



Research on the Reform Path of “Student-Centered” General Education in Universities in China

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Abstract. The purpose of general education is cultivating healthy individuals and citizens. “Student centered” is the basic principle of general education. On the basis of analyzing the problems existing in the reform of general education in Chinese universities, this paper puts forward some strategies for the reform of general education in Chinese Universities: first, implement the reform of general education based on the orientation of the school; second, carry out the reform of general education according to the characteristics of students; third, build a perfect university general education system, and the key links include teaching organization, teaching resources, and full use of modern information technology support, etc.

Keywords: general education · Student-centered · Localization · information technology

1 Introduction

Since the publication of Harvard general education red book in 1845, general education has been promoted in universities all over the world. In 1998, UNESCO issued the declaration of higher education in the 21st century: outlook and action, which proposed that colleges and universities must cultivate students’ ability to critically think and analyze social problems and seek problem solutions.

Reviewing the development process and stage of general education in the United States and other countries, its educational ideas and models are constantly changing with the development background of the times and the characteristics of student groups. China’s higher education system has a variety of higher education institutions, including not only Tsinghua University, Peking University and other research universities, but also a large number of local universities. Different universities have different foundations, positioning and characteristics. “student-centered” should be the basic principle of general education, but in practice, it is difficult for most universities to implement this principle in general education. How to build a suitable general education system in Chinese universities? How to cultivate students’ comprehensive quality and sound personality based on the basic principle of “student-centered”, so as to realize the basic purpose of general education? The above issues have become key issues.

This paper aims to strengthen the concept of “student-centered” general education and promote the construction of a general education system.

2 Literature Review of “Student-Centered” General Education Reform

Many scholars have discussed the student-centered general education, the reform measures of localized general education, and the problems in general education in Colleges and universities in China. Some foreign general education cases are studied.

It is believed that general education in universities should be “school oriented” and “student-centered”. Ma Xingdong and Dong Xi (2016) investigated the evaluation index system of general education in Colleges and universities in Taiwan. It is pointed out that universities and colleges in Taiwan are encouraged to position themselves according to the development of the University. Taking six world-class universities in the United States such as Harvard University as an example, Chen Le (2019) pointed out that the focus of general education is to stimulate students’ enthusiasm for exploration and thinking, cultivate comprehensive qualities such as independent thinking, problem analysis and expression ability, and prepare for future study and life.

Problems and Reform Countermeasures in the practice of general education in universities in China has been focused. Li Sen et al. (2018) analyze the problems in general education in Chinese universities, including: first, the number of teachers is insufficient; Second, teachers’ knowledge literacy is difficult to deal with the teaching of general courses; Third, there is a lack of effective incentive mechanism for general course teachers. Wang Xuehong, Chen Jiankang and others (2021) believe that the incentive mechanism of colleges and universities is linked to the contribution of scientific research, and is not strongly related to teaching performance and teaching workload, which leads many teachers to ignore the teaching research of general education.

To sum up, colleges and universities should learn from domestic and foreign experience, reflect on the problems existing in general education, build a “Chinese model” of general education based on the school’s level, characteristics and resources, and build an effective organizational model and system to promote general education.

3 Problems in General Education in Chinese Colleges

The development of modern general education is closely related to the rise of American research universities such as Harvard and Yale, many universities in Hong Kong and Taiwan have followed the American general education model and achieved good results. Due to cultural differences, school characteristics, student differences and other reasons, there are many problems in early Chinese general education.

3.1 Lack of Systematic and In-Depth Understanding of General Education

Most Chinese universities lack a systematic understanding of general education. On the one hand, education managers fail to realize that general education is a huge systematic

project, which involves the understanding and understanding of the concept of general education, organization and management, resource support, system guarantee, etc. On the other hand, there are many conflicts in the reform of general education in China, which are embodied in liberalism and collectivism, humanism and scientism, humanism and socialization.

3.2 Lack of Understanding of the Relationship Between General Education and Professional Education

Most Chinese universities cannot handle the relationship between general education and professional education. Attaching importance to professional and vocational education can only cultivate the obedient of social order, cannot form a comprehensive knowledge system, and cannot understand the scientificity of occupation and the relationship between occupation and society. However, at the present stage, most colleges and universities in China do not manage general education well: the selection of educational content is disorganized, and the scientific demonstration of curriculum composition is insufficient; Lack of training for students' logical thinking, speculation and expression ability. General education courses become a means to obtain credits.

For the above reasons, the current general education system in China pays more attention to the quantity and breadth of courses, but less to the quality and depth of courses. Finally, it leads to the lack of high-quality core courses and insufficient contact with professional courses.

4 Analysis on the Path of “Student-Centered” General Education Reform

In the 21st century, the multi-cultural integration and conflict in globalization have intensified, and the interdisciplinary trend is significant. Many first-class universities in China have launched general education reform, such as the “Yuanpei experimental class” of Peking University, the “Fudan College” of Fudan University and the “Boya College” of Sun Yat sen University. The outline of the national 13th five-year plan points out that it is necessary to “implement the training system of classifying academic and applied talents and combining general education with professional education”.

As mentioned above, the development of general education is affected by the macro external environment of different countries and regions, such as history and culture, development stage and so on. Similarly, the characteristics and internal environment evolution of universities also affect the process of general education. Since students are the center of the reform of general education, this paper proposes the path of the reform of general education in Chinese universities like Fig. 1.

4.1 “Localization” of General Education in Different Types of Universities

Based on the basic principle of “student-centered” and considering the development orientation and educational objectives of the University, this paper divides Chinese universities into research universities, teaching and research universities and application-oriented universities. The types, characteristics and methods of general education of universities are shown in Table 1.

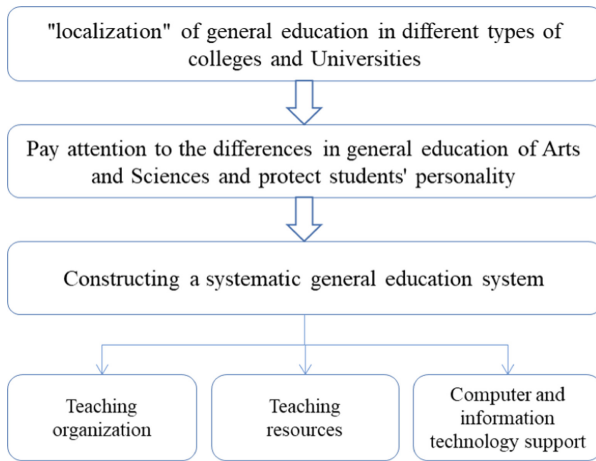


Fig. 1. The reform path of student-centered General Education

Table 1. Characteristics of Chinese universities and existing general education methods

University type	research universities	teaching and research universities	application-oriented universities
School and student characteristics	School have received more resource support and attracted more excellent teachers. Students have good basic scientific research literacy.	School usually pay equal attention to teaching and scientific research. The quality of students is lower than that of research universities.	Students' learning and teachers' teaching are carried out around specific industries, focusing on the cultivation of specific skills.
General education mode	School can explore and practice the material general education mode independently.	School have provided new ideas for the reform of general education. Many schools try to use the network to establish alliances and share general education resources	Many schools realize that general education is necessary. School try to set up general education modules with the help of school enterprise cooperation.

China's "985" and "211" universities are generally regarded as research universities. The students of research universities have high scores in the college entrance examination, which can be considered as having good basic scientific research literacy. Such universities have received more resource support and attracted more excellent teachers to join. Their main educational purpose is to train scientific research elites. After long-term accumulation, such universities have generally made outstanding achievements in

scientific research. However, with the integration of global culture, the requirements for comprehensive knowledge, coordination and innovation are constantly improving, and research universities also attach more importance to general education. Research universities have a good foundation of general education. They can independently explore and practice the material general education mode. As mentioned above, Peking University and Fudan University are the pioneers of China’s general education reform.

Teaching and research universities account for the vast majority of China’s undergraduate universities. The competent departments are generally units below the provincial and municipal level. Compared with research universities, such universities have poor student qualifications and teachers. Their development orientation is usually to pay equal attention to teaching and scientific research. Due to the promotion of regional foreign economic and trade exchanges and cooperation, most schools have realized the importance of general education. However, the status of general education is difficult to match with professional education, and the quality of general education courses is not high due to the limited number of teachers. In recent years, the rise of network education and the increase of inter school communication have provided new ideas for the reform of general education. Many schools have also put forward the promotion strategy of general education based on network classroom.

The main purpose of applied universities is to cultivate people who meet the needs of industry and professional development. Students’ learning and teachers’ teaching are carried out around specific industries, focusing on the cultivation of specific skills, which is contrary to the basic concept of general education. Since students’ learning is mainly based on skills cultivation, they cannot form a systematic understanding and understanding of the relationship between their career and social development. In the later stage of employment, they are also difficult to understand customer needs. More importantly, students from application-oriented university are very likely to be unemployed or unable to adapt to new industries. To cultivate learning ability and comprehensive quality, General education is very necessary for applied universities. On the basis of establishing a correct concept of general education, it is a practical idea to set up general education modules with the help of school enterprise cooperation and other activities of application-oriented schools.

4.2 General Education Based on Students’ Personality

Under the system of dividing arts and Sciences, humanistic culture is separated from scientific culture. Science students have narrow knowledge and lack humanistic spirit. Liberal arts students do not understand the basic natural science knowledge, and lack scientific thinking and scientific spirit. University general education is an important way to make up for this institutional defect. Based on the characteristics of students with different subject backgrounds, corresponding general education curriculum system, teaching mode and evaluation method should be set up.

University is the most important place to produce ideas. Only by protecting students’ personality differences, can we produce innovative ideas and sound personality and realize the original intention and purpose of university education.

Table 2. Types and objectives of general education courses

Course type	Basic course	Core curriculum	Hidden curriculum
Course objectives	To cultivate basic quality	Expand horizons through interdisciplinary crossing	Inspire learning interests through extracurricular activities, scientific research activities and quality development

4.3 Building a Systematic General Education System

In the process of general education development and reform, reasonable organization, sufficient resources and information technology support are necessary. It is needed to establish a unified general education system to promote reform. Specifically:

1. determines the model of general education;
2. establishes a general education management organization;
3. determines the curriculum system;
4. determines the evaluation criteria;
5. establishes a teacher selection system;
6. determines the teacher evaluation index system;
7. determines the training plan and evaluation method of students.

4.3.1 Teaching Organization

The teaching organization involves many aspects, at least including: systematic curriculum system setting; course teaching plan arrangement; the relationship and coordination between teachers and student management organizations; teachers' teaching organization and coordination; teacher evaluation requirements, etc.

Among them, curriculum is the carrier of educational goals and concepts. According to international experience, the general education curriculum can be divided into basic courses, core courses and hidden courses, like Table 2. Universities can design a curriculum system that conforms to the objectives of general education based on their own educational and teaching resources.

4.3.2 Teaching Resources

General education resources include teachers, teaching information resources, software and hardware facilities and equipment. General education emphasizes the internal relationship of subject system, and puts forward higher requirements for teachers' knowledge system and teaching methods. Teachers with rich teaching and scientific research experience are generally required to participate. In addition, it is also necessary to establish more reasonable performance evaluation standards and professional title evaluation system to improve teachers' teaching enthusiasm.

4.3.3 Computer and Information Technology Support

The development of computer information technology provides new methods and means for general education. The main ways of applying modern information technology to carry out general education include: first, schools with sufficient teaching resources and educational experience can carry out open courses of general education. Schools lacking in teaching resources can use network platform resources to carry out general education teaching. Second, local colleges and universities can establish a general education alliance to share teachers and curriculum resources through network support. Third, students and teachers in different universities can realize cross time and space discussions and exchanges through computer communication support. Fourthly, teachers’ teaching evaluation and students’ learning evaluation are carried out through network support. In a word, modern information technology promotes the internationalization of general education.

5 Conclusion

The overall goal of general education is to cultivate people with complete and all-round development. Students are not only the object of general education, but also the center of the construction of general education system. This paper summarizes the problems existing in general education in Chinese universities, and puts forward the path of “student-centered” general education reform, including: (1) Universities should formulate general education objectives and general education models suitable for their own. (2) Universities should pay attention to the characteristics of students. (3) A systematic general education system should be built in universities, which provide teaching organization, teaching resources and information technology support for general education.

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