



A Study of College Teacher Assessment Systems in China and the United States

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Abstract

This article introduces American college teacher assessment system, which consists of Summative Evaluation and Formative Evaluation. On this basis, difference of college teacher assessment systems in China and the United States is explored to obtain enlightenment for our country's college teacher assessment mechanism.

Key words: College teacher assessment mechanism; Summative evaluation; Formative evaluation; TGA systems in America

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INTRODUCTION

College teacher assessment is an activity during which college teachers' working results or potential value is assessed (Cao, 2012). Assessment on teachers is an essential part in college teacher management, which can directly conduct, stimulate, and regulate teachers' concept and action. During assessment, teachers' working achievement is examined, teachers' short-term development is promoted, teachers' professional improvement is guided and teachers' initiative is motivated. As a result, teaching burnout would be effectively solved.

1. AMERICAN COLLEGE TEACHER ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

Currently, TGA (Teacher Growth and Assessment) system is the assessment system which is carried out in most American states. Consisting of Summative Evaluation and Formative Evaluation, this system combined assessment of students' learning outcomes and teachers' professional development. Summative Evaluation emphasizes accountability, to ensure that the teachers' teaching achieves the requirement of the state and national standard. Teachers would be given advice according to their performance. Formative Evaluation assists teachers who perform better in Summative Evaluation by providing them with personal professional development evaluation and its feedback information. Evaluation ways are diverse, including executive report, self-evaluation, classroom observation, student reaction, learning outcomes, interviews with students and parents, etc.

1.1 Summative Evaluation in TGA

Summative Evaluation is aimed to provide a systematic teaching approach for new teachers and teachers in need. To get to the standard of states and nation, teachers' teaching quality is assessed and their professional development is given advice. TGA offers a progressive performance management to strengthen teachers' knowledge and teaching skill. The implementation processes are as following:

(a) Have an explanation meeting to inform teachers who will be assessed.

(b) Take the first time classroom teaching observation, then talk to the teacher.

(c) Take the second time classroom teaching observation, then talk with the teacher.

(d) Make a summary or take the final talk with the teacher.

(e) Check up teachers' teaching plans materials for grading.

(f) Have a meeting with assessment personnel after finishing the talk with teachers.

(g) Put forward proposals for the assessment and teachers' professional development.

In the last process, if the teacher's performance is excellent, he or she would be recommended to have the Formative Evaluation; if the teacher's performance is just OK, he or she would be recommended to accept the Summative Evaluation once more; if the teacher's performance is barely satisfactory, she

or she would be recommended to have an especial assessment.

There are 22 progressive assessment standards in TGA which are conformed with NBPTS (National Board for Professional Teaching Standard). The first-year teachers have to come up to at least 12 standards stipulated in NBPTS. The second-year teachers have to come up to another 7 standards besides the previous 12 standards. The third-year teachers have to come up to all the 22 standards. The assessment follows a triennial circle. 22 standards are as following (Table 1):

Table 1
Key Points of Summative Evaluation

Key points of teaching assessment	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
1. Long-term and coherent syllabus	◎	◎	▲
2. Combination of courses	▲	■	■
3. Preparation for teaching aids and materials	▲	■	■
4. Course content	▲	■	■
5. Presentation of subject knowledge	◎	▲	■
6. Adequacy and speed of course	◎	◎	▲
7. Use of technology	◎	▲	■
8. Effective teaching strategies	◎	▲	■
9. Strategies for students below standard	▲	■	■
10. Questioning skills	◎	▲	■
11. Analysis of learning outcome	◎	◎	■
12. Course assignment	◎	■	■
13. Feedback to students	▲	■	■
14. Control of class	▲	■	■
15. Expectation for students' reaching standard	▲	■	■
16. Students' interest and participation	▲	■	■
17. Classroom climate	▲	■	■
18. Students' progress and achievements	▲	■	■
19. Contribution to school activities	◎	▲	■
20. Professional development	◎	▲	■
21. Helpful interaction with students	▲	■	■
22. Record of teaching score	▲	■	■

Note. ◎ means it needs to be improved but is not for scoring

▲ means it's a key point for scoring

■ means it's a continuing performance point for scoring

The key point of assessment for the 1st year teachers is their basic competence of teaching, including combination of courses, preparation for teaching aids and materials, course content, strategies for students below standard, feedback to students, control of class, expectation for students' reaching standard, students' interest and participation, classroom climate, students' progress and achievements, flexible interaction with students, and record of teaching score. For the 1st year teachers, the summative assessment system ensures that they have basic

teaching skills. If a teacher fails to reach the standard, he or she would be trained to guarantee the quality of teaching. The key point of the 2nd year is teaching skills and professional growth, including presentation of subject knowledge, use of technology, effective teaching strategies, questioning skills, contribution to school activities, and professional development. The key points of the 3rd year include long-term and coherent syllabus, adequacy and speed of course, and analysis of learning outcome.

1.2 Formative Evaluation in TGA

Teachers who perform excellent in Summative Evaluation are suggested to accept a more thorough assessment, Formative Evaluation, in which teachers are encouraged to try new teaching skills or strategies to promote students' learning achievements. There are four essential points in Formative Evaluation:

- (a) Set up teaching objectives according to teachers' self-assessment and advice from Summative Evaluation.
- (b) Choose support system which can help reach goal.
- (c) Choose ways of feedback (Peer review and conversation, teaching archives, etc.).
- (d) Evaluate students' learning progress and achievements.

Formative Evaluation is made for experienced teachers to implement in-depth teaching. During Formative Evaluation, teachers may set up teaching objectives, make self-examination, do self-assessment, check students' learning results, and try new teaching methods or strategies. Students' learning progress

is assessed by the school. In all, teachers' special requirements and professional development are taken seriously.

In the 1st year, TGA system assesses teachers' teaching level and guides teachers in need to improve their teaching quality. It takes 3 years to finish a progressive circulation in TGA to assist teachers' development. If a teacher meets with significant difficulties, he or she would be accurately assisted to improve teaching performance.

The goal of assessment is to "improve teaching and learning". (Bloom, 1987) Problems in teaching would be exposed during Formative Evaluation, which is beneficial for teachers' self-examination and professional development. Policies on promoting education quality can also be made on the basis of Formative Evaluation.

1.3 TGA Systems in America: Taking East Grand Rapid School District as an Example

There are 3 teacher evaluation systems (Table 2) in East Grand Rapid School District in Michigan: the 1st year teacher system, career development system, and assisting teacher system. Teachers can choose the one they need.

Table 2
Three Systems for Teacher Evaluation

System 1 for beginning teachers	System 2 for senior teachers	System 3 for teachers in need
Target teachers: ●Teaching less than 4 years	Target teachers: ●Long-term teaching and well-performed	Target teachers: ●Need assistance to get to standards
Objectives: ●Ensure teachers know and perform qualified teaching ●Offer help to get to qualified teaching ●Offer materials as reference for employment	Objectives: ●Promote professional development ●Promote students' achievements ●Focus on school reform proposal	Objectives: ●Offer help to long-term teachers ●Offer long-term teachers with systematic support ●Offer help at procedure aspect
Source of data: ●Observation of ferial performance ●Archives ●Introspection ●Teaching instructor	Source of data: ●Informal observation ●Develop professional promotion	Source of data: Three stages: Detection stage Assistance stage Review stage
Means: ●Review teaching observation ●Check archives ●Discuss profession affairs ●Counselor's support	Means: ●Informal discussion on teachers' performance ●Cooperation between teachers and administrative staff ●Set up standard to measure progress ●Administrative staff offer help ●Offer feedback to teachers	Means: ●Observe teaching weakness and give feedback

In terms of objectives of assessment, system for beginning teachers is to ensure teachers' teaching growth and accountability by offering assistance and implementing evaluation. In system for senior teachers, based on their growth needs, teachers are allowed to make professional development plans, cooperatively or individually. At the same time, in order to be more professional, teachers would get help from peer instructor and administrative staff.

In terms of evaluation standard, the first two systems take all TGA standards to assess, while system 3 may take a different standard according to teachers' degree of needing assistance .

In terms of evaluation process, for the beginning teachers, the means to get evaluation data include

observation of ferial performance and feedback, check of the archives, discussion on professional affairs, and support from teaching instructor. Means of assessment for professional development system is adopting development plans whose process consists of informal discussion on teachers' performance, professional development plans made by teams of teachers or individual teachers, and feedback. In system for teachers in need, teachers' weaknesses in teaching are observed and given feedback.

In addition, the implementation of professional development takes 4 years as a circulation. In the 1st three years, teachers are supposed to take part in planned activities to improve professional competence and to

form Formative Evaluation. In the 4th year, Summative Evaluation is implemented. If the evaluation result is up to standard, the 4-year circulation is once again implemented. If the result doesn't meet the standard, improvement plan for teachers in need is implemented.

2. DIFFERENCE OF TEACHER EVALUATION SYSTEM BETWEEN CHINESE AND AMERICAN COLLEGES

After analyzing American TGA system, similarities and difference of teacher evaluation system between Chinese and American colleges can be compared.

2.1 Comparison of Evaluation Subjects

In terms of evaluation subjects, there are policy-making bodies both in American and Chinese colleges, in which administrators take the role of leaders. The different point is that ordinary teachers in American colleges are also crucial personnel in policy-making bodies. In contrast, in Chinese colleges, ordinary teachers are not included in policy-making bodies.

Subjects of American college teacher evaluation are diversified, including students, ordinary teachers, professors, administrators in department of personnel and teaching affairs, and experts from other colleges, etc. Diversity of evaluation subjects would make evaluation process more fair and reasonable, and evaluation results would be more authoritative. By endowing ordinary teachers with speaking rights, democracy of management is reflected, positivity of teachers is called forth. With advanced evaluation experience, experts from other colleges can promote the evaluation level. What's more, experts from other colleges can also avoid prejudice with the first impression, impact from group psychology, and abuse with discrimination.

2.2 Comparison of Evaluation System

The goal of American college teacher evaluation system is to improve the quality of teaching, researching, and serving, add teachers' honor, and raise the school-running level. The goal of Chinese college evaluation system is to promote improvement and development through evaluation, and to raise teaching standard. There is evaluation of teaching level and teachers' basic workload in the assessment of Chinese college teachers' performance, which weighs much in the assessment system. The purpose of teachers' performance evaluation system is to deepen the reform of educational personnel system and advance performance-based pay system.

The result of evaluation is taken as an objective foundation to decide teachers' promotion, job rotation, salary, welfare, rewards and punishments. It's also an objective basis to make teachers' career development plans and offer educational training. The result of evaluation

is directly related to teachers' salary, so teachers' work positivity would be influenced definitely.

The cognition of performance assessment in Chinese colleges is still restricted at the level of "assessment". The lack of integration of the outside world situation with their own situation leads to half-baked performance assessment systems, which are obviously a practice of lack of respect and care for teachers.

2.3 Comparison of Evaluation Results

In American colleges, the department chair would feed back teachers' evaluation results to the teacher face to face. While in Chinese colleges, only "excellent" evaluation results are posted on publicity. And there is no personal improvement plan in the feedback. Therefore, developmental teacher assessment should be emphasized in our country's colleges. As a kind of formative and future-oriented evaluation, developmental teacher assessment not only pays close attention to teachers' past achievements, but also determines the professional development needs of teachers' personal future and formulates their direction of professional development according to teachers' past work performance.

Developmental teacher assessment features laying emphasize on teachers' future development, individual values, and developing teachers' positivity and initiative. Therefore, in teachers' evaluation system, colleges should not only pay attention to teachers' objective performance, but also pay attention to teachers' future development, so as to promote teachers' "growth". Based on teacher-oriented concept, teachers' professional development should be promoted. During teachers' evaluation activities, teachers' professional development would be given effective help and support. What's more, teachers' self-planning, self-reflection would be guided to regulate their behavior, promote professional quality, and realize self-development.

2.4 Make Scientific Evaluation Criteria

Teacher evaluation is a means of management and examination for human resource. For some evaluation items, which are hard to collect statistics and evidence, quantitative standard could be adopted. Hence, evaluation efficiency will be much higher. For example, the workload of teacher's counseling service could be measured by the number of students who have received counseling and the cumulative counseling time; the workload of research service could be measured by cumulative amount, etc. But singular quantified evaluation is difficult to reflect college teachers' working content accurately. Quantified evaluation would bring many negative impacts on teachers' teaching innovation and motivation. Therefore, scientific and reasonable teacher evaluation criteria should be set up to give teachers direction of making efforts. In this case, the reform of teacher evaluation can also be developed in

a more positive direction. Measures such as respecting teachers' individual differences in evaluation can help to establish more scientific and reasonable evaluation standards for teachers.

3. ENLIGHTENMENT OF AMERICAN TGA SYSTEM FOR CHINESE COLLEGES TEACHER ASSESSMENT

Quantified assessment should be changed into assessment in which "quality" weighs more. In college teacher assessment, it's important to focus on quality. Evaluation should reflect the characteristics of teachers' work and the diversity of types of colleges, disciplines and teachers. It's quality instead of quantity of teachers' work that should be highlighted. The paper should have the requirement of quantity and quality. If the number of papers is the only measure of teachers' assessment, teachers would publish their papers in pursuit of quantity, which would inevitably affect the quality of the paper. If teachers are thinking about how they're going to get more money instead of thinking about how they're going to get the project done better, the quality of their academic work would get a lot of impact.

Teachers' professional development should be paid attention to. Teachers' growth and evaluation system is an evaluation whose key point should be teachers' professional development, rather than the performance assessment in Summative Evaluation. Therefore, it is very important to carry out professional development activities after evaluation. Teachers' professional development can be promoted in the help of professional teams. The evaluation of teachers' professional development can also promote teachers' organizational learning, including promoting teachers' self-reflection, sharing, dialogue and cooperation, partnership, and improvement of teaching activities, etc. If the college can successfully create a learning environment, in which teachers cooperate with each other, respect each other and help each other, sincere dialogue, self-reflection, professional development evaluation would be motivated.

Different types of evaluation system should be adopted. There is no optimal evaluation system for teacher evaluation, even so, it is not proper for colleges to use only one evaluation system for all teachers. Colleges can adopt different teachers' evaluation models according to different types of teachers, different levels of teachers, and different disciplines. Full-time teachers in colleges can

be classified into following four categories: teachers who give priority to teach-researching work, teachers who give priority to scientific research work, teachers who give priority to teaching work, teachers who work on social service and technology promotion. Different evaluation systems can be set up according to the four different types of teachers in colleges.

The content of Chinese teacher evaluation system should include the evaluation criteria, evaluation implementation process and feedback of evaluation results, etc. Because current domestic academia have not in-depth studied our teachers' evaluation policy, we have no access to the text content of teacher evaluation policy based on empirical survey data. However, review on the practice of teacher evaluation in Chinese colleges can still stimulate our reflection and conception on the content of our teachers' evaluation policy. In practice, the situation of teacher evaluation is not optimistic. College teacher evaluation gives priority to "possessing system" which features "top-down and administrative control" (Li, 2008, pp.52-55). The reality of teacher evaluation is that quantity is seen as more important than quality, and singular standard is prevailed. For example, quantity of teachers' research projects and publications are highlighted.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above situation, the content of teacher evaluation system in our country should be rethought. The dynamic longitudinal process of policy execution should be defined clearly. Besides, the content must contain many horizontal factors, such as: evaluation methods, evaluation personnel, evaluation standard, evaluation process, feedback on evaluation results and utilization of evaluation results, etc. That is to say, the content system of teacher evaluation policy in Chinese colleges should include at least evaluation standards, evaluation of implementation and feedback of the evaluation results, etc.

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