

Efficacy Losing and Functions Regaining of Academic Test in Universities

Ying OU^{1, a}, Ping ZHAO^{1, b,*}

¹ Institute of Foreign Language, Yunnan Agricultural University, Kun Ming, China

^a 1606939855@qq.com, ^b 1151095343@qq.com

*corresponding author

ABSTRACT. Academic examination in universities has multiple functions, such as stimulating teaching, assessing teaching effect. At present, the common problems, such as rigid examination contents and forms, lacking of information feedback and exam cheating severely, lead to academic examinations losing efficacy. It will play a great role in the purification of examination discipline and academic atmosphere and in the improvement of teaching quality and students quality to take measures to play functions of academic examinations effectively.

KEYWORDS: Academic examination, University, Function

1. Introduction

Academic examination is to test students' progress that they have got in knowledge mastery and ability development during a period of study, that is, to test the degree of students' learning to achieve teaching objectives.[1] The academic examination of common colleges and universities includes formative tests, mid-term exam, final exam, graduation design (thesis), etc.

2. Due Functions of Academic Test

Academic examinations mainly have the following functions.

2.1 Evaluation Function

Academic examination plays an evaluation role in teachers' teaching effect and students' learning effectiveness. Examination is a basic way to evaluate education and a quantitative evaluation of educators and educatees. The examination grades always contain two aspects: one thing is "the quantity and quality of knowledge mastered by students, the accuracy and proficiency of skills, and the level of ability development";[2] the other is the actual effect of teachers' teaching. Examination is an important means and basis for schools to evaluate teachers' teaching effect.

2.2 Diagnostic and Stimulative Functions

No matter what type of academic examination, it has more or less diagnostic and stimulative functions. Through the academic examination, teachers and students can not only understand the changes and progress of their teaching and learning, but also find out the actual or possible problems. These realistic and potential problems are the starting point and basis for us to think and promote teaching and learning.[3]The feedback information from the exam can help teachers analyze their teaching problems, thus improving teaching; and it helps students find out their advantages, disadvantages and omissions in the study of this course, thus improving their study.

2.3 Guidance and Incentive Function

Examinations can guide students' learning. To a large extent, what students will learn depends on the content of exams. Scientific examination can guide people to study in the right direction. Unscientific examinations, such as those that stress on the recognition or reappearance of knowledge, will restrict the development of students' ability to observe,

imagine and diverge their thinking.[4]The incentive function is embodied in two aspects: it can promote learning through exam, which can promote students to learn, inspire them as well as promote teachers to teach seriously; Examination is both pressure and motivation. As far as students are concerned, examination can strengthen learning their motivation, stimulate their learning interest, promote them to review their lessons in time, and consolidate and deepen their knowledge. As far as teachers are concerned, it can urge them to consciously integrate teaching objectives into the teaching process, adjust and improve teaching contents and methods in a targeted way, and continuously improve teaching quality.[5]

3. Academic Examinations Losing Efficacy

Theoretically, academic examination has many functions. However, in practice, the various functions of academic examination in colleges and universities have not worked very well due to the problems in the form, content, teachers and students' understanding and utilization of the examination. In fact, academic examination has lost its due functions. At present, the general problems existing in academic examinations in China's universities mainly lie in the following three aspects.

3.1 The Rigid Pattern and Content of the Examination

Most of the academic exams in colleges and universities in China are conducted in written exams, with closed-book exams as the main form, and a few courses are conducted open-book exams or papers. There are more written tests but fewer oral defense, and more assessments of theoretical knowledge, but less assessments of ability on practice and skill operation. Examination emphasizes knowledge memory and neglects practical innovation. The content of the exam is too concentrated on the examination of teaching materials but lacks questions that reflect students' comprehensive ability and creativity. This kind of exam is not beneficial to stimulating students' extracurricular study and expanding students' knowledge, but will lead students to memorize by rote.

3.2 Getting Good Grades by Cramming At the Last Moment

It is a "unspoken rule" of the academic examination in colleges and universities to underline key points or exam range before the examination. Students enjoy this rule very much, and teachers either voluntarily or passively carry out this rule. As a result, students are indulged in cramming before exam and forgetting after the exam. In the long run, the deterioration of school spirit and academic atmosphere is inevitable.

3.3 Widespread Cheating in the Exam

Cheating in the exam is widespread in many universities' academic examination which has developed from traditional means to modern high-tech tools, such as mobile phone and wireless headphones. "Helping each other" in the examination is regarded as a code of brotherhood. Few people are ashamed of cheating, and conversely, they are proud of cheating successfully. Cheating not only undermines the principles of fairness and justice in examinations, but also makes it difficult for examinations to play an incentive role for students to learn. The negative impact of cheating is all-round and long-term.

4. The Causes Leading to the Above Problems

There are mainly three causes leading to the problems mentioned above.

4.1 Ossified Traditional Ideas

The traditional view of education holds that teachers are the imparters of knowledge, the classroom is the place where knowledge is imparted, the purpose of learning is to master knowledge, students who are good at examination are "excellent" students, and closed-book examination is the best or even the only way to evaluate students' quality. This kind of ossified traditional concept and fixed thinking is deeply rooted in the minds of some people, making teachers attach importance to knowledge indoctrination and neglect ability training in teaching. Under the condition that "the lecturer is responsible for setting the exam" and "teaching and examination are in combination all the times", teachers will naturally pay attention to examining students' memory of knowledge from the textbook they teach at class in tests. Many teachers have not seriously think over how to guide students to learn widely and develop their abilities through examinations, and how to test students' qualities other than remembering knowledge from the textbook through various

examinations.

4.2 Teachers' Professional Skills and Professional Ethics Needing to Be Improved

Needless to say, the closed-book examination, which is mainly based on objective questions, has the remarkable characteristics of simplicity, easy implementation and easy marking. Its objectivity can also minimize the disputes between teachers and students over the evaluation results. It is of great benefit to reduce the workload of teachers and some disputes caused by students' dissatisfaction with the evaluation results. Examination methods such as papers, oral tests, or small subjects research undoubtedly cost teachers more time and energy. In addition, designing an examination that can effectively promote students' learning and develop intelligence has higher requirements for teachers' professional skills and comprehensive quality.

On the one hand, emphasizing the key points before the examination not only shows that teachers lack confidence in their teaching effect, but also exposes the problems existing in teachers' professional ethics. On the other hand, the reason of underlining key points may be because of teachers' poor teaching effect at class or their intention to get a good evaluation from students.

4.3 Traditional Examination Bringing Conveniences for Cheating

closed-book examination, which focuses on objective questions, makes conveniences for cheating. Perhaps, we need to have a deeper understanding of cheating. Instead of passively preventing and punishing, it is better to actively adopt various counseling methods. Academic tests in universities can adopt some new ways in which cheating are impossible or unnecessary, such as open-book examinations, interviews, academic reports or essays.

5. Regaining Functions of Academic Test in Universities

While evaluating teaching, academic examination in colleges and universities should play a more important role in promoting teaching. Due functions of academic test can be regained from the following aspects.

5.1 To Increase Teachers Training and Promote Teachers Development

Teachers are the people who design, question, implement and get feedback in the academic examinations. Teachers' professional level directly determines the quality of examination paper. Teachers' views on education and talents directly determine their teaching methods, curriculum examination methods and examination contents. The level of teachers' professional ethics determines whether they are willing to do their best for the all-round development of students under the condition that there is no pressure from teaching quality competition. Therefore, to improve the quality of academic examination, teachers should not be ignored. Increasing teachers training, promoting teacher development and establishing high-quality university teachers are the premise and foundation for reforming academic examination and promoting teaching quality in universities.

5.2 To Establish Diversified Examination Forms to Improve the Scientificity of the Examination

Various forms of examinations should be adopted according to the curriculum system, teaching content and students' characteristics, in addition to close-book and opening-book exams, forms such as oral test, skill show, project, essay and experiment could be applied to assess students' comprehensive quality and ability, which makes the evaluation more scientifically, comprehensively and effectively reflect students' comprehensive quality, and embody the value orientation of giving priority to ability assessment and supplement by knowledge test. At the same time, teachers should try their best to study how to effectively improve the scientificity of examination questions, focusing on examining students' ability to solve problems by knowledge they learned, rather than rote memory. Diversified and scientific examinations can not only effectively prevent cheating, but also effectively guide the development of students' abilities and promote the improvement of teachers' teaching methods and teaching quality.

5.3 Take Measures to Effectively Play Various Functions of Academic Examination

Firstly, at the beginning of teaching, teachers should make scientific curriculum teaching tasks and make a comprehensive thinking and analysis on curriculum objectives. The general contents, methods and evaluation criteria of formative and summative academic examinations should be built accordingly. Secondly, teachers should try their

best to design scientific and reasonable examination forms and contents when making academic examination questions after teaching activities, so that students' knowledge and ability can be truly and comprehensively embodied in the examination. Of course, this has higher requirements for teachers' professional quality and insight as educators. Thirdly, teachers should attach great importance to formative tests and examination paper analysis, so that they could make full use of the function of examination to promote teaching. In the teaching process, teachers should arrange diagnostic quizzes in the light of actual progress of teaching and students' class reactions, so as to clarify students' perplexity and their own shortcomings in teaching through the quizzes.

6. Conclusion

In a word, the scientific understanding of the function of academic examination in colleges and universities, the continuous improvement of academic examination in form and content, and the improvement of its scientificity will play a huge role in purifying examination discipline and academic atmosphere, improving the quality of higher education teaching and the quality of university students.

References

- [1] Liu Haifeng. *History of Examination in China*. Wuhan: Central China Normal University Press, pp.350-390, 2002.
- [2] Pan Maoyuan. *Higher Education*. Beijing: People's Education Press, pp.295, 1984.
- [3] Xu Jicun, Xu Wenbin. *Curriculum and Teaching Methodology*. Beijing: Higher Education Press, no.12, pp.214, 2009.
- [4] Liao Pingsheng. *Theory of Examination*. Wuhan: Central China Normal University Press, no.9, pp.147, 2003.
- [5] Liao Pingsheng. *Nature and Function of Examination*. *Examinations Research*, no.1, pp.14-18, 2002.