Exploration and Practice of Graded Teaching in Private Colleges

Liang-Gui FENG¹,a,*

¹Dean's Office, Xiamen Institute of Technology, Xiamen, Fujian 361024, P.R. China
aemail: fenglg2002@sina.com
*Corresponding author

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Abstract. Under the background of popularization of higher education, private colleges and universities in China have realized the rapid development of the school scale, how to ensure the quality of education has become a broadly concerned topic. In order to provide reference for similar institutions, in this paper we introduce our exploration and practice of graded teaching in three public basic courses: Higher Mathematics, College Physics and College English.

Introduction

According to the Report on Higher Education Quality in China, issued by the Ministry of Education, in 2015 China had a total of 2852 colleges and universities, the number of college students reached 37 million, and the gross enrollment rate reached 40%. Chinese higher education has changed from elite education to the popularized education. Moreover, it is expected that by 2019, the gross enrollment rate of higher education in our country will reach more than 50%, and then our higher education will step into the universal stage. During this period, as an important product of the popularization of higher education, private colleges and universities of China have made outstanding contributions to alleviate the shortage of public higher education resources. But, on the other hand people are also eager to expect private colleges and universities can innovate teaching ideas, promote teaching reforms to ensure the quality of teaching to meet the requirements of the new era. Withal, Xiamen Institute of Technology(XIT for short), as a private university, began our lasting explorations and practices from the date of its founding, in which the graded teaching is one of measures in the reform and practice of our school. This article intends to introduce the practice of graded teaching in our school, with a view to provide reference for similar institutions.

Necessity of Implementing Graded Teaching

As known, the public universities in our country refer to the universities which are hosted by the state, and whose funding is (at least partially) provided by the state, while private colleges and universities refer to the social-oriented institutions of higher education, which are organized by the enterprise organizations, social groups, other social organizations or citizens with non-state financial education funding. After the promulgation and implementation of the “Private Education Promote Law” and the “Regulations for the Implementation of Private Education Promotion Law”, for achieving enough room, private colleges have developed rapidly. However, since the history of a private university is generally not long, and the funds for running school are mainly raised by the organisers through various channels, private colleges and universities have a low starting point and weak foundation in common. Coupled with the rapid expansion in recent years, then it has become an urgent problem to be solved for private college how to ensure and improve the quality of education and teaching. Considering this, it is necessary to innovate the ideas of education and promote the reform of teaching with the characteristics of private colleges and universities.

Under the background of popularization of higher education, private colleges and universities present many new features. Take our school as an example, with the sharp rise of college enrollment number, the status of students have changed dramatically: firstly, the diversity of students is more prominent. In XIT, the local students (i.e. students in Fujian Province) accounted for up to 90% five
years ago, while in the past three years, the proportion of students from other provinces has gradually increased, and even the students from the other provinces accounted for more than 40% last year. Secondly, the comprehensive quality of students is uneven, and the span grows. Due to the increase in the number of admissions, the region differences of students are greater, and note that, there is an obvious gap on the education level and teaching quality among regions in China, it leads the difference increases of the cultural foundation of the students before entering college. Among them, of course some are of good foundations, but most have relatively poor foundations compared to that of public universities. Thirdly, private college students are commonly devoid of persistent self-discipline and self-control, lack of autonomous learning ability, at the same time they often have hobbies, specialty advantages, a stronger sense of self-awareness and self-esteem, and a strong desire to get social recognition and reasonable treatment.

Based on the above, as a breakthrough of innovating teaching ideas, we carry out graded teaching as an important content of the construction of quality engineering in our school, because when we make a comprehensive survey on the system engineering of the quality assurance and improvement, curriculum teaching is the most important component.

**Implementation Scheme of Graded Teaching**

The overall idea of implementing graded teaching in our college is: students are graded, courses are divided into modules. We adopt multiple methods and offer different layers of teaching demand according to different students, so as to take care of students' individual learning expectation. In the management, we adjust the teaching operation mechanism, adjust the allocation of resources, and implement the flexible management.

In the past five years, our school has mainly carried out the graded teaching to three public basic courses: Higher Mathematics, College Physics and College English, where the implementation schemes of graded teaching on the courses of Mathematics and Physics are as follows.

**Level and Standard**

1. **Level A**: Give students lessons in strict accordance with the syllabus. The teaching content is deep, and with a wider range of knowledge, to lay the foundation for further study after completing their undergraduate education.

2. **Level B**: Give lessons according to the requirements of the syllabus. The knowledge module of the course will be selected appropriately to complete the undergraduate teaching objectives.

**Grading Method**

1. **Grading objects**: Freshmen.

2. **Students are only divided into two levels**: Level A and Level B. In Higher Mathematics we design the number of students with A level accounts for 10% of the total number of students studying this course, while set the rest as that with B level. In College Physics, we let the number of students with A level account for 15% of the total number of students studying the course, while let the rest be with B level.

3. **We filter them by the college entrance examination scores of subjects Mathematics and English, and determine finally who is in A level in Higher Mathematics. In this way we also determine the people into the A level in College Physics, but the two college entrance examination subjects providing us main basis are Physics and Mathematics.**

**Teaching Management**

1. **Dynamic management**: Make proper adjustments for students on A level and B level, according to the results of their learning, especially the score of the final examination of this course in the first semester.
(2) Placement guideline: Academic Affairs Division divides them into classes uniformly. All the A level students are put into only a class. But for the B level students only those in the same major are arranged in one class as far as possible, in order to strengthen the management of teaching process.

(3) Assessment mode: The final examination result and the peacetime achievement constitute a comprehensive evaluation result, in which the final exam result and the peacetime achievement account for 70% and 30% respectively in the hundred-mark system. The peacetime achievement consists of the class-attendance, assignment, class participation and classroom discipline. The A level students and the B level students use the same paper in the final exam, with the aim of testing students' learning effect in a more fair and reasonable way, and reducing the trouble in keeping paper in the archives.

Compared with that of the two courses above, the implementation scheme of English graded teaching in our college shows some differences as following.

First, the grading method is different. The time for grading is set at the end of the first year in college. Based on the CET-4 scores, the students are divided into two levels: A level and B level, those fail in CET-4 are put on B level, and a class consisting of B level students is called a regular class. The students who have passed CET-4 are designated as A level students, furthermore on the basis of their CET-4 scores they will also be divided into three categories: “specially excellent”, “excellent” and “good” respectively, and designated as A1, A2 and A3. We usually call a class consisting of A level students an advanced class.

Secondly, a more tailored teaching standard of each level is offered. We draft the teaching standard at each level according to the general requirements and higher requirements of the “College English Curriculum Requirements” of the Ministry of Education. For the students in regular class, we require them, with the CET-4 as the goal, to learn General English III and IV(They completed General English I and II in the freshman year). But for the students in advanced class we require them to learn advanced courses, instead of general courses, of college English aiming to teach on demand. To highlight the characteristics of our school, we stipulate that the advanced courses of college English are composed of three kinds of courses: practical examination, special use and cross-cultural communication. A student from advanced class should take and pass at least one of practical examination courses and one of special use courses. Cross-cultural communication courses are set up as public elective courses.

In the examination ways, the semester comprehensive evaluation of the course results from three parts: the usual results (30%), mid-term exam and final exam scores (60%), and oral proficiency test scores (10%). This comprehensive performance evaluation method fully reflects the idea of trinity assessment composed of "process assessment, summative assessment, spoken language ability assessment", checks students' English proficiency more scientifically, and provides us a good information feedback of the educational process.

Effect of Graded Teaching

Since the implementation of the grading teaching in Xiamen Institute of Technology, remarkable results have been achieved. Taking Higher Mathematics as an example, the passing rate and excellent rate have risen sharply, the examination results also changed the previous multi-peak state, showing a normal distribution. XIT has achieved success in the Mathematics Competition of Chinese College Students for three consecutive years, ranking the forefront of private colleges in Fujian.

Graded teaching breaks through the traditional "big pot" education mode of public basic courses, which validly brings about the transformation from the traditional teacher-centred teaching mode to learner-centered teaching mode. In particular, in the courses of English and Maths, which are two important courses in the postgraduate entrance examination, the traditional "big pot" education mode causes part of the students cannot “eat enough”, while another part of the students feel too much for them, and thus it seriously affects individual learning progress. The graded teaching provides an alternative menu for the students with different basic and different aspirations, which equips the good student with a solid foundation for further study after completing his(or her) undergraduate
education, and makes the student with a weak foundation get a comprehensive development by focusing on teaching the basic knowledge. After the implementation of graded teaching, the total number of students, who get offer by overseas universities or are admitted to domestic graduate school, has achieved a leap growth. In the class of 2013 there are only 5 people who succeed obtaining offer by overseas universities or being admitted to graduate school in China, while since the class of 2015, this number is stable at more than 32 each year.

Xiamen Institute of Technology is a private college giving priority to engineering, the annual enrollment in recent years is about 3000. The implementation of graded teaching promotes students' individual development, and has an positive effect on the development of good style of teaching and study. Considering the students in B calss have poor foundations, teachers emphasis more for them the basic concepts and basic ideas, which is very suitable for their situation, consequently most of them can make a great progress after a semester. This greatly boosts their confidence, at the same time, the existence of A class also makes them aware of the gap. In this way, it not only inspires students' independent learning consciousness, but also effectively protects their self-esteem since most people are in B class, they get an overall development of cultural quality and body-mind quality.

Conclusion

The graded teaching is a kind of teaching mode reform, which is not completely equal to the classified teaching. The graded teaching of private colleges and universities is still in a process that needs to be explored and improved steadily. As far as our school is concerned, it is mainly reflected in the following aspects: First, the educational administration management has become more and more complicated and the teaching cost increases. Secondly, the scientificness of the curriculum grading standards needs to be improved. Thirdly, the teaching effect evaluation mechanism needs also to be improved. For instance, we use the same examination paper for the course of Higher Mathematics, regardless of class A and class B. This is helpful for the horizontal comparison between A class and B class, but it can not reflect very well the internal differences among students in class A. Finally, the educational resource allocation needs also to be optimized. At present, the teacher resource allocation are not balanced, there are differences in the quality of teaching resources enjoyed by students at different levels.

Private higher education has become an important part of higher education. Private colleges and universities, like public universities, shoulder the important task of training qualified socialist builders and successors for the country. The characteristics of private colleges and universities determine that private colleges and universities should implement the principle of “classified guidance and individualized teaching”. Our practice shows that the graded teaching, as an important measure to carry out this principle, manifests its obvious advantages, but it also reveals some problems. A problem worthy of further study is how to improve the graded teaching in order to enhance the quality of training people. That's also exactly what we're going to do next.

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References

