

Reflection the Evaluation of Basic Education in China

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Abstract

Evaluation of basic education is to evaluate its quality, which ought to be fundamental, humanistic, just and developmental. At present, because of some unhealthy trends during evaluate the basic education, such as absolutization, leadership-based, subjectivism and utilitarianism, it is necessary to reflect and seek the future of basic education's evaluation in China.

Key words: Basic education; Evaluation; Orientation

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“Basic education” in this paper includes preschool, elementary and high school. As an important aspect of instructional activity in basic education and a main theoretical problem of educational research, evaluation is concerned by more and more scholars at home and abroad. Reflecting the evaluation of basic education will promote the reform of evaluation and exam system of basic education and enhance its effectiveness in China.

1. THE PECULIARITY OF BASIC EDUCATION EVALUATION

At present, there are various ideas on how to define “evaluation of basic education”. As for me, it is a process of value judgment, and value growth which can improve

the quality of basic education. Differentiating from the other educational evaluations, evaluation of basic education ought to be fundamental, humanistic, just and developmental.

1.1 Fundamentality Is the Starting Point of Evaluation of Basic Education

Because basic education is the base or foundation of higher education, “fundamentality” ought to be considered as the premise of evaluation, and we must evaluate whether and how basic education meets the fundamental needs of personal and social development. On the one hand, evaluation ought to take on whether and how basic education enhances the basic quality of the educated, including basic knowledge and skills, moral quality and aesthetic quality. On the other hand, evaluation ought to show us whether and how basic education plays fundamental role in social, national existence and development, such as spiritual and material civilization.

1.2 Humanity Is the Core of Evaluation of Basic Education

Humanistic ideas have a long history. With the emergence of modern humanism theory, humanistic value has become an important field of value theory. In my opinion, humanistic value is the internal value of basic education and evaluation ought to reveal the humanistic value. That is, evaluation presents not only personal value such as free development of individual subjectivity, but also cultural value including truth, virtue and beauty of humankind. “Human” and “culture” are both the key content of evaluation of basic education.

1.3 Justice Is the Guarantee of Evaluation of Basic Education

Some scholar considered that justice includes the substantial justice and the procedural one (CHEN, 2002). The former means that the rules and standards themselves are correct and scientific, which is the content of justice;

the latter is to fairly and consistently carry out the rules and standards. The justice of evaluating basic education ought to include the following two sides. In the first place, we should insist on procedural justice of evaluation, which means to perform the assessing standards strictly, consistently and flexibly. In the second place, evaluation standards should be authentic and reasonable. At present, the evaluation system has been set up; however, its operability and effectiveness ought to be improved.

1.4 Development Is the Terminal Point of Evaluation of Basic Education

Development is the essential characteristics of modern educational evaluation. It is the ultimate purpose of evaluation of basic education to motivate the students, the teachers and the schools grow and develop smoothly. First of all, since the student is one subject of basic education, learning evaluation should further the development of the students which includes the subjectivity and all-round development. Next, because the teacher is not only the subject but also the leader of education and instruction, teaching evaluation should be scientific and humanistic (LI, 2008) which ought to enhance the enthusiasm, self-reflection and instructional abilities. Then, school is a place and the subject of implementing educational activities, so schooling evaluation is in favor of increasing the quality, efficiency and unique feature.

2. THE MAIN PROBLEMS OF BASIC EDUCATION EVALUATION IN CHINA

For the past few years, Chinese scholars have paid much attention to evaluation of basic education. However, there are various problems in the evaluating process such as absolutization, leader-based, subjectivism and utilitarianism, etc..

2.1 Evaluation Idea Is Absolute and Opposite

Influenced by the traditional ideas which all are divided into “subject” and “object”, the evaluators usually stick to thinking mode of “one or the other” and “dual opposition”, that is, oppose “knowledge” against “ability”, “process” against “result”, “award” against “punishment”, “generality” against “personality”, “teaching” against “learning”, etc.. The result is that attends to one thing and loses another, and brings about one-sidedness, subjectivity and utilitarian of evaluation conclusions.

2.2 Evaluation Subject Is Leader-Based

In reality, evaluation has been the exclusive right of some educational managers and leaders in China, the teacher and student is only the evaluated. In reality, the leaders are the absolute and ultimate authority of evaluation of basic education in some schools and regions of China, so the teachers only have right of teaching and have no right of stating their ideas in teaching evaluation, which usually

leads to evaluation to be short of reality, and hinders the teacher’s teaching zeal, increase of teaching quality and professional development; the students have only learning right and no speaking right in learning evaluation, and they are merely the registers of the achievement portfolio and not the subject of growth, the result of which is that performance evaluation neither promotes the all-round development nor enhances their enthusiasm of learning and cultivates the perfect personality, and in the end impedes the healthy growth of the students.

2.3 Evaluation Process Is Subjective

During 30-year reform and opening up, the evaluation system and standards have been set up. However, some evaluators usually forget or abuse the standards in the process of evaluation. For example, some managers, irrespective of the evaluation standards and educational discipline, only judge “true” or “false”, “good” or “bad” of the teaching of the teachers and the learning of the students according to their own will and need; Some leaders maltreat the standards in evaluation such as reducing or enlarging the applied scope of the standards, and cannot adjust measures to local conditions due to misunderstanding the evaluation criteria.

2.4 Evaluation Purpose Is Utilitarian

In China, some evaluators now excessively think much of utilitarian purpose such as enrollment quotas, control, reward or punishment and selection.

To begin with, some evaluation is outcome-oriented, which means that the evaluators attach importance to test score and rates of admission into tertiary schools. For instance, scores and numbers into higher schools are regarded as the only standard of evaluating how good to teach and learn in some schools. In fact, the student’s merits are influenced by a lot of factors including the student, the teacher, managers, parents and other citizens, therefore, this kind of evaluation is neither fair nor objective and do or will do harm to quality of basic education.

Next, some evaluation is control-oriented. Some leaders consist that to evaluate is to control, so they emphasize the control function of evaluation and ignore the service, educational and developmental one. This kind of evaluation lacks of humanistic concern to the evaluated, and has been out of style and unsuitable to development of basic education in China.

Finally, some evaluation is reward-oriented or punishment-oriented and rank-oriented. Some evaluators consider evaluation as the only method of evaluating “advantages” or “disadvantages”, differentiating the levels of teaching and learning, and usually regard “profit”, “bonus” or “honor” as the incentive methods in schooling. This sort of evaluation one-sidedly pays attention to selecting function and has become the only rule of distinguishing from the various grades and ranks, which has stirred up the dissatisfaction of teacher and student.

3. THE MAIN STRATEGIES OF EVALUATION OF BASIC EDUCATION IN FUTURE CHINA

Facing up to these above problems in the process of evaluation of basic education, we would better the concept of “cognition”, “subject”, “process” and “purpose” in the course of evaluating basic education in China.

3.1 Wholly and Scientifically Cognizing Evaluation of Basic Education

On the one hand, the evaluators should set up dialectical thought of evaluation. In the future, the evaluating theory and practice should step out of the thinking stereotyping of “one or the other” and “dual opposition”, and correctly and dialectically analyzes the opposite and unity of contradictory sides of evaluation. We should avoid absolutization, “say turkey to one and bizzard to another” or “attend to one thing and lose another”.

On the other hand, the evaluators need correctly understanding function of evaluation. As far as I am concerned, evaluation is an indispensable method of judging the quality of basic education and an important step of achieving value of basic education. Its functions are not to control the evaluated, but to promote the student’s growth and the teacher’s development, that is, to evaluate is to know actuality, discover the problems, guide the deeds and counsel the policies. Thus, the evaluators neither magnify nor ignore and despise the evaluation function.

3.2 Promoting Diversification and Harmony of the Evaluation Subject

In the first place, the evaluation subject of basic education should include the managers, the educators, the educated and the parents; and it ought not to be the privilege of the headmasters and other managers. On the contrary, we must incite the initiative, positivity and creativity of the teachers and students. For the teachers to take part in evaluation, it will benefit very much from enhancing the pertinence and quality of teaching and better them; and for the students to join in evaluation, it will avail them of correcting the learning methods and increasing the learning efficiency. As for me, self-evaluation should play a dominant role in teaching or performance evaluation.

In the second place, the intersubjectivity of evaluation subject should be strengthened. Intersubjectivity means the internal harmony of “subject-subject” (WANG, 1994). In other word, the evaluating subjects should respect and get well along with each other, and join hands in the process of evaluation. The evaluators should understand and learn from the others and make much of the subjectivity and personality of the evaluated; meanwhile, the evaluated should listen to the good suggestions of the evaluators, and learn the merits from the others in order to correct their faults and better them. Mutual understanding,

respect and progress ought to be the ultimate purpose of evaluation of basic education.

3.3 Objectively and Fairly Implementing Evaluation of Basic Education

For one thing, the process of evaluation must be objective. In order to ensure the objectivity, firstly, we should reasonably employ the various methods of assessment, and link quantitative evaluation with qualitative evaluation, procedural evaluation with summative assessment, self-evaluation with other-evaluation, etc.. Secondly, the content of evaluation should be all-sided. Because there are a lot of factors influencing the quality of basic education, the evaluators should wholly investigate and grasp the status quo the school, teacher and student and scientifically assess their performance according to the evaluating standards.

For another thing, the process of evaluation must be just. When carrying out evaluation, the evaluators should be in strict accordance with the evaluating standards and rules and be far from the subjective randomness, personal preference and emotion; Furthermore, the evaluators should be case by case and differentiate from the different objects. Therefore, they ought not to mechanically but flexibly apply the evaluation standards and respect the specialties of the evaluated in order to guarantee the justice of evaluation conclusion.

3.4 Establishing Reasonable and Scientific Evaluation Purpose

Above all, evaluation should mirror the foundational function of basic education. In my opinion, laying a foundation should be the basic feature of basic education. That is to say, the primary goal of basic education is to set up a firm foundation for growth of the educated and social development and prosperity. Because basic education should base on fostering the ordinary laborers, entrance examination for college and the talents selection are not the only purpose of evaluation of basic education; thus, we ought to change selecting evaluation into eligible evaluation (YANG, 2006). Otherwise, basic education should service to economical and political development of the community and nation again, and so evaluation contributes to social stability, harmony and civilization in China.

In addition, evaluation should promote the scientific development of basic education. Evaluation is not only to reach some pragmatic purpose such as award and punishment, exam, fame and post, assessment, etc.; but also promote the integrated and sustainable development of the evaluated. Accordingly, evaluation ought to provoke the further development and learning of the school, teacher and student and lay a solid foundation for lifelong education and learning. In other words, evaluating purpose ought to be actual, sustainable and far-reaching.

In one word, the evaluating criteria and ideas of basic education should be correct and rational; the process

should be fair, effective and could promote the sustainable development of the teachers, students and schools in China.

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