Research on Examination Reform in Independent Colleges

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Key words: Independent Colleges, Examination Management, Reform and Innovation.

Abstract. Most independent colleges originate from universities, which are closely related to their matrix universities in the aspect of examination management. Some even copy from their matrix universities, which not only lead to the loss of their independence, but also does not adapt to the training objectives of applied and technological innovation-oriented talents in independent colleges. This paper intends to explore the reform and innovation of examination management in independent colleges in terms of the existed problems.

Introduction

As an important part of China’s higher education, the independent college is a major measure to ensure the sustainable and healthy development of higher education. Good examination management is a significant part to guarantee the running effect of independent colleges so as to cultivate excellent talents that meet the needs of socialist construction and market economy. As an important part of the whole teaching work, the examination management in independent colleges plays a vital role in testing teaching effect, promoting teaching reform, improving teaching quality, evaluating students’ academic achievements and stimulating their learning enthusiasm. It also promotes teachers to understand students and improve teaching methods, so teaching and learning benefit each other. In reality, however, currently most independent colleges are copying from their matrix universities in the examination management. Although there are some adjustments, they are just superficial changes, which cannot meet the requirements of personnel training from academic, interdisciplinary talents to technical, innovative applied talents. Therefore, there are many problems to be solved in the examination management in independent colleges.

Present Situation of Examination Management

Examination management is a dynamic process, including question setting, examination, test form, invigilation, marking, evaluation, and feedback and so on. And it is an indispensable part of daily teaching. At present, some teachers have no thorough understanding of the examination management which is separated from the daily teaching. They think that the examination is the end of a course, a semester or a year. It is just to give students a score. It is short-term process that is of no importance. It is obvious that the examination is highly utilitarian because teachers just teach for the exam and students only study for the exam. This paper argues that the examination management should focus on the “process” rather than test scores, the number of students passing the exam and the passing rate. The following makes an analysis of the problems existing in the examination management from the aspects of question setting, test form, and invigilation.

Question Setting: Narrow Contents without Innovation

Question setting is the beginning of the whole examination management work. With a scientific, standardized and high-quality test paper, it can be said that the examination management work is half successful. In fact, question setting has not received the attention it deserves. Firstly, questions are mostly set up by one teacher. Some teachers do not follow the requirements of question setting in order to facilitate marking. As a result, objective questions with irrational distribution, narrow coverage and outdated content account for too much in the paper, while there are little or no
subjective questions which require students to use their knowledge to analyze and solve problems, with strong innovative practical ability. Secondly, teachers generally teach the same course for many years with similar teaching contents, and only students are different. This also has caused that teachers just make some revisions based on previous test papers. One type of questions is used for a long period of time. It is difficult to avoid the high repetition of contents. Thirdly, although there is an examination system of question setting, it is difficult to implement it. The examination of paper only stays on the surface. The head of the department responsible for the examination or in charge of the course only signs symbolically and fills in the form. They almost don’t care about the contents of the test paper, the types of questions, and methods. The effect and the purpose of the exam are hard to be achieved.

**Test Form: Single Approaches**

At present, the examination methods used by the school to evaluate students’ academic performance are generally written, oral, practical, and operational tests. The written test includes closed-book and open-book exams; the interview includes on-site questions answering, thesis defense, class discussion and speech, etc.; in addition, there are writing papers, social investigation reports, and computer experiments. Although there are various types of exams, about 90% of the examination methods in independent colleges are still limited to closed-book and open-book exams. Those two forms are simple and easy. Most of the examination contents are based on the basic theory, basic knowledge and basic skills of the teaching materials. There is no evaluation of students’ practical abilities, ignoring their consciousness of innovation. In terms of form, the school also favors standardized test questions. The answers are unified which are easy to answer and give marks. The comprehensive, evaluated and inquiry questions account for a very small proportion. This single examination form is limited to the assessment of students’ theoretical knowledge, lacking in approaches to evaluate their practical ability and overall quality, which cannot accurately show their ability to analyze and solve problems.

**Invigilation: No Strict Examination Disciplines**

Currently, the examinations in independent college are basically conducted in the last two weeks of the end of the semester. It is difficult to implement invigilation because of the concentration of examination time, the great scale and number of test papers, and the heavy burden of invigilation and marking, and many teachers believe that examinations are not part of the teaching contents. Due to limited marking time, teachers focus their work on marking the examination papers. During the invigilation process, they revise papers or do other things that are irrelated to invigilation. They are irresponsible regard of students’ various improper test behaviors, providing an opportunity for students cheating in exams. Owing to the single examination form, and the test content from teaching materials (the basic theory, basic knowledge and basic skills), the question types are generally blank filling, multiple choice, true or false, term explanation, short answer and discussion. Besides, teachers review the key points before the exam, so that the students in the independent college cram for a test and cheat, who have poorer quality, self-consciousness, initiative, and self-control than those of its matrix university. This phenomenon is still repeated which is difficult to be prevented.

**Reform and Innovation of Examination Management**

**To Establish a Scientific and Reasonable Examination Management System**

It is necessary to improve management methods, attach importance to process management, and make an entire supervision. The examination management should be conducted throughout the whole teaching process. The control of all aspects and details needs to be strengthened to improve the scientific level and quality of examination management, so that it can be transformed from extensive form to intensive form. The whole process must be supervised. The division of labor shall be clear. Different people are responsible for different aspects from question setting, examination,
test form, invigilation, marking, evaluation, and feedback and so on. Only in this way can a scientific and reasonable examination management system be established to achieve the true purpose and effect of the test, reflecting the authenticity, objectivity and impartiality of the test. Only in this way can make students change from passive learning to active learning. And the exam focuses more on the learning process than on the scores.

**To Reform the Question Setting Mode, Update the Exam Content, Enrich the Test Form, and Innovate the Exam Method**

Question setting and question examination are an important part of the exam as well as the key to measure the expected goals. Therefore, the quality of the question directly determines the validity of the test, and the question examination is a comprehensive check on the quality. For a high-quality test paper, it is necessary to reform the previous question setting mode, shifting from individual setting to the collective setting by the course group. And finally, the integrated test paper is passed to the person in charge to examine. At the same time, for some courses where only several teachers teach, it is necessary to step up the construction of the test bank. Before making the test paper, each question type is randomly combined from the test question bank according to its percentage to separate teaching and examination. This can avoid the phenomenon that teachers review key points, and that students cram for the test and cheat in exams. Besides, the more important is the examination content, which cannot be only the memory and reproduction of the knowledge in books.

According to the training objective and student characteristics in the independent college, in terms of question design, it should guide students to think independently, develop their innovative thinking and their problem-solving ability with knowledge, thus to prevent the occurrence of students “taking notes in class, reading notes after class, reciting notes in exams, but forgetting all after exams”. Students will become applied, technical and innovative talents with solid theoretical knowledge, strong practical and innovative ability, and high overall quality.

**To Improve Evaluation System, Strengthen Disciplines, and Emphasize on Feedback**

Most independent colleges have improper purposes of the exam, which is only a basis for students to obtain credits, awards, graduation certificates and diplomas. Teachers teach for the exam and give students grades; students study for the exam and obtain their grades. Moreover, the standards for the evaluation of excellent scholarships, and the selection of outstanding students are single, relying on scores, which mislead students to learn just for high grades. For this purpose, they even resort to cheating, resulting in bad examination atmosphere. Therefore, the independent college should establish an objective evaluation system which is complementary, multi-dimensional and comprehensive. The emphasis of the examination is laid on the process evaluation to reflect the central idea of “horizontally cover all aspects, vertically through the whole process”.

In terms of evaluating the academic performance, the school should strengthen the daily evaluation and emphasize the dynamic assessment of the entire teaching process. Each course takes multiple forms of assessment to conduct a comprehensive evaluation, avoiding that one test paper determines the final scores. The traditional evaluation system which is static, one-sided, and subjective should be reformed to become a system that is qualitative and quantitative with emphasis on both process and results. So, students can be encouraged to carry out active learning rather than exam-directed learning. In terms of appraisal, apart from students’ academic performance, the school needs to pay more attention to their ideological and political performance, progress, contributions to the community, practical and innovative ability, social practice, various types of competitions and grading tests, voluntary work and team spirit, thus to weaken the utilitarianism embodied in the exam to avoid only placing emphasis on scores. The school also should continue to establish and improve examination disciplines, and resolutely put an end to the improper tendencies in the exams, making sure that all violations are punished, which can help create a good examination atmosphere that encourages fair competition and advanced learning. The test paper analysis is an indispensable part of a complete examination process. It is the qualitative and quantitative analysis of students’ question answering and the quality of the test papers based on the
results. Through the analysis, both teaching and learning situation can be known, which can promote teachers to reflect on previous teaching activities and improve teaching methods and teaching quality. Meanwhile, the pros and cons of the questions can also be found through the test paper analysis, which can provide reference for future question setting work and improve its quality.

**To Establish and Improve a Management System**

To establish a sound management system, on the one hand, it is necessary to build a scientific, reasonable and effective examination management system, as well as a comprehensive evaluation system, guiding students to learn for the sake of learning instead of studying for exams. On the other hand, it is more important to establish a management system that is conducive to teachers. At present, the assessment of teachers in most independent colleges mainly includes teaching and research. The scientific research has a great advantage in the teacher’s personal title assessment, income and social status. At the same time, some institutions in the society evaluate the school’s comprehensive ranking based on its research level. So, it puts more stress on teachers’ scientific research than teaching in the evaluation, which has caused both schools and teachers not pay attention to teaching and academic examinations and lacks efforts and support. In addition, this kind of evaluation system that focuses on scientific rather than teaching makes teachers neglect their most basic duty—teaching, because they are engaged in research for their titles, papers and projects, leading to a lack of responsibility for classroom teaching. However, teachers are the main undertakers for training specialized talents. Teaching is always an important responsibility that teachers should undertake. Therefore, it is suggested that the independent college should fully embody teachers’ contributions in teaching when formulating the management system for the evaluation of teachers. Schools should regularly carry out teaching competitions to select teaching masters and offer some preferential policies for excellent teachers in title evaluation, job promotion, advanced teacher selection, etc., so that they can achieve the same sense of achievement as from the scientific research. Teachers attach importance to both teaching and research, relieving them of their worries, so that they can be devoted to classroom teaching and teaching reform. And they will improve academic examinations, teaching quality, and thereby improving teaching style and learning atmosphere, forming a virtuous circle. Finally, independent colleges can accomplish the mission to cultivate qualified talents for the country.

**References**


