

# Study on the Quality Assurance System of After-school Service for Primary and Secondary Schools in the Context of "Double Reduction": Based on Total Quality Management Theory

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**Abstract:** Under the background of "double reduction" policy, after-school service is an important way to give full play to the role of school education and promote students' overall development, and the quality assurance system of after-school service in primary and secondary schools is an important element to improve the quality of after-school service. Based on the theory of total quality management, combined with the current situation of after-school service research in primary and secondary schools, and following the principles of "full participation", "whole process", "all-round" and "various methods", this paper constructs a quality assurance system for after-school services in primary and secondary schools, which includes after-school service decision-making and command system, after-school service quality target and standard system, after-school service logistics resource management system, after-school service organization and implementation system, and after-school service quality supervision and evaluation system, in order to provide theoretical guidance for improving the level and quality of after-school services in primary and secondary schools, promote the effective implementation of the "double reduction" policy, and build a high-quality education system.

**Keywords:** Double reduction, After-school services, Quality assurance, Total quality management.

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## 1. Introduction

After-school services are services provided for students' after-school activities. It is an important way for school education to play its role as the main forum. In July 2021, the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council issued the Opinions on Further Reducing the Burden of Homework and Off-Campus Training for Students in Compulsory Education (hereinafter referred to as the "double reduction" policy), proposing the "double reduction" policy, which proposes to "improve the level of after-school services to meet the diversified needs of students", how to focus on after-school services to meet the needs of students has become a key concern for the implementation of the "double reduction" policy, and to improve the level and quality of after-school services has also become the right thing to do to build a high-quality education system in the new era, which needs to seek innovation in the quality education guarantee system. However, the quality assurance mechanism of after-school services for primary and secondary school students in China is not sound, the quality standards and evaluation criteria of after-school services are still explored, the quality of research on after-school services still needs to be improved, and there is a lack of mature theoretical framework to guide and support. Since Total Quality Management (TQM) was proposed in the 1950s, it has been richly applied in the field of education, and the corresponding research and construction of education quality assurance system have been gradually developed and widely recognized. This paper will explore the construction of a quality assurance system for after-school services in primary and secondary schools under the guidance of TQM theory, so as to improve the level and quality of after-school services in

primary and secondary schools, promote the construction of a high-quality education system, facilitate the all-round development of students and run a satisfactory education for the people.

## 2. TQM Theory

### (1) Development and characteristics of TQM theory

In the 1950s, A. V. Feigenbaum (USA) published "Total Quality Management"(TQM), pointing out that "Total Quality Management is an effective system for developing, maintaining and improving quality activities in all departments of an enterprise in order to conduct market research, design, production and service at the most economical level and under conditions that fully satisfy the requirements of users. It advocates a systematic and comprehensive approach to quality management, requiring all functional departments to participate in the quality process. Since the 1980s, Joseph M. Juran, W.E. Deming and other scholars have put forward the "Juran trilogy", "PDCA cycle"(a continuous quality improvement model including four stages of planning, execution, inspection and processing), and other theoretical ideas, TQM has been improved in terms of ideological basis and methodological basis. It has been further expanded and deepened in continuous practical application and development, and has gradually become a systematic and comprehensive management theory and method that are widely recognized and applied all over the world. The definition of TQM by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), which is widely accepted by the academic community, is "a quality-centered organization, based on the participation of all employees, aiming to achieve long-term success by satisfying customers and benefiting all members of the organization and society".

TQM theory emphasizes "full participation", "whole process", "all-round" and "diverse methods". At the same time, the definition and basic view of TQM reflect its "quality-centered", "to improve the quality of products and services and customer satisfaction as the goal". Give full play to the role of leadership on the basis of full participation, respect individual existence, focus on prevention, and carry out continuous quality improvement to promote the benefit of the whole society. Under the "quality century" predicted by Dr. Juran, many scholars and enterprises have made theoretical and practical innovations of TQM, such as the "zero-defect theory" proposed by Philip Crosby, the "zero-defect theory" originated from the National Quality Award evaluation of the United States. The "Zero Defect Theory" proposed by Philip Crosby, the "Performance Excellence Model" derived from the evaluation criteria of the U.S. National Quality Award, and the "Benchmarking Management" created by Xerox Corporation are all perfect supplements to the TQM theory or innovative system frameworks based on the TQM theory. At the same time, the rapid development of information technology requires TQM tools and methods to achieve more advanced and scientific technology empowerment.

#### (2) Application of TQM theory

The systematic, comprehensive and scientific nature of TQM has made the theory enduring and widely used in various fields such as business, public administration, medicine and education. In the field of education, TQM has been widely introduced in the internal management of universities in the United States since before the 21st century, and China also began to explore the conceptual framework of quality management in higher education at the beginning of the 21st century, and introduced TQM theory in the construction of the quality assurance system for higher education. After more than 20 years of supplementation and development, TQM has been widely applied in higher education quality management, and a more mature theoretical system has been formed and tested in practice. However, compared with the TQM in higher education, the application of TQM in primary and secondary education teaching is still insufficient. Therefore, when introducing TQM in primary and secondary education teaching in China and constructing a quality assurance system based on it, the relevant contents of TQM in higher education and quality assurance in higher education can be appropriately borrowed.

Regarding the application of TQM in primary and secondary education, as early as the 1980s, the Total Quality Management Network Management Center was established in the United States to guide the total quality management activities in primary and secondary schools, and the American scholar Weller introduced the concept of TQM in Quality Middle School Leadership to discuss continuous improvement in primary and secondary schools. The theory and practice of TQM in primary and secondary schools in the United States started early and has accumulated rich experience. Research on TQM in primary and secondary schools has been ongoing in various countries: Bua analyzed the transformative effects of TQM applied to secondary school management in Nigeria through a questionnaire survey; Joyce Nawelwa conducted a practical analysis of TQM in Zambian secondary schools; Eleni Sfakianaki explores using a structured approach to the implementation of TQM in Greek primary and secondary education through empirical analysis; Suyitno discusses the use of ISO 9001 standard quality

management system based on TQM in a secondary school in Indonesia; Sami Abdullah Kadhim finds a significant relationship between TQM and educational performance (EP) of national institutions through empirical analysis and suggests the need to implement TQM in Iraqi secondary schools. In contrast, there is less research and practice related to the use of TQM for quality management in primary and secondary education in China, and a sound theoretical system has still not been formed for the use of TQM in primary and secondary education quality management, so China should actively learn from the theoretical and practical experiences of other countries such as the United States in this field.

### 3. Quality Assurance System for After-school Services in Primary and Secondary Schools

The "double reduction" policy points out that we should ensure the time of after-school services, improve the quality of after-school services, expand the channels of after-school services, and improve free online learning services, so as to improve the level of after-school services in schools and meet the diversified needs of students. In the context of "double reduction", after-school service in primary and secondary schools refers to "an extended service to meet students' personalized development, which is different from the comprehensive education of school subject teaching". Its function is gradually expanded from the initial "hosting" to "cultivating the overall development of primary and secondary school students' moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic and labor", which is both educational and service. At the same time, the policy clarifies the public welfare of after-school services, and insists on "voluntary student choice", "personalized education" and "differentiated learning" in education and teaching. After-school services are an important supplement to school classroom education and an important way for school education to play its role as the main forum, which is conducive to reducing students' academic pressure, promoting students' all-round development, easing parents' burden and promoting educational equity.

Research and practice have shown that the quality of after-school services determines their usefulness in performing educational and counseling functions, and developed Western countries generally attach importance to quality assurance mechanisms for after-school services for primary and secondary school students. However, there are many problems with after-school services in China, and the quality of after-school services still needs to be improved. Qin Lixiang pointed out through literature analysis that there was no theoretical consensus on the subject's rights and responsibilities, funding sources, and teachers' compensation for after-school services. Scholars such as Liu Yujia, Yuling Hu and Zhou Hongyu point out that after-school services have not achieved full regional coverage and fairness, its nature is not clearly defined, the subject's rights and responsibilities are unclear, parents' participation and feedback are not emphasized, students' needs are difficult to be met, the service content is single and formal, the educational function is not fully manifested, the resources inside and outside the school are not well managed, the quality standard and evaluation of after-school services are not clearly defined, and the supporting mechanism of after-school services is not sound. Regarding the influencing factors of after-school service

quality, Wu Libao summarized through the bibliometric analysis method that most of the relevant studies on the path of after-school service quality improvement involved teacher training, the policy implementation, after-school service quality, composition of participants, and students' participation; Mai Tong pointed out that the ambiguous target orientation of after-school services, the lack of synergistic mechanism for service implementation, the difficulty in guaranteeing service quality and the increased burden of teachers are important factors limiting its quality improvement, and improves the quality of after-school services in primary and secondary schools by building an organic curriculum continuum, coordinating school-based curriculum and after-school services, enhancing the attractiveness of service contents, helping the synergistic mechanism to be implemented, and promoting the sustainable development of after-school services; Lu Yunquan proposes improving the quality of after-school services in primary and secondary schools from the demand-side perspective, proposes to improve the content of after-school services (learning guidance, physical exercise, labor experience, and club activities) and build a curriculum-based after-school service system to improve the quality of regional after-school services; Zhang Huijie points out that the quality assurance mechanism of after-school services in primary and secondary schools in China is not sound, and suggests accelerating the introduction of national standards to regulate the allocation of teachers, organizations, venues and facilities for after-school services, and establishing a supervision and evaluation mechanism that includes the government, primary and secondary schools, parents, and third-party professional evaluation agencies. However, there are few studies and practices related to the quality assurance system of after-school services in primary and secondary schools in China, and there is an urgent need to use mature theories to build a perfect quality assurance system for after-school services to improve the quality of after-school services.

#### **4. Principles of TQM-based Quality Assurance System for After-school Services for Primary and Secondary Schools**

##### **(1) Ensuring "full participation" in after-school services**

After-school services are quasi-public goods, and the provision of services and the implementation of specific measures require the participation of multiple actors, including relevant government departments, schools, teachers, parents, communities, and out-of-school organizations, in order to maximize their systematic educational and service functions. The "double reduction" policy emphasizes the main role of schools in after-school services, and requires the work of education departments, social organizations, and other subjects, and clarifies the responsibilities of the family, school, and community. However, studies have shown that the rights and responsibilities of the subjects of after-school services in China are still unclear, which makes it impossible to carry out after-school services effectively, and ensuring the participation of multiple subjects is essential to ensure the quality of after-school services. Therefore, the TQM concept of full participation should be reflected in the quality assurance system of after-school services.

##### **(2) Throughout the "whole process" of after-school**

services

After-school service is a continuous process, in order to guarantee the quality of after-school service, besides focusing on its result quality, we should also focus on prevention, tracking the whole process of after-school service such as policy making, resource input, school management and teacher teaching, and emphasizing the process quality of each work. In constructing the quality assurance system of after-school service, we can guarantee the quality of after-school service from "Plan", "Do", "Check" and "Act" based on the PDCA cycle, which is the main tool of TQM theory system, so that the after-school service from the overall decision making and command, operation and management to the quality supervision and improvement are in accordance with the formulated quality objectives and quality standards.

##### **(3) Covering the "all-round" of after-school services**

The quality assurance of after-school services is a systematic and comprehensive management project. After-school services bear the important task of educating people and aim to promote the comprehensive development of primary and secondary school students' moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and social quality. Therefore, the quality of after-school services is not only related to the specific arrangement of the content and time of after-school services, but also related to the supply and quality of teachers, the policy implementation, the staff composition, student participation, target orientation, the coordination mechanism of service implementation, and teacher motivation. Under the promotion of "double reduction" policy, after-school services have been gradually improved in many dimensions, such as implementation and management by relevant departments, content and arrangement, human resources, financial guarantee, and quality supervision and evaluation, but there are still problems that restrict the quality of after-school services to some extent, so we should pay attention to the components of after-school services to ensure the quality of after-school services in all aspects.

##### **(4) "various methods" to achieve after-school services**

First of all, after-school service is not only about education and teaching activities, but also about policy making, operation and management, resource and technology development and application, financial support, quality assessment and supervision. Therefore, in addition to innovative educational theories and methods, quality assurance of after-school service should also pay attention to the use of cutting-edge management methods and economic methods. Secondly, the "double reduction" policy requires the education sector to actively and reasonably use education and teaching resource platforms and network platforms, develop high-quality online education and teaching resources, and organize teachers to conduct online interactive exchanges and answer questions, all of which undoubtedly require high-quality information platforms as intermediaries or use information technology to broaden the field of after-school services, enrich the content of after-school services, and improve the quality of after-school services. Therefore, after-school services should be combined with information technology for management and quality assurance.

## 5. Building a TQM-based Quality Assurance System for After-school Services for Primary and Secondary Schools

Under the guidance of TQM, we should adhere to the principles of full participation, whole process, all-round and various methods, mobilize all forces, implement the responsibilities of each main body, integrate the relevant elements of the system, and build a systematic and continuously improved quality assurance system for after-

school services in primary and secondary schools. Based on the theoretical framework of existing studies, the quality assurance system of after-school services can be constructed from five subsystems: after-school service decision-making and command system, after-school service quality target and standard system, after-school service logistics resource management system, after-school service organization and implementation system, and after-school service quality supervision and evaluation system. Figure 1 shows the framework of TQM-based quality assurance system for after-school services in primary and secondary schools.

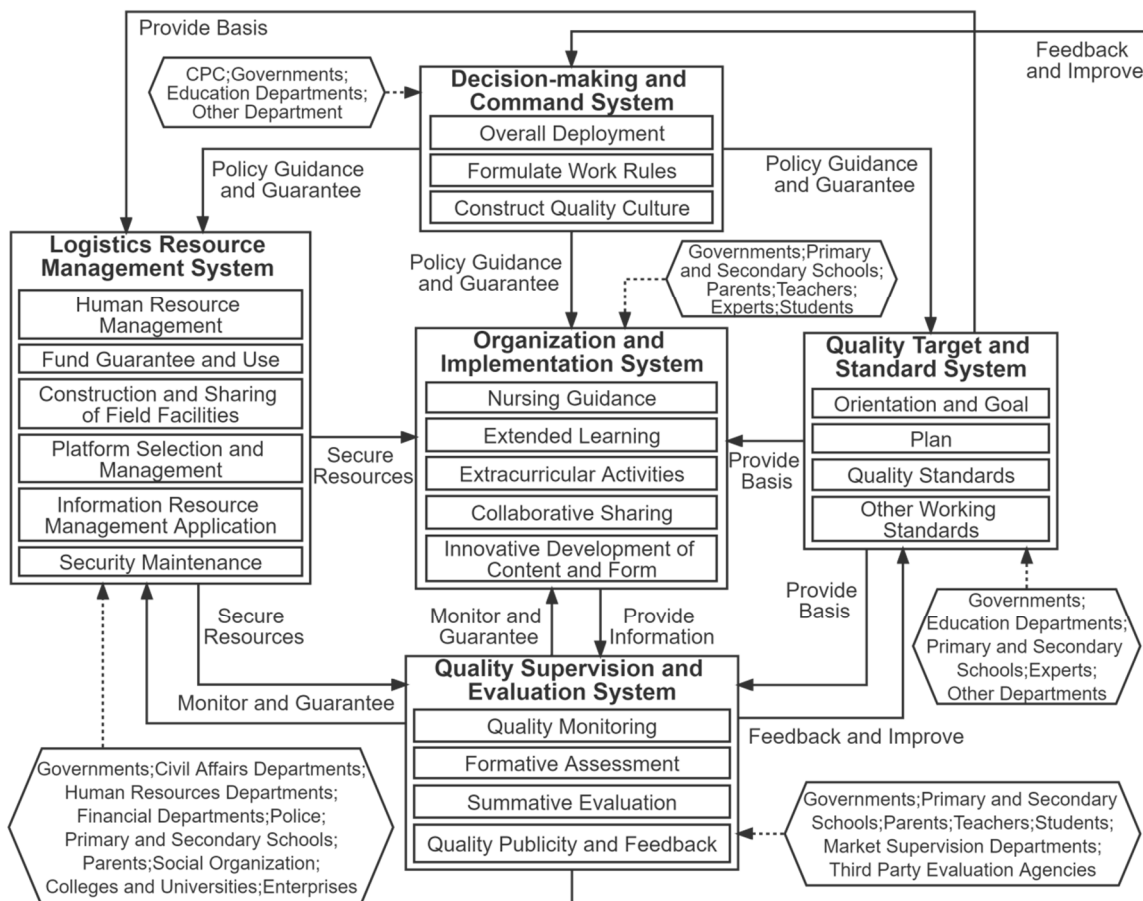


Figure 1. TQM-based quality assurance system for after-school services in primary and secondary schools

(1) After-school service decision-making and command system

After-school service decision-making and command system is the primary link of after-school service quality assurance, providing policy guidance and guarantee for after-school service quality target and standard system, after-school service logistics resource management system, and after-school service organization and implementation system. In the decision-making and command system of after-school service, the central government makes the overall deployment, puts forward the overall requirements, and clarifies the main responsibilities. The governments and education departments at all levels will formulate rules and regulations, including management systems, responsibility systems, work systems, incentives and rewards and punishments systems, such as the "flexible shift" system for primary and secondary school teachers, the public service purchase system, the education

evaluation system, the audit system for out-of-school training institutions, etc. At the same time, we will work together with the propaganda and Internet information departments to strengthen the propaganda and guidance of public opinion, educate and train the participating subjects on quality awareness, and form a culture of quality after-school service, so as to improve the quality of personnel and internal binding force, and promote the work of after-school service from top to bottom to be more efficient, less costly and transparent.

(2) After-school service quality target and standard system

After-school service quality target and standard system is the premise of after-school service quality assurance, providing the basis for after-school service logistics resource management system, after-school service organization and implementation system, and after-school service quality supervision and evaluation system. The system consists of the government, education departments, primary and secondary

schools, experts and other departments as participating subjects. First of all, it clarifies the positioning and objectives of after-school services, based on the overall requirements of the central coordination and deployment and the work rules of governments at all levels, following the laws of education, combines students' physical and mental development and social needs, and develops high-quality after-school service programs that meet the specific conditions of regional socio-economic and primary and secondary schools. The service targets, service hours, service contents, service methods, service personnel, and service fees are clearly defined, with particular attention to the gradient design and timing of service contents, handling the relationship between classroom learning and after-school services, coordinating the safety and security and educational development functions of after-school services, and avoiding the dilution of their educational functions due to formalization problems. Based on the positioning and objectives of the after-school service, centering on the overall development of students, abandoning the "score-only" theory, and setting clear quality standards for the after-school service and other work standards such as teachers' qualifications, funding and performance incentives according to local and local conditions, providing a basis for the work of the after-school service and a measure for the supervision and evaluation of the after-school service.

### (3) After-school service logistics resource management system

After-school service logistics resource management system is the support of after-school service quality assurance, mainly providing resource assurance for after-school service organization and implementation system and after-school service quality supervision and evaluation system to ensure normal and orderly operation of after-school service in primary and secondary schools. The system has a wide range of participating subjects, and the elements cover human, material and financial resources that affect the quality of after-school services. In terms of human resource management, teachers are constituted and provided through serving teachers in primary and secondary schools, retired teachers, parents who are empowered, professionals, and volunteers from universities and social organizations, etc. Management teams are formed through government administrators and leaders of primary and secondary schools. Teachers and managers are optimally managed, in addition to providing expert talents in evaluating educational activities for conducting systematic and standardized supervision and evaluation of after-school services. In terms of funding and use, the government and the financial department should provide financial support for the work of after-school services, so as to highlight the public welfare of after-school services, and at the same time, according to the nature of after-school services as quasi-public goods and the actual local situation, the funding model of "financial allocation + reasonable fees + public welfare support" should be implemented, and subsidies and exemptions should be provided for families with special difficulties as appropriate. In terms of construction and sharing of facilities in the field, the government, primary and secondary schools, social organizations, and relevant departments jointly provide venues, facilities and equipment, and teaching aids for after-school services, promote resource sharing between schools through online and offline exchanges, and expand the space for education from schools to families and communities through home-school-society collaboration, so that students

can experience in different fields and facilities what they are less exposed to in formal learning activities. In terms of platform selection and management, education departments, civil affairs departments, and primary and secondary schools should strictly review access to out-of-school training institutions and conduct strict supervision and governance. In terms of information resource management application, the government, primary and secondary schools, social organizations and related enterprises actively use digital information technology such as data and blockchain to build regional information platforms, build shared teacher pools, integrate online resources for after-school services, manage student file information, regulate and supervise out-of-school training institutions, manage related funds, collect, publish and publicize information in a timely manner, share excellent cases, use information resources for teaching reform and research, and provide "software" resource support for after-school services. In terms of security maintenance, students' safety is mainly maintained by primary and secondary schools and public security departments from inside and outside schools, forming a perfect security prevention and control system, preventing and solving security crises in a timely manner, and strictly preventing and investigating underground training.

### (4) After-school service organization and implementation system

The after-school service organization and implementation system is the core of after-school service quality assurance. Under the policy guidance of the after-school service decision-making and command system and the resource guarantee of the after-school service logistics resource management system, specific after-school service work is carried out and specific work requirements are implemented according to the work basis provided by the after-school service quality objective and standard system, and information is provided to the after-school service quality monitoring and evaluation system. In this system, the government, primary and secondary schools, parents, teachers, experts, and students need to participate together. Firstly, schools and primary and secondary school teachers with teacher competency should provide care and counseling to primary and secondary school students based on the after-school service program, answer questions and solve problems in a timely manner, and transition the time schedule between classroom teaching and after-school service to prevent the after-school service from being alienated into "remedial teaching". Secondly, we should teach students according to their abilities and realize personalized and precise teaching within the "closest distance to students", with teachers (including in-service teachers, volunteers, parents, etc.) communicating and interacting with students, caring for students' physical and mental health and interests, and establishing emotional ties. According to the actual situation, students are given more independent space to expand their learning and organize extracurricular activities for those who have the ability to do so, so as to give full play to the educational function of after-school services and ensure that the after-school services benefit every student within a reasonable time schedule and promote the overall development of students' moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic and social development. At the same time, under the leadership of the government, the primary and secondary schools in the region should make reasonable use of the human, financial and material resources provided by the

logistics resource guarantee system according to the time and place, and actively carry out collaborative sharing of after-school services, such as exchange and rotation of principals, establishment of inter-school alliances, grouping of school districts, exchange of teachers between urban and rural areas. In addition, innovative content and formats should continue to be developed, such as thematic lectures, reading classics, watching quality movies and performances. Subject areas and activities should be expanded, so that students can enjoy after-school services that are highly experiential, colorful and diverse, with appropriate difficulty level and independent choice, so as to enhance the attractiveness of the services and avoid the accumulation of the amount used creates additional pressure on students and teachers.

(5) After-school service quality supervision and evaluation system

After-school service quality supervision and evaluation system after-school service quality assurance of important content, from after-school service logistics resource management system, after-school service organization and implementation system to collect information, monitoring and assurance, and for after-school service quality target and standard system, after-school service decision-making and command system to provide feedback information, so as to judge the effectiveness of the operation of the after-school service quality assurance system, to check the gaps , achieve the goal of continuous quality improvement and finally form a "closed loop". First of all, in the atmosphere of after-school service quality culture, the government, primary and secondary schools, parents, teachers, students, market supervision departments and other participating subjects are empowered by technology to monitor the quality of after-school service from top to bottom in terms of decision-making and command, quality objectives and standards, logistic resource management, organization and implementation, so as to achieve reasonable quality control. In the command and coordination of after-school services and the development of quality goals and standards, public opinion and effectiveness monitoring of the decision-making and management behavior of the government, relevant departments, primary and secondary schools through online and offline reporting and suggestions. In the organization and implementation of after-school services, teachers and students are given daily attendance, and a third party is selected on a regular basis to spot-check, observe, and experience first-hand the content and activities of after-school services. In the logistic resource guarantee of after-school services, combining daily supervision, random inspections and reporting rewards to monitor human resources, funding, information platforms, and out-of-school training institutions to monitor quality, to eliminate teachers and managers who do not have the competence, over-package, or rely on special relationships to serve, and to eliminate unreasonable behavior of out-of-school training institutions and information platforms to ensure that funding is transparent, effective, and in place. Secondly, through the basis provided by the system of quality objectives and standards of after-school services, under the scientific and perfect quality evaluation index system, combined with formative and summative evaluation methods, a comprehensive quality evaluation of the current situation, process, results, and satisfaction of all parties of after-school services is conducted to discover the deep-seated internal problems and causes, and to test whether the after-school services meet the quality objectives and standards. In

addition to examinations and assessments, we should actively collect students' experience and feedback information in after-school services, and use information platforms to conduct questionnaires, so that teachers, parents, students and other subjects can effectively participate. Finally, the quality public announcement and feedback, not the public announcement of students' examination results, but the timely announcement of quality monitoring and quality evaluation information in the online and offline platforms, feedback to all subjects and links, reflection and adjustment in a new cycle, to achieve continuous improvement of quality.

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