

The Impact of Leadership and Student Focus on Teaching Quality Management in Private Higher Education Institutions in Guangxi, China

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between leadership, student focus, and teaching quality management in private higher education institutions in Guangxi, China. Using quantitative methods, data was collected from 400 participants across 11 institutions through standardized questionnaires measuring leadership practices, student-centered approaches, and teaching quality indicators. Multiple regression analysis revealed significant positive effects of both leadership ($\beta = 0.199$, $p < 0.001$) and student focus ($\beta = 0.269$, $p < 0.001$) on teaching quality management, with student focus demonstrating a stronger impact. Results indicate that effective leadership and student-centered approaches are crucial for enhancing educational quality. The study recommends implementing comprehensive leadership development programs, establishing systematic student feedback mechanisms, fostering a continuous improvement culture, and allocating resources strategically. These findings provide valuable insights for educational administrators and policymakers in improving teaching quality in private higher education institutions.

Keywords: leadership; student focus; teaching quality management

Introduction

The landscape of higher education in China has undergone significant transformation in recent years, with private institutions emerging as pivotal contributors to the educational ecosystem. (Mok & Han, 2017). This expansion is particularly noteworthy in Guangxi province, where private higher education institutions have become instrumental in fostering regional educational advancement and economic growth. (Su & Wang, 2022). However, the rapid proliferation of these institutions has raised critical questions about the quality of education they provide.

The challenges facing private higher education institutions in China are multifaceted and well-documented in the literature. These include weak comprehensive schooling strength and insufficient accumulation of institutional knowledge. (Guo, 2019), outdated educational philosophies, and a lack of distinctive institutional characteristics (Wu et al., 2020), and the prevalence of non-standardized operational practices (Zhao et al., 2019). Furthermore, issues related to student recruitment and graduate employment outcomes (Hou, 2021), misalignment between academic programs and market demands, high faculty turnover rates (Zhang, 2021), and financial vulnerabilities stemming from limited funding sources (Xiao & Tian, 2019) Compound these challenges.

These multifaceted issues underscore the urgent need for a comprehensive examination of teaching quality management in private higher education institutions. Understanding the key factors that influence teaching quality is crucial for enhancing the educational standards and competitive positioning of these institutions. (Ardi et al., 2012). This study focuses on two critical elements: leadership and student-centered approaches, investigating their impact on teaching quality management in private higher education institutions in Guangxi.

Leadership in educational institutions plays a pivotal role in shaping organizational culture, setting strategic directions, and driving quality improvement initiatives. (Bush, 2008). Concurrently, student-centered approaches have gained prominence as effective strategies for enhancing learning outcomes and overall educational quality. (Hoidn, 2016). By exploring the interplay between effective leadership, student-focused strategies, and teaching quality management, this research aims to contribute valuable insights to the discourse on higher education quality assurance.

The findings of this study have the potential to inform policy decisions, guide institutional reforms, and ultimately elevate the standard of private higher education in Guangxi and beyond. As

China continues to reform and develop its higher education sector, research into the factors affecting teaching quality in private institutions becomes increasingly vital for ensuring the sector's sustainable growth and competitiveness (Wu & Li, 2019).

Research Objectives

This study aims to investigate the impact of leadership and student focus on teaching quality management in private higher education institutions in Guangxi, China. Specifically, the research objectives are:

1. To analyze the influence of leadership practices on teaching quality management in private higher education institutions in Guangxi.
2. To examine the effect of student-focused approaches on teaching quality management in these institutions.
3. To identify the interrelationship between leadership, student focus, and teaching quality management in the context of private higher education.
4. To provide evidence-based recommendations for enhancing teaching quality management in private higher education institutions in Guangxi.

Literature Review

Teaching Quality Management

Teaching Quality Management (TQM) in higher education is a comprehensive and multifaceted concept that encompasses various strategies and practices aimed at ensuring the effectiveness of teaching and learning processes. Scholars have defined TQM as the systematic and comprehensive oversight of teaching activities to meet predetermined educational goals and enhance teaching effectiveness through scientific methods and systematic measures. (Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2003). TQM in higher education is characterized by its multidimensional attributes, which include students, teaching purposes, content, methods, environment, feedback, and instructors. Each of these elements plays a crucial role in the overall teaching process, with their interactions collectively influencing the quality of education. (Sahney et al., 2004).

Recent studies have identified key factors influencing teaching quality. For instance, Steinhardt et al. (2017) highlighted the importance of faculty competence, student engagement,

availability of learning resources, institutional philosophy, and campus culture in shaping educational quality. In a similar vein, Raissi (2019) categorized TQM into several dimensions: faculty commitment, departmental commitment, course design, campus facilities, student focus, feedback mechanisms, and continuous improvement. These dimensions emphasize the importance of faculty involvement and feedback mechanisms in achieving high levels of student satisfaction.

However, while these studies provide valuable insights, there remains a need to explore how these dimensions interact and contribute to the overarching goals of TQM, particularly in the context of private higher education institutions. Moreover, the specific impact of leadership and student focus on TQM in this context has been underexplored. (Ardi et al., 2012). The present study aims to address this gap by examining the influence of leadership and student-focused approaches on teaching quality management in private higher education institutions in Guangxi, China. By doing so, it seeks to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of TQM in the specific context of Chinese private higher education.

The Role of Leadership in Teaching Quality Management

Leadership is a critical factor in the management of teaching quality, significantly influencing the effectiveness of educational outcomes. The concept of leadership has evolved considerably, expanding from its origins in the industrial sector to various fields, including education. Effective leadership in educational institutions is often associated with the ability to motivate, guide, and influence others to achieve organizational goals. (Bush, 2008). From a competence perspective, leadership is defined as the ability to motivate followers toward achieving organizational goals. (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Essential leadership practices include setting direction, building relationships, and enhancing instructional programs. This perspective suggests that leadership involves not just strategic decision-making but also the ability to foster a collaborative environment that supports continuous improvement in teaching quality.

The interaction perspective views leadership as a dynamic interplay between leaders and followers within a given environment (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). This approach highlights the importance of relational dynamics and the impact of organizational culture and external factors on leadership effectiveness. Leadership, in this sense, is a two-way process that requires active engagement from both leaders and followers to be effective. From a process perspective, leadership is seen as an influence process, where leaders shape the behaviors and attitudes of their team members through various forms of influence—both authoritative and non-authoritative (Yukl, 2013).

This perspective underscores the importance of adaptability in leadership, as leaders must adjust their styles to meet the demands of different situations. Research has shown that leadership significantly impacts teaching quality by shaping school culture, setting clear goals, and fostering a supportive environment (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Robinson et al., 2008). The concept of distributed leadership, where leadership responsibilities are shared among various stakeholders, has been particularly effective in promoting school improvement and innovation (Harris, 2013). This approach not only alleviates the burden on individual leaders but also actively involves teachers in the management and operational processes, thereby enhancing overall educational outcomes.

Despite the positive impacts of leadership on TQM, there is a gap in the literature regarding how different leadership styles specifically influence TQM in private higher education institutions, particularly in the Chinese context. Moreover, the need for continuous leadership development remains a critical issue, as it directly affects the sustainability of teaching quality improvements. (Hallinger, 2018).

The Importance of Student Focus in Teaching Quality Management

Student focus refers to the extent to which educational institutions prioritize understanding and meeting student needs. A student-focused approach ensures that educational services align with student expectations, leading to increased satisfaction, engagement, and overall learning outcomes. (Kuh, 2009). The shift from a teaching-centered to a learning-centered approach is increasingly recognized as essential in higher education. Barr and Tagg (1995) Emphasize that modern education is evolving from merely emphasizing "teaching" to prioritizing "learning," which involves recognizing and responding to student needs. This paradigm shift has been observed globally, including in China, where recent educational reforms have emphasized student-centered learning. (Tan, 2017).

Internationally, the concept of student focus has been integrated into various aspects of teaching, management, and assessment practices. For example, educational systems in the UK and the US have successfully fostered independent thinking and innovation by incorporating student feedback into teaching practices. (Bovill et al., 2011). This approach not only improves academic performance but also enhances student retention and employability, demonstrating the broader benefits of a student-centered approach. However, while the importance of student focus is well-documented, there is still a need for more research on how this approach specifically impacts Teaching Quality Management (TQM) in private higher education institutions, particularly in the

Chinese context. Furthermore, the mechanisms through which student focus can be effectively implemented and measured in these institutions require further exploration. (Ardi et al., 2012).

Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

The conceptual framework for this study (Figure 1) is built on the premise that both effective leadership and a strong focus on student needs are critical determinants of high teaching quality in private higher education institutions.

Leadership is conceptualized as the ability of educational leaders to set clear goals, communicate a vision, and foster a collaborative environment. (Bush, 2008). Student focus is defined as the degree to which educational institutions prioritize understanding and meeting student needs (Kuh, 2009). This involves systematic processes for collecting and responding to student feedback, ensuring that students' voices are integral to decision-making processes.

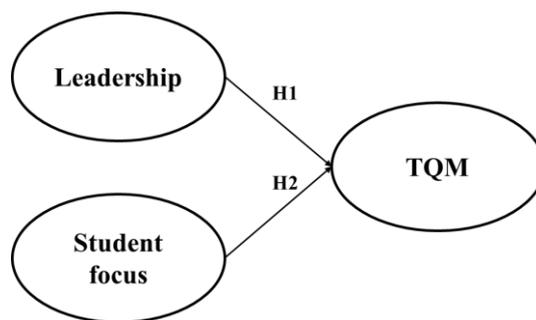


Fig. 1 Conceptual framework

Based on this conceptual framework and the literature reviewed, we propose the following hypotheses:

H1: Leadership positively impacts teaching quality management in private higher education institutions in Guangxi.

H2: Student focus positively impacts the teaching quality management in private higher education institutions in Guangxi.

Research Methodology

This study employs a quantitative research design to investigate the impact of leadership and student focus on teaching quality management in private higher education institutions in Guangxi, China. The methodology is structured to ensure rigorous data collection and analysis, following established practices in educational research. (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Population and Sample

The target population comprises teachers and educational administrators from 11 private higher education institutions in Guangxi. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure proportional representation from each institution. (Taherdoost, 2016). The sample size of 400 participants was determined using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) Table, ensuring a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. This sample size aligns with recommendations for regression in educational research. (Hair et al., 2010).

Data Collection Tools

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to measure leadership, student focus, and teaching quality management. The questionnaire was developed based on established scales in the literature, including the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) for leadership. (Bass & Avolio, 1995), the Student-Centered Learning Scale (SCLS) for student focus (Lea et al., 2003), and the Education Quality Management Scale (EQMS) for teaching quality management (Sahney et al., 2004). The questionnaire employed a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), which is widely used in educational research for its ability to capture nuanced responses. (Sullivan & Artino Jr, 2013). The instrument was divided into two sections: demographic information and the main survey items addressing the research variables. Content validity was established through expert review, with the Content Validity Index (CVI) calculated for each item. (Polit & Beck, 2006). Items with a CVI of 0.78 or higher were retained, following Lynn (1986) recommendations.

Data Collection Procedures

The questionnaires were distributed electronically using a secure online platform, adhering to best practices in online survey administration. (Dillman et al., 2014). Follow-up reminders were sent at two-week intervals to maximize response rates, following Dillman's Tailored Design Method. (Dillman et al., 2014). The data collection process spanned three months, allowing sufficient time for

participants to respond. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, anonymity, and data confidentiality, were strictly adhered to throughout the process. (Fowler, 2013).

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 26 software. Descriptive statistics were utilized to summarize the sample characteristics and provide an overview of the data distribution (Field, 2013). The reliability of the scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with values above 0.7 considered acceptable (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Regression analysis was employed to test the hypothesized relationships between leadership, student focus, and teaching quality management. This method allows for the examination of the direct effects between variables, providing insights into the extent to which leadership and student focus contribute to teaching quality management in the selected institutions.

Research Results

Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive analysis provides a comprehensive overview of the participants' demographic and professional characteristics, as well as their perceptions of leadership, student focus, and teaching quality management in private higher education institutions in Guangxi. This analysis is crucial for understanding the context of the study and the representativeness of the sample. (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Table 1 presents the frequency distribution of demographic and professional characteristics among the 400 respondents. The sample demonstrates diversity across several key dimensions, which is essential for capturing a range of perspectives in educational research (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Participants were drawn from 11 different private higher education institutions, with the highest representation from Beihai University of Art and Design (13%) and Guilin University (10%). This distribution ensures a broad representation of institutions, which is important for the generalizability of the findings (Fraenkel et al., 1993). The gender distribution is well-balanced, with males comprising 50.25% and females 49.75%. This balance enhances the representativeness of the study and allows for potential gender-based analyses, which are often relevant in educational research (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013). The age distribution shows that most participants are in the 36–45 (24.25%) and 46–55 (20.5%) age groups. These age ranges typically correspond to mid-

career professionals with significant teaching and management experience, which is valuable for assessing teaching quality management (Ng & Feldman, 2009). In terms of education, 63% of the participants hold a Master's degree, followed by 20.25% with a Bachelor's degree and 16.75% with a Doctoral degree. This high level of education among participants suggests a well-qualified sample, likely contributing to informed perspectives on educational management (Tight, 2012). The distribution of technical post titles is relatively even, with Lecturers or Assistant Professors (27.75%), Associate Professors (27%), and Professors (20.5%) well represented. This diversity provides a range of insights from different academic ranks, enriching the analysis of teaching quality management (Musselin, 2013). Most participants (87.5%) are teachers, with a smaller proportion serving as middle-level (5.25%) and high-level administrators (7.25%). This distribution indicates that the study primarily captures the perspectives of those directly involved in teaching, with additional input from management, providing a comprehensive view of teaching quality management (Biggs et al., 2022). Participants' work experience is varied, with the majority having 3 to 6 years of experience (25%).

Table 1 Frequency Distribution of Demographic and Professional Characteristics of Participants from Private Higher Education Institutions in Guangxi (N=400)

Items	Categories	N	Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Private Higher Education Institution	Guilin University	40	10	10
	Nanning University	37	9.25	19.25
	Guangxi City Vocational University	27	6.75	26
	Xiangsihu College of Guangxi Minzu University	32	8	34
	Liuzhou Institute of Technology	30	7.5	41.5
	Guilin Institute of Information Technology	27	6.75	48.25
	Nanning College of Technology	36	9	57.25
	Shiyuan College of Nanning Normal University	39	9.75	67
	Faculty of Chinese Medicine Science Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine	45	11.25	78.25
	Guangxi University of Foreign Languages	35	8.75	87
Gender	Beihai University of Art and Design	52	13	100
	male	201	50.25	50.25
	female	199	49.75	100

Table 1 (Continue)

Items	Categories	N	Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Age	25 years old or below	76	19	19
	26-35	66	16.5	35.5
	36-45	97	24.25	59.75
	46-55	82	20.5	80.25
	56 years old or up	79	19.75	100
Education	Bachelor's degree	81	20.25	20.25
	Master's degree	252	63	83.25
	Doctoral Degree	67	16.75	100
Technical post title	Teaching Assistant	99	24.75	24.75
	The lecturer or Assistant Professor	111	27.75	52.5
	Associate professor	108	27	79.5
	Professor	82	20.5	100
Position	Teacher	350	87.5	87.5
	Middle-level administrator	21	5.25	92.75
	High-level administrator	29	7.25	100
Working Experience in Higher Education	within 3 years	80	20	20
	3 to 6 years	100	25	45
	7 to 10 years	96	24	69
	11 to 15years	83	20.75	89.75
	More than 15 years	41	10.25	100
Total		400	100	100

Perceptions of Leadership and Student Focus

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for participants' perceptions of leadership and student focus in private higher education institutions in Guangxi.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics of Leadership and Student Focus Perceptions

Variable	Min Value	Max Value	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)	Kurtosis	Skewness
Leadership	1.30	4.40	3.18	0.62	0.47	-0.72
Student Focus	1.20	4.70	3.18	0.65	0.41	-0.58

Both leadership and student focus show similar mean scores (3.18), indicating moderately positive perceptions among participants. The standard deviations (Leadership: 0.62, Student Focus: 0.65) suggest relatively consistent responses across the sample. Both variables display slight

negative skewness (Leadership: -0.72 , Student Focus: -0.58), indicating a tendency towards higher ratings. The kurtosis values (Leadership: 0.47 , Student Focus: 0.41) suggest distributions slightly more peaked than a normal distribution.

These results suggest that participants generally view both leadership practices and student focus favorably in their institutions. This positive perception provides a foundation for understanding the potential influence of these factors on teaching quality management in private higher education institutions in Guangxi.

Reliability and Validity

The psychometric properties of the measurement instruments were assessed to ensure the reliability and validity of the constructs used in this study.

The internal consistency of the constructs was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha. The results demonstrated high reliability, with values of 0.787 for leadership and 0.809 for student focus. These values exceed the commonly accepted threshold of 0.7 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), indicating that the items within each construct consistently measure the intended concepts. Construct validity was assessed through factor analysis. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.6 for both constructs (Kaiser, 1974), confirming the sample's adequacy for factor analysis. Additionally, Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($p < 0.05$), indicating sufficient correlation among variables to proceed with factor analysis (Bartlett, 1954).

Regression Analysis

To examine the influence of leadership and student focus on teaching quality management in private higher education institutions in Guangxi, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Multiple Regression Analysis Results for Predicting Teaching Quality Management

	Parameter Estimates (n=400)						Collinearity Diagnostics	
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p	VIF	Tolerance	
	B	Std. Error	Beta					
Constant	1.764	0.19	-	9.293	0.000**	-	-	
Leadership	0.199	0.047	0.199	4.222	0.000**	1.028	0.973	
Student focus	0.269	0.044	0.287	6.075	0.000**	1.028	0.973	
R ²	0.141							
Adj R ²	0.136							
F	F (2,397) =32.492, p=0.000							
D-W value	1.938							

NOTE: Dependent Variable = teaching quality management

* p<0.05 ** p<0.01

The regression model can be expressed as:

$$\text{Teaching Quality Management} = 1.764 + 0.199 \times \text{Leadership} + 0.269 \times \text{Student Focus}$$

The model explains 14.1% of the variance in Teaching Quality Management (R² = 0.141, Adjusted R² = 0.136). The F-statistic (F (2,397) = 32.492, p < 0.001) confirms the overall statistical significance of the model. Both independent variables significantly predict Teaching Quality Management:

Leadership: $\beta = 0.199$, t = 4.222, p < 0.001

Student Focus: $\beta = 0.287$, t = 6.075, p < 0.001

These results indicate that both Leadership and Student Focus have significant positive effects on Teaching Quality Management, with Student Focus showing a slightly stronger impact. While the R² value is statistically significant, it is relatively low, indicating that additional factors beyond leadership and student focus contribute to teaching quality management. This aligns with the multifaceted nature of teaching quality, which may be influenced by other dimensions such as resource availability, curriculum design, or institutional policies. Multicollinearity: VIF values (1.028 for both variables) are well below the threshold of 5, and tolerance values (0.973) are high, indicating no multicollinearity issues (Hair et al., 2010). Independence of errors: The Durbin-Watson value of 1.938 suggests no significant autocorrelation in the residuals (Field, 2013).

In conclusion, the regression analysis demonstrates that both Leadership and Student Focus significantly and positively influence Teaching Quality Management in private higher education institutions in Guangxi. The model's robustness is supported by the absence of multicollinearity and the independence of residuals. These findings highlight the importance of enhancing leadership practices and student-focused approaches to improve educational outcomes in these institutions.

Discussion

The findings of this study emphasize the pivotal roles of leadership and student focus in enhancing teaching quality management within private higher education institutions in Guangxi. The results of the regression analysis revealed that both factors significantly predict teaching quality management, with student focus ($\beta = 0.287$) exhibiting a slightly stronger influence than leadership ($\beta = 0.199$). These insights provide an empirical basis for prioritizing leadership development and student-centered practices to improve educational outcomes.

The positive effect of leadership on teaching quality management aligns with Leithwood and Sun (2012), who highlighted the transformative potential of leadership in educational institutions. Effective leaders establish clear visions, foster collaboration, and drive continuous improvement efforts, all of which are essential for enhancing teaching quality. Similarly, this study supports findings by Hallinger and Heck (2010), who identified leadership as a cornerstone for cultivating effective teaching environments through strategic resource allocation and capacity building among faculty members.

The significant role of student focus corroborates research by Hoidn (2016), which emphasized the growing importance of student-centered education in higher learning institutions. Hoidn (2016) Noted that understanding and addressing student needs directly impacts curriculum relevance and teaching effectiveness. The strong association observed in this study between student focus and teaching quality management reinforces the notion that institutions emphasizing student engagement and feedback mechanisms are more likely to achieve higher levels of teaching quality. While the findings resonate with existing literature, they also provide novel insights by emphasizing the unique context of private higher education in Guangxi. Unlike studies in Western contexts that often prioritize institutional resources as a determinant of teaching quality (Mamites et al., 2022), this study highlights leadership and student focus as more impactful factors in resource-constrained

settings. This suggests that leadership and student-centric approaches may serve as critical compensatory mechanisms when financial or infrastructural resources are limited.

This study enriches the body of knowledge by situating the discussion of teaching quality management within the unique sociocultural and institutional dynamics of private higher education in Guangxi. It underscores the importance of leadership and student focus as critical levers for enhancing teaching quality, providing actionable insights for policymakers and educators seeking to improve educational outcomes in similar contexts. Future research should expand the scope to include diverse institutional settings and examine how these findings might intersect with digitalization and innovative teaching practices.

Suggestions

Enhancing leadership development is crucial for improving teaching quality management in private higher education institutions in Guangxi. Leadership training should focus on strategic decision-making, communication, and organizational skills tailored to the unique challenges of private institutions. Transformational leadership practices that promote collaboration, goal-setting, and motivation can significantly enhance teaching environments. Providing ongoing resources for leadership development ensures institutional leaders are equipped to adapt to evolving educational demands.

Strengthening student feedback systems is equally vital. Institutions should implement structured mechanisms, such as digital platforms and suggestion boxes, to gather and analyze feedback on teaching methods and course content. Trained student officers can facilitate effective communication of students' needs, fostering more responsive and relevant educational practices. Encouraging a culture of continuous improvement through peer reviews and faculty development further supports innovative and collaborative teaching approaches.

Future research should expand to include additional factors like institutional culture, technological integration, and external policies to build a broader framework. Exploring public institutions and other regions would enhance generalizability, while mixed-methods approaches could provide richer insights. Investigating the intersection of leadership, student focus, and technology is also essential as digital transformation continues to reshape higher education.

Conclusion

This study confirms the significant impact of leadership and student focus on teaching quality management in private higher education institutions in Guangxi. Effective leadership and a strong emphasis on student needs are crucial for the success of teaching quality management. By prioritizing leadership development and student engagement, private higher education institutions can create a more conducive environment for quality teaching and learning, ultimately contributing to the overall enhancement of higher education in Guangxi.

Future research should continue to explore these relationships and consider additional factors that may influence teaching quality in different educational contexts. This will further refine our understanding of quality management in higher education and provide more actionable insights for educational administrators.

New Knowledge

This study highlights the pivotal roles of leadership and student focus in improving teaching quality management in private higher education institutions in Guangxi. Unlike prior research emphasizing resource allocation or technology, this study demonstrates the greater influence of human-centric factors, particularly transformational leadership, and student-centered approaches, in resource-constrained environments. Effective leadership fosters collaboration and goal orientation, while a focus on student needs enhances teaching relevance and responsiveness.

The findings extend the existing literature by underscoring the importance of systematic student feedback mechanisms and leadership development in institutional strategies for continuous improvement. The relatively low R^2 (0.141) indicates the need to explore additional factors such as institutional culture and external policies, suggesting avenues for future research.

By contextualizing teaching quality management within the unique dynamics of Guangxi's private higher education sector, this study provides actionable insights for educators and policymakers. It establishes a foundation for further research on leadership and student-centered strategies in similar educational contexts.

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