

**2003 Midwest Research to Practice Conference in
Adult, Continuing, and Community Education**

A Comparison of Faculty Evaluation Systems Between China and Canada

**Paula A. Brook
Wei Chen
Qi Luo**

Abstract: This paper discusses characteristics between two different universities in different countries in terms of the teaching evaluation systems. A brief background to the Chinese institution is offered to help set the context for comparison. The Canadian University is a typical large, urban, public research university located in Western Canada. The paper analyzes commonalities and differences in faculty evaluation and suggests that each university can learn and/or adopt some improvement from the other.

Higher Education in China

Higher education in China has four components: junior college, bachelor degrees, master programs, and doctoral degrees. Public universities provided all these programs in the past. However, for such a large country with a population of 1.3 billion, China has only about 1,000 public universities. Statistics show that only about 15% of the total number of eligible students attend university.

The Chinese government has implemented many reform measures in the past several decades to improve higher education quality and access. One significant change is to encourage private universities and colleges, which corresponds to the shift from a planned economy to a market economy. Compared to public higher education, these private institutions lack any kind of (historical) reputation, which in Chinese culture has been critical to ensure better students and more funds. (In China, higher education is free, with all students who pass the competitive examinations receiving total scholarships.) Moreover, many Chinese think that private education isn't reliable or credible. Given a choice, parents prefer their children to apply to public sector universities and colleges.

Things are changing gradually in the burgeoning market economy and increasing privatization movement. Private higher education is establishing itself with high quality teaching, modern management systems, and sensitive market consciousness. Most educational institutions establish themselves and their specialties with globalization in mind, which helps their graduates be competitive in national and international economic development. "Statistics indicate that the number of higher education institutions run by non-governmental agencies tops 1,300 with 1.5 million students, or 39 percent of the total college and university students nationwide."

Pei Zheng Commercial College was constructed in 1993 by the alumni of Pei Zheng Middle School in the former province of Canton (southern China, now Guangdong). This school was established by Southern Baptist Missionaries in the mid 1800s and had a rich history of 110 years until the Communists nationalized all education after the 1949 revolution. But Pei Zheng still operates schools in Guangzhou, Hong Kong and Macau. Alumni have maintained strong affiliations and support for the schools, and when the opportunity arose to build a private college in the same area as their beloved former Middle School, they did not hesitate. The College was approved by Guangdong Government in April 1996 and is officially registered with the

Referred Paper: Brook, Chen, & Luo

Provincial Ministry of Education as a full-time private college providing higher education and government accredited diplomas to students.

The College has continued to build its faculty and administration based on western education practices and principles. About 35% of the teachers have advanced professional degrees. At the same time, the College is also highly market oriented. With China's application to WTO and informational technology's continued development, the College gradually put more emphasis on English education, especially oral skills and computer science. It employs approximately 50 foreign teachers each year from English-speaking countries, more foreign teachers than all other higher educational institutions in the Province. These instructors not only develop English skills of the students, but also bring their cultural experience to share with students. Students' exposure to western style cultures improves their viewpoints to the world

Cultural Background

University of Alberta and Pei Zheng College Partnership

There is a partnership between the University of Alberta (UofA) (Canada) and Pei Zheng Commercial College (China), established by funding from a wealthy Pei Zheng alumni. This 10 year agreement enables 4 faculty/administrators to spend one year at the UofA experiencing western teaching, advanced educational management strategies, and North American culture and lifestyle. It is assumed that this cooperation will be beneficial for developing teaching skills, promoting careers at Pei Zheng, and enhancing student learning.

Characteristics of These Systems for Comparison

1. The UofA was established in 1905, and is in the top 5 universities in Canada for reputation, size, research funding, library holdings, etc. There are more 3M Teaching Award winners at the UofA than at any other Canadian University.

Pei Zheng College is a private institution only ten years old, unknown reputation as a new institution (but the name is established and credible with older Chinese).

2. The UofA is funded by the provincial government, student tuitions, and other smaller sources. It is governed by a Board, with internal management directed by a University Senate. The faculty association is strong and collegial.

Pei Zheng Commercial College is a private school, mainly funded by Pei Zheng alumni and tuition of the students. The Board is both the management and administrative body. There is no faculty association.

3. The UofA faculty evaluation system is based on a highly refined booklet of several hundred questions related to teaching, learning, outcomes, classroom management, classroom climate, etc.

At Pei Zheng, faculty evaluation is only 2 years old and is mainly carried out by the Teaching Affairs Office. In addition, each instructor is evaluated by the Dean and a Teaching Excellence Group, both of whom visit the classroom. There is no faculty development system.

4. At the UofA, all courses, every term, every year are evaluated. Results are used as a basis for salary increments, tenure and promotion decisions, and continued employment. If results are unsatisfactory (but for which there are no standard criteria), the instructor may be encouraged to contact University Teaching Services office for help. Supposedly there are to be other types of evaluation (e.g., by the Chair or colleagues), but this rarely occurs.

Pei Zheng Commercial College also evaluates every course, but using a different approach. (See Table 1.)

Referred Paper: Brook, Chen, & Luo

Evaluation Profiles

Teaching is one of the three cornerstones of higher education (research and service being the others). For students (and some instructors), teaching quality is the most important part of a postsecondary education. Stevens (1987) suggests that “a system of institutional support, reward, and training for instructional improvement is necessary” (p. 37). In order to maintain and improve teaching competence of faculty members, colleges and universities have a responsibility to support, sustain, and reward teaching excellence. Faculty Development and Evaluation systems and services are the predominant means of doing so at most Western institutions (Regulations for Faculty Evaluation, 2002; University Student Ratings, 2003).

Table 1: Evaluation Procedures

| Pei Zheng Commercial College | The University of Alberta |
|--|---|
| Evaluations developed by Teaching Affairs | Evaluations spelled out in Policy Manual |
| Questionnaires format | 10-item questionnaire |
| Administered in last 2 - 4 weeks of 20 classes | Administered in last 2-4 weeks of 13 classes |
| Teaching Affairs Office administers and collects questionnaires | Questionnaires introduced by instructor; turned over to mature student for remaining administration |
| Instructor is not present | Instructor reads directions; leaves room |
| Students asked to complete questionnaire quietly and individually | Students asked to complete the questionnaire quietly and individually |
| Completed forms put in envelope; sealed in presence of instructor; instructor required to sign name at the place of seal | Completed forms put in envelope; taken to Dept. office or Designator’s office by student |
| Two Teaching Affairs staff are responsible for statistics results | Chair, Director or designate (usually staff from Dept. office) has overall responsibility |
| Optical scanning done in Teaching Affairs Office | Chair or designate transmit questionnaires for optical scanning; responsible for transmission of results and written comments to instructor |
| Final statistical results returned to respective Deans. List of top 40% of results submitted to Academic Committee | Numerical summaries reported to instructor, Chair or Dean and students (via CWIS-Campus Wide Information Service) |
| Academic Committee discusses award list | |
| Expert group evaluation At least three members of “expert group” attend a class and listen to lecture. Classes chosen at random. Evaluation is based on preparation of lessons, implementation of teaching plan, help offered to students, assignments and feedback on homework, test questions, and feedback on tests. Evaluators complete their assessment and submit it directly to Teaching Affairs Office | |
| Administrative Evaluation The Dean of every department gives a mark to instructors according to teaching quality | |

Referred Paper: Brook, Chen, & Luo

Statistics Used

At Pei Zheng 10% of the highest marks and 10% of the lowest marks of students' evaluation results are not used—they are discarded to avoid bias of “students who are too favorable to the instructor” and “students who do not like the instructor” (Regulations for Faculty Evaluation, 2002, p. 1). The average marks of the rest of student's evaluation results will be the final marks.

At the UofA all questionnaires are submitted to the computing center for optical scanning. The personal designate for administration of these is responsible for transmission of scanned results and any written comments to the instructor.

Evaluation Results and Feedback

Results and Feedback

The list of the top 40% is based on the 3 groups evaluating instruction according to the following proportions. Student evaluations constitute 60% of the final score; the Expert Group evaluations are worth 20%; Administrative scores = 20% of total score. Prizes are awarded according to the following ratings and rewards.

Table 2: Scores and Prizes for top 40% of teaching evaluations

| | |
|--|----------------|
| First Prize (top 5% of evaluated teachers) | \$3,000.00 RMB |
| Second Prize (next 10%) | \$2,000.00 RMB |
| Third Prize (remaining 15%) | \$1,000.00 RMB |

Of significance is that these scores are based on two terms of evaluation data—the total academic year. Pei Zheng instructors do not get any information about the evaluation results except for the award list made available once per year. Thus, an instructor may never know how he or she is doing in any given term or year, except by intuition, informal feedback, or the leadership of the Dean who communicates such “outside the norms of results dissemination.” The evaluations results (i.e., awards) can influence one's future title, salary, prestige, and the opportunity of study abroad.

At the UofA, normally, instructors receive the results within twenty working days after the course is complete and the Chair, Director or Dean has signed the final course grade sheet. For questions selected by an instructor, only the instructor receives these results. For questions initiated or mandated by a department or Faculty, the results will be reported to the instructor and the Chair, Director or Dean. Students can also review evaluation results from the campus information service center. At the UofA evaluation results are used only as a criterion for employment. Results are usually discussed in one's annual meeting with the Chair, who makes mention of them in his report for each faculty member to Faculty Salary and Promotions meetings.

Discussion

Evaluation provides a review and overview of an instructor's teaching that is an essential element in one's professional career. It provides helpful feedback by identifying teaching strengths and weaknesses and, in so doing, giving guidance for the improvement or refinement of teaching skill.

But not all systems are perfect, comprehensive, systematic, or effective. Institutions should be continually exploring ways to improve, ways to enhance teaching quality, and ways to

Referred Paper: Brook, Chen, & Luo

motivate and reward faculty. The University of Alberta can learn a few important things from a young, upstart, private college in southern China.

The award system of Pei Zheng is feasible for every instructor; everyone has the same opportunity to win an award. Most students are still fond of an active and interesting classroom atmosphere. Because of the different features of various courses, it is hard to conduct every class in such an atmosphere. Moreover, different instructors have different styles and use different methods in their teaching. Some students are used to certain types of teaching, whereas other students are more used to different methodologies. Therefore, there is a possibility of unfairness in the process of evaluation used at Pei Zheng. Because of this possibility, input from the TeachingExpert Group and administrators are added as evidence.

Shared Learnings and Recommendations

What Pei Zheng Can Learn from the UofA

1. Provide scores and feedback to all teachers, preferably by respective Deans. In Pei Zheng's faculty evaluation system, there is no feedback to the instructor, thus instructors don't know why their teaching is ineffective so that their names are not in the award list. "We don't want to just motivate those good teachers, we also need to help the instructors who are not so effective to improve their teaching skill." Therefore, the overall teaching quality of the college will be enhanced.

2. Establish a Faculty Development system. Research in teaching evaluation suggests that instituting student ratings typically produces some improvement, but is more likely to result in higher and ongoing improvements when the ratings are part of a larger faculty development system (McKeachie, 1987). Pei Zheng should establish some sort of faculty development program like the UofA, focusing on helping instructors improving their teaching, administration, and other professional development.

3. Develop an Evaluation Question database. Pei Zheng should develop an evaluation question database. Building on general questions, departments could choose to add related questions according to the nature of their courses as well. This will make the evaluation more valid and reliable.

What UofA can learn from Pei Zheng

1. Provide some sort of public award for given number of effective faculty. Although evaluation results are used as evidence for promotion or salary increases, the faculty at the UofA could be motivated by more obvious ways. Therefore, UofA can learn from Peizheng to give some sort of reward to the top 10 or more.

2. Broaden the evaluation process to include multiple data sources. Most instructors at the UA choose/use only the required 10 questions. However, this limited number (amount of feedback), may be insufficient to tell whether the instructor is good or not. Different courses have different content, context, methods, etc. These required 10 questions are too general to reflect the teaching quality of any instructor. Other types of evaluative data would be important to truly gain an understanding of one's teaching abilities.

In summary, it is clear to these authors that studying each other's faculty evaluation system has been a valuable academic learning experience. Neither an established, leading Canadian public university, nor a younger, wealthy, private educational college had found or created the "perfect" faculty evaluation and development system or service. Each can learn from the other; implementing change is another story!

Referred Paper: Brook, Chen, & Luo

References

- McKeachie, W. J. (1987). Can evaluating instruction improve teaching? In L. M. Aleamoni (Ed.), *Techniques for Evaluating and Improving Instruction* (pp. pp. 3-9). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. (New Directions for Teaching and Learning, No. 31)
- Regulations for faculty evaluation and reward in pei zheng commercial college.* (2002, October). Huadu, Guangdong, P.R. China: Pei Zheng Commercial College, Student Affairs Office.
- Stevens, J. J. (1987). Using student ratings to improve instruction. In L. M. Aleamoni (Ed.), *Techniques for Evaluating and Improving Instruction* (pp. 33-38). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. (New Directions for Teaching and Learning, No. 31)
- University student ratings of instruction using the Instructor Designed Questionnaire(IDQ) System with the GFC Catalog.* (2003, January). Edmonton, Alberta, Canada: University of Alberta, Office of the Vice President.

Dr. Paula A. Brook, Associate Professor, 7-104 Education North, University of Alberta,
Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2G5 Canada

Mr. Charlie (Wei) Chen, Visiting Scholar/Student, University of Alberta, Pei Zheng Commercial
College, Huadu, Guangdong, P.R. China

Ms. Angela (Qi) Luo, Visiting Scholar/Student, University of Alberta, Pei Zheng Commercial
College, Huadu, Guangdong, P.R. China

Presented at the Midwest Research-to-Practice Conference in Adult, Continuing, and
Community Education, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, October 8-10, 2003.