

The Enlightenment of General Education of Bergen Community College to Chinese Universities

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ABSTRACT

At present, Chinese economy is changing from high-speed growth to high-quality development. The training objectives and direction of undergraduate talents should also be adapted to the development of the times. Hence, the goal of college curriculum should also be changed from pure credits to meet students' learning needs and their life needs. General education plays a significant role. Based on the analyzing the implement of general education of Bergen Community College and the current situation of general education in Chinese universities, some suggestions for the reform of general education to Chinese universities are given in the paper.

Keywords: *general education; course content; reform*

1. INTRODUCTION

Applying our knowledge is the goal of our education. The undergraduate colleges in the new era should get rid of the unilateral professional skills training. At the same time, we should pay attention to the cultivation of human feelings and the cultivation of basic skills so as to meet the students' future work needs and life needs. To achieve this goal, we introduce general education to promote the overall development of students. USA is one of the earliest countries which implements the general education to higher education. After the Civil War, many international students returned from Germany to the United States where they promoted liberal education. In this social tide, liberal education has gradually become the topic of discussion in the educational circle. In the year of 1909, the United States began implementing the compulsory system of major and general classification, and made provisions for graduation requirements. In the 1930s and 1940s, the vocational education and professional education have become the focus of the University. However, this initiative has caused many people to worship material civilization and ignore the principle of reason. In 1945, Harvard University published *General Education in a Free Society: Report of Harvard Committee*. [1] General Education and professional education are the two parts of education. As part of university education, general education focuses on students' life needs as a person and citizen, while the latter gives students some kind of vocational training. There are differences, but they are not mutually antagonistic and fragmented. In the report, Conant pointed out clearly that "people must possess four abilities: effective thinking ability, clear communication ability, ability to make proper and clear judgement." [2] The general education curriculum recommended by the report includes: literary classics, western thoughts and

systems, introductory courses in physical sciences or biological sciences, and other courses belonging to humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. General education can allow students to participate in social practice and meet the needs of social development. Also, it can integrate vocational education and academic education through the establishment of general education.

As to the general education, Bergen community college is an outstanding one. The paper aims analyze the implement of its general education in order to give some enlightenment for the general education in Chinese universities.

2. THE GENERAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM OF BERGEN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

2.1. The Introduction of Bergen Community College

Founded in 1965 to satisfy the region's need for a convenient, affordable and comprehensive higher education destination, Bergen Community College now enrolls nearly 17,000 students in its academic degree programs. The College's three sites in Paramus (main campus), Hackensack (Ciarco Learning Center) and Lyndhurst (Bergen Community College at the Meadowlands) serve more than 32,000 students in degree, continuing education and adult education programs.

Upon graduation, students not only utilize the statewide transfer agreement to attend New Jersey's four-year schools, but use Bergen's reputation as a top community college to propel them to institutions nationwide. Other students enter careers with the skills they need in order to

succeed. The College boasts an accomplished faculty, cutting-edge facilities and opportunities for cultural awareness, civic engagement and service-learning. Bergen maintains accreditation by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools.[3]

2.2. General Education Development in Bergen Community College

Bergen Community College, in compliance with the requirements of New Jersey, stipulates clearly that in general education curriculum. We should aim at cultivating students' communicative thinking ability, communicating and communicating language abilities, handling information ability, logical reasoning ability, global awareness and civic awareness.

Bergen Community College divided their curriculum into two parts: first is about the collection, interpretation and presentation of knowledge. A general compulsory course in process of learning. These courses focus on process activities, such as English writing, verbal communication, etc. Second, the knowledge system of all well-educated people is mainly a decentralized knowledge system. For example, natural science curriculum, mathematics, humanities, social sciences, history and so on.

These two parts are interrelated. In addition, Bergen Community College attaches great importance to training students with critical thinking and writing ability. The general education course of the college provides students with appropriate critical thinking and writing assignments.

To provide students with the opportunity to develop these skills, the types of general courses that students need to learn include: Computer Science and communication, arts and media, history, literature, philosophy and religion, world language and culture, science and technology and mathematics, natural science, social sciences, and other diversified courses. [4]

Besides, on the basis of learning courses, Bergen community college also summarizes nine target categories for learning, which are as follows: communication; critical thinking, problem solving and information management; moral perspective; quantity knowledge and skills; science and industrial technology; society and human behavior; aesthetic perspective; historical perspective; pluralism and global perspective; health and sports.

2.3. Bergen Community College General Education Goals

Each Target category has two aspects: learning objectives and learning outcomes. Communication: ① Learning objectives: students can communicate effectively with others through speech and writing. ② Learning outcomes: students can understand and evaluate what is read, heard and seen; states and evaluates others' viewpoints or findings; students use standard American English for clear and effective writing and oral communication; students

can express their views in oral or written form, express their own research results, express logic and convince others; evaluate, modify and correct communication methods. [5]

Critical thinking, problem solving and information management: ① Learning objectives: students can use critical thinking and problem solving skills to analyze information collected from different media and different data. ② Learning outcomes: students can confirm the problem, analyze the main contradiction and the information needed to solve the problem; students can select and properly use information in various formats; evaluating the availability of information with the source, viewpoint, relevance, correctness and completeness of the information; students can recognize the inadequacies of certain arguments, such as the use of erroneous or controversial assumptions, concealing negative arguments, erroneous reasoning processes, and adding emotional factors; possible solutions to the problem of vision and judgment can provide strong arguments to prove the feasibility of the scheme; students can use computers and other electronic devices to access; analyze and present information. [6]

Moral perspective: ① Learning objectives: students can understand moral situations, analyze and evaluate moral problems. ② Learning outcomes: the moral meaning of identifying a certain problem or situation; students can analyze and evaluate the merits and demerits of different views arising from a moral issue or moral situation; students can establish one's position on a moral issue or moral situation and prove it with logical arguments.

Quantity knowledge and skills: ① Learning objectives: students can understand data and solve problems with appropriate quantity and statistical concepts. [7] ② Learning outcomes: students can use mathematical terms to explain quantitative problems and solve them by mathematical operations and statistical methods; students can draw diagrams and charts, explain them in proper language and draw conclusions.

Science and industrial technology: ① Learning objectives: explaining the impact of scientific theories, scientific discoveries and technological changes on society. ② Learning outcomes: students can understand the definition of science and describe its limitations; adopting scientific and standardized experimental procedures to analyze problems and draw conclusions from the data; we can distinguish scientific theories and scientific discoveries, basic science and applied science, and understand their influence on society. [8]

Society and human behavior: ① Learning objectives: students can use social science theories and concepts to analyze human behavior, social and political systems. ② Learning outcomes: students can use social science theories and concepts to analyze and discuss certain behavioral or social problems; students can explain how social systems, social organizations and personal behaviors interact with each other; students can describe and

demonstrate how social science scholars collect and analyze data and draw conclusions.

Historical perspective: ① Learning objectives: the main historical events and movements of the learning world (Western and non Western). The United States have a deep understanding of the historical significance of these events or movements.[9] ② Learning outcomes: students can account for the causes of major historical events and analyze their influence on the country or civilization; students can understand the main ideas, sports, inventions or discoveries and how they affect the world or American society; how does the author's understanding of historical events be influenced by their times, cultural backgrounds and personal concepts.

Pluralism and global perspective: ① Learning objectives: students can analyze the similarities and differences between people with different cultural backgrounds and their implications. ② Learning outcomes: we can combine cultural customs and cultural concepts with their geographical conditions and historical conditions; students can explain why people who understand different cultural backgrounds are particularly important for American society; the consequences of understanding and interpreting prejudice and the behavior of differential treatment; students can understand the needs and concerns of people of different cultures; we can understand and evaluate the contribution and influence of people from different countries, nationalities or cultures to the world.

Health and sports: ① Learning objectives: students can use the most beneficial exercise or health care methods to promote and maintain physical and mental health. ② Learning outcomes: students can identify risk factors for some common health problems such as infectious diseases, heart disease, obesity, osteoporosis, and describe how to change daily behaviors to minimize risk; students can analysis of physical exercise mode and its effect on physical and mental health of individuals.

It can be seen that general education in Bergen University College is a relatively comprehensive education, which involves five aspects: morality, intelligence and physical education.

3. THE GENERAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM OF UNDERGRADUATE UNIVERSITIES IN CHINA

3.1. Training Objectives of Undergraduate Education in China

The core idea of undergraduate education is manifested through specific forms of training objectives of undergraduate education.

The training objective of undergraduate education is the starting point and end result of personnel training, and points out the way forward for the cultivation of

undergraduate education talents. The goal of undergraduate education is to point out the way forward for the better construction of socialist modernization and the transfer of qualified personnel. The first of the sixty articles of higher education clearly stipulates: "the basic task of colleges and universities is to carry out the policy of combining education with the proletariat's political service, combining education with productive labor, and train all kinds of specialized talents needed for socialist construction in March 1998.

The Ministry of Education issued the "opinions on deepening teaching reform and training high-quality talents to meet the needs of the twenty-first Century". "Opinions" stressed that "the goal of higher education is to enable educator to develop comprehensively in moral education, intellectual education, sports and so on, and become a senior professional person who is in line with the practical needs of socialistic construction".

The goal of undergraduate education is to master the basic theory, professional knowledge and basic skills of the profession well, and to have the ability to work in this field and preliminary scientific research ability.

3.2. Current Situation of General Education Curriculum in China

In the 80s and 90s of last century, with the deepening of reform and opening up, the socialist system also changed. The so-called economic foundation decided the superstructure, and the open economic situation changed the level of social demand for talents. General education is the gate way to China under this background. Although many colleges and universities realize that general education plays a very important role in training talents, but they fail in practical application. Our country's education has achieved equal opportunities in education. However, in the aspect of promoting the all-round development of the people, there are problems in the undergraduate colleges. In the awareness of many undergraduates, the learning content of the university is to learn the knowledge of this major. For example, English majors should learn the knowledge of English majors. If they learn knowledge similar to mathematics, computer, language and art, they waste their time and the knowledge learnt by themselves is unnecessary. This extreme concept is obviously wrong. This is not the responsibility of students. Sometimes we have to understand why students think this way. Why do students not want to learn the so-called "unuseful" specialties arranged by schools?

In fact, the college entrance examination system in China is successful. The students who enter the undergraduate education stage through the college entrance examination are mentally rich and active. Everyone knows the simple principle of not having enough skills. Now that we all know the reason, what is the situation? Non- professional courses can be understood as general education. However, many universities have forgotten what is general education and what is the goal of general education. They will only

blindly imitate the general education mode of American first-class universities, but forget their own national conditions, and our socialistic system is also very special. Secondly, there are also weak points in the faculty of Chinese colleges and universities. The teachers' knowledge and ability of each institution are different. The knowledge level of teachers is only at the level of this profession. As the goal of general education has mentioned, general education is to change the educational specialization of undergraduate colleges and universities, and the talents to be trained are comprehensive and comprehensive. Therefore, teachers' ability indirectly determines the level of students.

From the above point of view, the speed of general education construction in China's undergraduate colleges is slow. There are three reasons for this failure: unreasonable school curriculum, lack of students' sense of identity in general education, and shortage of teachers in undergraduate colleges.

3.3. The Problems of General Education in Chinese Universities

If a reasonable reform plan is to be put forward, first of all, the existing problems must be identified. In the above paper, through the analysis of the current situation of general education in China, the following problems are summarized:

3.3.1. Students' knowledge is single.

In the long term professional education background, in order to improve the enrollment rate and improve the professional performance, most schools start from the beginning of high school, so that students can concentrate on liberal arts or science courses, but this kind of education mode does not meet the requirements of students' comprehensive development.

3.3.2. Insufficient understanding of general education

China's higher education has long attached importance to professional education. The concept and objectives of general education are not clear enough. In terms of educational philosophy, leaders, management and teachers in universities generally have no knowledge of the importance and urgency of general education. They cannot correctly view the relationship between general education and professional education, and worry that general education will weaken and dilute professional education. The relationship between general education and professional education cannot be seen as complementary and mutually reinforcing. One believes that the relationship between them is "mutual exclusion". Students do not know enough about general education courses. In

their eyes, only professional courses should be conscientiously studied. Knowledge is what should be grasped. The general course is regarded as a "leisure class".

Teachers' lax demand and high grade "water lessons" are the teachers who can be selected by their students for their general courses, so that the established goals of general courses cannot be achieved, and the overall effect of general education in China will be affected.

3.3.3. Shortage of teachers

At present, teachers in Colleges and universities in China are trained by professional education. Their educational background makes them attach importance to professional education fundamentally, ignoring the cultivation of general education to students. They lack the ability to break professional boundaries and integrate knowledge, and cannot help students develop perfect personality.

The evaluation index of the school focuses on examining the achievements of teachers' research, focusing only on the number of papers and monographs. Teachers in general education courses may be restricted in the process of title evaluation, and to a large extent limit the enthusiasm of teachers in general education.

4. THE ENLIGHTENMENT TO GENERAL EDUCATION REFORM IN CHINESE UNIVERSITIES

The general education in American community colleges can be divided into two levels: state and school teaching objectives. The design of curriculum objectives emphasizes the links among disciplines, and the relationship between individuals and society. Therefore, schools should pay attention to the links between different disciplines in the curriculum setting. The purpose of general education is to further promote the all-round development of students. In order to meet the needs of students' work and life after graduation, it is the most important thing for schools to consider in many ways and to listen to students' opinions. The ultimate recipient of general education is students, which are in accordance with the interests of students and recognized by students. However, they cannot fill students' needs without principles. Therefore, schools should set up a dual assessment mechanism and stipulate graduation requirements.

In view of the above requirements, the following measures are proposed for the reform of general education in Chinese colleges and universities:

4.1. Establish the Concept of General Education.

The reform of general education must be guided by the establishment of ideas. General education pays attention to holistic education. The goal of general education is to help students form a correct view of value and cultivate an independent thinking and innovation. The concept of general education directly determines the effect of general education curriculum implementation. Only when general education is regarded as an essential part of higher education process, it is recognized that the role of general education in training higher talents can be well guaranteed in the course of specific education.

4.2. Improve General Education Curriculum.

The establishment of a general education special organization and the establishment of a general education curriculum are critical. A general education course set up by a college as a unit causes many similar courses to be reopened repeatedly. The lack of integration between courses cannot help students form a complete knowledge system. The establishment of specialized institutions can break the boundaries between colleges. A set of training programs that meet the needs of students' growth and meet the needs of students' diversity can be specified as a whole. This institution can set up general education courses across colleges and universities, and the teachers of the Institute will participate in it.

4.3. Strengthen the Construction of Teaching Staff

The effect of general education is closely related to the level of teachers and the attitude of teaching. Therefore, building a high-level general education faculty is an inevitable requirement for improving the general education level. On the one hand, the state and the school should provide corresponding financial support for teachers in general education courses, so as to ensure that the general education curriculum can be further explored. Changing the traditional form of general education curriculum is too simple and unorganized. On the other hand, strengthening the ideological and moral construction of teachers, promoting the importance of general education to students' life development, and causing teachers' problems. Thinking resonates, strengthens own responsibility highly, positively and positively inputs in the general education reform process.

It's important to develop quality-oriented education, promote education equity, and cultivate socialist builders and successors with all-round development of morality, intelligence, physique and beauty". In the many schools, the age of college students is generally between 18 and 22 years old. They are in the youth stage of developmental psychology. Psychological counseling education for

college students is particularly important. Changes in students' learning attitude will bring about changes in behavior patterns, so that campus culture will also change. Some college students are lazy in school life. They spend a lot of their spare time in the virtual world of the Internet. They are far from enough in learning time. Therefore, colleges and universities should do psychological counseling so that they can truly realize the importance of general education for themselves. The ultimate goal is to improve students' autonomous learning ability and develop their own hobbies and activities.

To sum up, general education came into being when professionalism prevailed, and people in social relations changed their level of demand for talents. The background of this educational reform is similar to that in the United States. A country developing in the ride of globalization needs talents not only the professionals but broad vision and outstanding ability generalists.

5. CONCLUSION

Bergen community college brings a lot of inspirations to Chinese schools. It takes one hundred year of evolution and development for general education in American universities to achieve so much. General education in China is in the initial stage of development, which is not mature and perfect. "Rome was not built in a day", therefore, China should first study community colleges, and take the essence and discard the dross to surpass the level of American community colleges. In addition, when Chinese colleges and universities learn from American universities, they should conform to the basic national conditions and the basic situation of Chinese schools. Identify problems and find relevant solutions.

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