number of CFCRS entities in China was 33.2 times higher than that of 1995 (as shown in Figure 1.1). Since 2015, the number of institutions and programs has remained stable.

According to incomplete statistics, by 2018, there had been about 600,000 students enrolled in CFCRS entities in China, among which the number of students enrolled in higher education was 500,000, accounting for 1.32% of the total number of higher education students in China. The number of graduates of Chinese-foreign cooperatively-run institutions and programs has exceeded 1.6 million (CPPCC-online-education-weekly, 2018).

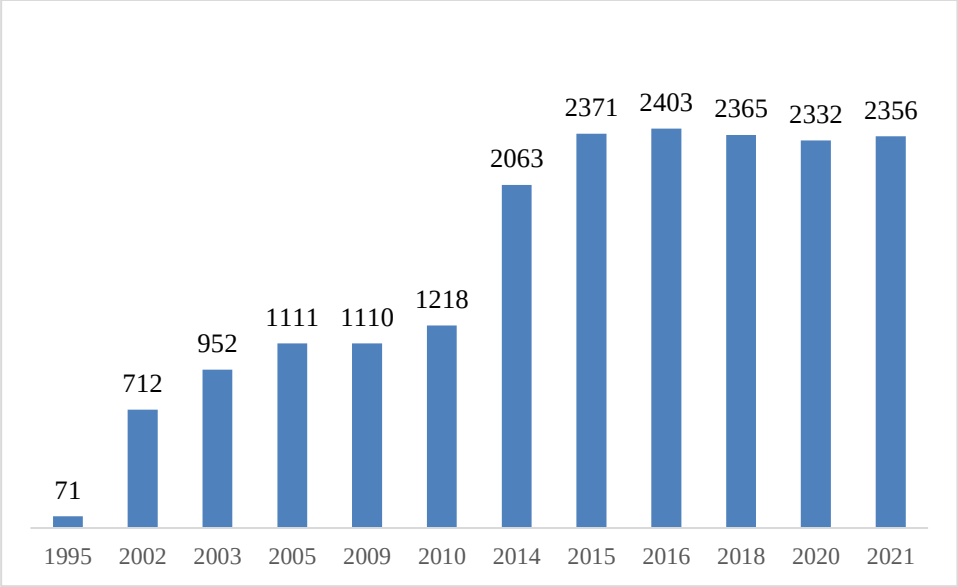

Fig. 1.1 Growth of joint institutions and programs with qualifications to award foreign degrees

Source: Based on government data (http://moe.edu.cn) and Lin (2016)

In order to promote the continuous and healthy development of education opening up, the Chinese government have issued a series of programatic document, which include *Opinions on the Opening up of Education in the new era* (General Office of the CPC Central Committee, and General Office of the State Council, 2016), *Opinions on Strengthening and improving Cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries* (General Office of the CPC Central Committee, and General Office of the State Council, 2017), *One Belt And One Road educational action plan* (MOE, 2016), and *Opinions on Accelerating and Expanding the*

Opening up of Education in the New Era (MOE et al., 2020). Education opening up ushered in a new pattern of development. Among them, quality construction has become the core orientation of CFCRS (Xue, 2015) and creating a better quality and higher level has become an important development goal of education opening up. For the past years, the education department has put forth efforts to improve the quality and efficiency of CFCRS through a series of measures, including raising the entry threshold, improving the examination and approval system, strengthening quality supervision, evaluation, and certification, and strengthening the construction of exit mechanism (Fang, 2019).

Since the implementation of the Reform and Opening-up policy, after more than 40 years of exploration, China has become the world's most influential school running partner for leading universities and quality education resources (Xiong, 2019). CFCRS has been widely recognized and achieved rapid development in China as a special educational resource (Yang, 2016), which has played an important role in expanding the opening-up of higher education, and helped the Chinese government cope with the demand for education, allowing for the adoption of excellent foreign teaching resources, and improved the overall quality of teaching. It has become a new channel to accelerate the cultivation of all kinds of talents urgently needed for the development of modern society. Besides, in the form of cultural exchange, it serves Chinese and foreign exchanges and promotes comprehensive opening-up and socialist modernization. In doing so, it effectively diminishes the geographical and cultural divide between China and the global community (Xiong, 2019).

1.1.2 Problems of the Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools

CFCRS has accumulated a lot of valuable school-running experience and gradually embarked on a high-level demonstrative development path. However, due to imbalanced development, different understanding of policies, and the need to strengthen and improve quality standards and assurance mechanisms, CFCRS still faces some problems (Tang, 2018).

(1) The overall capability in introducing quality educational resources needs improvement

Over the past years since the implementation of *the Outline of China's National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development* (2010-2020), the high-level demonstrative CFCRS has increased, and this momentum will persist (MOE, 2013). In addition, the deep-seated contradictions accumulated by Chinese-foreign cooperatively-run institutions and programs have been gradually resolved, though this is a challenging task (MOE, 2013). For

example, before promulgating *Regulations on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools* (the State Council, 2003), the programs approved by related industry sectors and local governments were complicated. The level of the resources introduced was low, or there was no substantive introduction. These problems have severely affected the overall level of CFCRS (On-job-postgraduate-education-network, 2018; Tang, 2018; Xue, 2016; Zhou & Jiang, 2019).

(2) School-running behaviors of some institutions and programs need further standardization

Some intermediaries participate in the establishment of CFCRS and focus on profiteering, which has seriously disrupted the regular order of CFCRS and affected its brand image and integrity. In addition, some foreign education institutions consider CFCRS a profiteering approach to opening "chain stores" (Li, 2015). With quantitative expansion as the purpose, it is impossible to guarantee the introduction of quality education resources, nor is it beneficial to improving the quality of school-running (On-job-postgraduate-education-network, 2018; Tang, 2013).

(3) The discipline structure needs further optimization

Although low-level, repetitive school running in business and management disciplines has been effectively controlled, the excessive concentration of discipline distribution still needs to be adjusted (Hong et al., 2016). For example, in the current undergraduate and higher level CFCRS, the proportion of majors urgently needed by the country is too small. For example, the proportion of professional programs such as international law is less than 1% (MOE, 2013), which cannot meet the needs of a large number of legal professionals who are proficient in international law. In the future, there is a need to strengthen regulation and control in the approval and supervision of CFCRS so as to continuously adapt to the new needs of national and local socio-economic development (On-job-postgraduate-education-network, 2018; Tang, 2018; Zhou & Chen, 2017).

(4) Lack of systematically-designed quality assurance system and mechanism

Quality assurance refers to all planned and systematic activities to convince people that a product or service meets quality requirements. The quality assurance system aims to guarantee and improve quality. It adopts a systematic approach to closely organize the quality management activities of each department and each link depending on necessary organizations to form an organic whole of quality management featuring precise tasks, responsibilities, and authority as well as mutual coordination and promotion. However, China lacks a systematic, specific, and practical design for quality assurance systems. For example, in terms of the system, the subjects of cooperative education quality assurance, their legal responsibilities, and their

interrelationships are unclear, nor are the organizational system of quality assurance and the principles of overall operation and supervision. In terms of mechanism, there are no clear and specific means, measures, and procedural arrangements (Sun & Chen, 2018).

(5) Lack of participating subjects of quality assurance system

The quality assurance system of CFCRS involves diversified participants, including the ministerial and provincial departments of educational administration, the Chinese and foreign members of the cooperative school council or the joint management committee, Chinese and foreign teachers and teaching management staff, program students, Chinese and foreign assessment institutions, Chinese and foreign certification agencies, the public and media, and employers. At present, most participants are not sufficiently involved in quality assurance in terms of both depth and strength. In 2009, China promulgated and implemented *the Evaluation Scheme for Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools (Trial)* (MOE, 2009), which played a positive role in improving the quality of cooperative education. However, the assessors participating in quality assurance were mainly from the Chinese education sector, with hardly any senior experts from employers and industries. There was a lack of participation by the public, media, and foreign personnel. The assessment lacked a comprehensive consideration of the interests of relevant subjects and the need for training international high-quality talents locally. It was incomplete regarding professionalism, authority, fairness, and openness (Sun & Chen, 2018).

1.2 Research problem and questions

At present, CFCRS in China is shifting from the extensive development stage characterized by scale expansion to the connotative development stage with quality as its core, and quality management plays a vital role (J. H. Lin, 2016; Meng & Qu, 2018). The quality of Chinese-foreign cooperative education programs directly affects the interests of learners and also determines the future development of CFCRS. Effective quality management has also become a common concern for learners, universities offering CFCRS, and government departments (Yang, 2004; Yang, 2016). Quality improvement and assurance, which is a key determinant factor for success, also exert significant influence on the development of CFCRS (Yang, 2016; Zheng et al., 2017).

However, the quality of CFCRS is uneven and unoptimistic at present. One of the reasons is that the quality assurance and evaluation system of CFCRS has not been established yet (Hou et al., 2016; Li, 2017; Yang, 2004; Zheng, 2013). The current evaluation of cooperative

education management is neither scientific nor systematic and lacks consistent intervention after approval. Unlike the single assessment of a regular program, a joint program involves more than one institution and accreditors from different countries in the review process. Due to the lack of a sophisticated quality supervision system for higher education, the quality review still relies on the conscious behavior of educational institutions (Liu, 2006; Lu, 2016; Yang, 2004). Quality assurance has always been a vague area in TNHE (Mok & Han, 2015b).

Different from tangible products and general service products, higher education service has its remarkable particularity (Liu et al., 2015). The service experience of students is complex and differs from the experience of consumers in any other service firms (Latif et al., 2019). The particularity of higher education determines that it cannot completely copy the quality management experience of enterprises (Liu et al., 2015; Noaman et al., 2015).

At present, there is still very little research on the quality assurance of TNHE (Zheng et al., 2017). In particular, even less research has been conducted on the matters of TNHE in China (Mok & Han, 2016). The existing literature on TNHE in China is mainly focused on the aspects of governance mode, policy interpretation, and development status, lacking research on quality assurance and empirical studies. Besides, the research on quality assurance of higher education in China is currently limited to practical operations and policy recommendations, lacking theoretical research on the educational quality assurance mechanism (Lu, 2016).

Another challenge to improving the perceived higher education quality is intensifying of its socially responsible behavior towards major stakeholders (Shams & Belyaeva, 2019). Different from domestic higher education, the Chinese-foreign cooperative education partners come from different countries and form an economic and cultural interest group with different motives, different interest demands, and different resource levels. Coordinating interests and achieving sustainable development in the value appeal and games of both parties is a joint problem that needs to be solved in Chinese-foreign cooperative education, especially in quality assurance (Zhou & Chen, 2017). In order to effectively practice quality assurance, the CFCRS program or institute must get the support, recognition, and participation of all stakeholders (Lin & Liu, 2014).

Developing a quality joint program calls for joint efforts by varying stakeholders to implement a QA mechanism and develop an external assessment system. Universities are considered significant and complex stakeholders. Morover, stakeholder management is regarded as an important part of modern university management (Jongbloed et al., 2008; Mainardes et al., 2013). To build a scientific, reasonable, and effective quality assurance system of Chinese-foreign cooperation, the roles of government, scholars, and social intermediary

organizations should be clearly defined, their respective functions in the quality assurance process should be clarified, and a joint force of division of responsibilities and coordination should be formed (Guo & Li, 2014). The first step is to understand the different preferences and demands of different stakeholders on the concept of quality and to ensure the interests of different stakeholders. It is essential to identify a set of core criteria for assessing quality in higher education (Harvey & Green, 1993; Shams & Belyaeva, 2019; Zhou & Chen, 2017).

In summary, how should we ensure the high quality of a transnational higher education cooperation program? Whether the evaluation system reflects the quality needs of stakeholders? What is the role of stakeholders in quality assurance? Is there any mechanism to engage stakeholders in quality assurance? The quality and quality assurance of Chinese-foreign cooperative education programs requires an analytical framework and evaluation system that fully reflects the quality demands of stakeholders.

This study aims at establishing an effective quality assurance model of CFCRS through a literature review on quality and quality assurance of higher education/TNHE, the stakeholder theory, as well as the analysis and empirical studies of quality analysis framework and its influencing factors so as to help managers and the government analyze, diagnose and improve the quality of education and facilitate the development of management strategies for achieving the target quality.

To solve the above problem, the following research questions are put forward.

（1） What is the quality of Chinese-foreign cooperative higher education?

（2） What are the main factors that affect the quality and quality assurance system of Chinese-foreign cooperative higher education?

（3） Who are the stakeholders of CFCRS? And how salient are they to the institution?

（4） What are the quality demands of (key) stakeholders in CFCRS?

（5） What role do stakeholders play in the quality assurance process?

（6） How can stakeholders contribute to the quality assurance system?

1.3 Thesis structure

Aiming at this objective, this study is comprised of the following chapters.

Chapter 1: Introduction. The background and problems of TNHE, the importance of quality assurance, the intention of CFCRS, its development history and characteristics, the establishment of its quality assurance system, and problems in China are described. And the research objectives, questions, and framework are provided.

Chapter 2: Literature Review. This chapter focuses on quality and the stakeholder theory. Specifically, quality-related theories are reviewed from the perspectives of quality, service quality, higher education quality, quality assurance in higher education, and its dimensions and measurement methods, while the stakeholder theory is reviewed based on three aspects, namely, the definition of the stakeholder theory, stakeholder identification and classification, and stakeholder research in higher education.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methods. The process of research design is elaborated on and research methods are described. Specifically, it is consisted of the selection of experts according to the Delphi technique of expert consultation, the process of conducting two rounds of investigations, the selection of cases in the case study, the basic situation of the case, the process of conducting in-depth interviews, and the process of data analysis.

Chapter 4: Result. This chapter presents the results of the Delphi technique of expert consultation and case study, deriving CFCRS stakeholders of high priorities. Through a case study, to explore the factors affecting quality assurance and its driving factors.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Finding. Focusing on the research questions, this chapter further discusses the research results in an attempt to answer the questions of the interests and quality demands of the core stakeholders of CFCRS as well as identify factors and create mechanisms that affect quality assurance. Last, a CFCRS quality assurance framework with the participation of stakeholders is constructed.

Chapter 6: Conclusions. This chapter summarises the conclusions of the study and proposes the theoretical and managerial contributions of the study. The analysis of the limitations of the study and the prospect of future research directions are also demonstrated.

[This page is deliberately left blank.]

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This study aims to build an analytical framework and identify the factors influencing the quality and quality assurance of CFCRS based on the stakeholder theory so as to help improve the quality of CFCRS. The present chapter will focus on several aspects, including quality, service quality, quality assurance, and stakeholder theory.

2.1 Quality, service quality, and quality assurance

What is quality? Quality is one of the many concepts in social science that is elusive and highly difficult to define (Abdullah, 2006a; Lagrosen et al., 2004; Latif et al., 2019; Parasuraman et al., 1985). The term "quality" has been defined from different perspectives and orientations, depending on the person making the definition, the measures adopted and the context in which it is considered (Tapiero, 1996).

According to Deming (2013), a product or service is deemed to have quality if it pays attention to helping someone and has a market that is both good and long-lasting. Harvey and Green (1993) argue that quality is a philosophical concept that, to some extent, reflects different views of individuals and society.

Harvey and Green (1993) conclude that quality is a relative concept. Firstly, the quality of a product or service is related to the user and the situation in which it is used. It means different things to different people and may be interpreted differently for the same person in different scenarios/moments (Harvey & Green, 1993); Secondly, the 'benchmark' relativism of quality should be considered. Some view quality as an absolute. It is an uncompromising, self-evident, and absolute quality. In this view, quality is similar in nature to truth and beauty (Harvey & Green, 1993). In other conceptualizations, quality is judged according to the absolute threshold, which must be exceeded to obtain a quality rating (for example, the output must meet the predetermined national standards) (Harvey & Green, 1993).

The 1990s was described as a "decade of heightened interest in quality" (Srikanthan, 1999), and most of the important papers on "quality" were published during this period. Different researchers defined quality differently. Specifically, quality is defined as "excellence, value, and conformance to specifications" (Pariseau & McDaniel, 1997); "fitness for use" (Juran & Gryna, 1988); "conformance to requirements" (Crosby, 1979);

"defect avoidance"(Crosby, 1984); and "meeting and/or exceeding customers' expectations" (Parasuraman et al. (1985).

Garvin (1988) categorized the conceptualizations of quality into five principal clusters: (1) Transcendent definitions: These interpretations are personal and subjective, existing beyond quantification and logical delineation. They transcend measurement and relate to abstract notions such as beauty and affection. (2) Product-based definitions: Quality is construed as a quantifiable variable, with measurement rooted in objective attributes of the product. (3) User-based definitions: Quality is viewed as a mechanism for engendering customer contentment, rendering these definitions individualistic and partially subjective. (4) Manufacturing-based definitions: Quality is conceived as adherence to stipulated requirements and specifications. (5) Value-based definitions: These explanations frame quality in relation to costs, characterizing quality as delivering commendable value relative to expenses.

Numerous prominent definitions of quality underscore the interplay between quality and the exigencies and gratification of consumers (Zafiropoulos et al., 2005). Petruzzellis et al. (2006) articulated that "the greater the quality of service, the higher the customer satisfaction." In this vein, satisfaction is hinged upon customers' anticipations and their discernment of service quality (Christou & Sigala, 2002; Ekinci, 2004; Sigala, 2004a, b).

2.1.1 Service quality

This section will review the literature on the attributes, definitions, and measurement methods of service quality.

2.1.1.1 Definition of service quality

In essence, service is "a process rather than an object" (Fan, 1999). Compared with physical products, service has the characteristics of intangibility, perishability, heterogeneity, and inseparability (Parasuraman et al., 1985). Morover, because of these characteristics, service quality cannot be identified based on objective indicators such as product appearance and life cycle like physical products.

Pioneering research on service quality began in the early 1980s, and scholars have conducted substantial research on the definition of service quality since then. Overall, there are three categories, the definition of service quality through comparison, the definition of service quality through service elements, and the definition of service quality through its formation mechanism.

(1) Definition of service quality through comparison

Levitte (1972) argues that service quality means that service results can meet the set standard. Gronroos (1983) contends that service quality is a subjective category that depends on the comparison of customer expectation for service quality with the actual perceived service level; therefore, Gronroos (1990) proposed the concept of service quality based on customer perception and carried out a detailed study on its composition. According to Lewis and Booms (1983), task service quality is a tool to measure whether the service level of an enterprise can meet its customer expectation. More recently, Teeroovengadum et al. (2016) described service quality as "a form of attitude, related but not equivalent to satisfaction, and resulting from the comparison of expectations with perceptions of performance".

The above definitions define service quality by comparing service results (service perception) with service standards (service expectations). Among them, the definition by Gronroos has a higher degree of acceptance (Ma, 2008), which laid the foundation for the study of service quality. Most of the subsequent achievements in the quality model are its evolution (Wang & Wang, 2005). Since then, quantitative research has been basically based on this definition, such as PZB's SERVQUAL scale ("PZB" here refers to the scale by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry in 1988). The theoretical basis is that the core of service quality is the gap between customer perception and expectation, and customer characteristics can affect service quality by affecting customer expectation and perception.

(2) Definition of service quality through service elements

Lehtinen (1982) proposed the concepts of output quality and process quality and later divided service quality into three aspects: material quality, interactive quality, and corporate quality (Lehtinen & Lehtinen, 1983). Material quality refers to the tangible support of the product itself and the entire service process, interactive quality refers to the contact process between consumers and company employees, and corporate quality refers to the quality of the company's image and reputation and other factors.

Gronroos (1984) believes that service quality consists of functional quality and technical quality: functional quality (How: service process) is the level of service that consumers perceive during service interactions, and technical quality (What: service result) is the service result that customer obtains after the service ends. Therefore, service quality management should include functional and technical quality management. The former is mainly achieved through service encounter management, while the latter is more dependent on service quality system improvement (Gronroos, 1990). On this basis, scholars (Kelley et al., 1990) added two dimensions, namely customer technical quality and customer functional

quality. Customer technical quality refers to the contribution of customers to the service process. Customer functional quality refers to customer behavior in the service process. Customer friendliness, respect, and cooperation have an important impact on service quality.

Gummesson (1988) proposed a service quality model involving design quality, production quality, delivery quality, and relationship quality, which was later revised (Gummesson, 1991) to divide service quality into four factors, namely design quality, production quality, process quality, and output quality. The service quality proposed by Edvardsson (1989) includes technical quality, integration quality, functional quality, and output quality. Olsen's (1992) model includes design quality, production quality, and process quality.

Sasser, Olsen, and D. Wyckoff (1978) believe that customers will evaluate service quality based on the following seven types of service attributes. (1) Safety, which refers to personal and property safety. (2) Consistency, which refers to the standardization and reliability of service. (3) Attitude, which refers to service attitude. (4) Completeness, which refers to whether the service items are complete. (5) Environment, which refers to the service environment and atmosphere. (6) Convenience, which refers to whether the service time and service location are convenient for customers. (7) Time, which refers to the time needed for the service and service speed.

Fan (1999) proposed the concept of interactive quality and argued that service quality includes technical and interactive quality. Interactive quality narrowly refers to interpersonal interaction. This model is the integration and development of the "service production model" (Eiglier & Langeard, 1977), "service encounter" (Surprenant & Solomon, 1987), and "service interaction" (Shostack, 1985).

Dabholkar et al. (2000) present the notion of service quality as a distinct construct rather than a summation of dimensions. They formulate the service quality construct using four specific elements and ascertain that it is impacted by four dimensions: reliability, personal attention, comfort, and features. Wen and Wang (2002) define service quality as two qualities and three justices. Specifically, two qualities are hard quality and soft quality, and three justices refer to communication, result, and procedure.

It is apparent that the theories proposed by scholars from different research perspectives are different from each other, but they are consistent by nature. Empirical research proves that service quality in different industries consists of different components; therefore, to assess the quality of different service industries, their factors need to be increased or decreased on the basis of public factors (Ma, 2008). The differences among different

industries determine that there are differences in their service quality models, and the service quality model of this industry can only be determined through research, which brings great difficulties to service quality assessment. Therefore, different industries need to establish different models for correct assessment (Ma, 2008).

This type of definition through service elements defines the components of service quality and lays the foundation for the selection of quantitative research factors. However, due to the uniqueness of the service industry, significant variability still exists in specific operations. It is difficult to determine the public components of service quality in essence.

(3) Definition of service quality through formation mechanism

Another type of service quality definition is from the perspective of its formation mechanism. Parasuraman et al. (1985) put forward the concept of "cognitive continuum of service quality", arguing that we should multiply the expectations before buying by feeling in the shopping process before multiplying the result by feeling after receiving the service to determine the customers' expectation level. The result is then compared with the services provided by the provider. If they are equal, then the service quality is satisfactory.

Sasser (1987) argues that service quality includes not only the best results, but also the approaches to provide services. In addition, service level and service quality share similar concepts. Service level is the degree to which the services provided to customers can bring external implicit benefits, and it can be divided into actual service level and cognitive service level.

(4) Summary

Scholars have adopted different paradigms and concepts to study service quality. Even when the same concepts are used, their connotations are also different. For example, concepts related to service processes include functional quality, interactive quality, delivery quality, and process quality (Fan, 1999).

It is believed that although scholars proceed from different perspectives to define service quality in the existing research, these definitions constitute the factors of service quality management, a progressive process of theoretical research development. In other words, they respectively answer the following questions: What is service quality? What are its influencing factors? What is its influencing mechanism on customer perception? Therefore, if we want to study service quality, we first need to profoundly understand the subjective formation mechanism of perceived service quality, explore the critical influencing factors of service quality differentiation, and then carry out customer-perceived service quality evaluation to provide information foundation for the improvement of service

encounter management and service quality system.

The object of quality assurance of CFCRS is higher education service, so it applies the quality meaning, standard and quality view of higher education service to construct a suitable quality assurance system.

2.1.2 The quality of higher education

The understanding of "the quality assurance system of higher education" cannot be separated from the understanding of "the quality of higher education". In the higher education sector, quality is defined from various perspectives, and it is still challenging to reach an agreement on a single definition, regardless of its increasing popularity in higher education policies and practices. Brennnan (1992) concluded that there are as many definitions of quality in higher education as there are categories of stakeholders multiplied by the number of their purposes or dimensions. Some may emphasize the quality of inputs to the education system, whereas others emphasize the quality of processes and outcomes (Cheng & Tam, 1997). Prisacariu and Shah (2016) also suggested that the various arguments on what constitutes quality are rooted in the values and assumptions of the different authors about the nature, purpose, and fundamental processes of higher education. The changes in higher education policies, government funding, marketization, technological developments, and institutional response to many external pressures require a definition that aligns with the changing context of the higher education landscape.

Vroeijenstijn (2006) concluded that quality lies in the eyes of the beholder, and the views of various stakeholders should be considered while defining quality. Therefore, instead of imposing a global interpretation of quality, different definitions have been used depending on the circumstances (Garvin, 1988). Different interest groups have different positions and views, which are also influenced by their social, economic, cultural, and political backgrounds (Goldenberg, 2018).

Among the many discussions, the most cited discussion on the definition of higher education quality is Harvey and Green's (Goldenberg, 2018; Prisacariu & Shah, 2016; Zheng et al., 2017) elaboration on the meaning of the five different conceptions of quality, namely, exceptional/excellence, perfection/consistency, fitness for purpose, value for money and transformation (Harvey & Green, 1993). Below is a brief description of these categories.

Quality as exceptional or as excellence: This perspective conceptualizes quality as a distinct and multifaceted notion, encompassing three distinct variations. The first variation

upholds the traditional conception of quality as something exceptional, associated with exclusivity and sophistication (Harvey & Green, 1993) This outlook refrains from prescribing benchmarks for evaluating quality, operating on the premise that quality is inherently recognized and not bound by explicit definitions. This perspective aligns with an elitist standpoint, suggesting that attributes like the exclusivity and inaccessibility of prestigious institutions like Oxbridge embody quality (Church, 1988).

The second variant is the excellence approach, characterizing quality as surpassing elevated standards. It underscores exceptional quality in both inputs and outputs. In the realm of higher education, quality manifests through optimal human and material resources, encompassing top-tier educators, advanced facilities, robust databases, and enrollment of the finest students.

The third rendition, portraying quality as extraordinary, attenuates the notion of excellence. In this context, quality pertains to adhering to predetermined (minimum) standards set by manufacturers or supervisory bodies (Harvey & Green, 1993). Here, quality is an outcome of meticulous "scientific quality control" and conformity to standards. This perspective implies that raising standards can enhance quality. Within higher education, this perspective has historically been adopted to maintain and elevate standards (Church, 1988). Notably, this approach accommodates diverse standards in higher education, allowing institutions to aspire to quality within varying parameters (Crawford, 1992).

Quality as perfection or consistency entails adherence to specific specifications. Unlike the conventional notion of perfection, this perspective centers on processes and their alignment with established specifications. This view incorporates concepts such as achieving zero defects and attaining correctness on the first attempt, which are intrinsically linked to the concept of a quality culture. In a quality culture, all members of an organization share responsibility for quality, extending beyond quality control personnel (Crosby, 1986);(Prisacariu & Shah, 2016).

Within higher education, the perspective that quality equates to perfection accentuates the significance of the process over tangible inputs and outputs. This stance contrasts with prevailing conceptions of quality in higher education. It prompts discussions concerning the establishment, maintenance, and scrutiny of standards (Harvey & Green, 1993). Nevertheless, challenges persist because the principles of "zero defects" or "getting it right the first time" cannot be readily applied in an educational context. The essence of higher education transcends the notion of flawlessly delivering predetermined specifications. Instead, it arguably revolves around fostering analytical and critical growth among students,

among other objectives. This entails sustained involvement with these "specifications", involving a continuous process of refining and reimagining (Harvey & Green, 1993; Prisacariu & Shah, 2016).

Quality as fitness for purpose suggests that quality's significance is contingent upon its alignment with a specific purpose. Within this framework, two alternative focal points for defining purpose emerge. The first approach places the responsibility on the customer, evaluating quality based on how well a product or service meets the customer's specified requirements. However, applying this notion to the context of higher education raises critical questions about the suitability of defining quality as merely "meeting customer requirements". Two primary reasons hinder its application within higher education (Harvey & Green, 1993). Firstly, a query arises over whether the customer should be considered the recipient (students) or the financier (government, employers) of the educational service. Secondly, the customer (such as a student) might not consistently possess the capacity or appropriate perspective to precisely define their requisites (Elton, 1992). Establishing quality in higher education by aligning it with customers' needs does not necessarily guarantee that customers are the best-qualified arbiters of what constitutes quality or its presence.

Consequently, this definition leaves unresolved the inquiry of who should be vested with the authority to define quality in higher education and how this determination should be evaluated. An alternative perspective for setting the purpose of quality centers on the institution itself. In this framework, quality is gauged through the institution's fulfillment of its predetermined mission or objectives (Harvey & Green, 1993). Within this framework, each educational entity is encouraged to establish a distinct market position and implicitly aligns with the notion that quality in higher education is synonymous with achieving the institution's mission (Harvey & Green, 1993). An institution of high quality is one that explicitly articulates its mission or purpose and demonstrates efficiency and efficacy in attaining its self-defined objectives. Such objectives typically encompass "instruction in skills", "promotion of the general power of the mind", "advancement of learning", and "transmission of a common culture and common standards of citizenship".

Quality as value for money embodies a populist perception that associates quality with value (Ball, 1985a), particularly in terms of the return on investment. The concepts of "quality products at affordable prices" and "quality within your budget" both imply that quality is defined by a high standard specification achieved at a reasonable cost (Schrock & Lefevre, 1988).

Quality as transformation centers on the idea of "qualitative change," signifying a

profound alteration of form. This transformation extends beyond physical shifts and encompasses cognitive elevation. The initial components are students endowed with latent potential. The educational process functions as a transformative agent, refining these students, with the resulting product being graduates (Reavill, 1998). This perspective often manifests through heightened participant development and empowerment. The emphasis lies on augmenting the participants' capabilities, infusing value into their capacities, and ultimately fostering their empowerment (Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2002). In this regard, there is a distinct emphasis on the "enhancement of participants".

Central to transformative learning is a lucid focus on the "student experience." Achieving transformative learning necessitates a transparent and integrated process, contributing to a holistic and relevant "total student experience". Transparency encompasses candidness regarding the objectives, procedures, and methods employed in students' educational attainment. Integration refers to connecting these experiences into a unified whole, ensuring a cohesive and comprehensive educational journey (Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2002).

The definitions adopted by Harvey and Green (1993), despite their vintage of over three decades, continue to retain relevance within the contemporary landscape of higher education. They assert that these definitions persist as diverse perspectives on distinct aspects, rather than being divergent interpretations of the same concepts. This underscores the fundamental idea that opting for varying approaches yields dissimilar actions and outcomes.

2.1.3 Quality assurance in higher education

The definition of quality assurance in higher education has evolved in the last 30 years. Harvey and Green (1993) define quality assurance as "ensuring that there are mechanisms, procedures, and processes in place to ensure that the desired quality, however, defined and measured, is delivered" (Harvey & Green, 1993, p. 19). According to UNESCO/OECD (2005), quality assurance is the systematic review of educational programs, ensuring that acceptable standards of education, scholarship, and infrastructure are maintained. The International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE, 2003) defines quality assurance in higher education as a process that helps stakeholders build confidence that educational provision (inputs, processes, and results) can meet the desired or minimum requirements. Similarly, Harvey (2012) defines quality assurance in higher education as a process of establishing stakeholder confidence where provision (input,

process, and outcomes) fulfills expectations or measures up to threshold minimum requirements. Woodhouse (1999) believes that, quality assurance is related to a program, an institution, or the entire higher education system. In each case, quality assurance encompasses attitudes, objectives, and procedures to ensure that appropriate academic standards are maintained and reinforced in each project through their existence, use, and quality control activities.

All of the above definitions emphasize that quality assurance implies fitness for purpose/quality objectives and ensures that the input (output) process and results meet the desired or minimum quality standards by focusing on quality objectives. According to the role of different elements of the quality assurance system, the system can be divided into two aspects: external quality assurance and internal quality assurance.

2.1.3.1 External quality assurance in higher education

External quality assurance mainly refers to all activities carried out by institutions outside the university to ensure the quality of higher education, including international professional certification, foreign-related supervision and guidance, and professional quality assessment organized by external institutions (Zhao & Meng, 2015).

As mentioned before, some international organizations have developed guidelines or toolkits on the quality assurance of TNHE (UNESCO, 2005). In 2003, INQAAHE developed *Guidelines of Good Practice in Quality Assurance.* Apart from establishing fundamental principles and setting up the institutions' efforts, the *Guidelines* also urged institutions to cooperate "in the fields such as the exchange of good practices, capacity building, decision review, cooperatively-run programs, and personnel exchanges whenever possible". It also underlined the need to consult with appropriate local institutions of exporting or importing countries regarding TNE.

In 2005, UNESCO/OECD (2005) developed the *Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education.* The *Guidelines* aimed to encourage and support international cooperation and strengthen understanding of the importance of TNHE. It was designed to protect students and other stakeholders from low-quality supplies and infamous providers of TNHE while encouraging the improvement of TNHE quality to meet human, social, economic, and cultural needs.

In 2009, UNESCO/APQN (2009) published a toolkit for regulating the quality of TNE in Asia, which is intended to aid in regulating the quality assurance for countries involved in providing and receiving TNE.

More recently, the Erasmus Mundus-funded project Quality Assurance of Cross-border Higher Education (QACHE) developed *Cooperation in Cross-Border Higher Education: A Toolkit for Quality Assurance Agencies.* Targeting quality assurance agencies and their networks, the QACHE toolkit aimed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of TNHE quality assurance by putting forward practical suggestions, initiatives, and good practices (agencies may consider adopting these suggestions and practices to strengthen cooperation). However, the suggestions are accompanied by a condition that its possible implementation and the precise scope within and methods by which institutions can cooperate in the quality assurance of TNHE will depend on the different national and regional quality assurance and regulatory environments in which they are located.

At national level

At the national level, quality assurance ensures that HEIs provide quality services/ knowledge to society. It is mainly associated with the procedures and tools, such as recognition, evaluation, ranking, and national surveys, used by external agencies or accreditation institutions. In the 1980s, developed countries, especially the United States, UK, the European Union, and Australia, made significant efforts to advance the research on building a quality guarantee system for higher education in the country.

The development of higher education in the United States emphasizes more on locality and diversity, leading to greater autonomy for local governments and universities (Han, 2013). The quality assurance of higher education in the United States is mainly reflected in educational accreditation. These accreditation activities are voluntary for schools. Accreditation committees are also non-governmental. Furthermore, accreditation standards are jointly formulated by institutions and accreditation bodies (Yan, 2020). This mode can be applied to developing education systems as well as mature education systems. On the one hand, the purpose of accreditation is to ensure the quality of basic education and help universities improve the quality of education; On the other hand, it can prove the quality of higher education and make it available to the public to improve the credibility of institutions (Zhao & Meng, 2015).

The quality of higher education in the United Kingdom is guaranteed mainly by internal control, complemented by internal and external supervision mechanisms (Liu & Li, 2019; Van Vught Don & Westerheijden, 1994). This mode is more suitable for a mature education system (Zhao & Meng, 2015). It has little direct control over higher educational institutions where experts and scholars play an important role in internal quality assurance. The UK also emphasizes the role of society in quality management, such as the direct involvement of

external personnel in school management, quality assessment by professional groups and other statutory bodies, and Higher Education Ranking (Liu & Li, 2019).

The establishment of higher education quality assurance system in Europe highlights the leading role of the government (Yan, 2020). Under the guidance of the unified European ideology, the EU countries started the Bologna process to promote the integration of European higher education in 1999 and established national higher education quality assurance institutions in 2000. These national institutions were further united and formed the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) in 2000. In 2005, ENQA completed the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and established a unified European standard for quality assurance in higher education, including standards for quality assurance in schools (Liu & Li, 2019).

At institution level

At the institution level, quality assurance in HEIs also consists of internal and external parts (Harvey & Green, 1993; Hou, 2020; Zheng, 2020). First, HEIs participate in external certifications or evaluations as candidates; second, quality assurance entails the establishment of an internal system that specifies guidelines, good practices, structures, and procedures to regulate and continue improving the quality as well as mechanisms to monitor/evaluate the outputs (Zheng, 2020). They are the two sides of the same coin that activities are inextricably interrelated. Overall, there is a broad agreement that external quality audits, together with internal university processes, have been driving the improvement of quality assurance processes in universities.

At present, the quality assurance system of higher education around the world is becoming more and more assimilated, which means that the quality assurance of higher education should be strengthened from both external and internal aspects, with internal quality assurance being the basic and the most important aspect (Han, 2013).

2.1.3.2 Internal quality assurance in higher education

The internal quality assurance system in higher education comprises all interrelated aspects and links. It refers to the evaluation conducted by the school itself as the main body of quality assurance for all aspects of teaching and management, including internal quality and self-quality evaluation. Its main goal is to ensure, guarantee, and improve the quality of core activities of each institution of the school. It mainly involves three aspects: who guarantees, what guarantees, and how it is guaranteed (Zhu & Luo, 2008). Some scholars regard it as a matter of level to some extent: the whole institution, the college, the department, the program,

and the individual. It is also a matter of focused points: teaching, research, and administration. From the perspective of "product production", some scholars divided the content of quality management of higher education into input, process, and output (Nerad, 2014), and system efficiency (Zhu & Luo, 2008). The input quality includes such factors as educational objective, teachers, source of students, and quality culture of HEIs. Process quality includes, for example, curriculum development, teaching methods and processes, and teacher-student relationship; output quality includes social output quality (such as student graduation rate and employment rate) and student learning quality; the system efficiency mainly includes the ratio of teachers to students, per-student training cost, time efficiency and comprehensive efficiency (Zhu & Luo, 2008).

Various studies acknowledge different factors affecting quality assurance in postmodern universities. For instance, Shams and Belyaeva (2019) summarized 12 driving factors of quality assurance in higher education service management, which are, Internal evaluations/self-assessments and follow-ups, faculty autonomy, compliance-driven quality assurance, the institutional structure of a quality assurance team, online-centered quality management, students' influence and engagement, other stakeholder communication, cooperation and engagement, capacity building, cross-cultural management, and quality assurance, as well as trust and social responsibility.

Internal evaluations/self-assessments and follow-ups

The basic principle of this internal evaluation is the autonomy of HEIs (Prisăcariu, 2014), according to which each institution develops its quality system based on its own needs and goals. These kinds of reviews usually focus on the procedures that institutions use to maintain and develop the quality of their operations. They are based on the principle of enhancement-led evaluation, which has set the goal to help HEIs identify the strengths, good practices, and areas in need of development in their own operations. The purpose is, thus, to help HEIs achieve their strategic objectives and steer future development activities in order to create a framework for the institutions' continuous development (Prisăcariu, 2014).

Cross-culture management

Cross-cultural understanding and management are helpful for recognizing cultural gaps between and among stakeholders and ensuring zero errors in quality management through the culturally accepted quality standards in higher education (O'Mahony & Garavan, 2012).

Institutional structure of quality assurance team

The formation of an institutional team of internal assessors for comprehensive quality

assessment is recognized as a key to ensuring education quality (Beerkens & Udam, 2017; Shams & Belyaeva, 2019). Such a team is responsible for internal quality review and liaising with various internal and external stakeholders for quality control (Nenadal, 2015; Nwajiuba et al., 2020; Shams & Belyaeva, 2019).

Stakeholders' cooperation and engagement

Communication among stakeholders, cooperation with stakeholders, and their enhanced communication and engagement in the quality assurance process are recognized as crucial concerns in modern universities (Harvey & Green, 1993; Nwajiuba et al., 2020; Shams, 2017), since stakeholders bring specific knowledge and power valuable and necessary for the design and implementation of quality assurance in higher education (Beerkens & Udam, 2017).

In the TNE context, integrating local business norms, values, culture, relevant examples, and so forth of the TNE host country in the business course materials would be a particular need for transnational students to better understand the underlying course principles through their local examples (Shams, 2017). Furthermore, understanding (orientation) transnational employees' needs and expectations, considering transcultural issues, beliefs, ideas, impressions, expressions, and similar other views would be vital for transnational employees' training and performance management in TNEs' total quality management (TQM) (Shams, 2017).

Student' influence and engagement

Students are one of the critical stakeholders in universities and QA. Some scholars believe that students, as consumers, have the right to participate in the quality management of higher education. Students' engagement and participation in both academic and non-academic activities (Krause & Coates, 2008) are recognized as important indicators of higher education quality (Ryan, 2015). Students participate in quality management in a variety of ways, including various institutional committees, platforms, and teaching evaluations. Students can participate in the internal QA system (Stalmeijer et al., 2016). Student representatives can also be elected to participate in internal and external evaluation groups, and some colleges supervise and evaluate school teaching by training "mystery students".

Building a quality culture

There is a growing belief that higher education institutions should nurture a "quality culture" where structural/managerial and cultural/psychological elements act in synergy to continuously improve education (Bendermacher et al., 2017; Jiang et al., 2018). Establishing an internal quality assurance system is not only a process of system construction but also a

process of cultural development. From the perspective of "quality culture", scholars have explored the establishment of a quality assurance system in HEIs (Bendermacher et al., 2017; Wang & Li, 2016). Liu (2000) discussed the components of quality culture in HEIs, pointed out that quality culture can be divided into three levels, namely material level, institutional level, and spiritual level, and explained the interactions between them. Lin (2015) proposed that we should start from strengthening the development of quality culture and improve the cultural taste and development efficiency of the internal quality assurance system of colleges and universities through material, spiritual, institutional, and behavioral aspects. In modern universities, the development of a quality culture is a new approach to the establishment of the internal quality assurance system of colleges and universities (Jiang et al., 2018).

Faculty autonomy

Universities are organizations with a high degree of autonomy. Studies show that there is a positive correlation between organizational autonomy and organizational performance. Therefore, faculty autonomy will also contribute to organizational performance (quality). Faculty autonomy helps individual faculty members implement their innovative ideas in practice for their research and teaching, such as encouraging innovative teaching methods and protecting academic freedom to improve higher education quality.

Online-centered quality management

Online-centered quality management is another hot topic in QA research (Liu & Liu, 2018). The Online Higher Education Quality Assurance not only includes issues related to the quality of online education but also discusses the impact of self-efficacy on learning quality in online learning. Online education is a new form of education that emerged in the information age. Online education and learning models in higher education are constantly evolving. The emergence of massive open online courses (MOOCs), micro-curriculums and distance education forms improves higher education quality. In particular, since the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020, the quality assurance of online teaching and self-learning has become a new concern for universities.

Sharing best practices among institutions

"Sharing best practices among institutions" is a QA driving factor that is generally instrumental to sharing and transfering knowledge with external stakeholders, such as other HEIs and industry-based research organizations (Shams & Belyaeva, 2019).

Capacity building

Another factor in QA in modern universities is capacity building (Shams & Belyaeva, 2019). Capacity building and high capacity in comparison to the competitors are a

precondition for attracting quality faculties, and administrators and maintaining good relationships with various stakeholders in higher education (Shams & Belyaeva, 2019). The building of capacity, such as dynamic capability (Teece et al., 1997), is a dynamic and iterative process that incorporates the building of frameworks, work cultures, policies, processes, and systems enabling an organization or individual to improve performance and respond to the environment change, which should be valuable at personal, interpersonal and organizational levels. Consequently, once the capacity is enhanced at personal, interpersonal and organizational levels, the enhanced capacity will contribute to the quality through improved performance (Shams & Belyaeva, 2019).

Trust and social responsibility

Another stream of quality-driven management factor is rather intangible and depends on the level of trust and social responsibility of organizations (Bengoa & Kaufmann, 2016).

External quality audits

In the contemporary practice of delivering education services, HEIs need to comply with the issues of external quality agencies. External quality evaluations usually refer to quality audits by external agencies (Beerkens & Udam, 2017), domestic/international accreditations, QA agencies (Hou, 2020), and ranking (Shams & Belyaeva, 2019).

For TNE, alongside meeting the requirements of the external agencies of the education exporting countries, offshore education providers also need to comply with the requirements of various agencies of the importing countries. International accreditation has challenged the QA systems of higher education in Asia. When universities integrate Western standards, in particular, those from the United States, into the local context, they risk being criticized for assisting “cultural imperialism”, which raises the serious issue of national interest in higher education (Hou, 2020).

The most critical subject of quality assurance in Chinese-foreign cooperative education is the institution itself, and a sound internal quality assurance system is the basis of the whole quality assurance (Li & Zhao, 2019; Liu & Williams, 2018).

2.1.3.3 Quality assurances system in CFCRS

TNHE quality assurance concerns the protection of stakeholders in the process of providing TNHE and the expectation of academic standards (Zheng, 2013). CFCRS differs from general higher education in talent cultivation objectives, faculty, curriculum and teaching materials arrangement, and governance body. There are also specific differences between them in quality assurance.

The first difference lies in the unique nature of cultivation objectives. CFCRS is primarily characterized by internationalization. Its talent cultivation objectives are pursuing a global vision, independent ability, innovation ability, and comprehensive quality (Zhao & Meng, 2015). The second difference has to do with the unique nature of the teaching quality evaluation system. The proportion of foreign teachers in CFCRS institutions is higher than that of regular colleges and universities. Besides, there are typical differences in higher education among different countries. For example, different countries may follow inconsistent standards in establishing teaching evaluation systems and may be subject to different teaching quality evaluation and assurance requirements. The third difference is shown in the unique nature of the governance body and system. CFCRS institutions have generally established a standardized governance structure, with a board of directors/trustees composed of representatives from both Chinese and foreign parties as the highest decision-making body. Important matters are discussed and decided by both Chinese and foreign parties through meetings. The fourth difference manifests in the unique nature of the faculty. Specifically, the faculty of CFCRS institutions is generally composed of teachers from both sides. Compared with regular institutions of higher learning, CFCRS institutions also put forward higher requirements for teachers' foreign language proficiency, bilingual teaching mode, professional knowledge, and cross-cultural communication and cooperation ability. The fifth difference concerns the unique nature of students. The tuition fees of CFCRS institutions are generally higher than those of regular colleges and universities, and students studying in CFCRS institutions are generally from abundant families. These students have prominent differences in personality characteristics and a strong sense of family superiority. Besides, these students are exposed to both Chinese and Western culture in their learning environment and daily lives. Therefore, a different and more comprehensive approach should be adopted in student management compared to regular institutions of higher learning (Zhao & Meng, 2015). The sixth difference is reflected in the unique nature of the curriculum and teaching materials. Most of the courses taught in CFCRS institutions are based on or adapted from the instructional design and original teaching materials of the partner foreign universities. Therefore, the content and teaching methods significantly differ those of regular colleges and universities.

Based on the Theory of Network Governance, Zhao and Meng (2015) identified the main stakeholders of CFCRS, on which basis they put forward that CFCRS institutions should form three network governance mechanisms: coordination, integration, and trust. CFCRS institutions should build a quality assurance system in which both external actors,

such as government and the public, and internal actors, such as teachers, jointly participate in governance. With CFCRS institutions as the subject, Zhao and Meng (2015) built a general framework for quality assurance of CFCRS institutions with the division of internal and external quality assurance systems and the input-process-output of educational resources as the main line (See Figure 2.1).

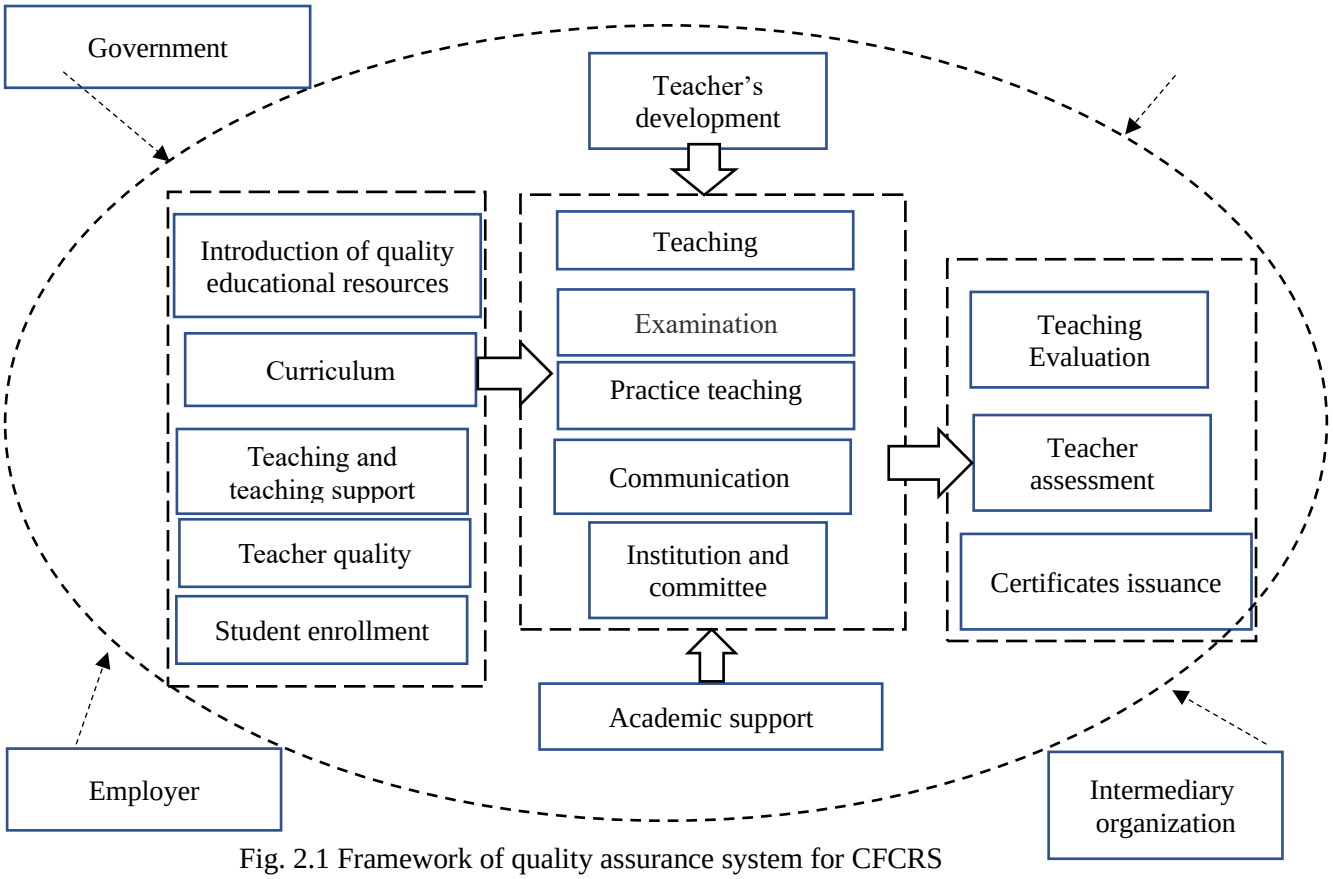

Fig. 2.1 Framework of quality assurance system for CFCRS

Source: Zhao and Meng (2015)

2.1.3.4 Service quality measurement in higher education

As a result of the difficulty in defining quality and higher education quality, the conceptual framework and measurement of quality have also turned out to be a controversial issue. Despite the efforts made by service marketing researchers to establish a few good scales, the context specification of each scale remains a significant challenge (Kashif et al., 2014).

International research on the quality assurance of higher education is active from the aspects of system development and service quality evaluation (Abdullah, 2006a; Brochado, 2009; Lagrosen et al., 2004; Latif et al., 2019; Noaman et al., 2015; Owlia & Aspinwall, 1996). In the literature on the quality of higher education, many researchers believe that higher education itself is a service (Hill, 1995; Reavill, 1998; Sardar et al., 2016; Shams & Belyaeva, 2019; Zafiropoulos & Vrana, 2008) since it exhibits all the classical features of

services. Specifically, it is intangible and heterogeneous; it meets the criterion of inseparability by being produced and consumed at the same time; it satisfies the perishability criterion and assumes the students' participation in the delivery process (Cuthbert, 1996). The concept of service quality is, therefore, directly applicable to higher education.

According to this concept, service quality in higher education has become a hot topic among administrators and academic researchers (Abdullah, 2006b; Han, 2013; Noaman et al., 2015). A large number of studies have discussed higher education quality assurance from the perspective of service quality. Crucially, to manage and improve the quality of services they provide, universities need to measure service quality regularly (Abdullah, 2006a). A brief survey of higher education service quality evaluation models is presented in Table 2-1.

(1) SERVQUAL, SERVPERF and modified SERVQUAL model

The most prevalent service quality measurement model in literature is the SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al., 1988) model (Ozdemir et al., 2019), a framework whose theoretical underpinnings are rooted in. This model delineates service quality by quantifying the disparity between customer expectations and their perceptions of actual performance. The SERVQUAL scale conceptualizes service quality as containing five dimensions measured through the 22 items under five metrics, namely tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Owing to the perceived shortcomings in the SERVQUAL approach at both conceptual and operational levels (see Buttle, 1996, for a review), a performance-based approach to measure service quality called SERVPERF was introduced (Cronin & Taylor, 1992). SERVPERF is a variant of the SERVQUAL scale, and it is based on the perception component alone.

Since the 1990s, SERVQUAL has attracted wide attention in the field of higher education (Han, 2013; Kashif et al., 2014). In order to better conform to the characteristics of higher education, many scholars have carried out dimensional modification and empirical research on the basis of this model (Han, 2013; Kashif et al., 2014). For example, Leblanc and Nguyen (1997) attempted to construct the dimensions of business administration students' evaluation of educational service quality. In conclusion, the seven dimensions concerned students are reputation, administrative staff, teachers, curriculum system, responsiveness, tangible equipment, and availability of equipment; Through focus groups, expert consultations, and questionnaire surveys, the application of the SERVQUAL model in the graduate education service field was modified by Chinese scholar Han (2013). The modified model includes six dimensions, namely, curriculum and teaching, teacher and supervisors, library services, management and support, culturel and atmosphere, as well as

logistics support.

Zafiropoulos and Vrana (2008) used the SERVQUAL instrument, adjusted in the educational context. It identified the gaps between students' and staff's attitudes and revealed possible differences between the views of students and staff. Staff had higher expectations for the quality of higher education, and they perceived the current education services to be of high level. In contrast, students had low expectations for the quality of education, and they perceived the current education services to be of low level.

Ozdemir et al. (2019) developed the measuring tool SusSERVQUAL scale, which addressed two independent research areas, namely, sustainability and service quality in higher education, using the SERVQUAL model and Pythagorean Fuzzy Sets method. This scale can be evaluated as a contribution to both scholars and practitioners, namely higher education authorities and managers of universities who seek to measure students' perceptions of sustainable campus services.

Some researchers also concluded that SERVPERF explained more of the variance in an overall measure of service quality than SERVQUAL in the higher education sector (Brochado, 2009; P. Sultan & H. Y. Wong, 2010). Although SERVPERF and SERVQUAL share the same dimensional constitution with the same scale, SERVPERF only uses the experience value of the respondents to measure the service quality of higher education (Xu, 2017; Shurair & Pokharel, 2019).

Based on the SERVPERF model, Chinese scholar Xu (2017) conducted an empirical analysis of an application-oriented undergraduate college in Jiangsu Province. Based on the results of exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis, the SERVPERF model scale showed good reliability and validity in evaluating higher education service quality.

Using the improved SERVPERF model, Fatima et al. (2019) conducted a quantitative study on the faculty's perception of the quality of higher education services in ten private higher education institutions in Pakistan. The result showed that the following eight factors have a significant impact on service quality from the perspective of faculty, namely preparation of pre-determined educational levels, course contents up to date with national and international levels, development of communication skills among students, attractive university campus, need-based scholarships, well-equipped computer labs, availability of computer laboratories and display of students' results within the stipulated period.

Numerous studies have shown that the SERVQUAL and the improved SERVQUAL

model suit the measurement of service quality in higher education well (Han, 2013; Ozdemir et al., 2019; Shurair & Pokharel, 2019; Yu & Han, 2010; Zafiropoulos & Vrana, 2008). In fact, there are multiple views on applying SERVQUAL in higher education. One of the criticisms is that Parasuraman et al. (1994) pertains to their omission of certain services characterized by intensive customer interaction or intervention. This contention gains particular relevance within the realm of higher education, where the nature of the service necessitates a higher degree of active engagement and collaboration from its customers (students) in co-creating the service product (education) than is typical in numerous other service contexts. A number of studies examine the SERVQUAL scale in the university environment, and none of those studies can replicate the five-factor structure of the SERVQUAL scale (Sultan & Yin Wong, 2010). Besides, some scholars believe that both the SERVQUAL and SERVPERE are too general, and to use them in the higher education sector, one must modify and relate them by considering academic aspects (Abbas, 2020; Abdullah, 2006a). Thus, there are controversies about the concept and suitability of the SERVQUAL scale in higher education (Sultan & Yin Wong, 2010). Consequently, several researchers have endeavored to pinpoint service quality dimensions tailored specifically to the education sector (Abbas, 2020; Shams & Belyaeva, 2019).

(2) Developed model for higher education

HEdPERF and HESQUAL instruments developed by Abdullah (2006b) and Teeroovengadum, Kamalanabhan, and Keshwar Seebaluck (2016) are considered better than SERVQUAL and SERVPERF since they are focused on the educational sector (Abbas, 2020).

HEdPERF (Higher education performance) was developed and modified by Abdullah (2006b) by incorporating a set of 41 items. This instrument aims at considering not only the academic components but also aspects of the total service environment as experienced by students. The author identifies five dimensions of the service quality concept: (1) Non-academic aspects, referring to items essential to enable students to fulfill their study obligations and relate to duties carried out by non-academic staff. (2) Academic aspects, referring to responsibilities of academics. (3) Reputation refers to the importance of higher learning institutions in projecting a professional image. (4) Access, including approachability, ease of contact, availability, and convenience. (5) Program issues, such as the importance of offering wide-ranging and reputable academic programs/specializations with flexible structures and health services.

HESQUAL (Higher education service quality) was developed by Teeroovengadum, Kamalanabhan, and Keshwar Seebaluck (2016) using a holistic and transformative approach.

The model was hierarchically termed HESQUAL consisting of five primary dimensions and nine sub-dimensions, and included a total of 48 items. The five dimensions are administrative quality, physical environment quality, core educational quality, support facilities quality, and transformative quality.

Besides, some scholars believe that different cultural backgrounds lead to different understandings of quality dimensions, directly affecting the effectiveness of different dimensions for customers with different cultural backgrounds (Raajpoot, 2004). Therefore, Raajpoot (2004) developed a scale to measure service quality that is best used in an Asian, and particularly, Pakistani cultural context. The PAKSERV scale consists of six dimensions, namely reliability, responsiveness, assurance, personalization, formality, and sincerity (Raajpoot, 2004). Some scholars have verified this model, and the result indicates that the hypotheses about the traditional service quality items of Tangibility and Assurance have been rejected. A strong significance has been identified for all the PAKSERV items, including Sincerity, Formality, and Personalization (Kashif et al., 2014).

Owlia and Aspinwall (1996) developed the conceptual framework of the quality dimension of higher education by analyzing and comparing the dimensions of "product quality", "software quality", and "service quality". Six dimensions were proposed in the framework, namely tangibles, competence, attitude, content, delivery, and reliability. Through an empirical study and primary internal consistency and factor analysis, the initial quality dimensions were analyzed and amended to attain the most appropriate grouping of the items (Owlia & Aspinwall, 1998). It was concluded that only four dimensions were valid enough to be included in the framework for quality measurement, namely academic resources, competence, attitude, and content.

Through in-depth interviews and questionnaire surveys among faculty members and students of business schools of three higher education institutions from three countries, seven significant dimensions affecting the quality of higher education were constructed by scholars Lagrosen et al. (2004). The significance dimensions include corporate collaboration, information and responsiveness, courses offered, internal evaluations, computer facilities, collaboration and comparisons, and library resources.

Jain et al. (2011) introduced an extensive framework for assessing the service quality of higher education. This model comprises two overarching dimensions: program quality and quality of life. These dimensions encapsulate fundamental components of service delivery within HEIs. Furthermore, the framework encompasses eight sub-dimensions, each capturing specific facets of the service process. Subsequently, the efficacy of this model

within the Indian context is systematically examined (Jain et al., 2013). The findings of their empirical study demonstrated that the formulated service quality scale for higher education furnishes practitioners with a dependable and valid analytical instrument for gauging students' perceptions of quality.

Noaman et al. (2015) developed the HEQAM (Higher Education Quality Assessment Model) to suit the needs of HEIs better. The model is composed of three hierarchical levels, consisting of eight main objectives (or criteria), namely, curriculum, staff, career prospects, infrastructure, e-services, library services, administrative services, and location.

More recently, Latif et al. (2019) developed and validated the construct HiEduQual (Higher Education Service Quality) to measure the level of service quality in HEIs through focus group discussions with four different stakeholders, namely, students, parents, faculty, and the employer. This model contains six factors that affect the quality of higher education services, namely, teachers, administrative services, knowledge services, activities, continuous improvement, and leadership. Abbas (2020) proposes a new instrument named HEISQUAL to measure SQ in HEIs from students' perspectives with seven themes, specifically stated as teachers' profile, curriculum, infrastructure and facilities, management and support staff, employment quality, safety and security, and students' skills development.

(3) Developed model for transnational higher education

The literature on quality-related matters in TNHE has proliferated since the beginning of the new century, covering the operation of various regulatory frameworks, mechanisms, and approaches (Hu et al., 2019). Through a review of the literature and the documents of tropEd, Zwanikken et al. (2013) explored the key themes of quality assurance of cross-border education, including true collaboration versus erosion of national education sovereignty, equivalence and comparability of quality assurance frameworks, accreditation agencies, and transparency.

The development of a quality assurance system for an international joint program is understood as an institutionalization process of organizational innovation, and the institutionalization process is also interpreted as a process of reconciling different institutional logics amid institutional changes (2017). Based on this understanding, Zheng et al. (2017) constructed an analytical framework for understanding quality assurance in international joint programs and tested it in a case study of a European-Chinese joint doctoral degree program and found that several factors may facilitate the process, namely profitability, compatibility and the agency of institutional entrepreneurs.

Hu et al. (2019) summarized the four most prominent factors affecting the quality of

Chinese-foreign cooperative education by analyzing the content of "problems and possible solutions" in the self-assessment reports submitted by 122 Chinese-foreign cooperative education institutions to the MOE in 2017, namely, institutional regulations, sustainable supply of highly qualified teachers, quality of curriculum design and implementation as well as language proficiency of students.

A brief summary of higher education service quality models is shown in table 2.1.

Table 2.1 A brief survey of higher education service quality models

Model/ Methodology	Dimension	Purpose of the research	Main conclusion	Dimension with significant impact	Case	Focus group
Framework for the dimensions of quality in higher education (Owlia & Aspinwall, 1996, 1998)	1) Tangibles 2) Competence 3) Attitude 4) Content 5) Delivery 6) Reliability	Proposed a specific framework for a higher education environment.	The conceptual framework proposed for quality dimensions in higher education provides a basis for the measurement and, consequently, improvement of quality in this environment; highlights the need for further identification/ clarification of the role that "customers" play in higher education.	1) Academic Resources 2) Competence 3) Attitude 4) Content		Students, academic staff, employers
Dimension for quality in HE (Lagrosen & Seyyed, 2004)	1) Corporate collaboration 2) Information and responsiveness 3) Courses offered 4) Campus facilities 5) Teaching practices 6) Internal evaluations, 7) External evaluations 8) Computer facilities, 9) Collaboration and comparisons, 10) Post-study factors 11) Library resources	To examine what dimensions constitute quality in higher education and to compare these with the dimensions of quality developed in general service quality research.	First, the author identified quality dimensions for academic business studies from the students' perspective. Further, the author compared the dimensions with earlier research into quality in higher education and general research on service management. The findings of this study rhyme well with some of the earlier publications regarding quality in higher education and provide a valuable development of them.	1) Corporate collaboration, 2) Information and responsiveness, 3) Courses offered, 4) Internal evaluations, 5) Computer facilities, 6) Collaboration and comparisons, 7) Library resources		Students
HEdPERF (Abdullah, 2006a, 2006b)	1) Non-academic aspects. 2) Academic aspects. 3) Reputation. 4) Access. 5) Program issues 6) Understanding	To develop a new measurement scale that incorporates not only the academic components but also aspects of the	A new measurement scale HEdPERF was developed and validated. A modified five-factor structure of HEdPERF with 38 items is put forward as the most appropriate scale for the higher education sector.	Access		Students

		total service environment as experienced by the student.				
PHEd (Performanc-based Higher Education model) (Sultan & Wong, 2010)	Dependability; Effectiveness; Capability; Efficiency; Competencies; Assurance; Unusual situation management; Semester and syllabus.	To develop and empirically test the performance-based higher education service quality model.	The results are satisfactory in terms of factor analysis, reliability and validity tests. Based on the overall loaded items, the eight dimensions are named.		Oita University, Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University and Ritsumeikan University	undergrad uates, graduates, post-graduates, and internatio nal students
Conceptual framework (Jain et al., 2013; Jain et al., 2011)	Two generic dimensions and eight sub-dimensions. Namely, Program Quality: 1) Industry interaction, 2) Input quality, 3) Academic facilities, 4) Curriculum, Quality of life: 5) Non-academic processes, 6) Support facilities, 7) Interaction quality, 8) Campus.	To develop the model for service quality in higher education and a multidimensional scale to measure service quality in higher education in the Indian context.	The scale for service quality in higher education developed in this study provides practitioners with a reliable and valid analytical tool for the measurement of students' quality perceptions.	Industry interaction, Input quality, Academic facilities, Curriculum, Non-academic processes, Support facilities, Interaction quality,	Students were from the NBA accredited management, engineering and other technical courses from the cities of Pune and Indore in India.	Students
HEQAM (Noaman et al., 2015)	1) Curriculum 2) Staff 3) Career 4) Prospects 5) Infrastructure 6) e-services 7) library 8) services	To present a developed higher education quality assessment model (HEQAM) that can be applied to enchance university services.	This paper proposed a HEQAM. The proposed model consists of eight main criteria, including 53 alternatives. The issue of main quality criteria and sub-criteria have been addressed to define determinates and their respective weight in the overall quality.	Curriculum		Student, faculty and experts.

	9) administrative services 10) location				
HESQUAL (higher educational service quality) (Teeroovengadum et al., 2016)	1) Administrative quality; 2) Physical environment quality; 3) Core educational quality; 4) Support facilities quality; 5) Transformative quality	To develop and empirically test a hierarchical model for measuring service quality in higher education.	A hierarchical model was therefore considered the most appropriate. The final model consisted of five primary dimensions.		Students
HiEduQual (Latif et al., 2019)	1) teacher quality 2) administrative services 3) knowledge services 4) activities 5) continuous improvement 6) leadership quality	To develop and validate the construct HiEduQual (Higher Education Service Quality) to measure the level of service quality in higher education (HE) institutions.	The study provides a scale to evaluate service quality in HE. The study has a number of significant implications. This reliable and valid scale can be applied as a diagnostic tool in various institutions to ascertain the problem areas in service provision. A multi-stakeholder-driven framework can aid in enhancing the quality of the service.	Teacher quality	Students, parents, teachers, and employers ..
HEISQUAL (Abbas, 2020)	1) Teachers' profile 2) Curriculum 3) Infrastructure and facilities 4) Management and support staff 5) Employment quality 6) Safety and security 7) Students' skills development	To identify service quality (SQ) indicators from their perspectives and propose a more comprehensive instrument for measuring SQ exclusively in HEIs.	This study proposes a new instrument named HEISQUAL to measure SQ in HEIs.		Students

Source: self-produced.

2.2 Stakeholder theory

Stakeholder theory was first put forward in the 1960s and gained momentum in the 1980s (Alexander & Hjortsø, 2018; Fu & Zhao, 2006). Its proposal questioned the premise of "shareholder supremacy". The public gradually realized that enterprises not only serve shareholders but also, among others, many communities are closely related to the survival of enterprises. According to Clarkson (1995), the survival and success of an organization depend on the ability of its managers to provide wealth, value, and satisfaction to its stakeholders.

In 1965, Ansoff first introduced the term into Management and Economics, arguing that "to develop an ideal enterprise goal, it is necessary to consider a comprehensive way to balance the conflicting claims of many stakeholders in the enterprise, including managers, workers, shareholders, suppliers and distributors" (Fu & Zhao, 2006; Jia & Chen, 2002). According to Freeman (1984), the input or participation of various stakeholders is integral to the development of any enterprise. Enterprises should not only pursue the interests of shareholders but also the collective interests of stakeholders.

Since the creation of the term stakeholder, there have been many explanations for its meaning, among which Freemen's (1984) was deemed the most representative (Mitchell et al., 1997; Wang & Jiang, 2007). According to Freeman (1984), a stakeholder is a person or group that can influence the behaviors, decisions, policies, activities, or goals of an organization or an individual or group that is affected by the behaviors, decisions, policies, activities ,or goals of an organization. He defined stakeholders in a broad sense.

After more than 30 years of development, stakeholder theory has been widely applied in fields such as marketing, human resource, corporate governance, education, economy, health, business management, and ecosystem management (Alves et al., 2010; Fu & Zhao, 2006; He & Chu, 2019a). In contemporary organizational contexts, diverse studies have highlighted the utilization of stakeholder theory. This may be attributed to the increased pressure on organizations to respond to different stakeholders' group interests (Mainardes et al., 2012). Stakeholder theory provides a wide range of references for policy formulation and amendment and illustrates the relationships among the various groups of actors in and around an organization. Besides, stakeholder theory addresses the ethical and moral values of organizations to emphasize that an organization must consider and integrate the needs of all stakeholders in its operation and achieve maximum benefits by coordinating and

integrating the interests of its stakeholders to create value (Schlierer et al., 2012; Verbeke & Tung, 2013) and honor corporate social responsibility, business ethics (Freeman & Hasnaoui, 2011) and the fair play principle (Phillips, 1997). The theory aims to pursue balanced stakeholders interest relationships (He & Chu, 2019a).

Stakeholder theory takes place across three levels: the identification of stakeholders (building a stakeholder framework and ideology), the development of processes to recognize their needs and interests, and the strategic management procedure (establishing and building relationships with them and the overall process structured according to organizational objectives) (Freeman, 1984; Mainardes et al., 2012).

2.2.1 Classification of stakeholders

Only after scientific classification can scientific management be carried out for different types of stakeholders; there is a wealth of literature that identifies and classifies stakeholders according to different definitions and classification methods. Miles (2017) presented a multi-dimensional classification of stakeholder definitions with a 16-category model based on empirical observation of 885 definitions. Morover, he concluded that, as an essentially contested concept, the solution lies not in a universal stakeholder definition but in debating the boundaries of stakeholder identification.

The two main classification methods in the existing literature are the multidimensional classification method and the Mitchell score-based approach (Mitchell et al., 1997) (Chen, 2003; Fu & Zhao, 2006; Zhou & Chen, 2017). The multidimensional classification method looks at the differences among stakeholders in multiple dimensions where enterprise stakeholders are classified accordingly (Zhou & Chen, 2017). For example, Freeman (1984) classified enterprise stakeholders according to ownership, economic dependence, and social interests: all shareholders of an enterprise are ownership stakeholders; stakeholders with economic dependence on the enterprise include managers, creditors, employees, customers, suppliers, competitors, and local communities; and government leaders and media have social interest relations with the enterprise. Frederick (1988) divided stakeholders into direct stakeholders and indirect stakeholders. Direct stakeholders have established market relations with an enterprise, including shareholders, employees, creditors, and suppliers. Indirect stakeholders have non-market relations with the enterprise, including the central government, the local government, social groups, the media, and the general public. According to Chakrham (1992), stakeholders are contractual stakeholders or community stakeholders,

depending on whether a transactional contract exists. The former include shareholders, employees, customers, distributors, suppliers, and lenders, whereas the latter includes all consumers, regulators, government departments, pressure groups, media, and local communities. Clarkson (1994) proposed that stakeholders can be divided into voluntary and involuntary stakeholders according to the risks they bear in enterprise management activities, in other words, whether they voluntarily or involuntarily offer tangible or intangible capital and undertake the risks of business operations. Later, Clarkson (1995) further divided stakeholders into primary and secondary stakeholders according to their proximity to the enterprise: Primary stakeholders' participation in operation is indispensable for an enterprise to survive, while secondary stakeholders, such as media, indirectly affect or are affected by the operations of the enterprise (Clarkson, 1995). Wheeler (1998) introduced the social dimension into classification criteria and divided stakeholders into four categories, including primary social stakeholders, who are directly related to an enterprise and its staff; secondary social stakeholders, whose relations with the enterprise are intermediated by social activities; non-social stakeholders, who have a direct influence on the enterprise but do not connect with specific people; and secondary non-social stakeholders, who have an indirect influence on the enterprise and do not connect with relevant people, like the natural environment (Wheeler & Sillanpa, 1998). Chinese scholars Wan (1998) and Li (2001) took into consideration the cooperation and threat posed by stakeholders and subdivided stakeholders into four types, namely supportive, marginal, unsupportive, and mixed stakeholders.

The above dimensions adopted in classification have considerably deepened people's understanding of enterprise stakeholders (Chen, 2003). However, the common defect of those classifications is the lack of operability. In other words, they are suitable for academic discussions but not for practical application (Chen, 2003; Jia & Chen, 2002). In 1997, Mitchell et al. (1997) proposed a score-based approach to defining stakeholders based on 27 representative definitions of stakeholders in the history of the emergence and development of stakeholder theory (Score based Approach) (shown as fig. 2.2).

Mitchell et al. (1997) pointed out that the two core issues of stakeholder theory are stakeholder identification (who is the stakeholder of the enterprise) and stakeholder salience (the basis on which management pays attention to specific groups).

According to Mitchel et al. (1997), a possible stakeholder will be graded on three attributes and determined whether it is a stakeholder or not and to which category it may belong based on the scores. These three attributes are: (1) Legitimacy, referring to whether a group is endowed with legal and moral or specific claims on the enterprise; (2) Power,

indicating whether a group has the status, ability, and corresponding means to influence the decision of the enterprise; (3) Urgency, representing whether the requirements of a group can attract attention from the enterprise management immediately (Mitchell et al., 1997).

If all three attributes are present, the group is considered a definitive stakeholder. For the survival and development of an enterprise, the management must pay close attention to the wishes of its definitive stakeholders and meet their requirements. Typically, definitive stakeholders include shareholders, employees, and customers. If two attributes are present, the group is classified as an expectant stakeholder. Expectant stakeholders are further divided into three categories. First, groups with both legitimacy and power are called dominant stakeholders. They can attract the attention of enterprise management and sometimes participate in formal decision-making processes. Investors, employees, and government departments are dominant stakeholders. Second, groups with legitimacy and urgency but lack corresponding power to enforce their demands on the enterprise are called dependent stakeholders. They need to gain support from influencial stakeholders or count on the mercy of the management to achieve their goals. They often form alliances and engage in political activities to awaken the conscience of the management. Third, groups with urgency and power over the enterprise but without legitimacy are known as dangerous stakeholders. They are dangerous to the enterprise because they often resort to violence if their demands are not satisfied. For example, disgruntled employees may launch reckless strikes when tensions flare; environmentalists may stage demonstrations and other protests; and political and religious extremists may launch terrorist attacks. If only one attribute is present, the group is called a latent stakeholder. Latent stakeholders can also be subdivided into three types. Groups that have only legitimacy but lack power and urgency are called discretionary stakeholders, who decide whether to play their role as stakeholders depending on the enterprise's operations. Groups with power are called dormant stakeholders. When they exercise or threaten to exercise their power, they are worthy of attention. Groups with only urgency are called demanding stakeholders. According to Mitchell, they are "mosquitos buzzing around the ears of managers, annoying but not dangerous, troublesome but deserving not much attention". Unless they can demonstrate the legitimacy of their demands or have acquired power, there is little need or incentive for the management to pay attention.

Mitchell et al. (1997) held that one needs at least one of the above attributes to be a stakeholder, whether one has a legitimate claim on the enterprise, can attract the attention of the enterprise management immediately, or can exert power on decision-making.

The model proposed by Mitchell et al. (1997) on stakeholder classification is dynamic:

anyone or any group will fall into a different category after gaining or losing an attribute. For example, if an expectant stakeholder gains legitimacy and power and the changes in the political and economic environment make his/her demands more pressing, he/she will become a definitive stakeholder. The model has two important implications. First, whether a group has legitimacy is not the only reason management pays attention to them, nor is it the only attribute to confirm whether a group belongs to stakeholders. When defining stakeholders, enterprise management also needs to take into consideration the people who have power in the environment where the enterprise is located, as well as those who require urgent satisfaction of demands. Second, a classification is not the "fixed property" of stakeholders. The use of political power, the establishment of various alliances, and the change of socio-economic conditions are all likely to change the classification of stakeholders (Jia & Chen, 2002; Mainardes et al., 2012).

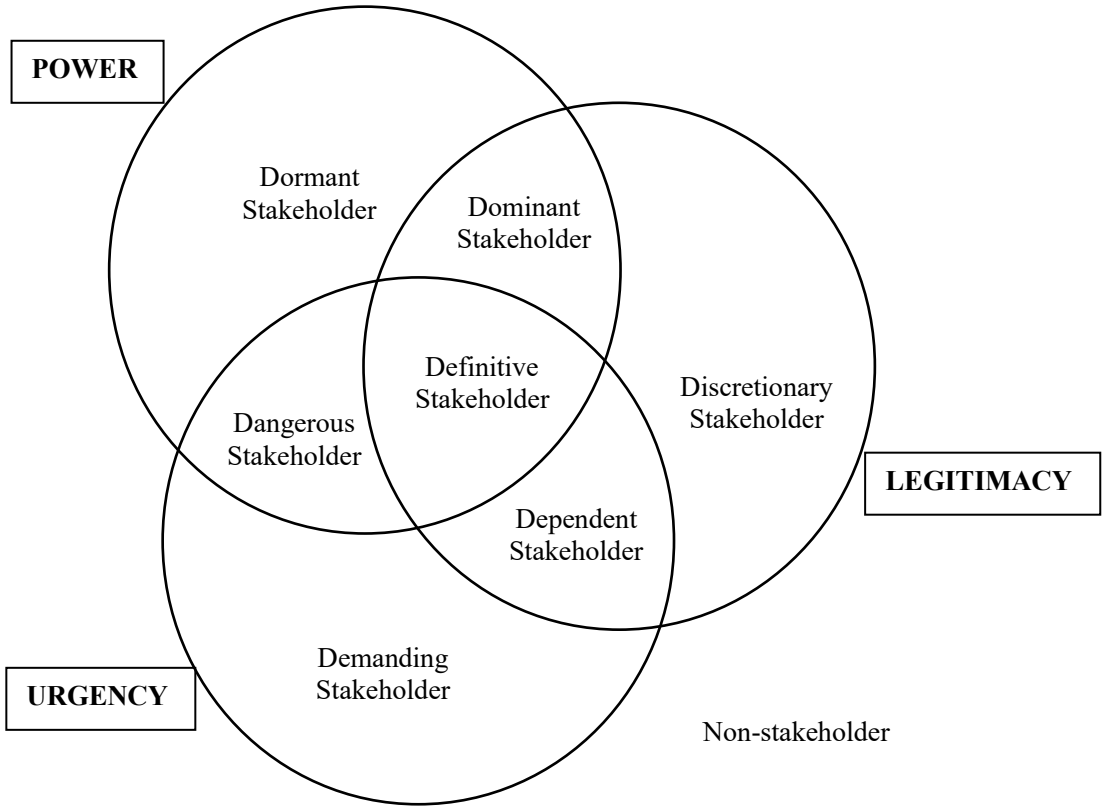

Fig. 2.2 Stakeholder typology: One, two, or three attributes present

Source: Mitchell et al. (1997)

The multidimensional classification method used by Freeman (1984), Frederick (1988), Chakrham (1992), Clarkson (1994), and Wheeler (1998) is of limited vision and lacks consideration of the dynamic change in the attributes of stakeholders. So the Mitchell score-based approach is generally considered more operable and applicable to the analysis of

various stakeholders of a specific enterprise and industry (Chen, 2003). However, some scholars believe that the deficiency of this model is that the priority degree of stakeholders is only judged based on whether they have a particular attribute or multiple attributes, but the extent of the attribute/attributes is not considered (Ribeiro Soriano et al., 2012).

Later, Mainardes et al. (2012) proposed a novel model for stakeholders' classification in the context of public organizations (Shown in Figure 2.3) based on Mitchell et al.'s (1997) framework and developed a scale for measuring the ongoing influence between a university and its stakeholders. Twenty-one stakeholders of a public university were identified and six stakeholder types were proposed in the study, namely regulator, controller, partner, passive, dependent, and non-stakeholder. This model explains the relationship between an organization and its stakeholders from the organization's management perspective, namely, the degree of legitimacy, power, and urgency (Miles, 2017).

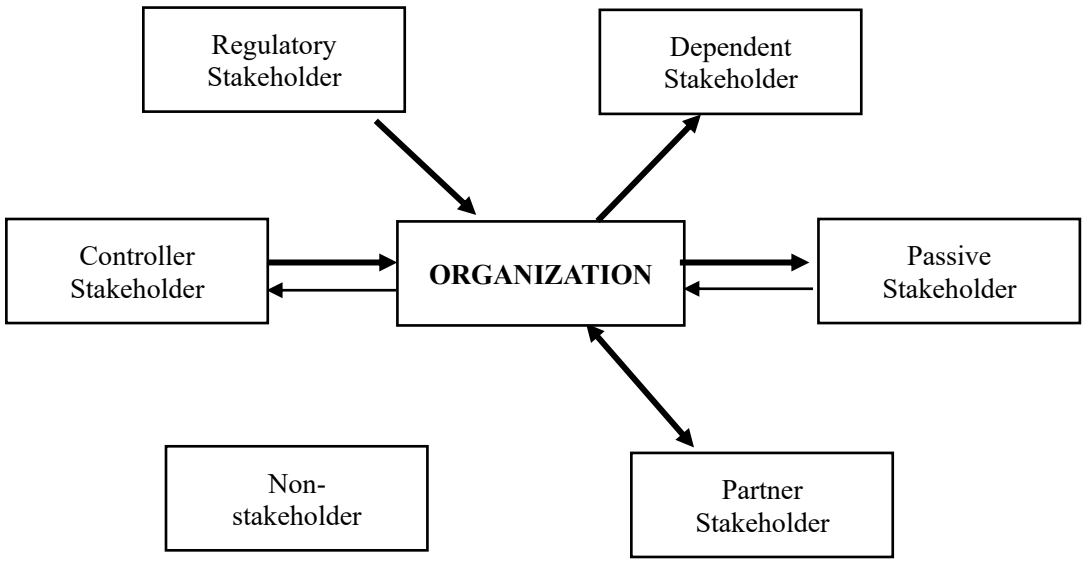

Fig. 2.3 Illustration of the organization and stakeholder relationship of influence

Source: Mainardes et al. (2012)

2.2.2 Stakeholder Theory in higher education

Stakeholder theory has been widely introduced into research on higher education and has become a new perspective to analyze higher education issues (Jiao, 2018; Zhao, 2018). HEIs are typical stakeholder organizations (Chapleo & Simms, 2010; Zang, 2017; Zhang et al., 2010; Zhou & Chen, 2017). In this context, one of the challenges of HEIs is to reorient their efforts to better satisfy social demands and reconsider their relationships with their stakeholders (Jongbloed et al., 2008). Unlike enterprises, HEIs are responsible for knowledge creation, research, and transmission to cultivate talents (Lin & Li, 2017), with

diverse objectives generally difficult to measure stakeholders (Alves et al., 2010), and they have closer and more complex relations with stakeholders than enterprises do (Chapleo & Simms, 2010; Zhang et al., 2010). As non-profit organizations, universities have no shareholders in the strict sense, and no one can obtain residual profits produced by universities. No individual or stakeholder can exercise independent control over a university. A university can only be jointly controlled by various stakeholders (Gong & Yu, 2019; Zang, 2017). In terms of management practice, the operation and development of HEIs involve more stakeholders, including the government, industry, teachers, students, community, parents, and the media, and they all have different impacts on development. In a word, HEIs are significant and complex stakeholder organizations.

Thus, the stakeholder orientation construct would have considerably more meaning in the university context (Llonch et al., 2016). Morover, communication among various stakeholders is also recognized as a key concern of quality assurance in postmodern universities (Shams & Belyaeva, 2019). The quality management of higher education is closely related to the satisfaction of stakeholders' needs (Liu et al., 2015; Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2003). Quality assurance is effective only when all stakeholders understand and accept the challenges they face and the benefits they can obtain (Wang & Meng, 2018). As higher education becomes more internationalized and market-oriented, it has become an international trend to open up cooperation in its quality assurance. As the core and foundation of higher education quality assurance, internal quality assurance is not just an affair of universities themselves but also requires the common participation of a large number of stakeholders (Lin & Li, 2017).

Relevant studies also revealed that "stakeholders' participation" in management and decision-making in the public domain can help promote "collaborative governance" in the following three aspects. First, stakeholders' participation is important for improving the legitimacy, applicability, and effectiveness of policies and regulations (Beerkens & Udam, 2017). Under a complex internal and external environment, the participation of stakeholders from all walks of society can break the system bottleneck and help improve the effectiveness of policies and regulations so as to meet the expectations of a wider public rather than particular stakeholders (Qin & Zhou, 2018). Second, stakeholders' participation can help advance external "accountability". For example, external experts, as stakeholders, introduce expertise into the quality assurance process of higher education, which facilitates the supervision and accountability of quality assurance. In addition, the participation of stakeholders helps establish a broader feedback mechanism, making the administrative

management system more open and flexible. External evaluations are combined to improve the previous self-improvement-based supervision within the organization. Third, stakeholders' participation helps build a platform for exchanging different opinions. According to communicative rationality, dialogue, and communication can enhance mutual understanding among stakeholders. Communication itself not only helps stabilize the formation of the agreement but also enables the participants to see fairness and justice in the outcome and thus recognize its legitimacy (Qin & Zhou, 2018).

2.2.2.1 Stakeholders and its classification in higher education

Henry Rosovsky pioneered applying stakeholder theory in university management. In his book entitled *The University: An Owner's Manual*, Rosovsky (1996) proposed the concept of "owner of university", under which he listed four groups, namely, the most important group, important group, partial owner, and secondary group (Cui & Sun, 2018). In recent years, many scholars have explored issues concerning stakeholder identification and classification in the higher education sector from different perspectives. Like many other public products, higher education has many or even more stakeholders, and different stakeholders have different experiences and perceptions or cumulative effects of higher education (Rowley, 1997).

UNESCO (2005) delineates six distinct stakeholders within the domain of higher education, each discerned by their specific roles and functions within the realm: governments, HEIs)/providers, including academic staff, student organizations, quality assurance and accreditation institutions, academic recognition, and professional institutions.

In the higher education sector, based on different standards and purposes, researchers have classified higher education stakeholders into different categories. The most used classification methods in the literature are based on stakeholder location (Burrows, 1999; Ferrero-Ferrero et al., 2017). Burrows (1999) proposed four dimensions for distinguishing stakeholders, namely location, involvement status, potential for cooperation as well as interest in and influence on the organization. This classification clusters stakeholders depending on whether they are internal or external to the organization.

There are other classifications. For example, Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2003) present the four main stakeholders and relate the interpretations of quality by Harvey and Green (1993) to them in the following manner: (1) Providers (funders and community at large). (2) Users of products (such as current and prospective students). (3) Users of outputs (such as the employers). (4) The employees of the sector (scholars and administrators). Chapleo &

Simms (2010) put forward three critical factors in identifying and classifying university stakeholders, namely, their impact on student enrollment and satisfaction, their impact on school financial implementation, and their impact on school policies and strategic direction. Their impact can be divided into direct influence, indirect influence, and no influence by degree.

In parallel, Mitchell et al.'s stakeholder model (1997) has been well applied in colleges and universities as well (Gong & Yu, 2019; Leisyte & Westerheijden, 2014; Zang, 2017; Zhang et al., 2010), suggesting that the response should be based on the power of stakeholders as well as the urgency and legitimacy of their appeal. Whether stakeholders' claims are legitimate or reasonable depends on political regulations and institutions. Chinese scholars Zhang et al. (2010) defined the boundary of attributes of stakeholders from legitimacy, power, and urgency. Accordingly, students, teachers, school administrators, and project units are four groups of definitive stakeholders, and the government, alumni, employers, donors, parents, community, borrowers, the public and other universities are nine groups of expectant stakeholders. Table 2.2 summarizes the classifications of university stakeholders conducted by scholars according to different principles.

To sum up, it can be seen that the government, students, teachers, administrators, and employers are widely defined as the stakeholders of HEIs, although they were classified into different categories according to different research perspectives, functions, and interests. In terms of the most important stakeholder, scholars' opinions vary. For example, Jongbloed et al. (2008) suggest that the most important stakeholder groups in HEIs are students and the government. Zhang et al. (2010) believed that teachers are the most important, and the higher the education level of teachers, the more important to school development they are deemed.

A stakeholder's importance and significance may differ depending on the type of institutions, departments, and even disciplines (Leisyte & Westerheijden, 2014; Zhang et al., 2010). Leisyte and Westerheijden (2014) probed into the influence of students and employers on the quality assurance system of 28 HEIs across seven European countries based on the three attributes of power, legitimacy, and urgency from Mitchell's score-based approach. The results showed that the same stakeholders are classified into different categories under the influence of different national policies and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, it is improper to generalize the scope and significance of stakeholders in certain institutions by one single classification method.

Table 2.2 Stakeholders classification in HE

Authors	Classification basis	Higher education stakeholders
Rosovsky (1996)	The importance of its relationship with the university	Most important groups: teachers, administrators and students Important groups: directors, alumni and donors Part owner: the government and parliament Less important groups: citizens, communities, media
Reavill (1998, 1997)	Chekland's "Soft system approach"	(1) The students (2) The employer (3) The family and dependents of the student (4) Universities and their employees (5) The suppliers of goods and services to universities (6) The secondary education sectors (7) Other universities (8) Commerce and industry (9) The nation (10) The government (11) Taxpayers, nationally and locally (12) Professional bodies
(Burrows, 1999; Ferrero-Ferrero et al., 2017; Jongbloed et al., 2008)	Stakeholders' location, whether they are internal or external to the organization.	**Internal:** Operational staff (non-academic staff), teachers/academic staff, students, university decision-makers, volunteers. **External:** Market/companies/employers, graduates/pregraduates (alumni)/students organization, government/sector regulatory bodies, municipal departments, local community, society- NGO's investors/shareholders/donors, the academic and scientific sector, media/opinion leaders, suppliers, partnering institutions/collaborators, competitors/other universities, trade unions, third-parties, and others.
Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2003)	**The interpretations of quality** by Harvey and Green (1993)	(1) Providers (funding bodies and community at large). (2) Users of products (e.g. current and prospective students). (3) Users of outputs (e.g. the employers). (4) The employees of the sector (academics and administrators).
Zhao et al. (2003)	The context of the stakeholder	**External stakeholders:** public, enterprises, alumni, schools, governments, and society in the broad sense; **Internal stakeholders:** students, teachers and staff.

Hu (2005)	The degree of importance between universities and them	**Authoritative stakeholders:** teachers, students, funders and governments; **Potential stakeholders:** Alumni, donors and legislatures; **The third layer of stakeholders:** Citizens, media, enterprises and Banks.
Zhang (2006)	The forces influencing the development of colleges and universities	Government and funders (alumni, donors); market (citizens, enterprises, Banks, media); Institutions of higher learning (teachers, students, and administrators).
Li (2008)	Affinity-disaffinity relationship	**Belong to the "relatives" level:** teachers, students, management personnel, namely the majority of teachers and students and staff; **Belongs to the level of "acquaintances"**: financial appropriators (government), alumni, parents of students, employers, providers of funds for running schools and scientific research, collaborators of enterprises, universities and research institutions, loan providers, etc. **Belong to "unfamiliar" level:** examinee's parent, local citizen, media, business community, brother school.
Zhang et al. (2010)	Legitimacy, power and urgency	**Definitive Stakeholders:** Students, teachers, school administrators and project units **Expectant stakeholders:** Governments, alumni, employers, donors, parents, communities, lenders, the public and other colleges.
Mainardes et al. (2012)	Relationship between an organization and its stakeholders.	**Regulatory stakeholders**: national government/ministries/accreditation agencies, European Union. **Dependent stakeholders** **Passive stakeholders**: student families, non-teaching members of staff, university host local community, host municipality, secondary school. **Partner stakeholders**: students, former student, Portuguese society in general, teaching and/or research staff, foreign students, business/ trade associations. **Controller stakeholder**: senior university management, scientific communities and their publications, employers, professional orders, privet financiers. **Non-stakeholder**
Lin and Li (2017)	The influence of various stakeholders on higher education.	**Major stakeholders:** the government, students, teachers, administrative personnel, vocational industry and parents; **Secondary stakeholders:** community, media, alumni, donors, Banks, and community groups.

2.2.2.2 Empirical study of stakeholder theory in higher education quality assurance

Stakeholder involvement in management is the value proposition of quality management (Wang & Meng, 2018). Scholars have explored quality assurance of higher education based on stakeholder theory from different perspectives, such as schooling quality satisfaction, teaching quality evaluation, higher education quality concept, quality assurance goals, and TQM. Li (2008) believed that the values of university stakeholders are the main variables that influence and determine the higher education outlook. The different value demands of stakeholders on the quality of university education form different views of educational quality, and the higher education outlook is the result of the game between stakeholders. Gong and Yu (2019) classified stakeholders related to the evaluation of university teaching quality according to the Mitchell score-based approach and analyzed their demands of interest. The government and the university itself are considered to be the most important stakeholders in the teaching quality evaluation system, and they have three scoring attributes; university students, who have impact and urgency, are risky stakeholders related to teaching quality evaluation; society, teacher peers and teachers, who have only one attribute, are potential stakeholders of teaching quality evaluation. Some scholars (Gong & Yu, 2019; Nwajiuba et al., 2020) have also outlined the roles of major higher education stakeholders and offered ways to improve graduates' knowledge, employability, and skills.

Beerkens and Udam (2017) indicate that all stakeholder groups agree that quality assurance should ensure that education providers meet the desired standards. The difference in the view lies in whether quality assurance is designed to provide information transparency or continuous improvement goals. Internal stakeholders emphasize evaluation feedback and internal development, whereas employers and students believe that quality assurance provides the public and stakeholders with access to information (Shams & Belyaeva, 2019).

Chinese scholars Zhou and Chen (2017) also used stakeholder theory to explore the interest demands and game among the four types of stakeholders in Sino-foreign cooperative education, namely, the government, schooling providers, teachers, and students. Lin and Li (2017) explored stakeholders jointly participating in the internal quality assurance operation mechanism of higher education. Besides, many scholars also carried out evaluation research on schooling quality satisfaction from the perspective of stakeholders (Gong et al., 2017; Mainardes et al., 2013). Hickman and Akdere (2017) believe that for TQM to succeed in the field of higher education, the concept of customers should be replaced by the concept of stakeholders, and they focus on challenging TQM philosophy to widen its scope of

customers to a whole new level.

2.3 Research framework

Based on our literature review on quality assurances and stakeholder theory, we propose the following adjusted framework for quality assurance in CFCRS.

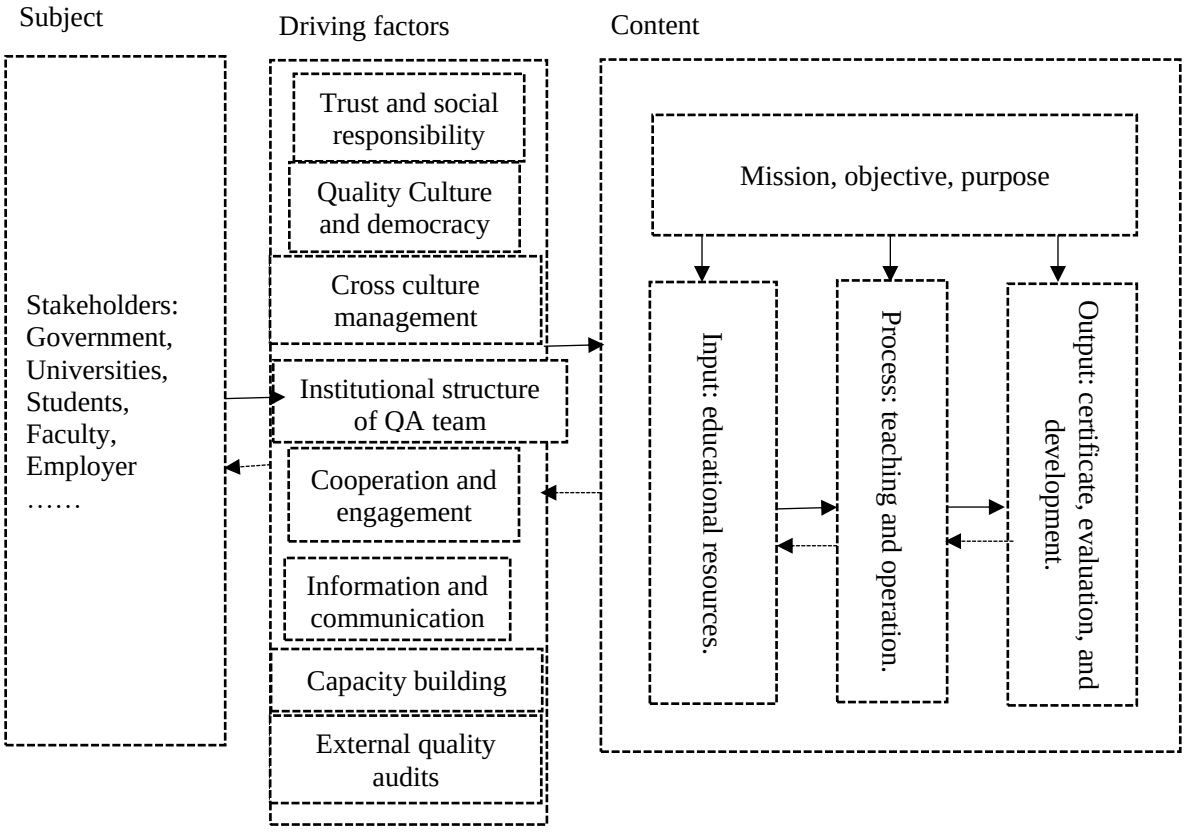

Fig. 2.4 Research framework

The above framework consists of three parts:

Part 1 is the assurance subject. CFCRS involves multiple stakeholders, including Chinese and foreign school operators, the competent national and local governments, students, faculty, employers, and third-party organizations. Different types of stakeholders are directly or indirectly involved in the quality assurance system at different levels, playing different roles and exerting different degrees of influence (or as a result of influence).

Part 2 is assurance driving factors. In the higher education sector, the key driving factors that act as antecedents of knowledge management to achieve and maintain higher quality in education service among stakeholders. In a diverse culture and governance system, the establishment of an assurance system requires trust and social responsibility, cooperation and engagement, institutional structure, quality culture and democracy, information and

communications, capacity building, cross-culture management, as well as external quality audits.

Part 3 is the assurance content, which is about the input of educational resources, educational process, and educational output under the framework of mission, objective, and purpose. The mission and purpose of CFCRS should reflect the greatest common divisor of the needs of various stakeholders while incorporating the positioning of and requirements for the project by the country, governments, and school operators as well as meeting the interest needs of the students, teachers, and employers.

The investment in educational resources includes investment in hardware and software as well as in human, financial, and material resources. The introduction of foreign-quality educational resources is the most critical resource for CFCRS compared to traditional education. This includes the training mode, programs, curriculum, faculty, and database of foreign partners.

The educational process consists of teaching, assessment, student activities, academic and management services support, collaboration between Chinese and foreign teachers, teacher-student interaction process, and the process of cultural exchange.

The educational output, at the micro level, includes the academic and professional development of students and the faculty, as well as their contributions to the development of their alma mater. At the macro level, it refers to their contributions to the advancement of learning and the development of society.

Among the three parts, there is both a process of direct influences and a process of dynamic feedback and interaction. In other words, stakeholders participate in the quality assurance process directly or indirectly through the established mechanisms and channels, and the evaluation of the effectiveness of quality assurance also directly or indirectly adjusts and influences the improvement of the mechanism and the way of stakeholder participation.

[This page is deliberately left blank.]

Chapter 3: Methodology

This study aims at establishing an effective quality assurance model of CFCRS. To be specific, who are the key stakeholders; what is/are the key Stakeholder's concern on the CFCRS program; what is the key factor that affects the quality; how does this factor work; what is the mechanism to ensure the stakeholder could participate in the quality assurance system. To answer who are the key Stakeholders, we conducted the Delphi method. And to find out what the key stakeholders concern and how they are involved and contribute to the quality assurance system, we adopted case study research.

3.1 Identification and classification of stakeholders

According to the literature, industry background, and experience of the authors, 25 potential stakeholders of the CFCRS were presented (Shown in Table 3.1). To have further identification and classification of the 25 stakeholders, we conducted the Delphi method in this study.

Table 3.1 Stakeholders of CFCRS

No.	Stakeholders
1	Senior university management (the dean's team, general board, council of deans)
2	National government/ministries/accreditation agencies
3	Teaching and/ or research staff
4	Students
5	European Union
6	Scientific communities and their publications
7	Research and development partner companies
8	Research and development actors (incubators, technological parks, patent agencies, research centers, external researchers)
9	Employers
10	Professional orders
11	Private financiers （business angels, risk capital companies, investors)
12	Other universities and / or higher education institution (public or private)
13	Host municipality (local government authorities)
14	Portuguese society in general
15	University host local community (population, companies, services)
16	Non-teaching members of staff
17	Foreign students
18	Business/trade associations

19	Former students
20	Secondary schools
21	Families of students
22	Interpreter and translator
23	Partners
24	Chinese national health system
25	Chinese society in general

3.1.1 Delphi method

The Delphi method is an iterative process to collect and distill the anonymous judgments of experts using a series of data collection and analysis techniques interspersed with feedback (Skulmoski et al., 2007). It is well suited as a research instrument when there is incomplete knowledge about a problem or phenomenon and to structure models (Skulmoski et al., 2007). According to Rowe and Wright (1999), the Delphi method has four key characteristics, namely, anonymity, interaction, controlled feedback, and statistical aggregation of a group of answers. They (Rowe & Wright, 1999) suggest that those studies true to their origins that have the four characteristics should be classified as Delphi studies, while others show that the technique can be effectively modified to meet the needs of the given study (Skulmoski et al., 2007; Zartha Sossa et al., 2019).

Several rounds of questionnaires are sent out to the group of experts, and the responses are aggregated and shared with the group after each round. The experts are allowed to adjust their answers in subsequent rounds based on how they interpret the "group response" provided to them. Since multiple rounds of questions are asked, and the panel is told what the group thinks as a whole, the Delphi method seeks to reach the correct response through consensus (Twin, 2020). In the typical Delphi, three or more rounds are performed, whereas in the modified Delphi, two rounds are usually carried out (Zartha Sossa et al., 2019). This is so for a series of reasons: the Delphi can become a long and expensive task for both parties, researcher and experts; each phase consumes an extended time, making it increasingly difficult to maintain an acceptable response rate; with two rounds, the interest of the panelists is more easily maintained; in this new version experts react to a topic instead of generating it, and they try not to build a theme but to reach agreements on it (Creange & Careyron).

3.1.2 Delphi process

This study follows a modified Delphi process (Skulmoski et al., 2007), in which the main steps were presented as follows.

(1) Develop Delphi Round One Questionnaire. The questionnaire was built based on Mitchell et al. (1997) score-based model used to explore the stakeholder's salience.

(2) Research Sample - Selecting research participants is a critical component of Delphi research since it is their expert opinions on which the output of Delphi is based. There are four requirements for "expertise": i) knowledge and experience with the issues under investigation; ii) capacity and willingness to participate; iii) sufficient time to participate in the Delphi; and iv) effective communication skills (Adler & Ziglio 1996).

In this study, 26 experts were selected from the expert pool of the Branch for Chinese - Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools, Guangdong Association of Higher Education (BCFCRS, GAHE), which is a provincial, professional, and non-profit academic organization engaged in CFCRS scientific research. The 26 experts are managers from CFCRS relative departments in HEIs, educational administration departments, and education industry associations, with more than 5-year managerial experience in this field, and who are of different age groups, educational levels, professional titles, and scope of duty. Detailed information can be found in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Basic information of participant

Item		Frequency	%
Organizational type	Higher education institute	22	84.6
	Administrative department	2	7.7
	Education industry association	2	7.7
Age	<30	0	0
	31-40	10	38.5
	41-50	16	61.5
	>51	0	0
Educational level	Bachelor's degree	1	3.8
	Master's degree	8	30.8
	Ph. D. degree	17	65.4
Professional title	Junior professional title	1	3.8
	Medium-grade professional title	6	23.1
	Senior professional title	19	73.1
Number of years working experience in the field	<3 years	0	0
	4-6 years	1	3.8
	7-10 years	4	15.4
	11-15 years	21	80.8
	>16 years	0	0
Scope of responsibility	Student recruitment, promotion	16	61.5
	Teaching, academic affairs	16	61.5
	Administration/logistics affairs	24	92.3
	Financial management	8	30.8
	Personnel management	12	46.2
	Student, Alumni affairs	8	30.8

(3) Delphi Pilot Study - A pilot study was conducted in October 2021 with the goals of

testing and adjusting the Delphi questionnaire to improve comprehension and to work out any procedural problems.

According to the pilot test result and suggestions from the experts, serval adjustments have been made. First, the potential stakeholders were adjusted, merged, or removed. Twenty-two potential stakeholders were presented eventually. Second, a further explanation for each item of the model mentioned above (Mitchell et al., 1997) was added, which could help the expert to have a better understanding of the questions. An adjusted version was made (Appendix 1).

(4) Release and Analyze Round One Questionnaire - The questionnaires are distributed to the Delphi participants, who complete and return them to the researcher through email and Wechat from January to February 2022. A total of 26 experts participated in the round of questionnaires. The results of Round One are then analyzed according to the research paradigm (statistical summarizing into medians plus upper and lower quartiles).

(5) Develop Round Two Questionnaire - The Round One responses are the basis with for developing the questions in the Round Two Questionnaire.

(6) Release and Analyze Round Two Questionnaire - The Round Two Questionnaire is released to the research participants and, when completed, returned for analysis from February to March 2022. Twenty-two experts participated in the round two questionnaire. Four experts did not participate in the second round due to their personal reason.

The process stopped after the two rounds of Delphi since the consensus was reached , and sufficient information has been exchanged.

3.1.3 Data analysis

In this study, experts are invited to classify the stakeholders from three perspectives: power, legitimacy, and urgency and rank the stakeholders to such three grades as weak, normal, and strong, scored as 0, 50, and 100 respectively (Jiang & Jin, 2009). The calculation formula is shown as follows:

$$S=Wa\times Sa+Wl\times Sl+Wu\times Su \quad (3.1)$$

S represents the comprehensive score. Wa, W1, and Wu signify the weight of power, legitimacy, and urgency, respectively. Sa, S1, and Su refer to the score of power, legitimacy and urgency respectively (Jiang & Jin, 2009).

The weight value is shown as follows: (1) if the weight of power, legitimacy, and urgency has the same score, accounting for 1/3, respectively; (2) if one of such three sc values is 0, then such item weighs 100% with the other two items weighed 0; (3) if all these three weight scores are higher than 50, each item weighs 1/3 (Jiang & Jin, 2009).

With the result from the Delphi, stakeholders of CFCRS were identified and classified. Then we moved to the next step. To answer the series of "what" and "how" questions concerning the quality assurance system of CFCRS, we conducted case study research.

3.2 Case study

As one of the commonly used research methods in management science, the case study method is widely used in the research of social sciences. It is suitable for in-depth research on complex and specific problems, and its focus is to understand the dynamic process under a specific single situation (Eisenhardt, 1989; Li & Cao, 2012), such as clique behavior, organizational management process, school performance (Yin, 2003). Using case studies as a research method to describe and explore a phenomenon or thing, that is, to answer "what" and "Why" questions to find solutions to existing problems (Yin, 2003). The case study method integrates a questionnaire survey, interview, literature/document analysis, and other methods. It also includes multiple case studies and single case studies to provide the basis for project evaluation, strategic management, and policy-making (Yin, 2003).

3.2.1 Selecting case

This study adopted the single-case (embeddedness) research method (Yin, 2003); that is, a case contains more than one level of analysis unit. We chose the Doctor of Management in Healthcare program (DMH) as the case, which is an international joint program between ISCTE University Institute of Lisbon (ISCTE-IUL) and Southern Medical University of China (SMU). This case is selected for mainly two reasons. First, this joint program is a representative case of a CFCRS doctoral education program, the first and only Sino-foreign doctoral program in management for high-level management personnel in the medical industry recognized by MOE. It has been running for over ten years. Secondly, the program has relatively clear educational objectives, industry direction, developed management process, and quality assurance system, which can provide meaningful empirical data for the research.

3.2.2 Instruments and protocols

Based on Yin's (2003) view, a fundamental principle to collect data is to use multiple sources of evidence. Gathering information from multiple sources improves the effectiveness of the

research, and the case study offers more opportunities for integrating different evidence sources than experiments or surveys. There are two main data collection methods in this study: (1) document analysis; (2) interviews with key stakeholders.

(1) Document analysis

The analysis of documents is divided into three levels, namely, national/local policy, regulations, and documents on CFCRS and quality assurance, self-assessment reports submitted by the case to evaluation institutions from 2015 to 2021, and internal management procedures and quality assurance guidance documents of the case.

The analysis of national/local policies, regulations, and documents on CFCRS and quality assurance mainly covers the content and guidance of quality assurance system construction at the national level (shown in Table 3.3). The analysis objectives are as follows: 1) Analyze the composition and influence of the organization's external quality assurance system; 2) Summarize the objectives, orientation, and influencing factors of government departments as stakeholders in quality assurance.

The analysis of self-assessment reports submitted to evaluations institution, namely the Ministry of Education of China, includes the annual report submitted from 2015 to 2021 and the self-assessment report submitted in 2016 and 2021 for program extension, respectively (shown in Table 3.4). Analysis objectives are as follows: 1) Analyze the construction method, content, and results of the internal quality assurance system of the case. 2) Ways and platforms for stakeholders to participate in quality assurance in the case.

The Analysis of the internal management process, quality assurance guidance documents in the case, including the internal management process documents of the case, student-oriented guidance/ handbook of the learning process and thesis specifications, and management norms guidance documents (shown in Table 3.4). Analysis objectives: 1) To find the quality assurance system formed within the system; 2) to explore the construction of quality management culture within the organization; 3) ways and channels for stakeholders to participate in the quality assurance process.

Table 3.3 List of relevant administrative laws, regulations, and normative documents on CFCRS

Release year	Release organization	Type	Title
2003	The State Council of China	Administrative laws and regulations	*Regulations on Chinese-foreign Cooperation in Running Schools.*
2004	The State Council of China	Regulation	*Measures for the Implementation of the Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools.*
2004	MOE	Normative documents	*Notice on the Review of Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools*
2006	MOE	Normative documents	*Opinions on Several Issues Concerning Chinese-foreign Cooperation in Running Schools.*
2007	MOE	Normative documents	*Notification on Further Regulating the Schooling Order of Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools.*
2010	The CPC Central Committee, The State Council of China	Development Plan	*National Education Medium and Long-Term Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020).*
2012	General Office of the MOE	Normative documents	*Notice on Strengthening the Standardized Management of Foreign-related Running schools.*
2013	MOE	Normative documents	*Opinions on Further Strengthening the Quality Assurance of Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools in Colleges and Universities.*
2016	General Office of the CPC Central Committee, and General Office of the State Council	Normative documents	*Opinions on the Opening up of Education in the New Era*
2020	MOE and other eight departments	Normative documents	*Opinions on Accelerating and Expanding the Opening up of Education in the New Era*

Table 3.4 List of relevant self-assessment reports, internal management procedures and quality assurance guidance documents of the case

No.	Document type / title	Content	Object-Oriented
1	Annual report 2015 to 2021	Includes basic information, student information, training program and teacher information, school self-assessment, financial status, contact information, Party building.	MOE
2	The self-assessment report 2016 & 2021	Include cooperation agreement, admission brochure, financial situation, self-assessment, integrity, and relevant supporting materials.	MOE
3	Student guideline 2016 to 2021	Teaching arrangement and learning process, courses and credits, attendance and assessment, leave and make-up, other teaching resources.	Student

4	Guideline for thesis writing 2016 to 2021	Thesis writing principles, basic requirements and precautions, progress plan, guidelines for Research proposal and Progress report writing, guidelines for reference, Final theses format guidelines, defense application process, oral defense process, paper publication standards, Recommended bibliography, online library usage guidelines, citation software operation guidelines.	Student
5	Administrion handbook 2016-2021	Work guidelines and normative documents for the whole process. Including admission application, admission interview, teaching, thesis writing, graduation application, academic degree certification.	Non academic staff

(2) Semi-structured interview

Then we conducted interviews under an interview protocol with the key stakeholders to have a further understanding of their quality demands and the measures and mechanism for them to participate in the quality assurance. The interviews were semi-structured with open-ended questions, giving the interviewees more flexibility and freedom to discuss their experiences.

The interview content includes the following aspects:1) stakeholders' quality demand in a CFCRS program; 2) factors affecting the quality assurances process in a CFCRS program; 3) measures and mechanisms for stakeholders to participate in the quality assurance; 4) difficulty or challenge of quality assurance in a CFCRS program (Please check the Appendix 2 for the complete interview outline).

All interviews were conducted between February 2022 and May 2023. And all the interviewees were informed of the purpose of the interviews and that their identities would be kept confidential. The interviews were conducted in Chinese or English, and took an average of 56.6 minutes, and were recorded and transcribed. The protocol for the interviews ensured that the interviewees were given enough chance to talk and give relevant information related to the topic.

3.2.3 Data analysis interpretation

The author transcribed every word uttered in the interviews. The transcription was facilitated by the online transcription tool provided by a voice recording solutions provider (Xunfei Tingjian), and the scripts were proofread by the researcher through repetitive listening to the recordings. The transcription process continued until the data were sorted out. The stored data lasted 21.7 hours. The transcriptions were uploaded onto MAXQDA. Then, the interview analysis was carried out using the thematic analysis technique (Braun & Clarke,

2006). The steps involved are as follows.

(1) Familiarization with the data

The content of each interview was collated based on repeated reviews. In the process of collating the content, it was found that as the interviews were all about various aspects of the same topic, the questions were interlinked, and the interviewees' answers were sometimes not just about the question being asked but also about the questions before and after. Therefore, the response documents needed to be collated.

(2) Thematic coding

The initial coding was done by mining the data for elements and interesting ideas, thoughts, and events. These codes constituted the main themes and could facilitate data organization. Then, codes were grouped into potential themes under the framework we proposed in the Chapter 2, and all data relevant to each potential theme were gathered.

After completing the coding of all the materials, the researcher used MAXQDA software to classify and refine the codes. The primary and secondary codes were separately refined.

(3) Formation of a data map

With reference to the research framework, a preliminary data framework and a logic chain were generated. Finally, a preliminary "data map" was created with the primary and secondary codes.

(4) Formation of a theoretical framework

Based on a comparative literature analysis, the case document analysis, and the data map formed by the content analysis of the semi-structured interviews, the author constructed a theoretical framework on quality assurance in CFCRS.

[This page is deliberately left blank.]

Chapter 4: Results

4.1 Identification and classification of stakeholders

In this study, two rounds of Delphi expert consultation questionnaire surveys were conducted to identify and classify the stakeholders in CFCRS. The results of each round of the questionnaire survey were successively processed and analyzed according to the scoring method by Mitchell et al. (1997) and the prioritization scoring method for stakeholders by Jiang and Jin (2009). Specifically, any category that received support from 50% of the expert opinions would be considered to possess a particular attribute and then identified as a stakeholder; the stakeholders were then classified according to their different attributes (Mitchell et al., 1997). Subsequently, according to the scoring method by Jiang and Jin (2009), the above-identified stakeholders were sorted by order of priority.

4.1.1 The first round of Delphi expert consultation

A total of 26 experts participated in the first round of the Delphi expert consultation questionnaire survey. The result of the first round of Delphi consultation is shown in Table 4.1. Through the statistics and analysis of the collected data, 22 categories of stakeholders were identified.

According to the Mitchell scoring method, 12 types of stakeholders are classified as definitive stakeholders, that is, who hold all three types of attributes (support rate greater than or equal to 50%). The average attribute score and standard deviation of deterministic stakeholders are shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.1 Identification and classification of stakeholders (the first round of the Delphi expert consultation)

	Stakeholder	Power				Legitimacy				Urgency			
		W	M	S	SR	W	M	S	SR	W	M	S	SR
1	Partners	0	4	21	96.15%	0	2	24	100.00%	1	4	20	96.15%
2	Senior university management (the dean's team, general board, council of deans)	0	7	18	96.15%	0	10	16	100.00%	1	13	9	88.46%
3	Teaching and/ or research staff	8	12	2	84.62%	5	10	8	88.46%	7	12	2	80.77%
4	Non-teaching members of staff （Teaching assistants）	14	9	1	92.31%	6	15	3	92.31%	14	7	3	92.31%
5	Students	4	10	9	88.46%	2	5	18	96.15%	4	11	10	96.15%
6	Scientific communities and their publication institutions	5	2	2	34.62%	13	7	4	92.31%	7	3	0	38.46%
7	Research and development actors (incubators, teachnological parks, patent agencies, research centers, external researchers）	0	7	0	26.92%	7	10	3	76.92%	7	4	1	46.15%
8	Interpreter and translator	11	7	0	69.23%	9	13	4	100.00%	10	5	0	57.69%
9	Other universities and / or higher education institution	1	5	0	23.08%	10	7	2	73.08%	7	2	1	38.46%
10	National government/ministries/accreditation agencies	0	0	24	92.31%	0	1	24	96.15%	1	1	22	92.31%
11	Host municipality (local government authorities)	1	5	17	88.46%	0	3	21	92.31%	1	5	15	80.77%
12	Third-party evaluation / accreditation agencies	5	6	8	73.08%	2	14	6	84.62%	5	12	6	88.46%
13	Education Industry Association	5	5	3	50.00%	3	15	4	84.62%	10	7	2	73.08%
14	Industry Association (e. g. Healthcare industry）	2	4	3	34.62%	10	9	3	84.62%	3	5	3	42.31%
15	Employers	5	11	2	69.23%	4	16	5	96.15%	6	8	1	57.69%
16	Families of students	6	10	2	69.23%	2	14	8	92.31%	9	6	3	69.23%
17	Private financiers （business angels, risk capital companies, investors)	3	2	7	46.15%	10	4	9	88.46%	3	2	5	38.46%
18	Alumni	11	5	0	61.54%	4	6	16	100.00%	4	5	1	76.92%
19	Chinese society in general	5	1	4	38.46%	8	0	6	92.31%	6	2	6	53.85%
20	Portuguese society in general	1	2	5	30.77%	8	8	5	80.77%	7	1	3	42.31%
21	University host local community (population, companies, services)	3	2	1	26.92%	0	6	4	76.92%	7	3	1	42.31%
22	Potential applicants	6	2	1	34.62%	5	3	4	84.62%	13	6	1	76.92%

Note:"W" refers to week; "M" refers to "medium"; "S" refers to "strong"; "SR" refers to "supporting rate"

Table 4.2 Attribute Score of Stakeholders Definitive Stakeholders (the first round of the Delphi expert consultation)

Stakeholder	Attribute Score (Average)	Standard deviation
Partners	92.666	12.3
Senior university management (the dean's team, general board, council of deans)	70.6664	25.85235
Teaching and/ or research staff	35.334	30.07181
Non-teaching members of staff （Teaching assistants）	20	20.8
Students	59.9996	36.102
Interpreter and translator	24.667	25.369
National government/ministries/accreditation agencies	94.667	19.99982052
Host municipality (local government authorities)	71.333	37.416
Third-party evaluation / accreditation agencies	43.334	35.806
Employers	40.0004	26.555
Families of students	36	34.801
Alumni	30	30.312

4.1.2 The second round of Delphi expert consultation

A total of 22 experts participated in the second round of the Delphi expert consultation questionnaire. Classification and ranking of the 12 categories of stakeholders are presented in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3 Attribute Score of Stakeholders Definitive Stakeholders (the second round of the Delphi expert consultation)

Stakeholder	Attribute Score (Average)	Standard deviation
Partners	96.031	6.9368
Senior university management (the dean's team, general board, council of deans)	72.22238	17.64712
Teaching and/ or research staff	54.76238	24.17491
Non-teaching members of staff （Teaching assistants）	21.429	22.449
Students	71.428	18.898
Interpreter and translator	24.603	25.435
National government/ministries/accreditation agencies	97.619	10.403
Host municipality (local government authorities)	96.031	6.9368
Third-party evaluation / accreditation agencies	46.508	25.236
Employers	45.239	24.175
Families of students	40.476	24.398
Alumni	38.095	24.691

4.1.3 Core stakeholders

According to the attribute scores shown above, among the Definitive Stakeholders, the stakeholders whose scores were higher than 50 mean a strong possession of attributes, which are National government/ministries/accreditation agencies, Host municipality (local government authorities), Partners, Senior university management (the dean's team, general

board, council of deans), Students, and Teaching and/ or research staff. In this study, they were defined as core stakeholders.

(1) National government/ministries/accreditation agencies

In the operation mechanism of CFCRS, as macro-management subjects, government departments impact CFCRS in various ways. Since they are one of the most important external stakeholders, the government establishes the legal, political, and financial framework for the birth and development of CFCRS. They are the main maker of national policies and regulations and the supervisor and supporters (Sun, 2017). The main regulatory oversight of the practice implementation body, a combination of foreign and domestic higher education institutions, is mainly through accreditation, assessment, and audit to ensure the quality of CFCRS.

(2) Host municipality (local government authorities)

The local municipal government where the CFCRS is located mainly performs the micro-administration liabilities required by the national government on CFCRS. At the same time, the local government monitors the behaviors of running the education programs from the perspective of cultivation of talents, research results, quality of employment and further education, the average cost per student, teacher-student ratio, and some data system evaluation, which covers both macro-control and micro-administration. With the gradual decentralization of government authority and functions, the role of provincial and prefectural governments in the administration and development of CFCRS is becoming increasingly significant.

(3) Partners

In terms of practice subjects, foreign educational institutions are mainly responsible for providing educational resources, training models, and financial investment (Geng, 2016). The schooling running philosophy, strategic positioning, and international reputation all play a key role in whether CFCRS can yield fruitful results, so foreign partners are also essential stakeholders of CFCRS.

(4) Senior university management

The top management team (TMT)/board of directors/co-management alliance is the highest decision-making body or subject, which holds power to make decisions on the strategy, objectives, resources input, and positioning of the education programs. They are also the core stakeholder of CFCRS, playing a key role in the running of CFCRS. They are the main body of governance that ensures education quality.

(5) Students

Students are the foundation of the existence and development of CFCRS, and they are the main subject of education. There is no doubt that students are an important stakeholder, the object who receive attention and service from CFCRS, and an important force influencing the quality of education.

(6) Teaching and/ or research staff

One of the important purposes of organizing CFCRS is to bring in quality educational resources. Faculty members of CFCRS are providers, organizers, instructors, participants, and collaborators of education (Sun, 2017). They are both employees and owners of HEIs.

4.2 The basic information of the case

To study what the key stakeholders concern and how they involve and contribute to the quality assurance system, we adopted a case study method. Before we go to the result of the fieldwork, the following is some background and basic information about the case.

4.2.1 Background

With the deepening of China's medical system reform and the implementation of the "Healthy China" strategy, the social demand for health for all is growing. The current national demand for strengthening the public health system requires a large number of versatile and innovative high-end public health policy and management talents who fully understand China's reality while having a global perspective.

The senior managers in China's healthcare management field generally have a low degree of professionalism and a single academic background, mostly in medicine. Besides, despite rich practical experience in management, they lack international, modern, and systematic training in management studies and research. As a result, they find it increasingly difficult to adapt to the needs of healthcare reform and the scientific development of healthcare undertakings. Some senior managers, despite having corresponding management education backgrounds, lack a profound understanding of the medical and health professions, which also makes it difficult for them to adapt to the needs of healthcare reform and development.

The DMH program was established in 2010 and is designed to better integrate bilateral education resources, provide a platform of mutual learning, exchanges, and research for

high-level management personnel in the medical industry who have received master degrees, and thus promote more systematic and profound research on the prevailing and special problems existing in healthcare management. The program meets the academic standard of a doctor in management, and its curriculum and the principle governing the theses process fully reflect the features of the healthcare industry.

4.2.2 Basic information of the universities

(1) The foreign party, ISCTE – University Institute of Lisbon.

ISCTE – University Institute of Lisbon, abbreviated ISCTE-IUL (in Portuguese ISCTE – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa), located in the center of Lisbon, is a Portuguese national university and an independent research university whose research quality is recognized by the European Union (EU). Its disciplines can be divided into social sciences, management science, and technology. The University's teaching and research are renowned for their innovation, quality, and diversity. ISCTE-IUL ranks among the top three among Portuguese universities in the main research fields.

ISCTE-IUL is an independent research university directly under Portugal's Ministry of Science, Technology, and Higher Education and research quality recognized by EU. The credits of its courses are recognized by other universities in EU member countries. Degrees and diplomas granted by ISCTE-IUL are recognized by the Ministry of Education of China.

ISCTE-IUL has many excellent faculties on board, with the largest number of teachers who own a doctor degree in management science among Portuguese universities. Many of its teachers graduated from well-known business schools in the U.S. or Europe. ISCTE-IUL has cultivated a galaxy of talents for political and economic circles. The incumbent prime minister of Portugal graduated from the university, and both the minister of education and minister of social affairs once worked here as professors.

ISCTE-IUL Business School is a member of the Portuguese Universities Foundation, EFMD – the European Foundation for Management Development, AMBA – Association of MBA, AACSB – Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, EABIS – European Association for Business and Society, EDAMBA – European Doctoral Programs Association in Management and Business Administration and NIBES – Network of International Business and Economic Schools. Iscte's Masters in Management is ranked 88th in the 2020 QS World University Rankings. In terms of subject rankings, Iscte has been in the QS World University Rankings by Subject since 2019, continuing to secure its position

among the world's 350 best universities in the field of business and management studies.

(2) The Chinese party, Southern Medical University

Southern Medical University (SMU), formerly known as First Military Medical University. In 2004, SMU was among the eight universities permitted to implement trials of 8-year medical science programs. And in August later the same year, under the instruction of the State Council, SMU was handed over to the local government of Guangdong Province and was renamed as Southern Medial University.

SMU is a high-level key university in Guangdong Province, the only Ministry-Province Constructed University in South China, and the first batch of pilot universities for the training programs of Excellent Doctors nationwide (Southern Medical University, 2023).

The university is a research-teaching-oriented medical university with multiple disciplines. Since high-level university construction, 13 disciplines have entered the top 1% of ESI global rankings (Southern Medical University, 2023).

As of 2023, the affiliated hospitals of SMU have expanded into 13, with more than 14,000 beds being set and the annual medical treatment amount to over 17-million-person times. The SMU owns 27 national key clinical specialties, 79 Guangdong provincial clinical key specialties, and 15 Guangdong provincial medical quality control centers (Southern Medical University, 2023).

SMU confers all levels of academic degrees in medicine, sciences, engineering, liberal arts, management, law studies, and economics. The University has undertaken 93 research projects funded by the National Key Technology Research and Development Program of China during the “10th Five-Year Plan, the Eleventh Five Plan, and Work Bank. SMU has achieved remarkable progress in experiment education reform, innovation education, medical and humanities education, the maintenance of teaching, the digitalization of educational management, the integration of scientific research with teaching, as well as the research on medical education technologies (Southern Medical University, 2023).

4.2.3 Learning process and curriculum

The program is based on the academic standards of the Doctoral Degree in Management of ISCTE-IUL, and the courses are combined with the features of the medical and health industry.

Faculty from both SMU and ISCTE-IUL give courses and supervision to the doctoral candidates. The doctoral candidates attend courses at SMU in Guangzhou and attend the oral

defense of their theses in Portugal after completing them under the guidance of both Portugal supervisors and local supervisors. The candidates who pass the thesis defense will be granted the Doctor of Management by ISCTE-IUL and recognition from MOE.

The schooling is three years and can be extended to a maximum of six years. The first year of the program is course learning, which consists of three blocks. Block 1, Understanding the work, which mainly focuses on international cutting-edge management principles with China's national conditions, incorporates the features of the medical industry. Block 2, Management Theory and healthcare management, is focused on healthcare management theories and practices. Bock 3, How to Research, contains philosophy of science and research methods.

After completing the courses, the candidates are supposed to conduct research and write the thesis in the second and the following years, under the guidance of the pointed supervisor.

4.2.4 Basie data

Since the program was initiated in 2010, the two universities have established a stable, friendly, and high-quality cooperation model based on the objectives and training goals of the program, and the model has gained widespread recognition from society. The following are the basic data of the program, including the introduction of educational resources, faculty, courses taught by Chinese and foreign sides, number of students, and composition structure of student sources.

(1) Introduction of resources

The program meets the requirements of the Chinese Ministry of Education for the introduction of educational resources for CFCRS. In other words, it meets the "four one-thirds" requirements detailed in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Introduction of quality resources

Indictor	Percentage
The percentage of the number of courses introduced from the foreign university in the total number of courses	61.1%
The percentage of the number of professional core courses introduced from the foreign university in the total number of courses	44.4%
The percentage of the number of professional core courses introduced from the foreign university in the total number of professional core courses	100%
The percentage of the number of class hours of professional core courses introduced from the foreign university in the total number of class hours of all courses	50%

Source: 2020, 2021 Annual Report of the case program

(2) Faculty

The faculty of the program include both lecturers and thesis supervisors. Specifically, the Chinese faculty members come from Southern Medical University (SMU), and the global faculty employed by SMU based on appraisal. The foreign faculty members come from the ISCTE-IUL faculty and the ISCTE-IUL global faculty employed on the basis of appraisal.

Table 4.5 Faculty composition

Category			Number	Percentage
Educational attainment	Chinese side	Doctor's degree	9	90%
		Master's degree	1	10%
	Foreign side	Doctor's degree	38	100%
		Master's degree	0	0%
Title	Chinese side	Senior title	10	100%
		Intermediate title	0	0%
		Junior title	0	0%
	Foreign side	Senior title	37	97%
		Intermediate title	1	3%
		Junior title	0	0%

Source: 2020, 2021 Annual Report of the case program

(3) Students

The program has been enrolling 25 students per year since 2010. As of December 2020, 275 students had been enrolled and trained in the program. Below is the basic information about the sources of students.

Table 4.6 Basic information of students

Category		Number	Percentage
Age	Below 35 years old	30	11%
	35-40 years old	53	19%
	41-45 years old	71	26%
	46-50 years old	56	20%
	Above 50 years old	65	24%
Gender	Male	193	70%
	Female	92	33%
Place of student source	Guangdong Province (Shenzhen is not included)	136	50%
	Shenzhen	26	9%
	Shanghai	20	7%
	Beijing	13	5%
	Jiangsu Province	8	3%
	Hunan Province	8	3%
	Others	64	23%
Industry distribution	Medical and health institutions	132	48%
	Medical and healthcare companies	57	21%
	Administrative authorities in the field of medical and healthcare	24	9%
	Higher education institutions	40	15%
	Others	22	8%
Level of position	Senior management	173	63%
	Middle management	85	31%
	Lower management	17	6%

Source: internal document of the case program.

4.3 Result of the case study

There are two main data collection methods in the case study, namely document analysis and in-depth interviews with key stakeholders. Following are results of the case study above.

4.3.1 Document analysis

The quality assurance of Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools is a systematic project which involves top-level policy design, program introduction mechanism, guidelines for school-running procedures, construction of evaluation system and certification system, supervision and enforcement, and the hierarchical management system from the central government to local governments and specific cooperative schools. It is embodied in the external assurance system of laws and regulations, administrative management, certification approval, administrative planning, information disclosure, public opinion, and industry supervision. Currently, in China, the construction of a cooperative education quality assurance system is mainly based on regulations and policies. It is carried out through the supervision of education administrative departments at all levels, evaluation by China Academic Degrees and Graduate Education Development Center (CDGDC), public oversight, and internal quality control (Sun & Chen, 2018). In this section, we tried to summarize the objectives, orientation, and influencing factors to the quality assurance system by analysing r relevant documents from external and internal the organization.

(1) National/local policies, regulations, and documents on CFCRS

The analysis of national/local policies, regulations, and documents on CFCRS and quality assurance mainly covers the content and guidance of quality assurance system construction at the national level (shown in Table 3.3). Try to find out the composition and influence of the organization's external quality assurance system, as well as the objectives, orientation, and influencing factors of government departments as stakeholders in quality assurance.

Laws and regulations

Since 2003, China has successively formulated and promulgated a series of laws and regulations to regulate Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools, including the Law on *Promotion of Privately-run Schools* (China State Council, 2003), the *Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools* (MOE, 2003) (hereinafter referred to as the *Regulations*), the *Implementation Measures for the*

Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Chinese-foreign Cooperation in Running Schools (MOE, 2004) (hereinafter referred to as the *Implementation Measures*), *Opinions of the Ministry of Education on Several Issues Concerning the Current Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools* (MOE, 2006), and *Notice of the Ministry of Education on Further Regulating the Order of Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools* (MOE, 2007). These laws and regulations clarify the connotation and requirements of quality assurance systems for cooperatively-run schools from the perspectives of regulations and policies, project approval, resource introduction, education and teaching, degree certificate issuance, and quality supervision.

The *Regulations* and the *Implementation Measures* are currently the main laws and implementation measures used by China to guide Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools and guarantee their quality. In the formulation and improvement of the detailed implementation rules of the Regulations, the quality standards of CFCRS at all levels are clarified, and their quality certification system is established to guide, coordinate, and inspect the quality assurance behavior of CFCRS. It is even possible to formulate quality standard rules independently so that the quality assurance activities and school-running behavior can have laws to abide by.

Since the promulgation of the *Regulations*, Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools has begun to implement a permit system. In other words, to implement CFCRS in China, a license issued by the Chinese education administrative department must be held, otherwise, education services cannot be provided in China. An application for establishing a Chinese-foreign cooperatively-run school offering higher education for academic qualifications at or above the regular university education shall be subject to examination and approval of the education administrative department of the State Council. The establishment of a Chinese-foreign cooperatively-run school shall include two steps of preparation for the establishment and formal establishment. However, the applicant may file an application directly for formal establishment if it fulfills the conditions for offering education and meets the standards for establishment.

In terms of education and teaching, according to the *Opinions of the Ministry of Education on Several Issues Concerning the Current Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools* (MOE, 2006), it is clearly stated that "the management of the training process must be strengthened." For CFCRS offering higher education for academic qualifications at or above the regular university education, corresponding provisions have been made on the education and teaching plan, training program, and length of schooling.

For those offering higher education for a bachelor's degree or above at foreign educational institutions, it is required that "the standards and academic requirements of the jointly formulated educational and teaching plans and training programs, curriculum design, and teaching contents should not be lower than that of the foreign educational institutions in their own countries, and there are specific requirements for the number of courses and the length of class hours. Teachers recruited internationally in the name of this foreign educational institution shall be recognized by foreign and Chinese educational institutions.

In terms of degree certificate issuance, the *Regulations* clearly stipulate that certificates denoting academic qualifications or academic degrees awarded by a foreign educational institution through a CFCRS must be congruent with the certificates of academic qualifications or academic degrees dispensed by the foreign educational institution within its native country. Moreover, these certificates are mandated to receive recognition from the respective foreign country. The Opinions of the MOE on Several Issues Concerning the Current Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools clearly stipulate that the cooperatively-run school simultaneously implements Chinese higher academic qualification education and foreign academic qualification and degree education and grants Chinese academic qualification certificate and academic degree certificate as well as foreign academic qualification certificate and academic degree certificate. The training objectives, training requirements, course offered, and teaching contents should meet the academic requirements of both parties.

Regarding quality oversight, the Regulations mandate the education administrative department of the State Council, alongside the education administrative departments, labor administrative departments, and pertinent administrative bodies of the provinces, autonomous regions, or municipalities directly under the central government, to reinforce their regular monitoring of CFCRS. They are further tasked with arranging or delegating intermediary organizations to assess the operational and educational standards of these institutions and subsequently disseminating the outcomes of these evaluations to the public.

Administrative supervision means

Since the implementation of the *Regulations* and the *Implementation Measures*, the MOE has issued a series of normative documents, which have played an important role in strengthening the management of Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools.

In order to further standardize the order of Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools, improve the schooling quality, and promote its healthy development, the MOE has taken four measures to strengthen supervision, namely, the construction of "two platforms"

and “two mechanisms” (Information platform for supervision of CFCRS, 2009).

First, based on the education foreign-related supervision information network of the MOE, the Chinese-foreign cooperative school-running supervision information platform is established. Through disclosure of school-running supervision information, dynamic supervision is implemented. When necessary, the platform can provide society and students with comprehensive and reliable schooling guidance and service information.

The second measure is to strengthen the certification of academic degree certificates and develop a platform to verify the certificate granted by Chinese-foreign cooperatively-run programs.

The third is to carry out quality evaluation and establish a quality evaluation mechanism for Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools.

The fourth is to strengthen the responsibilities of school operating departments and management departments at all levels and establish a law enforcement and punishment mechanism for Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools.

As one of the important measures of the MOE to strengthen the supervision of CFCRS, the focus and core of CFCRS evaluation is to improve the quality of education and standardize the order of school-running through evaluation. Implementing quality evaluation of Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools is one of the important measures for the MOE to strengthen the supervision of actual results, guarantee the quality of schooling, and improve the level of cooperatively-run education. The focus and core of the evaluation of Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools is to improve the quality of education and standardize the order of school-running through evaluation.

The evaluation of CFCRS is conducted by a combination of self-assessment and spot-check assessment. As for self-assessment, the evaluation objects refer to the Chinese-foreign cooperatively-run school (or program) assessment index system, complete self-assessment within the required time, submit the self-assessment summary report and relevant data and information, and sort out the educational and teaching management documents and materials for further examination. As for the spot check assessment, based on the self-assessment, an initial assessment of the self-assessment is conducted by means of expert meetings or communication reviews. The evaluation contents include training objectives and training plans, project management, training conditions, teaching staff, teaching organization, training quality, social effects of running a school, introduction of high-quality educational resources, and characteristics of school-running.

Six rounds of evaluations have been carried out since 2009, of which 22 programs have

been rated as unqualified, and 109 have voluntarily applied for termination. In 2016, the MOE publicized the 308 cooperatively-run institutions and programs at or below the regular university education, and in 2018 it approved the termination of 234 cooperatively-run institutions and programs. A preliminary exit mechanism has been established, showing the progress of the establishment of a quality assurance system for cooperatively-run education (Sun & Chen, 2018).

In 2016, according to Article 52 of the Implementation Measures, a Chinese-foreign cooperatively-run school and Chinese educational institution that conducts CFCRS programs shall submit an annual report for offering education to the examination and approval authorities before the end of March each year, which shall contain student enrollment, courses, teachers, teaching quality, financial situation, and other information of the Chinese-foreign cooperatively-run school and educational project.

The evaluation and supervision information platform will promote the formation of a Chinese-foreign cooperatively-run school management mechanism that combines the self-discipline of school operators, social supervision, and government regulation, and help gradually establish a quality standard and guarantee system for Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools with broad social credibility.

Administrative planning means

The development of CFCRS shall be incorporated into national and regional overall plans to fully utilize the interaction between the development of the CFCRS and the local economy and education and avoid blind development. In December 2013, the MOE of China released the *Opinions of the Ministry of Education on Further Strengthening the Quality Assurance of Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools in Higher Education Institutions*, which pointed out that it is encouraged to carry out Chinese-foreign cooperative education with foreign educational institutions that have advantageous disciplines in the fields of advanced manufacturing, modern agriculture, and strategic emerging industries as well as the fields that are urgent, weak and blank in China. Cooperative-run programs in business, management, and state-regulated science should be strictly controlled to guard the entry of foreign resources and uphold our education sovereignty.

Quality recognition

The MOE of China started the evaluation of Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools in 2009, but the majority of institutions being evaluated were still Chinese colleges and universities, with low participation of foreign cooperative institutions. As a result, the recognition is considered to have weak international comparability and low international

recognition to a certain extent (Sun & Chen, 2018). In recent years, the MOE of China has supported CFCRS programs/institutions to explore cooperation with international high-level educational quality evaluation institutions (such as AACSB and QAA), aiming to give full play to the role of third-party guarantee mechanisms. It is necessary to establish a Chinese-foreign cooperative education quality recognition standard and mechanism that reflect the characteristics of Chinese-foreign cooperative education with extensive social credibility and international comparability and promote industrial quality improvement and healthy development so as to strengthen industry self-discipline (Ministry of Education, 2013) and form a multiple-party coordination and cooperation quality assurance system covering the government, colleges and universities and third-party institutions. At present, although many school-running institutions have already obtained international certifications, few CFCRS institutions or programs carry out third-party quality assessment/certification. The applicability of international certification to CFCRS is yet to be discussed, and the road to international certification is still in the exploratory stage.

CFCRS Industry supervision

Currently, in the transnational higher education domain, influential industry associations or research institutes related to CFCRS include the Commission on Chinese-foreign Cooperation in Education (CCCE-CEAIE) and the Center of Research on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools, Xiamen University.

Center of Research on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools, Xiamen University (CRCFCRS), was established on March 19, 2010. It is the first specialized research institution in China designed to study Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools. It is the theoretical research base on Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools as well as the policy consulting platform and center of the MOE, the president unit of the Branch for Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools, China Association of Higher Education and the agency where the secretariat is located.

CCCE-CEAIE was formally established in July 2012. As a branch of the China Education Association for International Exchange, it is a national industry organization of Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools formed voluntarily by various cooperatively-run educational institutions at all levels. It is committed to providing various services related to Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools, including schooling consultation, capacity building, research and publication, and communication and promotion (China Education Association for International Exchange, 2012).

Specialized industry associations and research institutions have established opportunities and platforms for communication, exchange, and cooperation between Chinese and foreign cooperators, which facilitates the sharing of good practices and information.

(2) The analysis of self-assessment reports and internal documents

For this part of the analysis, we reviewed the self-assessment reports submitted to the Ministry of Education of China, including the annual report submitted from 2015 to 2021, the self-assessment report submitted in 2016 and 2021 for program extension, respectively, and the internal management process documents of the case, student-oriented guidance/ handbook of the learning process and thesis specifications, management norms guidance documents.

The results of the analysis are mainly focused on two aspects. First, a quality assurance system is formed within the system. Second, ways and platforms for stakeholders to participate in quality assurance in the case.

The quality assurance system is mainly composed of an internal quality assurance system and an external quality assurance system.

1) **Internal quality assurance system and an external quality assurance system**

In the external quality assurance system, the Chinese side mainly focuses on government-led regulatory measures at various levels, including annual reports to China's Ministry of Education, reports on the operation of the Program, and reports on extension applications. On the foreign side, international quality accreditation assessment measures are the focus in addition to government-led assessment measures.

Regarding the establishment of the internal quality assurance system, the focus of quality management is on the teaching process, research process, and process regulation.

Teaching quality assurance

The measures include internal teaching quality assessment, in which participants assess the teaching performance in terms of such aspects as course structure and content and teaching methods (16 indicators under five items); student satisfaction surveys, student seminars, real-time management and monitoring of teaching quality, and adjustment and improvement of training programs and teachers are carried out; and a system of listening to lectures, in which the Chinese and Portuguese Program leaders keep track of the teaching level of teachers and feedback from students in the form of occasional audits and participation in field research.

Theses quality assurance

a) Quality control of key processes: a review of key nodes in the timeline: topic selection (review), thesis proposal defense, mid-term presentation, progress report, thesis format review, thesis pre-defense, and thesis defense. The quality of thesis is controlled at each stage by both the Chinese and Portuguese sides. Format review reports: The SMU-ISCTE DMH Program Office conducts a pre-session review of the content and format of the reports to eliminate common problems in advance.

b) Multi-form academic activities: thesis workshops, academic salons/doctoral academic forums, excellent research case studies, field research, academic integrity education, and paper experience exchange sessions.

c) Establishment of a formal examination system. The Program team establishes a system of step-by-step reviews of thesis proposals, mid-term presentations, and thesis. In other words, before presentations, the contents, format, and language of what is to be presented and submitted are reviewed to rule out common problems in advance.

d) Academic integrity and standards. Thesis review: plagiarism check of the English and Chinese versions of each thesis is conducted; the consistency of the contents of both Chinese and English versions of each thesis is checked to eliminate the risk of academic misconduct.

e) Joint Defence Committee. The review at each stage is conducted by a jury consisting of Portuguese, Chinese, and third-party university members.

2) **Ways and platform for stakeholders to participate in quality assurance**

As an important quality assurance method, the case provides ways, mechanisms, and platforms for differet stakeholders to participate in the assurance process, which can be summarized as the following four aspects.

For students/candidates.

Candidates are important participants in teaching and learning activities, and their level of participation and engagement directly affects the outcome of the quality of education. In this case, in addition to the Program's teaching requirements for students, attention is paid to the participants' demands and involvement, and a multi-channel communication and information collection channel has been established. The following details are included.

a) Seminars for DMH candidates/graduates and establishment of a Program alumni association. A seminar is organized for key Program managers and candidates to give feedback on the Program and teaching one by one. Outstanding graduates are regularly invited to come back to the University to share their experience during their DoM journeys,

their career development after graduation, and their suggestions for improving the Program. A branch of the SMU Alumni Association and SMU-ISCTE Doctor of Management in Healthcare Program was established.

b) Teaching quality assessment and satisfaction survey. Candidates provide feedback on teaching quality and needs through participation in teaching quality assessments. In addition, annual student satisfaction surveys are conducted, including new candidate questionnaires, existing candidate satisfaction surveys, and graduate satisfaction surveys. The Program management team communicates the results of the assessments and surveys to the two universities so that they can take appropriate measures or make adjustments, such as improving the curriculum and optimizing teaching methods.

c) Class committees. On the one hand, each class sets up a class committee, which coordinates the affairs of each class and helps organize and participate in the major activities of the Program. In the first academic year, class meetings are held regularly once a month to focus on conveying various school notices and to listen to feedback and suggestions from participants on teaching and management.

For managers

The management system of the Program consists of two main levels: (1) the Joint Management Committee, which plays a leading role in planning the development of the Program, making decisions on major matters, party building work, and project management; and (2) a Program Office set up by each of the two universities, which is responsible for a specific operation.

The Joint Management Committee has five seats, of which three are for SMU, respectively Vice President of Southern Medical University in charge of this Programe, the Secretary of the Party Committee of the School of Health Management, and the Dean of the School of Health Management; and the remaining two are for ISCTE, respectively the Rector of ISCTE and the Dean of ISCTE Business School. The functions exercised include the re-election or by-election of the members of the Joint Management Committee; appointment and dismissal of the Executive Director or the principal administrator of the program; formulation of development plans and approval of annual work plans; raising of funds for the operation of the program and examination of budgets and final accounts; approval of the list of the Director of the Academic Committee and its members; approval of the staffing quotas and salary standards; and decision-making power on other important matters.

Each partner sets up a Program Office to follow up on Program operations, teaching, and classroom matters, including quality assurance and feedback on the teaching process

and individualized needs of the candidates. The Program is supported by an effective multi-party feedback platform, centered on the joint office, to continuously promote, follow up and provide feedback on issues in the teaching and learning process.

The foreign management team is made up of people with experience in Chinese affairs or Chinese nationals who have an in-depth understanding of Chinese culture and national conditions. They play a key role in supporting the communication between SMU and ISCTE. The Chinese management team consists of members with a Doctor of Management degree, overseas returned Chinese with a master's degree in Pedagogy, and members with a master's degree in Translation Studies. They all boast strong English proficiency and academic comprehension. The team plays a strong role in communication between teachers and students.

For teachers

There are two main ways for teachers to participate in the quality assurance system of the Program. One is the Academic Committee established by the Program, and the other is faculty involvement in teaching and academic quality assurance.

The Academic Committee is the highest academic body of the program and is responsible for making decisions, deliberating, evaluating, and advising on academic matters. The Joint Academic Committee is composed of seven members. The members are professors and persons with senior titles in the management disciplines of both sides of the cooperation. The main duties of the Academic Committee include: deliberating and evaluating the academic policies of the program, including training programs, curriculum, academic awards, and quality assessment; deliberating on discipline development plans and major academic programs; evaluating the teaching and research achievements of the program and reviewing the job qualifications of teachers/supervisions; deliberating on academic matters and accepting academic disputes and other academic matters; and being responsible for the establishment and maintenance of academic norms, academic ethics and academic ethos of the program.

In terms of teaching and academic quality control, faculty members are responsible for ensuring that their teaching content is advanced and scientific; they should provide timely and effective guidance to students' research and are the gatekeepers of academic quality and standards; they also participate in all stages of thesis review and provide advice on the direction, standardization and academic quality of academic research.

To sum up the finding from the documents analysis, a brief summary is shown in the table 4.7.

Table 4.7 A brief summary of means, objective of government and university on quality assurance

Stakeholder Type	Means	Objective	Content/ Measures
Government	Laws and regulations	Clarify the connotation and requirements of quality assurance systems.	✓ A permit system was implemented. ✓ Management of the training process must be strengthened. ✓ Certificates of shall be identical to the certificates of academic qualifications or certificates of academic degrees issued by the foreign educational institution in its own country and shall be recognized by that country. ✓ Strengthen daily supervision. ✓ Organize or authorize intermediary organizations to evaluate the management and educational quality and publicize the evaluation results.
	Administrative supervision means	Further standardize the order of CFCRS, improve the schooling quality, and promote its healthy development.	✓ CFCRS supervision information platform. ✓ Certificate recognition platform. ✓ Quality Evaluation.
	Administrative planning means	To fully utilize the interaction between the development of the CFCRS and the local economy and education and avoid blind development.	✓ Encouraged to carry out cooperation with foreign educational institutions that have advantageous disciplines in the fields of advanced manufacturing, modern agriculture, and strategic emerging industries as well as the fields that are urgent, weak and blank in China. ✓ Cooperative-run programs in business, management, and state-regulated science should be strictly controlled to guard the entry of foreign resources and uphold our education sovereignty.
	Quality recognition	To give full play to the role of third-party guarantee mechanisms.	✓ Supported CFCRS programs/ institutions to explore cooperation with international high-level educational quality evaluation institutions. ✓ To establish a Chinese-foreign cooperative education quality recognition standard and mechanism.
	CFCRS Industry supervision	Established opportunities and platforms for communication, exchange, and cooperation between Chinese and foreign cooperators, which facilitates the sharing of good practices and information.	✓ the Center of Research on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools, Xiamen University was established in 2010. ✓ the Commission on Chinese-foreign Cooperation in Education was established in 2012.

University	External quality assurance system	Accept government supervision and obtain school running certification.	✓ Participate quality evaluation by the China's MOE and Portuguese accreditation institute ✓ Submit annual reports to the China's MOE.
	Internal quality assurance system	Build up internal quality assurance system. Focus on the teaching process, research process, and process regulation.	✓ Build up internal quality assurance system ✓ Conduct Teaching quality assurance and evaluation ✓ Theses quality assurance (Quality control of key processes; multi-form academic activities; Establishment of a formal examination system. Academic integrity and standards. Joint Defence Committee.) ✓ Create ways and platform for stakeholders to participate in quality assurance (For students/candidates，managers，teachers).

4.3.2 Semi-structured interviews

A total of three types stakeholders were interviewed in semi-structured interviews, and 23 interviews were obtained. See Table 4.8 for the information of the interviews.

Table 4.8 Information of the interviews

NO.	Interviewee	Type	Gender	Duration
1	S1	Student	F	42min
2	S2	Student	M	51.21min
3	S3	Student	F	59.18min
4	S4	Student	F	29.39min
5	S5	Student	F	28min
6	S6	Student	M	38.31min
7	S7	Student	F	60.55min
8	S8	Student	F	44.44min
9	S9	Student	F	56min
10	S10	Student	F	65min
11	F1	Faculty	F	59min
12	F2	Faculty	M	57min
13	F3	Faculty	M	85min
14	F4	Faculty	F	58.48 min
15	F5	Faculty	M	55.08 min
16	F6	Faculty	M	58.16 min
17	F7	Faculty	M	59.56 min
18	A1	Administrator	F	45 min
19	A2	Administrator	M	66 min
20	A3	Administrator	F	78 min
21	A4	Administrator	F	88.5 min
22	A5	Administrator	M	58 min
23	A6	Administrator	F	59.56 min

4.3.3 Interpretation of the interview material

Software MAXQDA was used to assist in analyzing, data mining, and coding of the interview texts. These codes formed the main repeated patterns (themes) and helped to organize data. Subthemes were created within themes. The finalized themes, sub-themes, and exemplar quotes are presented in Table 4.9. There are 22 themes and 42 sub-themes in total. Based on the research framework, we made a further classification of the themes. That is, it can be divided into the factors affecting the contents of educational quality assurance and the driving factors that affect quality assurance.

In the next chapter, we will focus on the analysis and findings based on the case study results.

Table 4.9 Themes overview

Classification		Theme	Sub-themes	Description	Frequency
Content	Input	University's emphasis	Positioning of the program	Selection of partners, development of programs and objectives.	4
			Resource input		4
		Management Team	Prioritize project quality	A good quality management team first needs to prioritize project quality and have the determination to confront and overcome challenges.	16
			Competencies	Second, the management team needs to have a high level of dedication, service orientation, and cross-cultural communication skills.	13
			Stable management team	Third, a stable core management team is necessary to promote quality assurance strategy.	16
		Curriculum design	Practicality	The courses are practical and tailored to the needs of the degree level and to the practical management needs.	6
			Internationalization	Bringing theories, ideas, experiences, and trends with an international perspective.	19
			Logic	A logical and rational curriculum that reflects the learning objectives.	8
		Faculty's competency and level	Internationalization	An international perspective brings international management concepts and academic ideas.	11
			Competencies	Whether knowledge is up to date; on the ability to inspire students' thinking and engage their passions.	11
			Dedication	Patient, conscientious, responsible, and meticulous dedication to students.	16
			Authoritativeness	Industry opinion leader role with high social status, social recognition, and visibility.	5
		Quality of students	Competencies	Comprehensive learning ability including academic research skills, basic theoretical skills, foreign language skills	15
			Professional achievements	Appropriate management experience in line with the orientation and training objectives of the school	4

		Diversification	It is reflected in the source of students, the various sub-functional systems and positions within the industry to which it belongs, with different visions and contexts.	8
Process	Teaching organization and management	Process and specification guidelines	Clear teaching processes and learning plans, detailed requirements, and specification guidelines.	31
		Administrative service	This includes the adequacy of the educational facilities and environment, the availability of learning aids, databases and student support, as well as the attitude and quality of service provided by the management.	21
	Ways of teaching	Face-to-face teaching	A face-to-face teaching style is required, as well as	14
		Overseas study experience		10
Output	Student growth	Enhancing research capacity	Research skills and research attainment enhancement	15
		Upgrading the level of management	Change in practical management philosophy and competence	15
		Mindset	Ability to think through issues with comprehensiveness and foresight	18
		International perspective	International understanding, international communication skills enhancement	21
	Teacher growth	Teaching is learning	The accumulation of knowledge acquired by teachers in the course of teaching	5
		Sense of honor	The honor teachers get from teaching	3
	Academic standards and graduation rate	Rigorous academic quality control	Rigorous requirements and gauging of academic standards, the difficulty of graduation, high demands, and expectations of students	29
	Social benefit	Resources and platforms	To provide a platform to promote resource interaction, mutual learning, exchange and cooperation in the industry, and to broaden the network of people and resources in all aspects of society	28

	Quality culture building	Quality strategic planning		A quality strategic plan that is consistent with the program-running goals according to the university's type and target positioning.	7
		Internal evaluations/self-assessments and follow-ups		An effective internal evaluation should be organized around school-running goals and strategies through planned, organized, and systematic self-examination to achieve self-supervision, self-regulation, and self-improvement.	6
		Continuous optimization		The continuous optimization of the program and the continuous attention to students.	5
		Trust between partners		The spirit of the contract, trust, and transparency between the two universities.	21
	Trust	Recognition Brand and reputation	National recognition and standardization	National accreditation is an important aspect in judging quality and the regularity	21
			University's brand reputation	Brand reputation of the parent school and program, including school ranking	5
			Peer reputation	Reputation in the education sector and the reputation and credibility in its subject area of expertise	9
Mechanism			Learning motivation	Whether the learner's intrinsic motivation to apply or study will support them to engage in their studies and overcome their difficulties to complete their studies	17
	Communication, cooperation and engagement	Student engagement	Student participation and engagement	Active cooperation and proactive responsibility for communication	11
			Perseverance and persistence	Whether they are able to persevere through their studies and whether they have the perseverance and determination to overcome difficulties.	9
			Collective atmosphere	Forming a classroom atmosphere of mutual encouragement, promotion, and motivation	11

	Student-teacher communication	Effective communication	Emphasis is placed on the effectiveness of communication, whether language barriers are overcome, the frequency of teacher-student communication, and the timeliness and effectiveness of communication on key issues.	24
	Close follow-up and responsiveness	Supervision / Monitoring / Follo-up	The role of the academic team in following up on students' studies, reminding and supervising them, and in solving problems of communication between teachers and students.	24
Cross culture management	Cultural differences	Research habits and logic of thought	Differences in research and working style, thinking logic	39
		Differences in perception	Differences in values in terms of looking at the same thing	20
		Ways of working, customs and manners	Differences in cultural customs and etiquette	11
	Language skills	Students' foreign language skills	Differences in students' English listening, speaking, reading and writing skills	15
		Translation quality	Level of competence of translators, communication effectiveness and accessibility	20

Chapter 5: Discussion and Finding

This chapter starts with three aspects of quality assurance, combined with the research framework and results, to analyze and discuss the quality assurance system of Sino-foreign cooperative education. The first aspect is about "Who and Why": the quality demands of core stakeholders. The second aspect is about "What": what content should be guaranteed and the influencing factors in the three stages of input, process, and output. The third aspect is "How" stakeholders participate in the entire quality assurance system.

5.1 Who are the key stakeholders in CFCRS, and what are the quality demands for them

According to the statistical results of the Delphi method of expert consultation, six types of core stakeholders are obtained, namely National government/ministries/accreditation agencies, Host municipality (local government authorities), Partners, Senior university management (the dean's team, general board, council of deans), Students, and Teaching and/or research staff. This conclusion is consistent with the research results of Mainardes et al. (2012) on the classification and priority of higher education stakeholders. The difference is that this study further subdivides the government and the universities.

Different stakeholders have different expectations and demands about quality. Exploring the quality demands of the stakeholders in CFCRS is an important issue to be addressed in this study. Based on the result of the case study, we had further discussions on the quality demands of various key stakeholders. Among them, the core stakeholders at the administrative management level are the National government/ministries/accreditation agencies and the Host municipality (local government authorities). We combined it with "Government" in discussion. The same, we combined the Partners and Senior university management (the dean's team, general board, council of deans) to "Operator" in discussion.

Table 5.1 Quality demands of key stakeholders in CFCRS

Key stakeholders	Quality demands
Government	(1) Public welfare nature, (2) Standardization of operation, (3) the quality of the resources introduced
Partners / Universities	Host university: (1) Meet the needs of the international school-running strategy. (2) Enhancement of the overall development of the parent school. (3) Social benefits Foreign partner: Social benefits Standard requirements
Students	(1) Improvement of abilities (2) Resources and platforms
Faculty	(1) Broaden academic horizons, (2) Improve the professional competence, (3) Research and academic success, (4) Heterogeneous complementarity of individual culture.

5.1.1 Government

Although governments at all levels focus on resource allocation and interest needs at the operational level, the basic principles and overall demands are consistent. Therefore, when discussing quality demands at the government level, we will discuss governments at all levels together.

From the perspective of governments at all levels, the criteria for evaluating the quality of education are: to meet the requirements of China's socio-economic opening-up to the outside world and the needs of education development, it is necessary to train a large number of international talents who have a global vision, are familiar with international rules, and are able to participate in international affairs and international competition. The overall objectives of quality assurance are a gradual increase in the number of high-level demonstrative Chinese-foreign cooperative education institutions, a basically sound curriculum of brand programs and exemplary courses, a more optimized structure, a more reasonable allocation of education resources, a perfect quality assessment and accreditation system, a basically sound quality supervision and information disclosure platform, a greater role in facilitating the reform and development of higher education, and further contributions to national and local socio-economic development.

Its main characteristics are threefold.

(1) An emphasis on the principle of public welfare nature

It has been underscored in many policy documents such as *the Regulations on Chinese-foreign Cooperation in Running Schools* (China's State Council, 2003) and *the Opinions of*

the Ministry of Education on Some Issues concerning Current Sino-foreign Cooperative Education (China's Ministry of Education, 2006) that CFCRS must stick to the principle of public welfare nature. Efforts must be made to strictly put an end to the acts of arbitrary charges and high charges in the name of Sino-foreign cooperative education and prevent the trend of educational industrialization.

(2) An emphasis on standardization of operation

For example, *the Regulations on Chinese-foreign Cooperation in Running Schools* (China's State Council, 2003) emphasizes exercising administration according to law and standardization of running schools. It has also provided guidelines on such matters as the examination and approval of the CFCRS application, the responsibilities, authority, and articles of association of the board of trustees/board of directors/joint managerial committee of a CFCRS ,and the responsibilities and power of the persons in charge, the evaluation and employment of teachers, teaching materials, teaching standards, enrollment, management of certificates, charges, and finance management.

(3) An emphasis on the quality of the resources introduced

This is reflected in due consideration of the need for all kinds of talents required for national/local and regional economic development as well as the need for the development of schools' academic disciplines. The planning and policy guidance of disciplines and specialties should be guided by the needs of local economic development and prevent low-level duplication. The examination and approval of the qualifications for running schools should be introduced, and a requirement should be set on the proportion of the introduced resources to the overall educational resources of the program.

Scholars at home and abroad have not unified the definition of foreign high-quality educational resources. But there is a consensus that foreign high-quality educational resources possess international characteristics, successful experience in the construction of disciplines and majors, advanced education levels and leading advantages, courses, teaching materials, teaching concepts, teaching methods, teaching forms, teaching management system, evaluation method, teaching staff, talent training mode and quality assurance system that are worth learning in China (Yan, 2014; J. Lin, 2016).

It is worth noting that in previous studies, some scholars believe that students are the primary stakeholders in higher education (Chapleo & Simms, 2010; Lin & Li, 2017). Some scholars believe that teachers are the most important stakeholders (Zhang et al., 2010), while others believe that managers are the primary stakeholders (Zhang, 2022). In the research results, the highest-scoring core stakeholder is the government, followed by

academics/managers, and then students. We believe this conclusion may be due to two reasons. First, different from the previous research, most of the experts participating in the Delphi method in this research are managers of CFCRS. From managers' perspective, they have different perceptions and possible biases. Second, compared with other studies focusing on transnational higher education stakeholders, the national conditions, culture, and system of the country where the research object is located in this study are different. The relationship between government and higher education increasingly demonstrates bilateral complexity (Hu, 2005). This is particularly the case in CFCRS projects. Whether the school can be run and how long it can be run depends largely on the government's decision-making and the policy impacts at that time. Although the government is committed to transiting its functions from a regulator to a service provider, the fact that the government has relatively high decision-making power in running schools still exists objectively.

5.1.2 Partner/ Universities

When discussing the interests and needs of educational institutions, the in-putter, and out-putter of educational resources indeed have different interests. Scholars believe that the difference in interest orientation between the two sides of the cooperation has formed the overall quality risk of CFCRS (Guo & Lin, 2014).

5.1.2.1 Chinese partner university

From the documents and interviews of this case, the interests and needs of the Chinese school-running institution can be roughly summarized into three levels. The first is to serve the strategic needs of international school-running institutions; the second is to improve the overall discipline level; the third is to provide social benefits.

(1) Meet the needs of the International school-running strategy

From the perspective of a school-running institution, embodying the internationalization attribute is not only a requirement for running a program but also in line with its own development needs. The school runners hope to improve their own school-running level and drive the development of related disciplines by introducing international resources.

The university attaches great importance to international education. The university thoroughly implements the international school-running promotion project deployed by the eighth party committee and insists on promoting the development of key areas such as talent training, scientific research, teaching staff, and medical and health care with an

international perspective. Internationalization is integrated into the whole process of running a school. With colleges and hospitals as the main body, friendly relations with overseas high-level colleges and institutions are established, and various forms of international exchanges and cooperation are carried out. A1

(2) Enhancement of the overall development of the parent school.

The contribution of a Sino-foreign cooperative education program to the overall development of the parent school is one aspect of interest to the operators and one of the indicators for its quality assessment. According to the interview data analysis results, three main aspects were mentioned: the building of the university's own teaching capacity, the building of disciplinary and academic competence, and the building and expansion of international exchange platforms. There is still a gap in higher education teaching concepts, teaching models, teaching methods, and teaching standards compared to the world's top universities. For higher education to meet the needs of social development for talents and to cultivate specialists with a global vision to meet the trend of economic globalization, it is necessary to learn from and absorb the advanced higher education philosophy, teaching & management experience, and educational technology from abroad to enhance the comprehensive capacity of the parent university and promote educational reform. Hosting Sino-foreign cooperative education programs is one of the ways to achieve this purpose.

(3) Social benefits

From a broader perspective, the social benefits of a Sino-foreign cooperative education program are one of the concerns of the operators, the government, and society, as well as an important aspect of its quality. The social benefits of the program take up a significant part of its annual evaluation report. The introduction of quality resources from abroad through Sino-foreign cooperative education programs plays an important role in meeting people's diverse needs for higher education by providing them with a more economical way to study abroad. By introducing foreign programs with special characteristics and training talents with a global vision, the function of Chinese universities to serve the local economy is strengthened. In addition, collaboration with foreign universities can provide Chinese universities with a platform for communication and cooperation with universities and governments in the host countries, thus expanding their popularity and influence and driving the development of their other businesses.

5.1.2.2 The foreign partner

Similarly, based on interviews with foreign administrators, their emphasis on quality

revolves around students' growth and the benefits they bring to society. Through project-based learning, students can enhance their research capabilities and develop problem-solving skills, resulting in positive outcomes for organizations and society.

"Of course, people usually don't talk about that because is difficult in some cases, I would say impossible to quantify the impact of that, because we cannot quantify the impact (to the society). And by the way, in the short term, in the medium term and in the long run. But in the end, the quality of the program and is related with that, having mentioned that in my humble opinion, and this is in this problem. And in any other programs, if you have lots of kpi's side key performance indicators, but in the long run, if you have and i'm saying this for the last 10 years, I still maintain this. But in the long run, it is the society that will tell if the problem is increasing the quality or decreasing the quality." F6

"But in this program, every year, we only look at 25, but it is a kind of reflection program. The good could be now is a driver to have decision makers in important places that can really help or contribute to make better voices that can help us all in spread to the society, to a better society." A6

The quality of projects is also expected to meet the quality indicators required by the accreditation bodies of the country. In this case, it refers to academic achievements and the number of academic publications.

So as a teacher and as the director of the program we have from our accreditation agency. We have guidelines which measure the quality. And one of these guidelines is the number of publications in international journal. A4

However, it should be noted that while the importance of academic publications is mentioned multiple times by foreign administrators, they also highlight that we should not overly emphasize this criterion when evaluating quality. This criterion is primarily designed for academic-oriented projects. In the actual educational process, besides meeting the standards, it is more important to align with the educational goals, nature of education, and student profile. We should not rigidly apply the standards but instead, adjust our perception of educational quality based on the actual circumstances.

What we need to do is to change our accreditation agency, to make them change the criteria to measure the quality of the program, not only. Public publications is important. We managed to publish some. But it cannot be the most important criteria because you can look at the thesis and you can identify if it is a good disease or not. And I think the quality of the disease is increasing. A4

5.1.3 Students

As the direct beneficiaries and participants of educational services, the quality needs of students are paramount for managers and academic researchers. For the quality needs of students, some studies believe that it should include knowledge, individual capability, and personal character (Zhou, 2009). Specifically, knowledge evaluation focuses on the student's knowledge of fundamental theory in their specific major and of basic and international background information in the major and related study fields. An individual capability evaluation targets students' practical skills in their field and skills of innovation, international communication skills, and practical know-how in related academic areas. A personal character evaluation considers students' international perspective, cultural sensitivity in an international setting, cultural sophistication, and a fine level of integration with both local and foreign cultures.

In the case program, the quality demands of the students are focused on two aspects: Improvement of abilities, and resources and platforms.

(1) Improvement of abilities

The quality of the program is also reflected in whether students improve their abilities through the program, and such improvement is demonstrated in two aspects. The first is whether the students can complete the program and obtain the degree. The second is whether the students have exactly improved their comprehensive ability through the program. In the case program, the main abilities are academic research ability, global vision, academic quality, and thinking ability, and the capacity to apply these abilities to management practices. Particular attention was paid to the enhancement of the students' abilities. During the interviews, the students mentioned several times that the school was not blindly pursuing graduation rates but was aiming at enhancing the students' abilities and competencies.

"In my opinion, whether the students can really learn something in the process is a criterion for assessing the teaching quality of the program. Besides, the graduation rate, or how many people graduate, is an outcome indicator. The process is about what we can really learn and whether we can apply what we have learnt in the workplace or in practice" (S5)

(2) Resources and platforms

The resources and platforms that the program can have been mentioned in this case in terms of providing a platform to facilitate interaction, mutual learning, exchange and collaboration in the industry, and the consequently broadened network of social contacts. These have been mentioned several times as an important educational output or additional

benefit.

So, I think it's important that there is communication and exchange between the students and then between different industries. We have a lot to learn from each other, and there may be an opportunity for collaboration, so I think this piece is also very important. S9

5.1.4 Faculty

Tampoe (1993), a knowledge management expert, found through empirical research that the top four factors that knowledge workers care about most are individual growth, work autonomy, business achievement, and money and wealth. In cooperative education, Chinese and foreign teachers have different levels of interest demands for these four items.

(1) Individual growth and professional achievement

Chinese teachers pay more attention to individual growth and professional achievement, and their interests are reflected in the pursuit of career development and the realization of self-worth. On the one hand, they hope that through international exchanges and cooperation, they can broaden their academic horizons and get closer to the international academic discourse center in terms of professional knowledge sharing and integration, academic contact, and scientific research cooperation, which is conducive to the development of personal academic expertise. On the other hand, they hope to get in touch with better teaching methods and teaching concepts and improve teachers' professional ability through overseas training, joint teaching, classroom observation, and teaching seminars.

It must be teaching is learning, from which I am pleased that the students do their thesis and at the same time I can learn something that I didn't know before, some new theories. By being a Chinese supervisor, I actually got a lot out of it. Because I have to supervise the students, first of all, I have to learn myself first. My knowledge will be expanded more and more, and I am actually really grateful to my Portuguese supervisor here. F1

Foreign teachers do not have the same strong emphasis on individual growth as their Chinese counterparts. They value the professional achievements that come from imparting academic ideas and educational philosophies, including the improvement of students' research abilities, advancements in students' career achievements, completion of a thesis (the final product), and whether their research findings can help students solve practical management issues.

Aas a teacher or as a supervisor of the thesis, what I want is them to finish a thesis with a solution for the problem. And for me, this is more important measure of quality.F4

(2) Cross-cultural exchange

Additionally, the development of China and the experience of Chinese culture are factors that attract foreign teachers. Many of them hope to achieve personal cultural heterogeneity through mutual exchange and learning by immersing in different ethnic backgrounds and ways of thinking. Some interviewees also believe that their willingness to actively participate in projects stems from their great curiosity about China's development and deep identification with Chinese culture.

And I want to know what is going on in China. Because if I know from China, I know from the first time in the world. So part of my interests, so I'm closer to innovation. If I come to China, ii see many things that maybe in some time will appear in other countries. But here I'm seeing at the forefront of progress. And I think it's fascinating. if you teach statistics. every everywhere is the same. If you are teaching mega trends. Yeah, to be here. (F6)

(3) Teacher-student relationship

Regardless of whether they are Chinese or foreign, both sides mention the importance of establishing a good teacher-student relationship and maintaining continuous contact throughout the academic guidance process, which they highly value.

It's also important that we keep after we finish that the supervisors keep contact with the students, I have. In my situation, I have managed to keep some of them with some of them. I still contact them. And I expect, for example, if they have a problem, they call me or send me an email. Yeah, and some of them do it. And that's very rewarding for me. F4.

5.2 What are the main factors that affect the quality and quality assurance system of Chinese-foreign cooperative higher education?

This section will discuss the three aspects of education quality assurance in CFCRS, i.e., what needs to be guaranteed and its influencing factors in the input of teaching resources, teaching process, and teaching output. Figure 5.1 shows the main influencing factors of teaching resource input, teaching process, and teaching output in the quality assurance content based on the analysis of qualitative interview content by MAXQDA software.

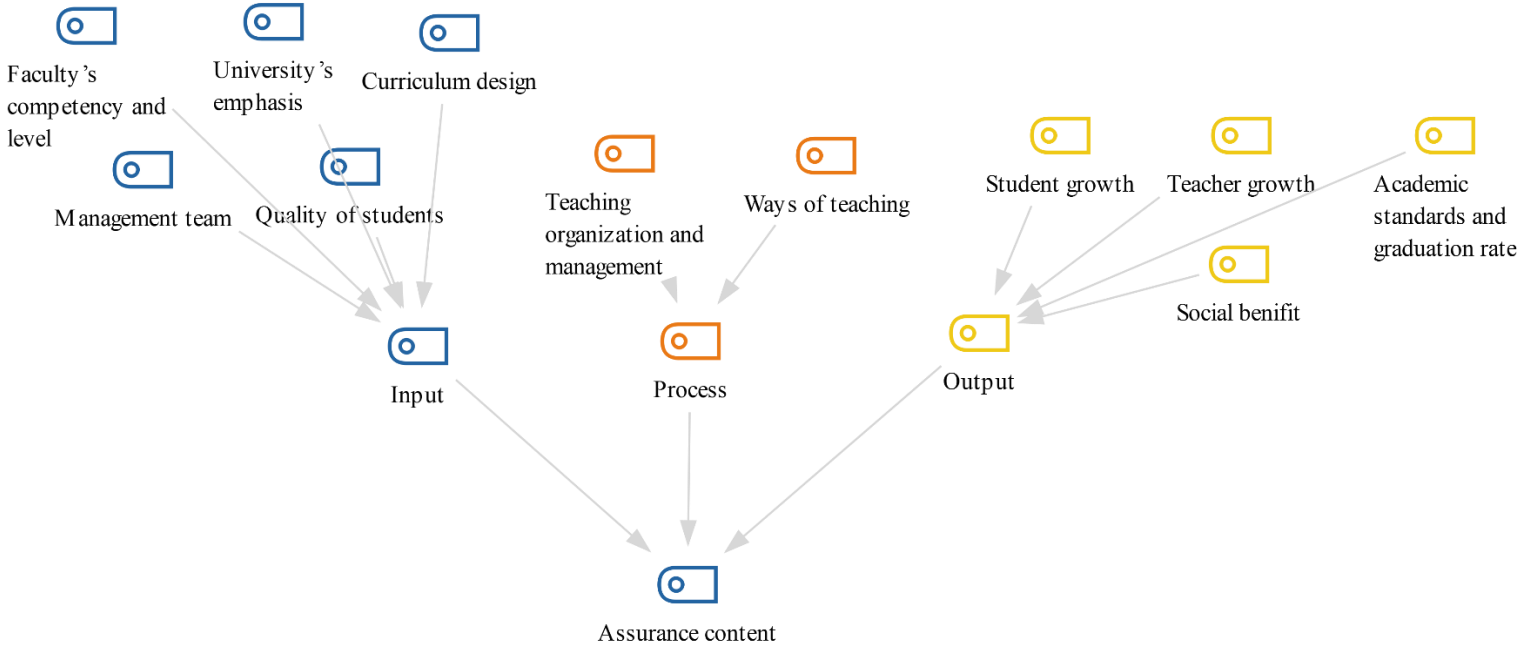

Fig. 5.1 Three-level coding chart for the assurance content

5.2.1 Input of teaching resources

Input in teaching resources includes the parent university's all-round investment in the Sino-foreign cooperative education program, including human, financial and material resources in the form of tangible and intangible inputs. Tangible input includes the established management team of the partner university, sufficient development funds, and internationalized venues and facilities. Intangible investment consists of the university's emphasis and a management system conducive to long-term development. In this case, five areas are highlighted: level of importance attached by leadership, the management team, curriculum design, quality of teachers, and quality of the enrolling students.

(1) Level of importance attached by leadership

The level of importance that the two universities attach to the Sino-foreign cooperative education program, or we call it the understanding of leadership, plays a key role in the program quality. Zhan (2014) argued that leadership awareness, teaching conditions, and teaching operation are the three major factors that affect the quality of CFCRS.

At the beginning of the program, the leadership from both of the parent universities was the decision-maker on important matters such as the positioning of the program, the choice of partners, the development of training programs, and the formulation of quality standards. Whether the program was accurately positioned and whether the parent university had invested enough resources played a key role in the establishment and development of the program.

On one side, we have the support of both leaderships. And that's very important. You cannot have a program of such magnitude without the support of the leadership of the Top leadership. Although a long, 10 years, very naturally, this leadership has changed in terms of person. They have never changed the purpose and the support that they have given to this program. (A1)

(2) Management team

In response to the question that which type of stakeholder plays an important role in quality assurance, interviewees indicated that:

"I think the main person in charge of the operation of the program plays an important role. This is because he/she decides the height and depth of the quality of all aspects of the program, what curriculum to use, which teachers and which management and service staff to use, which students are enrolled, and which university to cooperate with." (S1).

"The key is exactly; this is the team. We have a good strategy. We have even a better execution, because the people who are at the forefront of this program, they never back up on the face of challenges, on the face of problems. We always try to solve any problems, and we find that they are even an opportunity for us to be creative and flexible and last, but not least we also trust each other." A6

The important role played by the management team in the quality assurance process was repeatedly emphasized by different categories of stakeholders during the interviews. While students and professors may have varying interests and positions, the management team consistently plays a crucial role in the process. This includes the continuous optimization of the quality assurance system formulated by the management team, as well as their central role in organizing and coordinating various project affairs. Additionally, as a bridge of communication between stakeholders, the professionalism and dedication of the management team significantly impact the quality and assurance of the project.

"The management team makes the success of the program. Who is able to and willing to do anything that is necessary to overcome the difficulties. So we are sure that whatever a difficulty appears, the management team will cooperate to a committee. " A6

Abbs (2020) also pointed out that, the behavors of the management ans support staff and the efficiency and effectiveness in their processes are highly important. From the result, a good quality management team first needs to prioritize project quality and have the determination to confront and overcome challenges. Second, the management team needs to have a high level of dedication, service orientation, and cross-cultural communication skills. Third, a stable core management team is necessary.

"I believe there is one key point that I understand, which is that some of our core members are relatively stable. At the same time, the core members are also continuously growing, or constantly thinking actively and investing in this project." A5

The stability of core management team members is beneficial for maintaining a quality-oriented perspective, implementing quality assurance strategies and measures consistently, fostering a tacit understanding among team members, and enabling collective problem-solving, thereby improving organizational effectiveness and reducing communication costs.

(3) Curriculum

The rationality of the curriculum design of the CFCRS directly affects whether the goal of talent training can be realized. According to the studies, the main problems in the curriculum design of CFCRS are: a). lack of advancement and outstanding features (J. Lin & M. Liu, 2014), c). lack of localization of content (Xue, 2017), and d). conflict between the

curriculum and culture (Xue, 2017).

The internationalization, logical design, and practical nature of the curriculum of the Sino-foreign cooperative education program was mentioned very frequently in the interviews of this case.

Internationalization

In addition to the general attributes of the talent training plan, the talent training program of CFCRS also has international characteristics. Therefore, the talent training plan should fully reflect the integration and cooperation of Chinese and foreign educational concepts (Cao, 2011). During the interviews, student interviewees repeatedly mentioned in response to questions of various aspects that the most important reason or expectation for choosing a Sino-foreign cooperative education program was its internationalization. This is reflected in the presence of international teachers and an international curriculum, as well as the possibility of international exchange, be it in the classroom, in collaborative research, or in the opportunities and activities offered abroad, to develop students' international perspectives and international communication skills through interaction with different cultures.

"As to quality, in my view, the curriculum must reflect a global vision and be up to international standards. From the management perspective, our program is a program in public health policy and management. The courses on health policies should cover the history, principles and trends of major policy developments globally or internationally." (S1).

Logical design

The logical design is reflected in how well the curriculum fits in with the training objectives and whether it is necessary for students to complete their studies. In this case, there is a further layer of logical design, which is whether the curriculum and course contents are in line with the way Chinese students think. For example, Chinese students are used to thinking from the surface to the point and from the big picture to the details. They expect teachers to give a general outline of what is to be learned and then introduce details during each lecture. Regarding this point, one student interviewee mentioned:

"In my view, the Empirical Research course should be taught first because it outlines what the framework of the thesis is and how research ideas should be developed. If this course were taught in the beginning, I would have gained more clarity and would have been able to better understand other courses as each lecture I attended afterwards could be put into this framework. In that case, I would have not felt confused along the journey." (S1)

Practical nature

The practical nature is reflected in whether it is of direct value to students in their studies, research, and work and is closely associated with their fields. This nature was also highlighted in Lin's (2016) research on the introduction of high-quality educational resources for CFCRS.

"I feel that our curriculum system is still the best in China as it is closer to the needs of healthcare management". (S4)

(4) Faculty's competency and level

Research suggests that teacher's competency and performance are crucial to ensure education quality and development objectives, while it involves primarily teachers' skills, course design, and classroom performance (Zhou, 2009). Studies show that the quantity and quality of teachers in CFCRS programs in many colleges and universities cannot meet the teaching needs, seriously affecting the quality of teaching (J. Lin & M. Liu, 2014). The main problems manifest the way of "flying teaching" of foreign teachers that delivers little communication with students (Cai, 2022), poor communication, high mobility, unstable teaching teams, and the gap between Chinese teachers' teaching philosophy, language ability and teaching methods, and the requirements of cooperative schools (Xue, 2017; Lin & Gao, 2022; Zhang, 2019).

In this case, the quality of teachers influenced or reflected the quality of the program in two ways.

On the one hand, the level of competence of the faculty. In this case, the level of competence is mentioned more in terms of whether the teacher has a solid theoretical foundation, teaching ability, inspiration to students, and knowledge that keep pace with the times.

"The level of the teachers is reflected in students' experience of each lecture taught by the teachers, specifically in whether the professor has taught you real knowledge or whether he/she has broadened your horizon." (S2)

On the other hand, the internationalization level of the faculty. In this case, it is more about the degree of internationalization of the teachers, which is reflected in two aspects: 1) the ability of the teachers to teach theories and practical experience at the forefront of internationalization in the field and to develop students' international perspectives and views on research in the field; and 2) the ability of the teachers to think internationally and to be open-minded towards and tolerant of different cultures. Both have a direct impact on student satisfaction and program quality. For example.

So, in terms of quality, the first thing I think about is whether some of the teachers in the program really have an international perspective that can inspire students. We selected the China-foreign cooperation program because we want to get an international perspective, otherwise, we can choose some domestic programs. I hope that our teachers will bring more academic ideas and thoughts with an international perspective, which is the difference between Chinese and foreign teachers in the China-foreign cooperation program. S8

Third, the authority and dedication of the faculty

The first is the authority of the teachers. In this case, as the program is specifically focused on the healthcare sector and the candidates are all senior managers, the teachers generally have high reputations, status ,and executive positions in the industry. This feature is particularly pronounced in the selection of Chinese teachers. The "authority" of the teachers is largely a reflection of the reputation, influence, and quality of the program, and to some extent, influences the level of student engagement in the classroom and the choice of supervisors.

I think the whole program is very good, and the teachers are of a good standard. For example, Liu Yuanli, who is a national counsellor, I think thinking is quite good in all aspects. I also thought the lecture was very good, including the one given by the Party Secretary of Jinan University on crisis communication media. S9

The dedication of the faculty

Dedication here should be understood in a broad sense. It includes the level of commitment of each supervisor to their students, the level of academic standards and requirements, and the smoothness and frequency of communication. In this case, candidates were required to conduct academic research, and thus they must interact with their supervisors very frequently. The dedication of supervisors would directly influence students' learning initiative and academic quality to a large extent. Some interviewees stated:

I met these two supervisors who are particularly good, particularly patient. He basically started from the very beginning. It was like he taught me how to do it from scratch, and then step by step. When Mr. Xia taught me to do the scale, the table are even provided. S7

(5) Quality of the enrolling students

The quality of the enrolling students has always been an important reflection and influencing factor of the program quality in the field of higher education. Students choose CFCRS, which means they have to face the challenge of multiculturalism. Students need to have a solid knowledge base, a positive learning attitude, and strong learning ability, which

are the prerequisites for meeting and coping with challenges (林金辉 & 刘梦今, 2014).

Similarly, in the case program, both the interviews and the documentation suggest that the quality of the enrolling students is reflected in many aspects. For example, at the admissions stage, students are examined in terms of their management experience, academic background, research potential, English proficiency, and motivation for the application.

In this case, the requirements for the quality of the enrolling students can be broadly classified into three aspects: professional achievements, competencies, and diversity.

The first aspect is professional achievements. Based on the positioning of the program, the students are senior managers in the healthcare sector and are required to conduct in-depth scientific research into practical management issues. Generally, students have a high level of job title, which means that they have extensive management experience and competence. To a certain extent, it also means students have the ability to adapt to and understand the curriculum, as well as the capacity to conduct and complete management studies.

"The requirement for students to have extensive management experience is based on three considerations. First, the program research needs to be carried out for the purpose of solving management problems in reality. So, candidates need to have practical management experience to be able to put forward and study specific management problems and engage in classroom discussions and interactions. Second, students have a need for social networking. Third, influential candidates can contribute to the branding of the program, creating a good reputation and influence in the industry and thus attracting more high-quality students. This benefit is more pronounced in the early years of the program." (A1)

The second aspect is the competencies of the students. As the case is a research-based DoM program, students are required to carry out research, which makes their academic foundation and learning skills particularly important. During the interviews, some interviewees also repeatedly mentioned that they had encountered difficulties in three aspects: (1) they found it difficult to conduct research due to their lack of basic theoretical knowledge of the subject; (2) they found it difficult to communicate with their foreign supervisors due to their limited English proficiency and cultural differences; and (3) they were unable to reasonably allocate their time for study due to their tight schedules. These problems, to a large extent, can be attributed to the student's academic ability and learning ability.

Third, the diversity in the source of student.

Whether the overall learner structure has the attribute of diversity is reflected in the

source of students, the various sub-functional systems and positions in the industry to which they belong, and their different perspectives, resources, and backgrounds. These diverse attributes create the potential for different inspirations in the learning and interaction process.

Like us in this class, we have students from public hospitals, private systems, and non-medical (systems). Also, we have supervisors from both China and other countries. So we share different concepts and diversity, which will generate great inspiration. s6

5.2.2 Teaching process

The teaching quality of CFCRS is not shaped by the final evaluation but is dynamically formed during the teaching operation process. To ensure the quality of the teaching process, all factors that affect the quality and all the links and stakeholders that form the quality should be included in the range of guarantees. Attention should not be merely paid to teaching and learning or teachers and students.

(1) Teaching organization and teaching management

The teaching management of CFCRS programs in colleges and universities is the central link of its management work, which includes the planning, control and feedback of the teaching process, and is the key link to teaching quality (J. Lin & M. Liu, 2014). The clarity and rationality of the program process, strictness of the management, and closeness of follow-up were also the most frequently mentioned quality demands in the interviews in this case. The reasons are threefold. Firstly, unlike undergraduate and graduate education, this case is a research program at the doctoral level. The regular coursework is only part of the program. In addition, the students have to take the initiative to arrange their own study and research. In other words, most of the time, the students are in an "unsupervised" state. This requires not only a high degree of self-discipline and learning ability on the part of students but also a clear process and guidelines from the program management. Secondly, all the students are in-service staff, and most of them are senior managers. Apart from devoting time to learning, they also need to take care of their busy work at the same time. Therefore, the program's management, supervision, and follow-up are also important to ensure that students are able to complete their studies efficiently within the extremely limited time available.

A clear program process and guidelines

A clear program process means that the school has clear requirements and guidelines for the learning process, that students are clear about the tasks, objectives, and timelines for

each stage of learning, that the learning tasks are clearly articulated and standardized, and that the school is able to continuously improve the learning process and provide more comprehensive and relevant learning support.

"In my opinion, one of the reasons that this program can guarantee quality is that the thesis procedures are managed. In other words, the timelines for such key nodes as thesis proposal and mid-term report are very clear, and the whole process is supervised step by step". (S3)

In addition to the interview process, including the analysis of case studies, the program also focused on process management, including the development of a series of guidelines, the adoption of quality control at key points, and the establishment of a tripartite (teacher-student-office) communication mechanism.

(2) Administrative service

Administrative service in educational products is often in the form of logistical support and services. This includes the educational facilities and environment, the learning aids, and the provision of databases. In this case, in addition to the above-mentioned tangible logistical support, the timely and effective response of the management staff, their friendly and enthusiastic attitude, their professional communication and collaboration, and their positive role of encouragement and supervision are also highlighted.

"Most of the time, we are too busy with our daily work and only have time to devote to our studies when we are off work. Because of this, sometimes we would text or call our administration teachers on weekends or at night. Nevertheless, our management staff would always help us patiently. They are very dedicated and responsible". (S3)

(3) Ways of teaching

The ways of teaching mentioned in this case refer to two perspectives: face-to-face teaching and the experience of studying abroad. The emphasis is on the effect of direct face-to-face interaction and communication with the lecturer or supervisor. Face-to-face teaching is particularly important for transnational education, especially as this study was conducted during the travel constraint period due to COVID-19. The online teaching approach during the pandemic affects the motivation of teachers and students, the interaction, and the quality of teaching and learning. A face-to-face approach to teaching and mentoring is more conducive to quality assurance in transnational education since it can increase the immediacy of communication and removes some of the barriers to communication due to language and culture.

Now I find it a bit difficult because after the epidemic a lot of the classes are online.

The effect of online classes is not as good as the effect of offline communication. The teachers come to China and communicate with us in person. Some students have even never met their tutors in person, so it's actually difficult to communicate through this email and video. The reason my dissertation is going so well is that Professor Virginia spends a lot of time in China. I have to do everything I can to communicate with her every time she comes, no matter what form it takes. S9

Similarly, some studies implied that in 2020 when international mobility was greatly restricted due to the COVID-19, the normal operation of CFCRS encountered severe challenges. The original face-to-face teaching mode is unsustainable. In addition, the use of distance teaching platforms, the barriers brought about by time and space distance, and the difficulty of assessment are all prominent problems. During this period, how to maintain the effectiveness of teaching has become a global problem (Cai, 2022). These difficulties hinder students' confidence in learning. It is difficult for students to maintain their enthusiasm for learning under the original face-to-face teaching mode, which erodes their enthusiasm for independent learning (Lin & Gao, 2022).

At the same time, a certain period of studying abroad during the program not only increases the possibility of face-to-face interaction with supervisors but also broadens students' international perspective and international communication skills because of the exotic cultural and academic exchanges, which will help students to complete their studies. This is one of the advantages of CFCRS.

This is why I believe that this kind of international exchange program must include a student going to a local school for exchange and study, so that this kind of cultural exchange will produce better quality. S7

It can be seen that in the teaching process, the "communication" of various stakeholders is a critical issue. There are several categories of communication. On the one hand, the communication between managers and students. It is mainly manifested in the communication of teaching planning, management services, and follow-up services, with a focus on service. Management services are required to be all-around, timely, and effective. On the other hand, the communication between teachers and students, including teaching knowledge and guidance for academic research guidance. The emphasis is on the timeliness and effectiveness of communication. Unlike traditional education, due to language barriers and cultural differences, the communication between teachers and students in CFCRS is not merely an interaction between the "teacher" role and the "student" role but the result of multi-party collaboration and efforts.

5.2.3 Teaching output

Some scholars believe that the output of higher education can be mainly measured from four aspects: talent cultivation, scientific research, social service, and cultural inheritance (Bian & Ye, 2014). Based on the data from case studies, it can be observed that the educational output focused on by various stakeholders is closely related to their interests, as discussed in detail in section 5.1. In general, the emphasis differs among the four aforementioned aspects. In terms of talent cultivation, it has a broader meaning, encompassing not only students' learning and personal development but also highlighting the enhancement of their international perspectives and cross-cultural communication abilities. In addition to students' growth, attention should also be given to the personal development and effectiveness of teachers. The output of scientific research is reflected in the quantity and quality of students' completed theses, with external indicators including graduation rates and the number of published achievements. As for social service, it is evident in the academic and resource platforms and value created for various stakeholders through projects. In the aspect of cultural inheritance, the focus lies on fostering mutual understanding and interaction between Chinese and Western cultures through cross-cultural exchanges.

(1) Improvement of abilities

The quality of education is students' key pursuit and one of the most important factors influencing the quality of education, including the improvement of students' research skills, academic competency, mindset, and international perspective. The enhancement of students' international perspectives and cross-cultural communication abilities refers to students' understanding of Western cultures, improvement in their ability to engage in international dialogues, and their grasp of international academic standards, concepts, and experiences. This is an essential objective and significance of CFCRS.

From the stakeholder's perspective that teaching benefits teachers as well as students, teachers' competence in the teaching process cannot be ignored. This is both a "gain" and a "motivation" for teachers to engage in the teaching process. Consistent with the needs of teachers mentioned in section 5.1, the focus on high-quality teaching output should also include attention to the academic, resource, and personal fulfillment of teachers in the teaching process. This involves expanding teachers' abilities in cross-cultural communication and understanding as well.

"The second thing is that teaching must be beneficial to both teachers and students. What I benefit from being a Chinese supervisor is that I can learn more about the theoretical

and practical aspects of my students' theses. Because I have to supervise, I am required to learn and understand their topics first, and in fact, I still get a lot out of this process." (F1)

We found that when discussing each of the above-mentioned sections, the word "internationalization" is frequently mentioned in regard to curriculum, the requirements for teachers' ability, and the students themselves. The level of internationalization is not only the expectation and goal of various stakeholders but also an important aspect affecting the quality of education.

(2) Output of scientific research and graduation rate

The completion of a student's studies and the attainment of a degree are a common quality demands for all stakeholders. The quality of graduates is an important indicator for assessing both the improvement of students' abilities and the overall quality of the program. Graduation quality is reflected in whether students have achieved their training goals and whether the stakeholders are satisfied. The quality of graduates and the overall graduation rate of the program itself are results of the training and can, in turn, influence the quality assurance of the program itself. For example, high academic standards, effective academic quality control, rigorous quality control of academic output, high quality graduation and a high graduation rate can generate a positive reputation for the program in society, reflecting a high program quality, which in turn attracts more and higher-quality students, forming a virtuous cycle. Besides, the university's rigorous approach to graduation requirements and the rigor of its teachers also play an important role in enhancing student learning.

"The university never assesses me on how many of my students have graduated, nor does it interfere too much with my academic supervision. This gives me a lot of room and power to give guidance to students according to my standards, something I consider crucial for ensuring quality."

Another criterion to measure is the percentage of students that finished the degree that present their thesis and go for an oral exam. This is very good for us. We managed to have a very high rate of, how do you say, completion. Students that get their degree.

(3) Social benefit

The social benefits of higher education programs are the higher and deeper quality demands pursued and shared by various stakeholders. These benefits hold different specific values for different stakeholders, as mentioned in section 5.1. From the government's perspective, the demand is for these programs to contribute to local economic development, promote industry growth, and even facilitate exchanges and connectivity in terms of trade and culture between countries. From the perspective of educational institutions, the

requirement is for these programs to advance their internationalization strategies and branding, as well as enhance their social influence. For students, the social benefits lie in the improvement of their capabilities, career development, and the overall service level of their organizations. Furthermore, these programs aim to provide a platform to promote resource interaction, mutual learning, exchange, and cooperation in the industry, thus expanding the network of individuals and resources throughout society. All these aspects reflect the social benefits of higher education programs.

5.3 What are driving factors for quality assurances of CFCRS

As can be seen from Figure 5.2 coding of in-depth interview data, the driving factors of quality assurance include quality culture building, trust, communication, cooperation and engagement, and cross-cultural management.

5.3.1 Quality culture building

The construction of quality culture in higher education is an important form and embodiment of higher education autonomy. The researchers believe that the internal teaching quality assurance of CFCRS programs is insufficient, and its foundation is weak. The fundamental reason is that internal quality assurance lacks the motivation derived from built-in needs and development goals. Lack of ideas and deficiencies make it difficult to form a long-term mechanism for teaching quality assurance (J. Lin & M. Liu, 2014). Cultivating a quality culture recognized by CFCRS program managers, teachers, and students can help reduce the resistance to the implementation of various internal quality guarantees, thus ensuring the construction of quality systems and operating mechanisms to provide inexhaustible motivation and endowing in-depth drivers at the level of value.

The quality culture in an organization is not just a consensus on basic quality standards but an organization’s relentless pursuit of excellent quality. The interviewees believe that consistent values are reflected in prioritizing project quality in all decision-making processes. It is reflected in the development of a series of quality assurance activities, such as the formulation of organizational strategic goals, organizational structure, internal quality assessment and follow-up, project management process, standardization, high standardization, and the maintenance of innovation, and positive vibes of pursuing high quality and uniqueness.

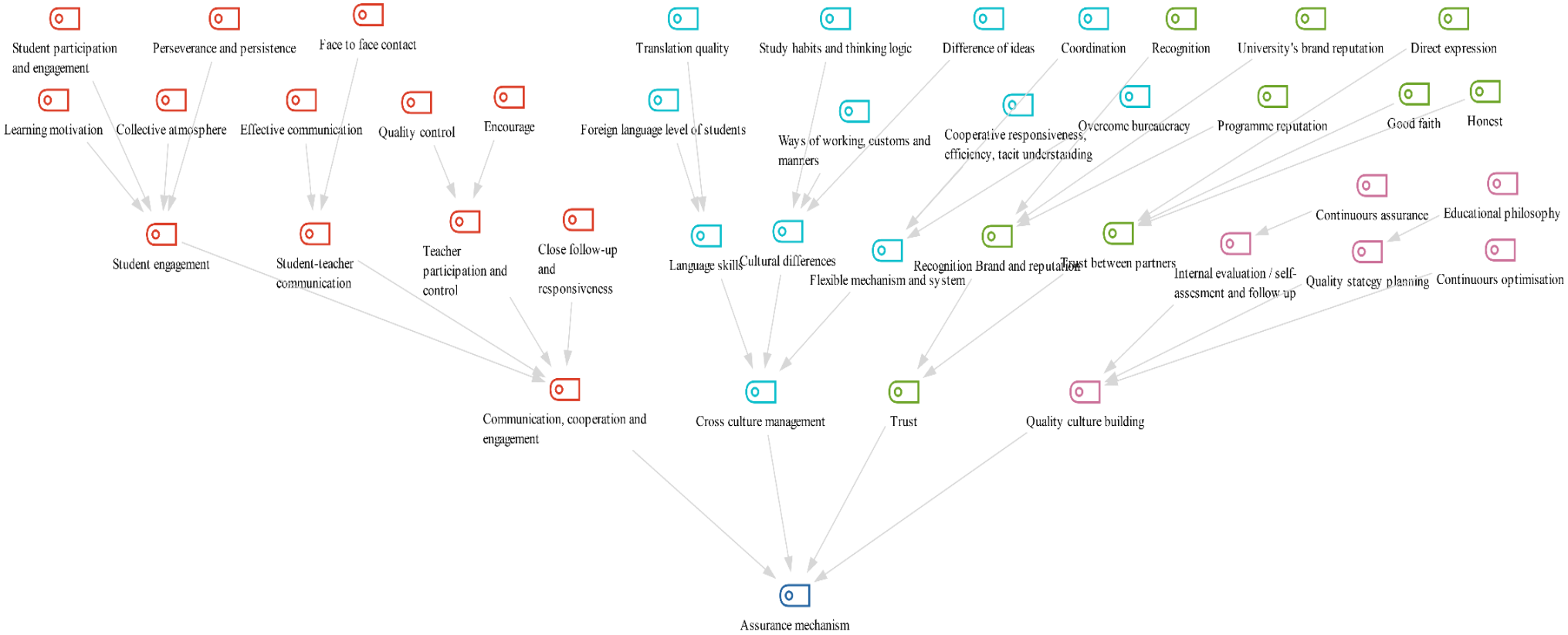

Fig. 5.2 Three-level coding chart for the assurance driving factors

(1) Quality strategic planning

Strategic planning is one of the most important factors in successfully embedding culture in an organization. The focus is to put forward a quality strategic plan that is consistent with the program-running goals according to the university's type and target positioning. Based on this, the timetable and roadmap should be clarified for achieving the goals and ensure the participation of various stakeholders (faculty, students, staff, especially external stakeholders) in the planning development.

"As the program develops, the problems faced by the program have transitioned from the "survival" problem to the "quality" improvement. In other words, the focus of our strategic planning may also be correspondingly (transit) from enrolment to how to make students graduate with high quality. Correspondingly, the so-called barriers to entry may become higher and higher, and graduation requirements will become stricter and stricter." (A1)

(2) Internal evaluations/self-assessments and follow-ups

Internal assessment or self-assessment is an important form of organizational autonomy and internal quality assurance. In many cases, the cycle and content of a university's self-assessment are often linked to external assessment, which means that the self-assessment of colleges and universities is passive. It is a preliminary internal review to meet the requirements of external assessment before the external assessment. The purpose and function of an effective internal evaluation are to improve and enhance quality, not related to control or punishment (Xue & Guo, 2022). An effective internal evaluation should be organized around school-running goals and strategies through planned, organized, and systematic self-examination to achieve self-supervision, self-regulation, and self-improvement. It is a process of self-improvement. EUA (2022) emphasizes that a good internal evaluation should meet at least the following conditions: First, the evaluation process should be understood in a broader context of quality management and quality development rather than bureaucratic practices for dealing with data or reporting. Second, evaluation rules and procedures should be transparent. Third, evaluation design should not mechanically follow external evaluation standards and indicators but follow external evaluation procedures on the basis of understanding the connotation and essence of evaluation. Fourth, evaluation requires the participation of a wide range of stakeholders. Fifth, the evaluation is result-oriented, forming a closed evaluation loop.

When answering the above questions, Sino-foreign cooperative education is often still in the exploration stage due to multi-subject management and the coexistence of multiple systems.

It is still not clear and specific about what to evaluate and who will evaluate it.

(3) Continuous optimization

An important embodiment of quality culture is the emphasis on continuous improvement. During the interviews, we found that although managers did not mention the term "quality culture" frequently, they said the consensus that quality needs to be continuously improved.

The interviewees said that since the needs of students and teachers are individualized and not static, a consistent quality concept should be shaped in the team, which is the pursuit of continuous improvement. Continuous improvement requires fully considering and grasping the needs of students, teachers, and society for the quality of education and always regarding education quality assurance and continuous improvement of education quality as important work priorities.

"I feel that our team's pursuit of quality is quite high, and we can reach a consensus. We hold various seminars on a regular basis to discuss how to improve our work, and we will actively encourage innovation, and we will not just stop at passing standards." (A1)

5.3.2 Trust

Trust is crucial to the success of international business cooperations and their economic results: knowledge creation, knowledge sharing, and knowledge transfer (Bengoa & Kaufmann, 2016). In addition to the contract itself, CFCRS needs to cross different cultures and systems to overcome information gaps, thus forming more efficient and stable cooperation. Trust is crucial, including partner universities, between schools and society, and between teachers and students.

(1) Trust between partners

The spirit of the contract, trust, and transparency are the basis for the smooth development of the cooperation between the two universities. In the school-running self-evaluation report and interviews of the case, it could be found that the cooperation between the two universities inevitably encountered institutional and cultural impacts, and both sides needed to establish new operating rules to resolve it. For example,

"Since the start of the project, the two universities have always strictly abided by the cooperative education agreement signed by both parties, and conscientiously performed their respective duties and obligations based on the principles of mutual trust, openness, and transparency. In the past few years, adhering to the principles of mutual trust, openness, and

transparency, the cooperation between the two universities has progressed very smoothly and achieved fruitful results." (School-running Self-evaluation Report 2021)

"Strategy, execution, and trust are key to success. We have a good strategy. We have even a better execution, because the people who are at the forefront of this program, they never back up on the face of challenges, on the face of problems. We always try to solve any problems, and we find that they are even an opportunity for us to be creative and flexible and last but not least we also trust each other. (A4).

In the school-running process, the distance and language differences pose significant challenges to the efficiency of the project in various aspects of the collaboration, including the standardization and process supervision of education, as well as the consistency of important document contents. To overcome these challenges, it is essential to emphasize flexibility, which requires mutual understanding and trust, demonstrated through sincerity, directness, and openness in the collaborative process.

(2) Recognition, brand, and reputation

Due to the wide range of foreign institutions and their varying quality, the recognition by the MoE of the People's Republic of China is the primary factor for students to identify the standardization and quality of CFCRS. The recognition of the program by the MoE, the brand and industry reputation of the parent school as well as the program can be seen as a reflection of the standardization and quality are ones of the influencing factors for the continued quality assurance of the program, and a source of fundamental trust with various stakeholders, especially students. It directly or indirectly affects the quality of the student population mentioned above and affects the recognition and motivation of faculties and students.

"The first thing that makes us go and enrol in a cooperative program is that the program is well recognised by everyone and the brand influence is better known in the industry. Like our China-Portuguese class is becoming more and more famous now, and I think there are a lot of people who choose to go to it just in these years". S8

5.3.3 Communication, cooperation and engagement

Stakeholder communication, cooperation, and engagement are the basis and key influencing factors of quality assurance, especially in the field of cooperative education.

(1) Students' influence and engagement

As an important core stakeholder of higher education and quality assurance, student

participation and engagement play a key role in the quality of education. Studies show that students' professional attitudes and learning goals have a significant impact on the performance evaluation of CFCRS programs (Ge, 2017). In this case, we can see that both the government department and the project itself attach importance to the channels and forms of student participation in internal and external quality assurance. In addition to the external form of student participation in quality assurance created by the school runner, the internal motivation of student participation in quality assurance, process participation, and collective interaction will be the focus.

Motivation of learning

The third aspect is the student's motivation for the application. Unlike compulsory education and undergraduate education in which students passively accept what is taught, the students, in this case, are strongly motivated to learn. The students' subjective initiative is closely related to whether they aim to get the degree and whether they can overcome difficulties along the journey.

"The subjective initiative of the student is very important. At least they must plan to learn, want to learn, want to graduate, hope to improve more by graduating, and have a clear goal. This kind of initiative is the most important because this program is not a compulsory program, and nobody can force students to do anything." (S3)

Student engagement

Students, as important stakeholders, are not only involved in the teaching process but are also the outputs of teaching. The degree and quality of student engagement play a key role in the quality of education. This is a different concept from the quality of the enrolling students. Without a high level of student engagement, even high-quality enrolling students cannot lead to high teaching outputs. Conversely, students who do not have a "solid foundation" but have a very high level of engagement and personal commitment stand a very good chance of completing the DoM journey. Interviewees also mentioned several times during the interviews that:

"The most important thing is whether the students themselves value and are willing to invest time and energy in their studies, otherwise no one can help them. Because in fact, supervisors and the universities or schools only play a guiding role. It is the students themselves who must complete the whole process". (S7)

Perseverance and persistence were mentioned several times in this case. Interviewees generally agreed that an important aspect of being able to complete their studies was their own perseverance and persistence.

"What matters is the students' own self-consciousness. The decisive factor for whether students are able to persevere in the program, in whether class or research or some other aspects of the program, is still students themselves." (S7)

Collective atmosphere

In China, the influence of the collective on the individual cannot be ignored. The collective atmosphere here refers to the collective atmosphere of the class. It is influenced by the guidance of the school, by the class committee, and by each member of the class. This influence can be either positive or negative. For example, when negative emotions arise, they can easily spread within the class and thus affect other students' interest in learning and satisfaction with the program. Similarly, positive influences can also have a positive impact on peers. For example, one manager of the program mentioned in the interview:

"An important reason for some classes to have higher graduation rates is their competitive class atmosphere. If most students in some classes are generally slow in progress, everyone would slacken their efforts."A2

Some students also mentioned in their interviews that:

"We formed study groups to urge, learn from, and encourage each other. Seeing others making good progress invariably puts pressure on ourselves to also move forward. It is fair to say that a lot of the credit for the completion of my dissertation goes to the mutual promotion between the members of our study group, or peer pressure." (S5)

(2) Student-teacher communication

Communication between teachers and students is a key factor in the quality of teaching and training. Numerous research results show that foreign professors adopt centralized teaching methods. There is not much communication between teachers and students. Poor communication and short teaching time are one of the main reasons for the teaching quality problems of CFCRE (J. Lin & M. Liu, 2014; S. B. Li, 2008). There are several main factors affecting the communication between teachers and students, including the way of communication (face-to-face or indirect); differences in language, culture, and ideas; differences in working methods, research paradigms, and thinking logic. In the teaching of CFCRS projects, the communication between teachers and students is not simply the interaction between the two roles of "teacher" and "student" but the result of multi-party cooperation and efforts.

The quality of student-teacher communication, in this case, lies primarily in the quality of communication between each student and his/her thesis supervisor. Whether the communication with the supervisor, especially with the foreign supervisor, is smooth, with

appropriate frequency, with close contact, and with no communication barriers directly affects the progress and quality of the student's research.

"My supervisor is actually very good. During our rehearsal last time, my supervisor gave very detailed suggestions. But some of my classmates told me that their supervisors were very difficult to contact. Maybe this has to do with both sides. Their communication with supervisors may not be very smooth. As many classmates mentioned this point, I feel this is the biggest problem." (S6)

From the perspective of teachers, establishing a connection with students is equally important and is considered one of the most challenging aspects of the project. Due to geographical distance and language barriers, face-to-face communication, and regular interaction become crucial in overcoming these challenges.

The most difficult part is because we are very far away. If we were near, we could meet the students. It was much easier for me to explain. It is very far away, is not so easy. And if we are face to face, it's much easier. F4

The essence of communication lies in the interaction of information between the two parties. From the student's perspective, the effectiveness of communication mainly depends on whether the student is proactive in communicating with and reporting progress to the supervisor, whether he/she understands the etiquette or cultural differences in interacting with the supervisor abroad, and whether he/she can understand and adapt to the requirements of the supervisor. From the supervisor's perspective, the ability to adapt to the individual differences of students with different cultural and professional backgrounds and the ability to give timely feedback and clear guidance is very important.

"It is also important that the supervisor adapts to the Chinese culture, that he basically understands a little bit about the characteristics of Chinese students, or at least a little bit about China. Similarly, I also have to understand their culture so that we can communicate. I think communication is important as it is an aspect of quality assurance." (S3)

(3) Teacher participation and control

Teachers, as crucial stakeholders, play a vital role in the success and quality of education output. In addition to the requirements for their own level of competence during the educational resource investment phase discussed in section 5.2.1, their attention, level of involvement, and quality control during the entire educational process significantly influence whether students can successfully complete their studies and the overall quality of educational outcomes. Specifically, both from student interviews and teacher perspectives, it has been observed that students not only require academic guidance but also seek support,

understanding, recognition, and encouragement from their teachers during the learning process.

"I feel that he provided me with a lot of inspiration and encouragement, and so did Professor Zhao before. Encouragement is truly crucial; there were many times when I wanted to give up, but it was the encouragement from my teachers that made me persevere until the end." S3

The role of teachers in ensuring the quality of students' academic research is also easily understandable. They not only participate in the nurturing process but also serve as the primary guardians of educational quality, making sure the standards are upheld and maintained.

"I could clearly feel that my supervisor would not lower her requirements for my graduation. Instead, I had to reach her ideal research capacity and level before she would let me pass. Although the process was painful, I was grateful for her and felt very rewarding afterwards". (S2)

(4) Close follow-up and responsiveness

In order to promote smooth communication, timely feedback, and solve communication problems, the project management team often appears as a coordinator. The project management team participates in quality assurance by ensuring the smooth, effective, and timely collaboration of management, teachers, teachers and students, and translators. It often also acts as a "lubricant" in a multi-party relationship, mediating communication conflicts and balancing the interests between parties.

Meanwhile, the program managers provide very close process management and progress follow-up. Specifically, the program managers regularly follow up on students' progress, provide timely feedback, and deal with problems in the learning process and in the communication between teachers and students.

"Thirdly, management is also very important. In terms of managing students, if the program adopts loose management, we will also slacken our efforts because we are all very busy with work. If the program does not have some management rules and regulations, the desired results can hardly be achieved". (S3)

From the perspective of operation and management, the degree to which the program managers followed up closely on students' studies, the degree to which they cared for students, and the degree to which they responded to the demands of teachers and students all directly reflected the level of importance that the two universities attached to the program as well as to its teachers and students.

"The degree to which the two universities follow up on students, or the degree of time and effort the two universities invest in students, is, to a large extent, a major source of motivation for and a positive influence/incentive on students' completion of studies." (S8)

5.3.4 Cross culture management

Cross-cultural management issues manifest at both the managerial and instructional levels. At the managerial level, the collaboration between Chinese and foreign partners in CFCRS programs encounters challenges arising from differences in national conditions, culture, and institutional mechanisms. It requires both parties to establish relatively flexible institutional mechanisms, strong collaboration and coordination capabilities, high responsiveness and efficiency in cooperation, and a sense of mutual understanding.

Both universities have matured and familiar mechanisms and processes in their respective countries, including those related to student recruitment and admission, the teaching process, and assessment and evaluation. In CFCRS programs, both parties are required to make concessions and adjustments to their existing models in order to accommodate this new mode of collaboration. As each adjustment involves multiple parties' communication and collaboration, consensus must be reached for all decisions, resulting in an exponential increase in communication costs and making the project "burdensome." As a result, CFCRS programs demand greater responsiveness, flexibility, and collaboration capabilities compared to domestic projects.

The interviewees, in this case, express that there are no shortcuts to overcoming these challenges. It requires both parties to trust each other, set aside bureaucracy, and undergo a lengthy process of understanding and adaptation to ultimately form a more consistent set of values and mutual understanding.

Cross-cultural management issues also manifest on the instructional level. The collision of multiple cultures is an important way for students to improve their international communication skills, understand the rules of international communication, and improve their international vision. It is also one of the goals of Sino-foreign cooperative education. Cross-cultural issues are happening all the time among various stakeholders. Studies showed that students of CFCRS institutions/projects generally encounter three types of challenges at the cross-cultural level: psychological adaptation, sociocultural adaptation, and academic adaptation (Tan & Tao, 2014). Cultural differences between teachers and students existed in these cases.

One is the problem of psychological adaptation based on the language barrier. In CFCRS institutions/projects, language problems are particularly prominent. This problem is reflected at both the student level and the teacher level. On the surface, it seems to be a language barrier, but at a deeper level is the resulting communication barrier at the psychological level.

Language barriers are particularly pronounced in Sino-foreign cooperative education programs.

"Although it was clear that I needed to contact my supervisor and that I could hire an interpreter, the psychological pressure caused by the language barrier was always there. I felt I might appear rude if I did not speak English. I felt I did not dare to fully express myself to my foreign supervisor in the same way as I communicated with Chinese teachers. I just could not convey my feelings to him". (S5)

Similarly,

"It is easier for me to express myself and communicate with Chinese professors, whereas when I communicate with foreign professors, even with an interpreter present, I seem to unconsciously listen more to the teacher's requirements and then make changes accordingly. But as a matter of fact, I may not fully understand or fully agree with those requirements. Yet due to the language barrier, I tend to speak less." (S7)

On the other hand, one supervisor mentioned:

"Due to the poor English quality of students' theses, I do not know what they are trying to say, or it takes me a lot of time to try to understand their theses. But with a busy schedule, I may not be able to read their theses right away as I know it will be very difficult and time-consuming." F4

Secondly, the differences in customs, etiquette, and concepts belong to the level of social and cultural adaptation. Differences in perceptions are reflected in different views of the same thing. This is because different people have different experiences and come from different environments. Such differences are bound to exist even in the same cultural context, let alone for students and teachers in a collaborative cooperation program between schools in different counties and with different historical contexts.

"For example, I wrote about some doctors' willingness to work in the countryside partly because of their dedication spirit, which my supervisor was not quite able to understand." (S2)

Thirdly, there are differences in styles of work, customs & habits as well as etiquette. For example, students tend to overlook important Western holidays and thus fail to

understand the slow reply of their supervisors during certain periods of the year. There are also problems with the grasp of etiquette in communicating with foreign supervisors. For example, a student interviewee mentioned:

"In the west, if you encounter any difficulties, you would be lucky if your teacher answers your phone during non-working hours. But in China, although it sounds inappropriate, it seems that both sides are used to this way of contact at all times". (S2)

Third, academic adaptation. In higher education, the problem of academic adjustment brought about by interculturalism is particularly significant (Koch, 2013). In these cases, almost all the interviewees mentioned the differences at the academic level to varying degrees. There are differences in research paradigms, research habits, and academic standards. For example, in China, it is customary for students to first discuss the framework of the whole thesis and then to carry out and complete the research to produce a first draft of the thesis. On that basis, the supervisor then interacts with the student in several rounds and makes revisions accordingly. In the West, the research process is more progressive, with each step requiring communication and progression.

As one supervisor mentioned:

"The student had not contacted me for the past year or two. But suddenly a whole thesis was sent to me, and I felt overwhelmed. Even though I could not agree with the content, I did not know how to give feedback for fear of discouraging him. But I could not compromise my academic standards and requirements."

The interviewees believe that the issues arising from cultural differences cannot be completely resolved or diminished. On the contrary, as the project develops and personnel changes occur, these issues will continue to arise, and the resolution of old problems may give rise to new ones. However, this does not mean that we turn a blind eye to these challenges. Instead, the experience of dealing with cross-cultural issues allows us to face new problems with greater composure and mutual understanding. In this process, it is essential to establish not only mechanisms and systems but also a shared commitment to prioritizing quality and a shared quality perspective among all stakeholders.

5.4 How can stakeholders contribute to the quality assurance system?

The answer to how stakeholders contribute to the construction of the quality assurance system is essentially about what organic whole of quality assurance we need to build. Stakeholders should be encouraged to participate in all aspects of quality assurance in their

roles through different means. Overall planning and coordination of resources from all parties are necessary to form a three-dimensional and all-around quality management network. CFCRS has its particularity. On the basis of drawing lessons from the international experience of quality assurance in higher education, the quality assurance system should be built based on the current situation of the development of CFCRS. Advanced Chinese and Western educational concepts should be integrated, and quality assurance systems should be formed that can guide CFCRS institutions and projects to make quality assurance work more standardized, systematic, and international. The construction of the quality assurance system should also be changed from the original passive, administrative department-led, and the use of rules and regulations to ensure the quality of education to give full play to the subjective initiative of teachers and students. A positive education quality assurance system should be established with multiple goals for students, teachers, alma mater, and social development.

Based on the literature review and case studies, this thesis adopts the CFCRS program as the main body, the three elements of quality assurance (guarantee subjects, guarantee mechanism, and guarantee content) as the main line to construct a quality assurance framework for CFCRS program, as shown in Figure 5.3.

The framework attempts to explain three aspects: who the subject of the guarantee is, how and what to guarantee.

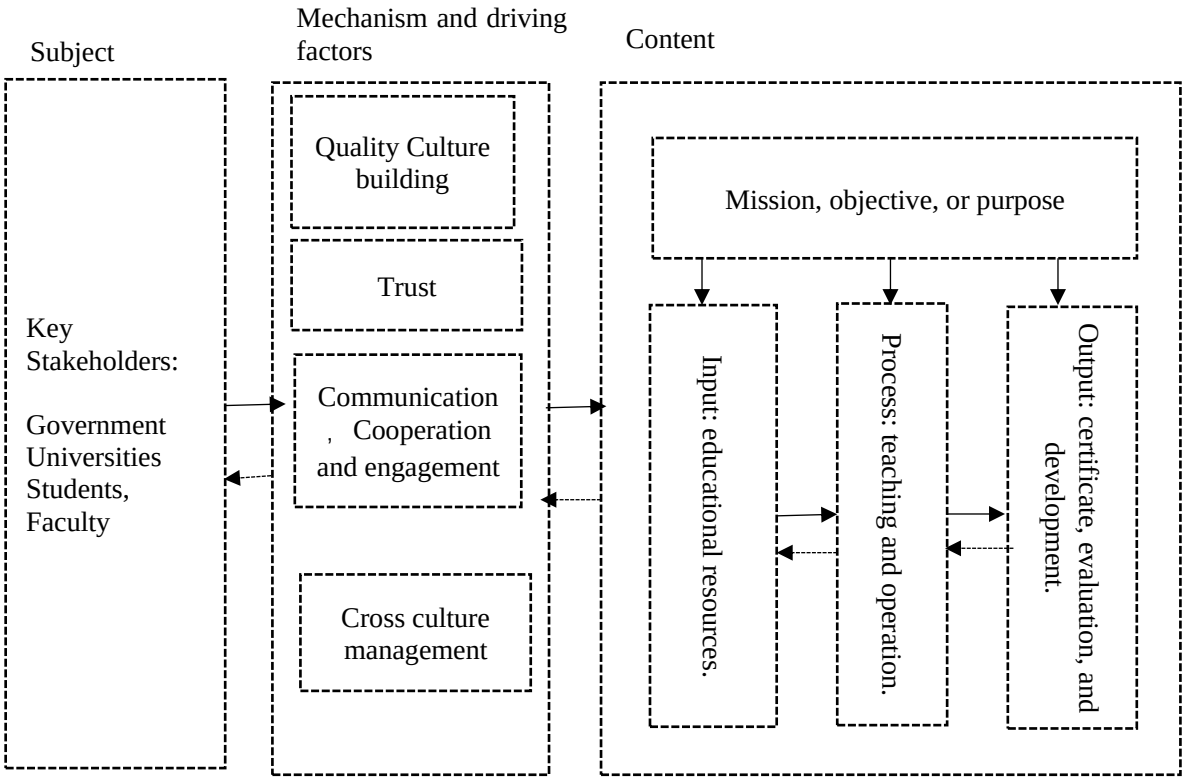

Fig. 5.3 Quality assurance framework for CFCRS with stakeholder participation

5.4.1 Guarantee subjects

The first is the question of who will guarantee it. There is no doubt that the construction of a quality assurance system for Sino-foreign cooperative education needs to fully mobilize the enthusiasm and participation of various stakeholders (Zhang, 2022). The basic ideas of the conclusions of this research can be summarized as follows: endogenous construction as well as diversified participation and supervision.

(1) Endogenous construction

CFCRS mainly builds an internal quality assurance system by giving full play to the subjective initiative of the partners and implementing self-regulation and self-adjustment behavior under the guidance of the government and industry organizations. As the main body of running schools, universities are also the main body of quality assurance. It mainly implements the government's relevant requirements on the quality management of CFCRS through playing the role of strategic guidance, resource allocation, organization and coordination, and supervision and supervision of cooperative education.

The partner universities and program managers should be committed to establishing a quality assurance system with multi-subject participation. The construction of the quality assurance system should not only reflect the whole process of enrollment, teaching, and results output, but also the participation of multiple subjects, and create comprehensive, open, and inclusive conditions and atmosphere that are conducive to the participation of stakeholders, such as faculty and students. The project can take measures to strengthen the process management of teaching quality and standardize teaching behaviors, including teaching supervision and project leaders responding to Chinese and foreign teachers taking random lectures and regularly check of teaching documents. At the same time, the opinions and suggestions put forward by Chinese and foreign teachers, students, graduates, and employers on the quality of teaching should be feedbacked through teacher-student symposiums and online questionnaire surveys. A diversified information feedback channel should be opened. The program can also submit the annual quality report of CFCRS to the joint management committee. In this way, problems can be pinpointed in time so that the teaching quality problems can be fed back to the relevant responsible departments and individuals and urge them to take corrective measures to improve the teaching quality.

(2) Diversified participation and supervision

First, CFCRS requires supervision from various stakeholders. First of all, government agencies composed of governments at all levels and educational administrative departments

should focus on the introduction of high-quality educational resources, the demand, layout, and orientation of the teaching market. In the various stages of the admission, process, and export/exit of the CFCRS program, through the construction of laws and regulations, administrative supervision, policy planning guidance, information disclosure, and quality certification, government departments can approve the admission conditions for cooperative education and establish quality, establish a quality standard system, evaluate, and monitor quality, disclose information and services, and warn risks in an early stage. Government departments should play the role of gatekeepers and regulators of the quality of cooperative education, which reflects the spirit of accountability from top to bottom and rigid regulations.

Second, the organizers should focus on building the internal quality assurance and supervision system of the project. By cooperating with foreign parties, CFCRS programs can learn from foreign advanced teaching management elites, introduce advanced teaching management systems, and build an international teaching management team (J. Lin & M. Liu, 2014). In terms of organizational systems, universities should set up necessary quality assurance and supervision institutions, such as the Joint Management Committees, according to the unique attributes of CFCRS. The committee coordinates the overall affairs of cooperative education and formulates corresponding strategic plans. At the same time, various sub-committees are set up under the committee to be responsible for specific work in various fields. For example, the Academic Management Committee is responsible for checking the key links that affect the quality of teaching, such as teaching content and assessment methods. The Teacher Teaching Committee is composed of teachers and is mainly responsible for peer review, experience exchange and improvement. The Development Advisory Committee is mainly responsible for extensively collecting suggestions on the development of cooperative education from social celebrities or business leaders.

Third, teachers should raise their awareness of “ownership”. This requires teachers to transit from being passively managed to being participants, and actively participate in management and supervision through the teaching committee, participate in teacher evaluation, feedback and suggestions, which is an important manifestation of teacher governance of universities.

Fourth, students, as the core stakeholders that cannot be ignored in higher education, are the result of the “consumer-centered” marketization of higher education. For CFCRS programs with prominent market characteristics, it is essential for students to participate in the governance and supervision system as the main body. They should take the initiative to

participate in the teaching process in addition to their studies and lead the communication with teachers. In addition, students should actively participate in the construction of quality assurance, including offering suggestions and comments, evaluation, and assessment. Student representatives can engage in the work of the CFCRS committee, satisfaction surveys, and student unions/alumni associations.

In addition, students' families, intermediary organizations or third-party certification agencies, and employers are considered to be important stakeholders who need to participate in the quality governance system (Zhang, 2022).In short, the quality governance system of CFCRS needs to improve the internal and external quality governance structure, give full play to the enthusiasm of multiple subjects such as the government, universities, managers, faculty, staff, and students, and improve policies, systems, mechanisms, majors, and curriculum construction. Only by establishing a scientific quality management system for Sino-foreign cooperative education can Sino-foreign cooperative education achieve sustainable development.

5.4.2 Guarantee mechanism

This study believes that in the quality assurance process of Sino-foreign cooperative education, all stakeholders should work together to build a consistent quality culture. This is conducive to the establishment of trust, communication, cooperation, and input, forming the conditions and mechanisms for cross-cultural management.

The government should transform its functions from management to governance (Guo & Lin, 2014). The government can strengthen coordination and services, establish and improve research and decision-making systems, macro-detection systems and support service systems. A policy atmosphere should be nurtured that is conducive to the construction of quality culture, mutual trust, communication, cooperation, and cross-cultural exchanges of CFCRS, and the government can serve as the coordinator and guide for improving the quality and efficiency of cooperative education.

Similarly, both Chinese and foreign partners should establish a unified quality concept to guide the program and university, as well as the selection of cooperation models and quality standards for CFCRS. Jiao et al. (2022) also argued that the unified quality concept of both Chinese and foreign partners is one of the most fundamental factors affecting the quality of running a program. Both sides of the cooperation should formulate standards in line with their development based on their school-running concepts, cooperation models,

and teaching management methods. Based on equal status negotiations and communications, both partners can finally agree on the training objectives and implement effective measures of quality assurance to make such goals achievable. In order to create an open, transparent, mutual trust, and interoperable multi-party cooperative relationship, a sound organizational system and rules and regulations with a certain degree of flexibility should be set up.

Moreover, cross-cultural management is an important topic of international school-running cooperation, including how to communicate accurately with managers, how to reflect internationalization in actual educational affairs management and administrative management and promote teachers and students to adapt to the cooperative school-running model faster and more effectively. Various administrative rules and systems should reserve a certain degree of flexibility and uniqueness to adapt to possible discomfort and conflicts caused by the differences in the systems, cultures, and procedures of the two partners. In the process, a good communication mechanism should be established to become a “platform” and “bridge” for the communication between teachers and students and help teachers and students overcome or minimize problems caused by differences in culture and thinking.

Teachers, as an important subject of teaching, emphasize professionalism, professionalism and international communication skills. Give students timely and effective feedback professionally, and adapt to and understand the differences between different cultures and students from the perspective of humanistic care. Faculty and staff should strive to improve their professional quality and international communication skills. Faculty and staff broaden their horizons through international exchanges and use academic connections with foreign schools to understand the development trend of international academic discourse centers. Through teaching seminars, classroom observations, and joint teaching by Chinese and foreign teachers, faculty and staff can master more advanced teaching concepts and methods, thereby improving their professional abilities.

Students, in addition to mastering the professional knowledge needed to adapt to society or study abroad, should actively address the challenges brought about by multiculturalism and actively improve their international communication skills. Compared with other types of education, students in the CFCRS program can get in touch with more systematic and international language, thinking and ability training, which can indirectly improve their learning and living abilities in a cross-cultural environment.

5.4.3 Guarantee content

The content of quality assurance is essentially an important factor affecting the whole process of input-process-output of educational resources in the process of quality assurance.

(1) The input of education resources highlights internationalization level

As mentioned in section 5.2, regarding the input of educational resources, apart from the routine content of higher education quality assurance (faculty, curriculum, teaching materials, teaching conditions), CFCRS is different from traditional higher education in its internationalization level. The embodiment of the internationalization level is an important factor in its quality. The level of internationalization includes the internationalization of the curriculum, the internationalization of teachers, the level of international communication ability of students and many other aspects.

To build a quality assurance mechanism for CFCRS, it is necessary to adhere to the future development space for students. The focus is on the cultivation of students' innovative abilities and the cultivation of their international competitiveness. It is achieved through the construction of an international teaching atmosphere and environment, the implementation of the introduction and integration of international teaching content, and the establishment of international education and employment channels. With the help of introducing foreign high-quality educational resources, students can receive international education at home. At the same time, CFCRS can promote the internationalization of China's higher education, promote the construction of disciplines and majors, and improve the university's educational strength and level. In fact, CFCRS can cultivate the international vision of China's younger generation, so that they can become global citizens, thus enjoying brighter prospects after graduation. CFCRS can allow the West to understand Chinese culture and values and strengthen China's influence on the international stage.

It is an important topic about the quality assurance for CFCRS program runners to reflect and strengthen their internationalization attributes more comprehensively and effectively (i.e., the purist of higher-quality internationalization) on top of the most basic requirements set by the education authorities to meet expectations and needs of stakeholders in terms of internationalization.

(2) The education process focuses on management services and communication support

The training process is the main battlefield of quality assurance. As discussed above, the quality assurance of the training process includes teaching organization and teaching

management, management services, and teaching methods. Among them, the content of management services is the extracurricular tutoring or service provision for students' learning, learning methods and skills in the Sino-foreign cooperative education project of the Department of Case Discussion. It is also called academic support in some studies (Zhao & Meng, 2015). It is relatively common in foreign schools, and some CFCRS programs have also begun to explore the setting up of academic support centers. Students can come to the center at any time to consult or ask for help with their study problems. Such management services also include organizing lectures and introducing tools on learning methods such as literature retrieval, data analysis, and special workshops. In addition, under the background of transnational education, to highlight international school running is inevitably associated with cross-cultural communication and cultural integration. The problem of cross-cultural communication also emerges in this context. Communication problems in the process of education and training emerge not only at the level of communication between teachers and students but also at the level of two universities and at the level of managers of the two sides. In other words, there are communication barriers between various stakeholders due to cross-cultural issues. Therefore, cross-cultural communication can, directly and indirectly, affect the quality of running a school, so it is one of the important factors of quality assurance.

(3) The evaluation of education output

There is hardly progress without evaluation. In the case study discussion, for the educational output of CFCRS, the program runners evaluate the level of educational output through student capacity improvement, teaching quality evaluation, and university evaluation. In many studies, peer review or third-party evaluation is regarded as an important method of educational output evaluation (Zhao & Meng, 2015), and this model can positively motivate teachers and develop the level of program running.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

After more than forty years of development, the development of Sino-foreign cooperative education has transited from quantity increase to quality improvement. The various states and qualities presented make the quality assurance of running a CFCRS program a key issue for its orderly, healthy, and sustainable development. Since transnational higher education crosses national borders, it breaks through the regulatory scope of a country. Regulation needs to be implemented within different legal and cultural frameworks, and its quality assurance issues are far more complex than the quality assurance of higher education within a given country.

The construction of the quality assurance system is to boost the confidence of stakeholders and to achieve an all-round guarantee of the input, process, and output of CFCRS (Tang, 2013). Building a quality assurance system centered on stakeholders is an important component of delivering the benign development of current CFCRS programs. It is also the only way to solve the institutional barriers of CFCRS and strengthen the reform of CFCRS mentioned in the Opinions. The quality assurance system needs to improve the internal and external quality governance structure of CFCRS. The roles of the government, academicians, administrators, teachers, and students, as well as their respective functions, should be clarified. Only when a situation of clear division of labor and coordinated advancement is formed can a scientific, reasonable, and effective quality assurance system for CFCRS be established.

Based on the stakeholder theory, this thesis conducted two rounds of a questionnaire survey on 26 CFCRS management experts by using the Delphi technique of expert consultation. Experts were invited to rate stakeholders in CFCRS programs in terms of power, legitimacy, and urgency. This thesis identified and categorized the stakeholders of CFCRS. Through case studies, this study analyzed the demands of different core stakeholders in CFCRS programs for the quality of education, the mechanism of their participation in the quality assurance process, and the construction of a multi-stakeholder quality assurance system suitable for CFCRS. The conclusions of this study are as below.

The findings of this study show that the top six core stakeholders are National government/ministries/accreditation agencies, Host municipality (local government authorities), Partners, Senior university management (the dean’s team, general board, council of deans), Students, and Teaching and/ or research staff.

Different stakeholders have different interests and quality demands in CFCRS programs. In terms of quality assurance, based on the development stage of CFCRS programs, public welfare attributes, and access approval, the government has a relatively high say in resource introduction, guarantee process, and quality assessment. From the perspective of the government, the quality of CFCRS depends on whether it is in line with the nature of public welfare, the standardization of its operation, and the quality of introduced resources. For Chinese and foreign university partners, their quality demands have different emphases. The resource introducer expects that the cooperation can reflect the value of three aspects: serving the international strategy of the university, improving the overall discipline building, and university level, and improving social benefits. From the perspective of students, their demands for quality contain the improvement of capability, industry resources and the communication platform provided by the CFCRS program in this study. Chinese and foreign faculties also have different emphases on quality demands. The main quality appeal of Chinese teachers is that cooperation with foreign universities can broaden their international vision and enhance their academic competence and level.

In the quality assurance process of CFCRS, the factors affecting the whole process of input-process-output of educational resources include many aspects. According to the analysis results of the case study, first of all, in the process of resource input, besides tangible human, financial and material input. In addition to that, the main influencing factors are the emphasis of the two university partners, the curriculum design, the level of faculty, and the quality of students. We focused on discussing that the degree of internationalization reflected by these factors is an important factor affecting the quality of CFCRS. Second, in the teaching process, factors affecting quality assurance include teaching organization, teaching management, and teaching methods. The timeliness and comprehensiveness of management services provided in the process of teaching management, as well as the measures that are conducive to the effectiveness of cross-cultural communication between teachers and students, are particularly important. Third, in terms of teaching output, we mainly discussed the improvement of students' capability, the rigorous academic standards, and the graduation rate. These are not only the aspects of this study to evaluate the effect of running a program, but also the factors that will continue to affect the sustained improvement and promotion of the quality of running a program.

Moreover, this study found that four factors also play an important role in the quality assurance and continuous improvement of CFCRS. First, the construction of quality culture. It is not only the internal driving force for improving the quality of running programs but also the basis for establishing a long-term quality assurance mechanism. It is reflected in the consistent

quality concept, quality strategic planning, internal evaluation system, and continuous optimization and improvement management system of the two university partners for the CFCRS program. Second, the establishment of trust. No cooperation is possible without trust. The cooperation between the two parties of CFCRS is based on the differences in culture and institutional background. It is essential that program managers are committed to establishing and maintaining mutual trust, building a brand and shouldering social responsibility at the social level. Third, communication, cooperation, and engagement among stakeholders, including communication and cooperation between teachers and students, colleagues, managers and teachers and students. It not only requires the input of stakeholders themselves, but program managers should also create ways and mechanisms that are conducive to promoting communication and cooperation. Fourth, cross-cultural management. Interculturalism is both an advantage and a challenge of CFCRS. It is very important whether the organizer can overcome the negative impacts brought by it through management so that stakeholders can improve the ability of transnational communication in a cross-cultural context.

Finally, based on the literature review and case study, we attempt to build a quality assurance framework for CFCRS with the participation of stakeholders, taking the three elements of quality assurance (guarantee subject, guarantee mechanism, and guarantee content) as the main line. This study proposes that for the main body of protection, the model of independent construction, multi-participation and supervision should be adopted. In terms of the guarantee mechanism, this study believes that in the process of quality assurance in CFCRS, all stakeholders should work together to build a consistent quality culture. This is not only conducive to the establishment of trust, communication, cooperation and investment but also facilitates the conditions and mechanisms of cross-cultural management.

6.1 Theoretical contribution

There are many studies on the quality assurance of higher education, but there is little on quality assurance in transnational education (Zheng et al., 2017). Most of them merely focus on the perspective of a single stakeholder or discuss a specific process management issue, lacking a perspective of stakeholders' quality demands and participation in the quality assurance process. Compared with ordinary higher education, the quality governance of CFCRS has distinctive characteristics of stakeholders. The theoretical contributions of this study are mainly reflected in two aspects. First, it provides a case study from the perspective of stakeholders for the construction of quality assurance systems in related fields of transnational higher education.

Second, this thesis attempts to construct a quality assurance framework for the scenario of CFCRS involving the participation of stakeholders.

6.2 Managerial contribution

As CFCRS transits to an intensive development path that underlines improving quality and efficiency (Cai, 2022), the qualities of CFCRS programs are uneven. Both the government and the academics urgently need to explore a quality assurance model suitable for CFCRS. Through the literature review and a case study of a CFCRS program that has been running for more than a decade, this study serves as a reference for policymakers in the reform and development of CFCRS as well as a channel for organizers and operators to understand the status-quo, general framework, and problems of CFCRS current quality assurance. For CFCRS program managers, this thesis can provide ideas and a framework for building a quality assurance system.

6.3 Limitations

This study mainly has the following three limitations.

First, this study is a single case study. This thesis selects a case of a doctoral-level CFCRS program. Although the program has its uniqueness, the educational level of this case is still a "minority" among CFCRS programs in China. The nature of the program, the characteristics of the students, the graduation assessment, the categorization of stakeholders and the quality demands of the program are so distinctive that cannot represent the overall situation of the CFCRS program.

Second, the case of this study is a CFCRS program, but no in-depth research has been carried out on other forms of CFCRS programs. There is a big difference in the forms of the CFCRS program and the programs runners and operators. Due to the difference in the cooperation scale, the cooperation mode, resource acquisition and management complexity are also different.

Third, the interests of all levels of government have the highest priority in this study. However, since we have limited resources in relevant government departments, the core stakeholders interviewed did not involve government department personnel. Instead, this study conducted a content analysis based on various laws and regulations, opinion documents and administrative regulations issued by governments at all levels. These documents reflect the opinions and positions of the government as a stakeholder to a certain extent, but they cannot

fully represent the interests and demands of government departments. This limitation has a certain impact on the generalizability of the research results.

6.4 Future study

First, CFCRS at different levels differs greatly in all aspects of school running, and the types of stakeholders involved may also be different. For example, at the undergraduate level, the roles and priorities of parents and employers are substantially different from those at the doctoral level. Follow-up research can select various school-running levels in higher education to carry out further multi-case studies to provide references for CFCRS program runners and operators at different levels.

Second, in terms of the type of CFCRS, Future studies can consider whether different CFCRS programs and program runners should construct different quality assurance systems, or whether the programs have independent legal personalities will cause differences in the construction of a quality assurance system. Follow-up research can further discuss the above issues, including what the differences are and what the root causes are.

Third, future research can discuss the role of the government in the quality assurance of CFCRS in a more in-depth manner. Topics may contain how the government transforms its functions and how the government should carry out macro-control and guidance in terms of policies and administrative methods during the process of function transition.

[This page is deliberately left blank.]

Bibliography

Abbas, J. (2020). HEISQUAL: A modern approach to measure service quality in higher education institutions. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, *67*, 100933.

Abdullah, F. (2006a). Measuring service quality in higher education: HEdPERF versus SERVPERF. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, *24*(1), 31-47.

Abdullah, F. (2006b). The development of HEdPERF: a new measuring instrument of service quality for the higher education sector. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, *30*(6), 569-581.

Alexander, I. K., & Hjortsø, C. N. (2018). Sources of complexity in participatory curriculum development: an activity system and stakeholder analysis approach to the analyses of tensions and contradictions. *Higher Education*, 1-22.

Alves, H., Mainardes, E. W., & Raposo, M. (2010). A Relationship Approach to Higher Education Institution Stakeholder Management. *Tertiary Education & Management*, *16*(3), 159-181.

Beerkens, M., & Udam, M. (2017). Stakeholders in Higher Education Quality Assurance: Richness in Diversity? *Higher Education Policy*,

Bendermacher, G. W. G., Oude Egbrink, M. G. A., Wolfhagen, I. H. A. P., & Dolmans, D. H. J. M. (2017). Unravelling quality culture in higher education: a realist review. *Higher Education*, *73*(1), 39-60.

Bengoa, D. S., & Kaufmann, H. R. (2016). The influence of trust on the trilogy of knowledge creation, sharing, and transfer. *Thunderbird Int'l Bus Rev*, *58*, 239-249.

Bentley, D., Henderson, F., & Lim, C. B. (2017). The legislative requirements for measuring quality in transnational education: Understanding divergence while maintaining standards. *HIGHER EDUCATION QUARTERLY*, *71*(4), 338-351.

Bian, X., & Ye, Z. (2014*高等教育人才培养工作存在的主要问题与对策*. Paper presented at the 中国民主同盟江苏省委员会.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77-101.

Brochado, A. (2009). Comparing alternative instruments to measure service quality in higher education. *Quality Assurance in Education*, *17*(2), 174-190.

Burrows, J. (1999). Going beyond labels: A framework for profiling institutional stakeholders. *Contemporary Education*, *70*(4), 248-264.

Cai, Y. K. (2022). 新时代中外合作办学引进课程教学质量提升初探 [Reflections on Improving Teaching Quality of Introduction Courses in Sino－foreign Cooperative Education in the New Era]. *湖北开放职业学院学报*, *35*(20), 148-149.

Cao, J. F. (2011). 提高中外合作办学人才培养质量的有效途径 [An effective way to improve the quality of talents training in Sino-foreign cooperative education]. *教育理*

论与实践:学科版,

Chapleo, C., & Simms, C. (2010). Stakeholder analysis in higher education: A case study of the University of Portsmouth

. *Perspectives*, *14*(1), 12-20.

Charkham, J. (1992). Corporate governance: Lessons from abroad. *European Business Journal*, *4*(2), 8-16.

Chen, H. H. (2003). *企业的利益相关者理论与实证研究* [Doctoral thesis 博士]. 浙江大学.

Cheng, Y. C., & Tam, W. M. (1997). Multi-models of quality in education. *Quality Assurance in Education*, *5*(2), 22-31.

ChinaYouthDaily. (2015). *中国已成世界最大跨境教育资源国家* Retrieved 10-10 from http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/s5147/201505/t20150513_188022.html

Clarkson, E. M. (1995). A STAKEHOLDER FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYZING AND EVALUATING CORPORATE SOCIAL PERFORMANCE. *Academy of Management Review*, *20*(1), 92-117.

Clarkson, M. (1994). *A risk-based model of stakeholder theory*. Proceeding of the Toronto Conference on Stakeholder Theory., Toronto, Canada.

CPPCC-online-education-weekly. (2018). 中外合作办学亟待发出“中国声音”, *CPPCC online education weekly*, p. Retrieved from http://www.jsj.edu.cn/news/2/1184.shtml

Creange, A., & Careyron, A. (The diagnosis of chronic inflammatory demyelinating

polyneuropathy: a Delphi-method approach. *Journal of Neurology*, *260*(12), 3015-3022.

Cronin, J. J., & Taylor, S. A. (1992). Measuring Service Quality: A Reexamination and Extension. *Journal of Marketing*, *56*(3), 55-68.

Crosby, P. B. (1984). *Quality without Tears*. McGraw Hill.

Cui, Y. G., & Sun, L. X. (2018). 高等继续教育利益相关者冲突关系分析 [On the Conflict Ｒelationship of Stakeholders in Higher Continuing Education]. *当代继续教育*, *36*(03), 64-68.

Cuthbert, P. (1996). Managing service quality in HE: is SERVQUAL the answer? Part 2. *Managing Service Quality*, *6*(3), 31-35.

Dabholkar, P. A., Shepherd, C. D., & Thorpe, D. I. (2000). A Comprehensive Framework for Service Quality: An Investigation of Critical Conceptual and Measurement Issues Through a Longitudinal Study. *Journal of Retailing*, *76*(2), 139-173.

Damme, D. V. (2001). Quality issues in the internationalisation of higher education. *Higher Education*,(41), 415-441.

Deming, W. E. (2013). *The new economics for industry, government, education- 2nd Edition*. The MIT Press.

Dragut, B. M. (2011). Quality management in higher education services. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *15*, 3366-3368.

Eisenhardt, K. M. (1989). Building theories from case study research. *Academy of Management Review*,(14), 532-550.

Fan, X. C. (1999). 服务质量管理:交互过程与交互质量 [Quality of service management: interaction process and interaction quality]. *南开管理评论*,(01), 8-12.

Fang, J. (2019). *Improving the Quality and Efficiency of Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools: New era, new opportunities and new challenges* http://www.cfce.cn/a/news/zhxw/2019/0307/3806.html

Fatima, S., Fatima, S., & Fatima, N. (2019). Higher education faculty perception of service quality of Pakistan. *INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED AND APPLIED SCIENCES*, *6*(10), 7-13.

Ferrero-Ferrero, I., Fernández-Izquierdo, M. A., Muoz-Torres, M. J., & Belles-Colomer, L. (2017). Stakeholder engagement in sustainability reporting in higher education: An analysis of key internal stakeholders' expectations. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, *19*(4), 313-336.

Freeman, R. E. (1984). *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*. Cambridge university press.

Fu, J. W., & Zhao, H. (2006). 利益相关者理论综述 [Literature reveiw of Stakeholder Theory]. *首都经济贸易大学学报*,(02), 16-21.

Garvin, D. (1988). *Managing Quality*. The Free Press.

GATE. (1999). *Trade in transnational education services. The global alliance for transnational education.*

Ge, X. R. (2017). 中外合作办学项目学生学习满意度评价研究——以浙江财经大学中加会计合作项目为例 [The evaluation of students' learning satisfaction in Chinese-foreign cooperative educational programs -- A case study of the Sino-Canadian accounting cooperation program in Zhejiang University of Finance and Economics]. *商业会计*,(5), 107-111.

Geng, S. Q. (2016). 基于利益相关者视角的高等教育中外合作办学运行机制研究 [Research on China-Foreign Cooperation's School Running Mechanism of Higher Education based on Stakeholders' Perspective]. *创新科技*,(08), 57-59.

Goldenberg, J. S. (2018). Quality in higher education: the view of quality assurance managers in Chile. *QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION*, *24*(2), 102-116.

Gong, L. M., & Yu, B. H. (2019). 利益相关者视角下大学课堂教学质量评价主体构建 [The construction of the evaluation subject of university classroom teaching quality from the perspective of stakeholders]. *芜湖职业技术学院学报*,(01), 72-76.

Gong, R., Su, D. H., Li, B. H., Li, D., & Zhao, Y. (2017). 高等教育利益相关者办学质量满意度评价研究——以G大学为例 [The Satisfaction Evaluation of the School Running Quality Based on Higher Education Stakeholders —Take G University as An Example]. *教育教学论坛*,(52), 3-4.

Gronroos, C. A. (1984). A Service Quality Model and its Marketing Implications. *European Journal of Marketing*, *18*(4), 36-44.

Gronroos, C. (1990). Relationship approach to marketing in service contexts: The marketing and organizational behavior interface. *Journal of Business Research*, *20*(1), 3-11.

Gummesson, E. (1991). Truths and Myths in Service Quality. *Journal for Quality & Participation*, *2*(3), 7-16.

Guo, L. J., & Li, H. Y. (2014). 中外合作办学质量保障：制度与文化分析视角 [The quality assurance of Sino-foreign Cooperative Education: on the perspectiveof institiution and culture]. *高等教育研究, 35*(5), 49-54.

Guo, L. J., & Lin, H. Y. (2014). 中外合作办学质量保障:制度与文化分析视角 [Quality assurance of Sino-foreign cooperation in running schools: institutional and cultural perspectives]. *高等教育研究, 35*(05), 49-54.

Han, Y. X. (2013). *高等教育质量管理：体系与方法* [Higher education quality management: system and method]. 北京大学出版社.

Harvey, L. (2012). Analytic Quality Glossary. *Quality Research International*,

Harvey, L., & Green, D. (1993). Defining Quality. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, *18*(1), 9-34.

He, X. X., & Chu, T. (2019). 利益相关者理论视域下的学校变革模式分析 [An Analysis of School Ｒeform Mode from the Perspective of Stakeholder Theory]. *山西大学学报(哲学社会科学版), 42*(02), 67-76.

Hill, F. M. (1995). Managing service quality in higher education: the role of student as primary consumer. *Quality Assurance in Education*, *3*(3), 19-25.

Hong, Y., Zhong, B. L., & Liu, L. (2016). 高等教育中外合作办学的现状、问题与对策——基于教育部中外合作办学监督工作信息平台数据的统计分析 [Current situation, problems and countermeasures of sino-foreign cooperative education in higher education -- a statistical analysis based on the information platform of sino-foreign cooperative education supervision of the ministry of education]. *国家教育行政学院学报*,(11), 29-38.

Hou, Y. A. (2020). Quality assurance of joint degree programmes: what Asia can learn from Erasmus Mundus joint degree programmes in Europe. *GLOBALISATION SOCIETIES AND EDUCATION*, *18*(1SI), 19-29.

Hou, Y., Ince, M., Tsai, S., Wang, W., Hung, V., Jiang, C. L., & Chen, K. H. (2016). Quality assurance of joint degree programs from the perspective of quality assurance agencies: experience in East Asia. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *35*(3), 473-487.

Hu, C. D. (2005). 高等教育中的利益相关者分析 [Stakeholder analysis in higher education]. *教育研究*,(3), 38-46.

Hu, M. Y., Eisenchlas, S. A., & Trevaskes, S. (2019). Factors affecting the quality of transnational higher education in China: a qualitative content analysis on Chinese host universities ’ self-appraisal reports. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, *41*(3), 306-321.

Hu, M., & Willis, L. (2016). Towards a Common Transnational Education Framework: Peculiarities in China Matter. *Higher Education Policy*, *30*(2), 245-261.

Huang, F. T. (2003). Transnational Higher Education: A perspective from China. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *22*(2), 193-203.

Huang, F. T. (2007). Internationalisation of higher education in the developing and emerging countries: A focus on transnational higher education. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *11*(3/4), 421-432.

Jain, R., Sahney, S., & Sinha, G. (2013). Developing a scale to measure students ’

perception of service quality in the Indian context. *TQM Journal*, *25*(3), 276-294.

Jain, R., Sinha, G., & Sahney, S. (2011). Conceptualizing service quality in higher education. *Asian Journal on Quality*, *12*(3), 296-314.

Jia, S. H., & Chen, H. H. (2002). 利益相关者的界定方法述评 [Review on the definition of stakeholder]. *外国经济与管理*,(05), 13-18.

Jiang, R. M., & Jin, Y. H. (2009). *企业利益相关者理论与应用研究* [Theory and application of enterprise stakeholders]. 北京大学出版社.

Jiang, X., Wang, X. M., & Wang, H. H. (2018). 2014～2017年国内外高等教育质量保障研究综述——基于SSCI与CSSCI期刊论文的分析 [Review on higher education quality assurance at home and abroad (2014-2017) based on articles pubulished on SSCI and CSSCI indexed journals]. *当代外语研究*,(1), 36-41.

Jiao, L. (2018). 高等教育利益相关者理论研究的进路 [Theoretical reserach path of higher education's stakeholders Theory]. *高教发展与评估*, *34*(04), 1-8.

Jongbloed, B., Enders, J., & Salerno, C. (2008). Higher education and its communities: Interconnections, interdependencies and a research agenda. *Higher Education*, *56*(3), 303-324.

Juran, J. M., & Gryna, F. M. (1988). *Juran's Quality Control Handbook. Jr (Eds.)* . McGraw-Hill.

Kashif, M., Ramayah, T., & Sarifuddin, S. (2014). PAKSERV – measuring higher education service quality in a collectivist cultural context. *Total Quality Management & Business Excellence*,

Kelley, S. W., Donnelly, J. H., & Skinner, S. J. (1990). Customer Participation in Service Production and Delivery. *Journal of Retailing*, *66*(3), 315-335.

Krause, K., & Coates, H. (2008). Students' engagement in first-year university. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, *33*(5), 493-505.

Lagrosen, S., Seyyed-Hashemi, R., & Leitner, M. (2004). Examination of the dimensions of quality in higher education. *Quality Assurance in Education*, *12*(2), 61-69.

Latif, K. F., Latif, I., Sahibzada, U. F., & Ullah, M. (2019). In search of quality: measuring Higher Education Service Quality (HiEduQual). *Total Quality Management & Business Excellence*, *30*(7-8), 768-791.

Leblanc, G., & Nguyen, N. (1997). Searching for excellence in business education: an exploratory study of customer impressions of service quality. *International Journal of Educational Management*, *11*(2), 72-79.

Lehtinen, U., & Lehtinen, J. (1983). Service qual ity: a study of quality dimens ions. *Working paper, University of Tampere,Finland*,

Leisyte, L., & Westerheijden, D. F. (2014). *Stakeholders and Quality Assurance in Higher Education*.

Li, J. (2017). 跨境高等教育发展及质量保障制度建设——基于中外合作办学视角的探讨 [The Development of Cross-border Higher Education and the Construction of Quality Assurance System in the Context of Globalization —From the Perspective of Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running School]. *集美大学学报(教育科学版)*, *18*(5), 35-40.

Li, M., & Zhao, L. (2019). Quality assurance system of Chinese-foreign cooperative educational institutions under pluralistic co-governance -- taking Xi 'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University as an example. *大学教育科学*, *174*(02), 116-123.

Li, P. (2008). 高等教育的多维质量观:利益相关者的视角 [Multi-perspectives on quality of higher education: stake holders' angle]. *国家教育行政学院学报*, *126*(006), 53-58.

Li, P., & Cao, Y. F. (2012). *案例研究方法: 理论与范例--凯瑟琳·艾森哈特论文集* [The Case Study Research Method: Selected Articles by Kathleen M. Eisenhardt]. 北京大学出版社.

Li, S. B. (2008). 中外合作办学的人才培养模式——基于广东省高校案例分析 [Talent training mode of Sino-foreign cooperation in running schools -- based on case study of universities in Guangdong Province]. *教育发展研究*, *000*(013), 108-111.

Li, X. H. (2001). 面向可持续发展的利益相关者管理 [Stakeholder management for sustainable development]. *当代财经*,(1), 66-70.

Li, Y. (2015). 中外合作办学"连锁店"现象的问题及对策 [Problems and countermeasures of the phenomenon of "chain stores" in Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools]. *浙江树人大学学报*, *v.15;No.129*(6), 28-32.

Lin, H. L. (2015). 质量文化视角下的高校内部质量保障体系现状分析 [Analysis of the current situation of the internal quality assurance system in colleges and universities from the perspective of quality culture]. *黑龙江教育(高教研究与评估版)*,(2), 48-51.

Lin, J. H. (2016). 中外合作办学的规模、质量、效益及其相互关系 [The scale, quality and efficiency of Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools and their mutual relations]. *教育研究*, *37*(07), 39-43.

Lin, J. H. (2018). 中外合作办学的政策目标及其实现条件 [The policy objectives and realization conditions of Chinese-foreign cooperative education]. *教育研究*, *39*(10), 70-75.

Lin, J. H., & Liu, M. J. (2014). 高校中外合作办学项目内部教学质量保障基本要素及路径. *中国大学教学*,(5), 62-66.

Lin, J. (2016). Study on the Introduction of High-Quality Educational Resources for Sino-Foreign Cooperative Education. *Chinese Education & Society*, *49*(4-5), 243-253.

Lin, J., & Liu, M. (2014). 高校中外合作办学项目内部教学质量保障基本要素及路径 [Basic elements and paths of internal teaching quality assurance in Chinese-foreign cooperative educational projects in colleges and universities]. *中国大学教学*,(5), 5.

Lin, N. X., & Gao, J. N. (2022). 新形势下地方高校中外合作办学质量提升探索 [Exploration on improving the quality of Chinese-foreign cooperative education in local universities under the new situation]. *通化师范学院学报*, *43*(09), 137-140.

Lin, Y. E., & Li, H. W. (2017). 利益相关者共同参与的高等教育内部质量保障运行机制 [The operation mechanism of internal quality assurance in higher education with the participation of stakeholders]. *教育评论*,(07), 55-58.

Liu, B. S., Zhou, J. X., Zhang, Y., & Song, H. M. (2015). 商学院质量管理面临的挑战及建设途径 [Challenges and construction approaches of quality management in business

schools]. *人力资源管理*,(10), 133-136.

Liu, D. F. (2000). 高校质量文化及其意义 [University quality culture and its significance]. *盐城工学院学报*,(3), 41-44.

Liu, H., & Li, J. H. (2019). 中国高等教育质量保障体系的完型 [The quality assurance system of higher education in China：a gestalt approach]. *教育研究, 40*(11), 100-110.

Liu, S., & Liu, C. (2018). Study on the New Tread of Quality Assurance Development in International Higher Education. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research, 234*, 9-15.

Liu, W. H., & Williams, M. (2018). 高校中外合作办学机构内部质量保障体系构建研究 [Research on the construction of internal quality assurance system of Chinese-foreign cooperative educational institutions in universities]. *教育评论*,(5), 5.

Liu, Y. M. (2006). 高校合作办学管理的服务质量评价模型 [The evaluation model for service quality of the joint education in college]. *上海师范大学学报(基础教育版), 35*(05), 121-124.

Liu, Y. M. (2007). *高校合作办学的服务质量评价研究——以上海S高校为案例* [硕士学位]. 华东师范大学.

Llonch, J., Casablancas-Segura, C., & Alarcón-Del-Amo, M. C. (2016). Stakeholder orientation in public universities: A conceptual discussion and a scale development. *Revista Espanola De Investigacion En Marketing Esic*, *20*(1), 41-57.

Lu, S. J. (2016). 国外教育管理模式对提高我国高校教育质量的管理启示 [Enlightenment of foreign educational management model to China's quality improvement of higher education management]. *黑龙江畜牧兽医*,(23), 264-266.

Ma, D. L. (2008). 服务质量评价体系文献综述 [Literature review of service quality evaluation system]. *农业科技与信息*,(12), 74-75.

Mainardes, E. W., Alves, H., & Raposo, M. (2012). A model for stakeholder classification and stakeholder relationships. *Management Decision*, *50*(10), 1861-1879.

Mainardes, E., Alves, H., & Raposo, M. (2013). Portuguese Public University Student Satisfaction: A stakeholder theory-based approach. *Tertiary Education & Management, 19*(4), 353-372.

Meng, F. Q., & Qu, X. J. (2018). 中国高等教育质量标准演变历程及反思 [On the evolution of quality standards in China's higher education]. *信阳师范学院学报(哲学社会科学版), 38*(04), 75-79.

Miles, S. (2017). Stakeholder Theory Classification: A Theoretical and Empirical Evaluation of Definitions. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *142*(3), 1-23.

Ministry Of Education Of China. (2021). *Information platform for supervision of Sino-foreign cooperation in running schools* Retrieved 2021-8-21 from https://www.crs.jsj.edu.cn/index/sort/1006

Mitchell, R. K., Agle, B. R., & Wood, D. J. (1997). Toward a Theory of Stakeholder Identification and Salience: Defining the Principle of Who and What Really Counts. *Academy of Management Review*, *22*(4), 853-886.

MOE. (2013). *教育规划纲要实施三年来中外合作办学发展情况* Retrieved 2019-8-19

from http://www.crs.jsj.edu.cn/news/index/80

Mok, K. H., & Han, X. (2016). The rise of transnational higher education and changing educational governance in China. *International Journal of Comparative Education and Development*, *18*(1), 19-39.

Mok, K. H., & Xu, X. Z. (2008). When China Opens to the World: A Study of Transnational Higher Education in Zhejiang, China

. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, *9*(4), 393-408.

Nenadal, J. (2015). Comprehensive quality assessment of Czech higher education institutions. *International Journal of Quality & Service Sciences*, *7*(2-3), 138-151.

Nerad, M. (2014). Developing "Fit for Purpose" Research Doctoral Graduates：Increased standardization of quality measures in PhD education worldwide. In P. G. Albath (Ed.) *Globalization and its impacts on the quality of PhD education worldwide* (28, pp. 111-127). Sense Publishers.

Noaman, A. Y., Ragab, A. H. M., Madbouly, A. I., Khedra, A. M., & Fayoumi, A. G. (2015). Higher education quality assessment model: towards achieving educational quality standard. *Studies in Higher Education*,

Nwajiuba, C., Igwe, P., Akinsola-Obatolu, A., Ituma, A., & Binuomote, O. (2020). What can be done to improve higher education quality and graduate employability in Nigeria? A stakeholder approach. *Industry and Higher Education*, 1109303074.

OECD. (2010*The OECD Innovation Strategy: A Head Start on Tomorrow*. Paper presented at the, Paris.

OECD, & WorldBank. (2007*Cross-Border Tertiary Education: A Way towards Capacity Development*. Paper presented at the, Paris.

O'Mahony, K., & Garavan, T. N. (2012). Implementing a quality management framework in a higher education organisation: A case study. *Quality Assurance in Education*,

On-job-postgraduate-education-network. (2018). *中外合作办学发展情况以及存在问题分析* Retrieved 2019-6-22 from http://www.onjobedu.com/jiaowugonggao/30545.html

Owlia, M. S., & Aspinwall, E. M. (1996). A framework for the dimensions of quality in higher education. *Quality Assurance in Education*, *4*(2), 12-20.

Owlia, M. S., & Aspinwall, E. M. (1998). Application of Quality Function Deployment for the Improvement of Quality in an Engineering Department. *European Journal of Engineering Education*, *23*(1), 105-115.

Ozdemir, Y., Kaya, S. K., & Turhan, E. (2019). A scale to measure sustainable campus services in higher education: “Sustainable Service Quality”. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, *245*

Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V. A., & Berry, L. L. (1985). A Conceptual-model of service quality and its implications for future research. *Journal of Marketing*, *49*(4), 41-50.

Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V. A., & Berry, L. L. (1988). SERVQUAL_A Multiple-item Scale for Measuring Consumer Perceptions of Service quality. *Journal of Retailing*, *64*(1), 12-40.

Pariseau, S. E., & McDaniel, J. R. (1997). Assessing service quality in schools of business. *International Journal of Quality & Reliability Management*, *14*(3), 204-218.

Petruzzellis, L., D'Uggento, A. M., & Romanazzi, S. (2006). Student satisfaction and quality of service in Italian universities. *Managing Service Quality*, *16*(4), 349-364.

Prisăcariu, A. (2014). Approaches of Quality Assurance Models on Adult Education Provisions. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *142*, 133-139.

Prisacariu, A., & Shah, M. (2016). Defining the quality of higher education around ethics and moral values. *Quality in Higher Education*, *22*(2), 152-166.

Qian, Y., & Jiao, W. (2007). MOE sets limits on HEI's claims of foreign kinships., *Shanghai Xinmin Evening News*, p. 2. Retrieved from

Qiang, Z. (2003). Internationalization of Higher Education: Towards a Conceptual Framework. *Policy Futures in Education*, *1*(2), 248-270.

Qin, Q., & Zhou, Z. H. (2018). 利益相关者视域中的高等教育质量保障 [Higher education quality assurance from the perspective of stakeholders: purpose, comparison and enlghtenment]. *高教发展与评估*, *34*(05), 1-14.

Raajpoot, N. (2004). Reconceptualizing service encounter quality in a non-western context. *Journal of Service Research*, *7*(2), 181-201.

Reavill, L. R. P. (1998). Quality assessment, total quality management and the stakeholders in the UK higher education system. *Journal of Service Theory & Practice*, *8*(1), 55-63.

Reavill, L. (1997). Quality assessment and the stakeholder model of higher education. *Total Quality Management*, *8*, 246-252.

Ribeiro Soriano, D., Wagner Mainardes, E., Alves, H., & Raposo, M. (2012). A model for stakeholder classification and stakeholder relationships. *Management Decision*, *50*(10), 1861-1879.

Rowe, G., & Wright, G. (1999). The Delphi technique as a forecasting tool: issues and analysis. *International Journal of Forecasting*, *15*(4), 353-375.

Rowley, J. (1997). Beyond service quality dimensions in higher education and towards a service contract. *Quality Assurance in Education*, *5*(1), 7-14.

Ryan, T. (2015). Quality Assurance in Higher Education: A Review of Literature. *Higher Learning Research Communications*, *5*(4)

Sardar, A., Amjad, S., & Ali, U. (2016). An empirical analysis of the service quality gap in business education: Evidence from higher education in Pakistan. *Journal of Education for Business, 91*(3), 148-158.

Sasser, W. E., Olson, P. R., & D. Wyckoff, D. (1978). *Management of Service Operations: Text and Cases.*. Mass: Allyn & Ba.

Shams, S. M. R. (2017). Transnational education and total quality management: a stakeholder-centred model. *JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT*, *36*(3), 376-389.

Shams, S. M. R., & Belyaeva, Z. (2019). Quality Assurance Driving Factors as Antecedents of Knowledge Management: a Stakeholder-Focussed Perspective in Higher Education. *Journal of Knowledge Economic*,(10), 423-436.

Shi, Q. (2017). *高校中外合作办学质量研究-基于10所高校的调研* [Master dissertation]. 南京理工大学.

Shurair, A. S. A., & Pokharel, S. (2019). Stakeholder's perception of service quality: a case

in Qatar. *QUALITY ASSURANCE IN EDUCATION*, *27*(4), 493-510.

Skulmoski, G. J., Hartman, F. T., & Hartman, F. T. (2007). The Delphi Method for Graduate Research. *Journal of Information Technology Education: Research*, *6*(1), 1-21.

Southern Medical University. (2023). *Overview* Retrieved April 4th, 2023 from https://www.smu.edu.cn/xygk/xxjj.htm

Srikanthan, G. (1999). *Universities and quality: A world view*. 11th International Conference on Assessing Quality in HE, Manchester, UK.

Srikanthan, G., & Dalrymple, J. F. (2002). Developing a Holistic Model for Quality in Higher Education. *Quality in Higher Education*, *8*(3), 215-224.

Srikanthan, G., & Dalrymple, J. (2003). Developing alternative perspectives for quality in higher education. *International Journal of Educational Management*, *17*(3), 126-136.

Stafford, S., & Taylor, J. (2016). Transnational education as an internationalisation strategy: meeting the institutional management challenges. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, *38*(6), 625-636.

Stalmeijer, R., Whittingham, J., De Grave, W., & Dolmans, D. (2016). Strengthening internal quality assurance processes: facilitating student evaluation committees to contribute. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, *41*(1), 53-66.

Stella, A. (2006). Quality Assurance of Cross‐border Higher Education., *12*(3), 257-276.

Sultan, P., & Wong, H. Y. (2010). Service quality in higher education – a review and research agenda. *International Journal of Quality & Service Sciences*, *2*(2), 259-272.

Sultan, P., & Wong, H. (2010). Performance‐based service quality model: an empirical study on Japanese universities. *Quality Assurance in Education*, *18*(2), 126-143.

Sun, B. (2017). *利益相关者视角下中外合作大学治理研究* [Master disertation 硕士]. 宁波大学.

Sun, W., & Chen, Z. W. (2018). 高等教育中外合作办学质量保障体系建设的国际比较研究 [An international comparative study on the construction of sino-foreign cooperative education quality assurance system in higher education]. *河南教育(高教)*, *163*(11), 140-145.

Tampoe, M. (1993). Motivating knowledge workers—The challenge for the 1990s. *Long Range Planning*, *26*(3), 49-55.

Tan, Y., & Tao, R. (2014). 高校中外合作办学项目学生跨文化适应状况及其影响因素 [Cross-cultural adaptation of students in Chinese-foreign cooperative educational programs in universities and its influencing factors]. *北方民族大学学报：哲学社会科学版*,(6), 4.

Tang, X. H. (2018). 国际化背景下的中外合作办学质量保障体系探讨 [Quality assurance system of sino-foreign cooperative education under the background of internationalization]. *科技风*,(34), 266-267.

Tang, Z. F. (2013). 我国高等教育中外合作办学质量保障体系建设研究 [Research on the construction of quality Assurance System for Chinese-Foreign Cooperative school running in Chinese higher education]. *江苏高教*,(02), 34-36.

Tapiero, C. S. (1996). *The Management of Quality and its Control*. Chapman and Hall.

Teece, D. J., Pisano, G., & Shuen, A. (1997). DYNAMIC CAPABILITIES AND STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT. *Strategic Management Journal*, *18*(7), 509-533.

Teeroovengadum, V., Kamalanabhan, T. J., & Seebaluck, A. K. (2016). Measuring service quality in higher education. *Quality Assurance in Education*, *24*(2), 244-258.

Trifiro, F. (2018). Inter-agency cooperation in the quality assurance of transnational education: challenges and opportunities. *Quality in Higher Education*, *24*(2), 136-153.

Tsiligiris, V., & Hill, C. (2021). A prospective model for aligning educational quality and student experience in international higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, *46*(2), 228-244.

Twin, A. (2020, 2020-03-30). *Delphi Method* Retrieved 2020-7-13 from https://www.investopedia.com/terms/d/delphi-method.asp

UNESCO. (2005). *Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education*.

Urbanovic ˇ , J., & Wilkinsb, S. (2013). Internationalisation as a Strategy to Improve the Quality of Higher Education in Small States: Stakeholder Perspectives in Lithuania. *Higher Education Policy*, *26*, 373-396.

Van Der Wende, M. (2007). Internationalization of Higher Education in the OECD Countries: Challenges and Opportunities for the Coming Decade, *3/4*(11), 274-289.

Van Vught Don, F. A., & Westerheijden, D. F. (1994). Towards a general model of quality assessment in higher education. *Higher Education*, *28*(3), 355-371.

Wan, J. H. (1998). *利益相关者管理* [Stakeholder Management]. 海天出版社.

Wang, E. J., & Li, R. M. (2016). 高等教育质量研究十年:研究热点、趋势与前沿——基于知识图谱的可视化分析. [Ten years of quality research in Higher Education: Research Hotspots, Trends and Frontiers -- A Visual analysis based on Knowledge Atlas.]. *现代大学教育*,(5), 71-79.

Wang, H. M., & Jiang, R. C. (2007). 利益相关者理论综述研究 [Review of Stakeholder theory]. *经济问题探索*,(04), 11-14.

Wang, J., & Meng, Q. (2018). 高等教育质量管理机制研究 [The research on qualiyt management mechanism of higher education]. *教育现代化*, *5*(52), 357-359.

Wang, S. C., & Wang, W. (2005). 服务质量文献综述 [Service quality literature review]. *山东经济*,(05), 22-25.

Wang, Y., & Fang, H. (2014). 中外合作办学存在的问题及对策 [Problems and countermeasures of sino-foreign cooperation in running schools]. *科技创业月刊*, *27*(02), 123-125.

Wen, B. Y., & Wang, C. X. (2002). 服务公平性、顾客服务评估和行为意向的关系研究 [The relationship between service equity, customer service evaluation and behavioral intention]. *中山大学学报(社会科学版)*, *42*(2), 109-116.

Wheeler, D., & Sillanpa, A. M. (1998). Including the Stakeholders: The Business Case. *Long Range Planning*, *31*, 201-210.

Woodhouse, D. (1999*Quality and quality assurance*. Paper presented at the Quality and Quality AssuranceQuality and Internationalisation in Higher Education.

Xiong, J. (2019). 中外合作办学的发展阶段与展望, *学习时报*, p. 6. Retrieved from http://epub.cnki.net/kns/Request/kns.cnki.net/kns/download.aspx?filename=XQy0GbphDaJhnWpJXMptiUjZUNyEURS1WS1QmYqJkSkdETrpFUNFHZNd2THBDNEplTwMHNvRUYyAXTGhUe5xUZ=0TPnhkR2V3NJpXeZlHMZxkeStCcPlEWOVXM58GU0MXNUV2RUpkUvt2bO1GSvgDSzVncWlTbRh1b1gzb3glanF&tablename=CCNDLAST2019&dflag=pdfdown

Xu, B. R. (2017). 高等教育服务质量的评价体系研究——基于SERVPERF模型 [Research into Evaluation System of Service Quality in Higher Education —Based on SERVPERF Model]. *南京工程学院学报（社会科学版）*, *17*(2), 65-72.

Xue, W. Y. (2015). 论中外合作办学的质量观 [The view on quality assurance in Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools]. *中国高教研究*,

Xue, W. Y. (2016). 质量建设进程中的高等教育中外合作办学——基于《高等教育第三方评估报告》的思考 [Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools in Higher Education in the Process of Quality Improvement——The introduction of The Report of Chinese Higher Education Accrecitation by Third Party]. *中国高教研究*,(2), 12-19.

Xue, W. Y. (2017). 对中外合作办学质量建设的思考. *高校教育管理*, *11*(6), 6.

Yan, X. (2014). 中外合作办学引进国外优质教育资源的影响因素和基本原则 [The influencing factors and basic principles of introducing foreign high quality educational resources in Chinese-foreign cooperative schools]. *江苏高教*,(1), 4.

Yan, Y. (2020). 区域视角下高等教育质量保障体系建设研究 [Research on the construction of Higher education quality guarantee system from regional perspective]. *江苏高教*,(04), 64-67.

Yang, J. P. (2004). 中外合作办学质量保证体系初探 [Toward a quality guarantee system in Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in School

-running]. *煤炭高等教育*, *22*(3), 57-58.

Yang, R. (2008). Transnational higher education in China: Contexts, characteristics and concerns. *Australian Journal of Education*, *52*(3), 272-286.

Yang, S. (2016). 中外合作办学的发展及质量管理现状 [Development and quality management of chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools]. *人力资源管理*,(09), 141.

Yin, R. K. (2003). *案例研究：设计与方法* [Case Study Research: Design and Methods] (H. T. Zhou & S. J. Shi, Trans.). 重庆大学出版社.

Yu, T. Z., & Han, Y. X. (2010). Servqual在高等教育服务质量评价中的应用研究述评. *现代大学教育*,(6), 64-68.

Zafiropoulos, C., Frangidis, G., Kehris, E., Dimitriadis, S., & Paschaloudis, D. (2005*Service Quality Assessment in higher education: the case of Technological Educational Institute (T.E.I.) of Serres, Greece*. Paper presented at the 9th International Conference on Marketing and Development: Marketing Contributions to Prosperity and Peace.

Zafiropoulos, C., & Vrana, V. (2008). Service quality assessment in a Greek higher education institute. *Journal of Business Economics & Management*, *9*(1), 33-45.

Zang, D. H. (2017). *我国高等教育第三方评估的有效性研究-基于米切尔评分法的分析*

[Master dissertation]. 青岛大学.

Zartha Sossa, J. W., Halal, W., & Hernandez Zarta, R. (2019). Delphi method: analysis of rounds, stakeholder and statistical indicators. *Foresight*, *21*(5), 525-544.

Zhang, J. Y. (2019). 中外合作办学项目教育质量保障探究 [Research on education quality assurance of Sino-foreign cooperative school-running projects]. *沈阳工程学院学报：社会科学版*, *15*(4), 5.

Zhang, J. (2006). 高等学校战略管理的若干基本问题 [Several Fundamental Issues of Strategy Management in Universities

]. *教育研究*,(11), 35-40.

Zhang, Q. X. (2022). 基于利益相关者理论的中外合作办学质量治理体系研究 [Research on the quality governance system of Sino-foreign cooperative schools based on stakeholder theory]. *江西理工大学学报*, *43*(04), 62-68.

Zhang, Y. Y., & Guan, J. (2018). 改革开放40年我国职业教育中外合作办学的回顾与展望 [Review and prospect of sino-foreign cooperation in vocational education in China during the 40 years of reform and opening up]. *当代职业教育*,(06), 11-17.

Zhang, Y., Liu, J. P., & Zhang, R. (2010). 高校利益相关者的边界与属性识别 [Boundary and attribute identification of university stakeholders]. *高教发展与评估*,(2), 7-16.

Zhao, C. J., Lei, Y., & Yang, B. (2003). *中国管理教育报告* [Report on management education in China]. 清华大学出版社.

Zhao, N. (2018). 利益相关者视角下中等教育服务质量提升路径研究 [The improvement path of secondary education service quality from the perspective of stakeholders]. *文化创新比较研究*, *2*(11), 103-105.

Zhao, Y. Z., & Meng, T. (2015). *中外合作办学质量保障体系研究* [Research on the Systerm of Quality Assurance in Chinese-Foreign Educational Cooperation]. 东北财经大学出版社.

Zheng, G. (2020). *Quality and Quality Assurance of Europe-China Joint Doctoral Education: An Institutional Logics Perspective.* [Doctoral degree]. Tampere University.

Zheng, G., Cai, Y. Z., & Ma, S. (2017). Towards an analytical framework for understanding the development of a quality assurance system in an international joint programme. *European Journal of Higher Education*, *7*(3), 243-260.

Zheng, H. R. (2013). *中国跨国高等教育质量保障体系研究* [Doctoral degree]. 华中科技大学.

Zhou, C. (2009). Analysis of Three Frameworks for Quality Assurance in Sino‐Foreign Cooperation for Running Schools. *Chinese Education and Society*, *42*(July/August), 97-107.

Zhou, H., & Chen, S. J. (2017). 高等教育中外合作办学的现实困境与发展策略——基于利益相关者的视角 [The dilemma and development strategy of the Sino-foreign cooperation in running higher education: based on the Stakeholder Theory]. *清华大学教育研究*, *38*(01), 31-36.

Zhou, X. H., & Jiang, T. Y. (2019). 中外合作办学发展现状研究 [Status Quo of Chinese-

foreign Cooperation in Running School]. *林区教学*,(08), 18-21.

Zhu, J., & Luo, J. W. (2008). 论高等学校教育质量内部保障体系的构建 [On construction of interior safeguard system of high-education quality]. *教学研究*,(2), 14-16.

Zong, P. (2015). 中外合作办学中教学质量保障机制的研究 [The teaching quality assurance mechanism in sino-foreign cooperative education]. *江苏高教*,(01), 76-78.

Zwanikken, P. A. C., Peterhans, B., Dardis, L., & Scherpbier, A. (2013). Quality assurance in transnational higher education: a case study of the tropEd network. *BMC Medical Education*, *13*(43)

占小华. (2014). 高校中外合作办学质量评价指标体系研究. *继续教育研究*,(11), 4.

Appendix 1: Questionnaire of Stakeholder Classification of Transnational Higher Education Cooperation Project

Distinguished experts:

Appreciate for your participation. This questionnaire aims to identify and classify the stakeholders of transnational higher education cooperation projects, so as to provide a basis for subsequent analysis of the interest needs and quality needs of different types of stakeholders, as well as the influencing factors of stakeholders' participation in quality assurance mechanism. After the first round of expert opinion survey, we will sort out and analyze the opinions of each expert, and submit the opinions of the expert group and the second round of consultation form to you. Thank you for your guidance and help.

Research Team of Stakeholder Classification and Relationship Measurement of Transnational Higher Education Cooperation Project

Part 1: Basic information
1 The type of organization you work for: A, Higer Education Institute B, administrative department C, Education industry associations D, other:
2 Your age: A, 25-30 B. 31-40 C,41-50 D, 51 and above
3 Your aducational level: A, Bachelor B. Master C, Doctor D, other
4 Your professional title: A, senior professional title B, medium-grade professional title C, junior professional title D, Other
5 The degree level of the joint programe/ institute: A, Vocational level B, Bachelor C. Master D, Doctor E, Other:
6 The number of years you have worked in the field of transnational higher education cooperation projects:

7	Your job title/scope of responsibility： A, student recruitment, promotion B, teaching, academic affairs C. Administration/logistics affairs D, Financial management E, personnel management F, Student, Alumni affairs G. Other :

Part 2： Stakeholder classification and relationship measurement

Identification and classification of stakeholders： According to Mitchel et al. (1997), a possible stakeholder will be graded on three attributes and determined whether it is a stakeholder or not and to which category it may belong based on the scores. These three attributes are Legitimacy, Power, and Urgency. Please tick according to whether the stakeholder holds the attribute, and the degree of the possession.

No.	Interm	（1） Identification and classification of stakeholders								
		Power			Legitimacy			Urgency		
		referring to whether a group is endowed with legal and moral or specific claims on the organization.			referring to whether a group is endowed with legal and moral or specific claims on the organization.			referring to whether the requirements of a group can attract attention from the organization management immediately.		
		weak	medium	strong	weak	medium	strong	weak	medium	strong
1	Partners	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
2	Senior university management (the dean’s team, general board, council of deans)									
3	Teaching and/ or research staff									
4	Non-teaching members of staff （Teaching assistants）									
5	Students									
6	Scientific communities and their publication institutions									
7	Research and development actors (incubators, teachnological parks, patent agencies, research centres, external researchers）									
8	Interpreter and translator									

9	Other universities and / or higher education institution									
10	National government/ministries/accreditation agencies									
11	Host municipality (local government authorities)									
12	Third-party evaluation / accreditation agencies									
13	Education Industry Association									
14	Industry Association (e. g. Healthcare industry)									
15	Employers									
16	Families of students									
17	Private financiers (business angels, risk capital companies, investors)									
18	Alumni									
19	Chinese society in general									
20	Portuguese society in general									
21	University host local commuity (population, companies, services)									
22	Potential applicants									
23	Other:									

【This page is deliberately left blank.】

Appendix 2: Interview protocols

Time of interview:

Date:

Place:

Position/role of interview:

Short description:

To collect data concerning different stakeholder's quality demand, and methods, measures, and mechanism for stakeholders' participation in quality assurance.

Outline of interview questions:

Student:

1. How do you understand the quality of transnational higher education program?
2. What are your expectations to the program?
3. What do you think about the quality of the program that you received?
4. In your opinion, what do you think are the factors affecting the quality assurances process in a transnational higher educational program?
5. As a stakeholder, what is the role of you to the quality assurance system?
6. Which stakeholders play a key role in quality assurance system and why do you think so?
7. What is the biggest difficulty you have encountered during the study/? And how do you solve this?
8. Free question: any comments that you want to add?

Management：

1. How do you understand the quality of transnational higher education program?
2. What are your expectations to the program?
3. How would you describe the quality of the joint program?
4. In your opinion, what do you think are the factors affecting the quality assurances process in a transnational higher educational program?

5. As a stakeholder, what is the role of you to the quality assurance system?
6. Which stakeholders play a key role in quality assurance system and why do you think so?
7. What is the biggest difficulty or challenge that you have encountered in this joint cooperation? And how do you solve this?
8. What is the experience that cooperate with a foreign partner?
9. Free question: any comments that you want to add?

Faculty：

1. How do you understand the quality of transnational higher education program?
2. What are your expectations to the program?
3. How would you describe the quality of the joint program?
4. In your opinion, what do you think are the factors affecting the quality assurances process in a transnational higher educational program?
5. As a stakeholder, what is the role of you to the quality assurance system?
6. Which stakeholders play a key role in quality assurance system and why do you think so?
7. What is the biggest difficulty or challenge that you have encountered during the teaching or supervision? And how do you solve this?
8. What is the experience of teaching/ supervise a foreign student, and cooperate with foreign partner?
9. Free question: any comments that you want to add?