A study on the fragment of “Universalization” in Japanese university
— A case on Policy Management Faculty of Tohoku Bunka Gakuen University —

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SUMMARY

We carried out the test to measure the calculation capability of the students of the Faculty of Policy Management at Tohoku Bunka Gakuen University (TBGU) so that we can see if their capability changed as a result of the so-called “Universalization.” In this issue, “Universalization” has two meanings. One is the nationwide social phenomenon that university entrance ratio is on the upswing to over 50% (reaching 50.2% in academic year 2009) among the same ages. The other is that individual universities have non-selective entrance examination and a widening gap in students’ scholastic level or learning capability.

The faculty has been conducting non-selective entrance examination since academic year 2003 partly because it reasonably raised the maximum number of freshmen from 95 to 175. There was also a serious impact of the disclosure of dishonorable incident at the time of the university’s establishment. As a result, the faculty sees some students with a serious problem in basic scholastic achievement, including lower calculation ability.

We carried out the basic calculation test for first-year students twice – soon after the start of the first semester both in academic years 2003 and 2009. Comparing the result of the two years, the rate of correct answer decreased in 22 questions out of 23 (95.7%) in academic year 2009. In particular, the correction rate for the half of them (11 questions) fell by 10% or more.

If we aim at a radical solution for the problem, we should introduce any kind of basic common test similar to SAT (Scholastic Assessment Test) of the U.S.A., which enable a link between university education and the scholastic ability or educational resources that students obtained until high school. But that is obviously unrealistic because most Japanese people positively regard “Universalization” as a safety net for Japanese youths at present. But if such a generosity becomes excessive, the youths will lose their ability and creativity to solve their problems by themselves.

Meanwhile, we made it clear that the simple method of doing {test - feedback - re-test} practice was effective in the required subject of Mathematics for the first semester of 2003. It shows that the average score of the re-test, carried out at the end of the semester, rose to 17.2 points, up 4.0 (30.3%) from 13.2 in the previous test. On top of that, out of a total 23 questions, 19 posted an average score increase. Overall, a score jump of 10% or more was seen in nearly
the three quarters of them (17 questions).

Considering such situations, we think that it’s a better choice to develop a unique educational method corresponding to each student’s varying scholastic level and learning capability. The method should involve proper diversification and small classes (equivalent to that of the “Basic Seminar” in the Faculty of Policy Management at TBGU), especially for such basic subjects as Mathematics. If we could combine such learning systems with some kinds of professional educations or special subjects, we might efficiently be able to facilitate the students’ career advancement and creativity.
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