

The Comparison Of Teaching Quality Evaluation Between Chinese And American College.

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Abstract:

Through collecting and analyzing the criterion system of College Courses Teaching Quality Assessment in twenty odd universities in China and America, comparisons have been made in the College Courses Teaching Quality Assessment in China and in America through many phases including the rating data sources, the assessment criterion, and the evaluation manner. Then in the essay, the author has put forward the viewpoints that College Courses Teaching Quality Assessment must attach great importance to the indicators of academic values, democracy and self-studying.

Course teaching is the major channel of college education and the key plot, which directly influences the quality of fostering talents. Due to the variety in cultural background and higher education system between China and America, tremendous differences also exist in the ideology, indicators and implementation of Courses Teaching Quality Assessment. How to carry out mutual learning and incorporation and how to propel the healthy development of College Courses Teaching Quality Assessment are the important issues in the internationalization of higher education.

I. Comparison In The Choice Of Rating Data Sources

1. The main channel of rating teaching quality in American college is the students.

According to the American Education Assessment Theories, the evaluation on the Assessment Standard mainly lies in its propriety, utility, feasibility and accuracy^[1], among which propriety is designed to protect the rights of students, instructors, administrators, evaluators and others who have a direct bearing on the evaluation system. The major principles supporting propriety are “*College should serve the students*”^[2] and “*Goals are what individuals hope to achieve and accomplish*”^[3]. Therefore, the assessment on the instructors’ performances should focus on whether the instructors effectively satisfy the students’ need of study. And it is the students who are qualified enough to make such assessments. We have consulted the Course Teaching Assessment Systems in 20 and odd American universities, from which we can see that the assessment on instructors’ course teaching quality almost fully relies on the assessment channel of students^[4].

In the form of Student Evaluation Instruction, Kansas State University first clearly states to the students, *“Please give honest and thoughtful answers to the following questions. Your individual responses will be anonymous; a summary of the responses from the class will be provided to the course instructor and usually to the department head. Responsible students ratings can help instructors improve and can help department head make more valid judgments about teaching effectiveness when making recommendations about salary, promotion, and tenure* ^[5]”. In the Assessment and Enrollment Research Long Form, the University of Arizona states: *“Results are not released until after grades have been filled* ^[6]”.

In order to master the comprehensive information of course assessment, particularly the objectivity of students’ assessment, some universities have adopted the means of two-way questionnaires, which implies that on one hand, the students make assessments about the instructors and on the other, the instructors will also present their opinions and statements about course implementation. For example, Kansas State University has made a Faculty Information Form, in which the instructors are required to illustrate the courses’ form, the students’ composition and foundation, and the courses’ organization and teaching manners, and to answer twelve questions, which are similar to the students’, about the courses’ targets, so as to reach the effect of “Listen to both sides and you will be enlightened”.

In order to enable the students to fully express their opinions and viewpoints, many universities also have printed special suggestion forms and columns as a supplement to the assessment form of multi-choice. In the suggestion form, the Washington University has put forward four questions to investigate among the students:

1. Was this class intellectually stimulating? Did it stretch your thinking? Yes. No. Why or why not? 2. What aspects of the class contributed most to your learning? 3. What aspects of the class detracted from your learning? 4. What suggestions do you have for improving the class? ^[7].

Texas A & M University particularly invites the Student Senate to participate in the assessment and carefully absorbs their opinions to indicators.

However, there are also some different opinions about assessing the instructors’ course teaching quality in American universities, Academic freedom and tenure are two sides of the same coin. The current view of tenure was established in 1940 when the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and American Association of Colleges (AAC) officially sanctioned it for purpose of preserving faculty’ s right to academic freedom. Legally, it assures faculty the right to pursue any line of inquiry in the course of their teaching or research without being censored, penalized or fired by university administrators. In 1973, the Commission on Academic Tenure in Higher Education (jointly sponsored by the AAUP and AAC) recommended that ‘adequate cause in faculty dismissal proceedings should be restricted to (a) demonstrated incompetence and dishonesty in teaching and research, (b) substantial and manifest neglect of duty, and (c) personally conduct which substantially impairs the individual’ s fulfillment of institutional responsibility. The burden of proof in establishing cause for dismissal rests upon the institution. Therefore, some scholars hold the opinion that the students’ assessment of the instructors is to adopt the business principle of *“protecting the rights and interests of the customers” to infringe the principle of “academic freedom”* ^[8].

In the United States, there is such an organization of university faculty--“Society for a Return to Academic Standards”, who holds a discussion on the disadvantages of students’ assessment on the web. They pointed out: *“The extensive usage of the statistics of students’ assessment*

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on teaching quality has already caused the inflation of scores and the deflation of course teaching. Due to the abuse of the statistics by the administrators and dishonest students, the assessment information has already become ineffective". After making investigation and analysis about the inflation phenomenon of scores, Professor Jones in Duke University pointed out: some instructors grant the students higher scores in order to receive the students' positive comments, which means the students themselves actually govern their achievements and the students seemingly become the best instructors. Professor Klubuli in Texas A&M University also proposes: *the students' assessment has influenced instructors' salary, promotion and tenure and the only way to make the information of students' assessment on instructors believable and reliable is to request the students to sign their names or fill in their numbers on the assessment form*^[9].

2. The main channel of rating teaching quality in Chinese college is the experts and develops to pluralism.

The College Courses Teaching Quality Assessment in China develops very rapidly recently and three major assessment patterns have been formed. The first one is the pattern with the experts' assessment as the major form. Since the end of 1980's, in order to curb the falling tendency of teaching quality, Teaching Inspection Groups have been formed in many colleges and universities in China, which consist of the experienced teaching experts in all subjects (the majority of whom are retired or retiring professors) who will be in charge of the inspection of the teaching quality. The experts make assessments on the courses and the class teaching through attending the lectures. The result of such assessment will be reflected to the Teaching Affairs and Administration Office, who will inform the leaders in charge of teaching in the college and departments of the results, which can work as the reference for instructors' promotion and the selection of excellent instructors. From the practice, such a pattern can be helpful to the macro-control of the teaching quality of the whole university by the Teaching Affairs and Administration Office of universities. And it is also conducive to the guidance of the experienced old instructors to the younger instructors in uplifting their teaching levels. But, due to the limited number of experts of the Inspection Groups, the times of attending lectures are also limited, which can not exactly reflect every instructor's teaching level and the teaching quality of every course. At present, such an assessment pattern is the major stream of College Courses Teaching Quality Assessment in China.

The second pattern is parallel assessment, which means the instructors in every departments and teaching sections assess the qualities mutually by attending each other's lectures. Since instructors and their counterparts have a better understanding about each other's academic and teaching levels, the assessment conclusion is relatively more accurate. And it is conducive to the promotion of research on methodology and collective preparation for lectures, as well as the unified course requirements. However, due to the instructors' heavy burden of course teaching and academic research, it is hard to systemize, regularize and standardize such a pattern. The loose feature of faculty organization also determines that it is hard to effectively persist in carrying out such a pattern as an independent assessment system.

The third pattern can be called the leaders' assessment. In order to directly master the course teaching practice all around, the headmasters and the leaders in charge of teaching in the college and departments of quite some universities, for instance, Huazhong University of Science and Technology, Hubei University and Hubei Industry Institute, usually go to attend the class to check the lectures. Thus, a system has been formed and there is a detailed record

of assessment for every checking^[10]. Although in form it is only a supplement to college courses teaching quality assessment, such an assessment can be made more influential due to the administrative authority of evaluator.

In August, 2001, the Education Ministry of China has issued “Several Advices on Promoting Teaching Quality and Strengthening the Teaching of Undergraduate in Universities”, which required that all colleges must adopt the teaching job as the most important standard of instructors’ post employment and that the teaching quality guaranteeing system must be established. Therefore, some universities have put forward the teaching ideology of “*Teaching, quality, instructors and students are the foundation in university*”. In the process of establishing the system of college courses teaching quality assessment, the portion of students’ rating teaching quality has been strengthened and three different ways of students’ assessments on instructors have come up: the first one is the students’ assessment group on teaching, represented by Nanjing University, which means that the group sponsors the activities of students’ assessment on teaching regularly and the school will follow the students’ opinions and connects the students opinions to the instructors’ promotion and distribution of posts allowances^[11].

The second is students informers, represented by Wuhan University, which means that the university hires around 1000 students informers, who will make assessments about the instructors’ lectures and will connect the teaching job amount to promotion and salary and treatments^[12].

The third is the students’ direct assessment, represented by Huabei Electric Power University, which implies that all the students will take part in the assessment by the way of anonymous votes about the instructors’ class teaching. The assessment content includes the instructors’ vocational morality, teaching content, teaching methodology, teaching level and teaching effect. The Teaching Affairs and Administration Office makes a summary about the returned questionnaires and inform the result to those involved leaders. To those instructors who are the last 10% on the list of assessment, the leaders of the institutes or departments will inform them and they should present their advices of improvement. The assessment result will be joined to the instructors’ yearly check, promotion, and titles employment. In order to uplift the objectivity and accuracy of instructors’ teaching quality assessment, the university also founds a students’ social league-----University Teaching Information Department, which is administrated by the Teaching Affairs Administration Office and the Student Affairs Office. It will collect the students’ opinions about teaching reform and instructors’ lectures^[13]. In 2001, Zhejiang University has raised the power of students’ assessment to 0.8 while that of administrators’ assessment is only 0.2.

The upsurge of students’ participation in course teaching assessment is the necessary outcome of reform in China’s higher education and the reform in the tuition system has imposed the features of marketability and industrialization onto higher education. The adjustment of the higher educational structure and the background of education internationalization enable the competition between colleges more and more fierce. In the past, the colleges should be responsible for the government and the administrative department while now they should be responsible for the society and the students. Therefore, they must receive the supervision and examination of the society and the students.

II. The Comparison In Assessment Criterion Systems

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1. The College Course Teaching Assessment Indicator System in America takes variety as the major form

There are various college course assessment criterion systems in America without unified standard. And different requirements have been laid on different courses, which fully reflect the features of multi-cultural background and individual development of American higher education. In this aspect, there are some representative college course assessment criterion systems, including the Instructional Assessment System (IAS) in Washington University, the Teacher-Course Evaluation (TCE) in Arizona University, the Individual Development and Educational Assessment (IDEA) in Kansas State University.

The course assessment forms in Washington University are divided into 11 types according to teaching organizational forms of small lecture/discussion courses, seminar discussion classes, classes whose purpose is the teaching of problem-solving or heuristic methods, skill-oriented class, quiz sections, large lecture classes (such as those in math), lab sections, distance learning (correspondence) courses, clinical experience, and etc. any of which consists of more than 30 assessment items, which include both common indicators and individual requirements. For example, Items of small lecture/discussion courses assessment emphasize the clarity and quality of information transmitted, as well as the nature of the interaction between instructor and student, while such an emphasis is laid on the quality of course organization and information transmitted for the large classes. But for the seminars, in which instructors have less formal teaching, quality of discussion as well as course organization and interest level are stressed. The assessment of those classes whose purpose is the teaching of problem-solving or heuristic methods, clear explanations, dealing with students' difficulties and quality of problems are emphasized.

As far as the classes which are skill-oriented and in which students get "hands on" experiences related to future occupational demands, such classes include clinical nursing, art studio, social-work field experience, the assessment attaches more importance to the opportunities of learning from practice, instructors' acknowledgements and understanding of the students' progress, the tolerance towards the degree of freedom in developing their own thoughts and skills, whether the teaching is various according to students' different levels or not.

As to the quiz sections, these are usually taught by graduate teaching assistants, in conjunction with a lecture section taught by a regular faculty member, items focus on the ability of the quiz section instructor to interact with students and provide clear and useful explanation.

But for the large-scale lectures mainly relying on textbooks and homework, such as mathematics, the emphasis of assessment is on the instructor's ability to communicate with students, and the value of assigned problems and the value of reading.

The evaluation on the lab sections generally taught in conjunction with classes in the physical sciences, items emphasize the instructor's ability to introduce meaningful questions, assist students, and deal with unexpected problems.

The key point of distance learning (correspondence) courses, items relate to the instructor's responsiveness and the quality of support material. Arizona University has also set different college course assessment indicator systems according to the classification of teaching forms,

including natural science, philosophy and studio workshop.

Such various assessment ways have much better dealt with the relation between the common requirements and the individual development and it also has shown the various practices of college course teaching, but they have added much to the difficulties of organization in the evaluation process.

2. The College Course Assessment System in China condenses the common requirements.

For a long time, due to the concentrated administration and stronger requirements of unification in Chinese higher education, two phases are reflected in the construction of college course assessment criterion system: on one hand, some features, which can be reflected about common courses, are chosen from different types of courses as the assessment indicators; on the other hand, more emphasis of assessment on teaching are laid on the instructors' teaching basic skills and senses of responsibility. For instance, the course assessment criterion system in some colleges includes the first-level indicators or domain of assessment according to teaching goals, teaching contents, teaching methods, teaching means, teaching attitudes and teaching efficiency.

Then the second-level indicators or elements are extracted from the common requirements of the first-level ones. This system is used to evaluate different courses. Such a system has some apparent advantages, including the simplicity, the clear common requirements, the unified standard to various course teaching, the convenience to the macro-control of course teaching quality and the accessibility for experts and leaders to make assessments. But it also curbs the formation and development of teaching individuality and various teaching styles because of the illegibility of different requirements on different groups of courses, which thus influences the assessment's accuracy and practical effects.

In the recent years, with the deepening teaching reform, some new drafts have come up in the construction of college course assessment **criterion** system, which are mainly displayed in the setting of assessment **criteria** how to extrude the features of college education, the requirements of modern developments and the fostering of the students' creativity and individuality. For example, since 1999, the Teaching Quality Assessment Form of Shanxi University has been set up, which consists of 14 items, and a two-level assessment method has been introduced in the University, which has changed the traditional assessment standard. The assessment **criterion** has shifted from the original one purely estimating the instructors' teaching to the new one evaluating the students' learning. Great emphasis have been put on the assessment of students' learning interests, learning methods and fostering of creative spirits.

The concrete indicators are composed of the following: learning feelings/value feelings, teaching enthusiasm and organization and clarity, the mutual exchange of the groups, harmonious interpersonal relations, the breadth of knowledge, examination scoring and homework, reading materials, the course quantity, the difficulty and logical structure^[14].

In 2001, we have undertaken "the Course Teaching Quality Assessment System", which is the teaching reform project granted by Education Ministry of China. Such a system indicates that different assessment forms are made with various emphasis according to experts', leaders', students' and faculty-counterparts' assessment, the criterion of which extrude the academic values, ideology, artistic features and mutual-communication of course teaching. But,

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generally speaking, in the majority of college course teaching quality assessment, the reform and adjustment of criterion are still conducted under the framework of one form for all courses.

III. Several Thoughts About Developing Modern College Course Teaching Assessment

The college course teaching has the features of creativity, variety and individuality. Therefore, the assessment on such a special practice activity cannot take the customers' opinions as the major part like the commercial assessments. Neither can it be measured by a unified standard like products evaluation. The logical starting point of our developing modern college course teaching quality assessment system is not only to satisfy the students' needs for learning knowledge, improving abilities and enhancing qualities, but also to protect the instructors' rights of exploration and creativity in the teaching work, as well as to respect the instructors' teaching individuality and styles and to uplift the actual course teaching quality. In order to fully display the role of course teaching assessment in conduction, diagnosis and stimulation, research and practice should be enhanced in the following several aspects:

1. The construction of assessment criterion should extrude the features of modern college education.

Although there are common teaching principles and rules abided by both college education and common education, the former still has its own peculiarity, which actually forms the instinctive differences between college education and middle and primary school education. Only through the reaction and guidance of teaching assessment indicators, can the peculiarity be deepened in practice and can it basically ensure the promotion of college teaching quality. Which of the instinctive peculiarities of college teaching should be reflected in the teaching quality assessment system? They are mainly: academic values, democracy and self-studying.

As far as the academic values are concerned, college education is a department instruction according to the courses and specialty from its essence. Such an education must be realized through course teaching, which is also one of the differences between college education and common education. Therefore, the course teaching quality assessment must extrude such a feature. And the indicator of academic values in college teaching assessment is mainly shown in the following aspects: to introduce and display the development tendency and frontier of the subject-related fields, to introduce and make comments on different theoretical branches and academic viewpoints and to show the instructors' clear stand towards these theories and viewpoints, to introduce the latest research achievements in his own field to the students. Through the above evaluation of indicators of academic values, the instructors will be stimulated to show the development track of humanities and natural science to the students, which will lay a strong foundation for the formation of outlooks on life and the world and for the fostering of the students' academic spirits and the comprehensive quality combining science and humanities.

When it comes to the democracy, academic democracy and freedom are the fundamental ideology and elite of college education, as well as one of the basic principles that must be abided by college course teaching. The indicator of instructors' democracy is mainly displayed in the following phases: the democracy and harmony of class atmosphere, the stimulation of students' proposal of questions, the instructors' respect to students' personality, answer and explanation to questions and tolerance of different opinions, the instructors' encouragement of

students' learning interests of the course and the level of active thinking, the interchange and heuristic of class teaching. Through the assessment indicators of democracy, the instructors will be guided to transfer from the traditional one-way teaching methods to a two-way exchange teaching methods, from the traditional duck-filling pattern to the new pattern of heuristic discussion and guidance of exploration.

In the aspect of self-study, one of the basic requirements imposed by the modern society on college education is that the students should acquire the skills of studying and life-long learning, with the drastic progress in the renewal speed of information and the information capacity. Therefore, the requirement of self-study must be fully reflected in the Course Teaching Assessment System. The indicator of self-study is mainly shown in the instructors' offering the students the learning methods through the course teaching, fostering the students' ability of self-studying, and instructing the students' reading and independent thinking. Through the establishment of the indicator of self-studying, the course teaching quality assessment will shift from focusing on the instructors' teaching to the students' learning, so as to see how much progress has been made in the students' abilities of self-studying, with the eventual goal of "teaching for the sake of no-teaching". In addition, estimation should also be made on the instructors' teaching peculiarity and creativity so as to actively guide and encourage the instructors to form various teaching styles. Of course, there should also be indicators of teaching targets, teaching capacity, arts of teaching and teaching efficiency among the College Course Teaching Quality Assessment indicators, which are similar to those of common education in appearance but with different connotation and emphasis.

1. The establishment of assessment manner should attach more importance to variety

The college course teaching obtains the feature of variety. So different courses require different disciplines of acknowledgement, which lead to different teaching pattern. Different instructors have different teaching characteristics, thus different teaching styles have been formed. The adoption of different teaching methods towards different teaching objects also leads to different teaching practices of "teach students in accordance of their aptitude". Therefore, the assessment on different subjects should bear different assessment indicators and different emphasis. Only in this way, can we "call a spade a spade" and our assessment will have pertinence. But there are also some common principles and teaching requirements in the course teaching. If every instructor demands a set of indicators and every subject deserves one set, there is no comparability. Thus the assessment has lost its meaning. So, in the establishment of assessment indicators and means, the unification and variety must be combined, so will the common requirements and stimulating individual development. Consulting the TAS in Washington University and the system of Kansas University, as well as the teaching assessment systems of Zhejiang University, Huazhong Science and Technology University in China, we hold, generally speaking, all the courses can be divided into four groups, which are the courses with lectures as the major form, those with discussion as the major form, those with experiment as the major form and those with operational practice as the major form. Such a way of division basically covers almost all the college courses, which extrudes different features of course teaching organization forms, instead of adding much to the difficulty of practical assessment organization due to too detailed a division. In order to meet the needs of the practice of network teaching or long-distance teaching, long-distance teaching assessment system can also be established in regard to its peculiarity. All the colleges can also choose different assessment means and mark off different assessment ranges according to their own characteristics.

2. The choice of rating date source should also bear variety

In order to guarantee the objectivity and fairness of assessment, which means that the students' rights of choosing and assessing teaching should be protected and the instructors' spirit of active exploration and pursuit of their own peculiar teaching styles, in the choice of assessment body, variation should be adopted. On one hand, the degree of students' assessment should be enhanced, because students are the whole-process participants, the body of teaching and the direct customers of education. For course teaching quality, it is they who have the say. In the meanwhile, some detailed rules of practice must be composed so as to guarantee the objectivity and fairness of assessment. On the other hand, the academic features of course teaching and the potentiality and backwardness of teaching quality decide that the mere assessment of the students cannot completely reflect the actual teaching reality. We have conducted an experiment, which is that the same assessment forum are filled in by 10 experts and 100 students about three instructors who teach the courses of these classes in this term, which are the theoretical course in natural science. The assessment was conducted after the final examination of the courses and assessment levels include: A(90 points and above), B (from 80 to 89), C (from 70 to 79), and D(below 70). The assessment outcome is: for one excellent instructor, the experts scored 93.5 points while the students scored 94.1 points; for one normal instructor, the scores of experts and students are respectively 62.8 and 63.5; but for one medium-level instructor, the students scored 70.9 points while the experts scored 83.6, the reason for which is that they believed the instructor had set quite difficult problems in the final examination, he was too strict with them, and he lectured too little. But the experts believed that the instructor's strict requirements to the students should be affirmed and less lectures instead of detailed ones, which was "lectured one, practiced two and examined three", fully reflected his exploration in teaching reform. In the analysis report of the students' assessment outcome, Pennsylvanian University in America also pointed out that "*The SRTE(Student Rating of Teaching Effectiveness) appears to be a dependable instrument that probably produces consistent student rating of individual instructor quality, when enough observations are taken.*" [15].

From the above, we can see that the mere assessment of the students is partial and the assessment body must be set through various channels according to a certain ratio. In recent years, we have adopted the four-part assessment pattern, in which assessment statistics are collected through the four channels of experts, students, counterparts and leaders, the ratios of which are respectively 25%, 50%, 15% and 10%. After being tested by the practice, it is quite effective and can basically reflect the reality of course teaching.

Conclusion

In summary, the modern College Course Teaching Quality Assessment should be conducted according to the requirements of the internationalization of higher education. It should strengthen the exchange, cooperation and mutual supplements between China and the West. And a scientific assessment system should be composed. In addition, an assessment of multi-channel, pluralism and variety should be carried out. The instructors should be encouraged and guided to convert the traditional "Teaching and Receiving" pattern. The students' subjectivity should also be stimulated. Implementing exploration teaching strategy, a new course teaching pattern combining lecturing and self-studying, discussion and exchange, guidance and research, theoretical study and learning practice, in-class teaching and after-class teaching,

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creativity and career creation, so as to uplift the comprehensive quality of fostered talents.

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