

# Integration of Liberal Education with Professional Education in Colleges

## Taking the Major of Financial Management in Application-oriented Colleges as an Example

Mengyuan Liu

Guangdong University of Science and Technology  
Dongguan, China 523079

Yi Tang

Guangdong University of Science and Technology  
Dongguan, China 523079

**Abstract**—The introduction of “liberal education” makes people realize liberal education should be integrated with higher education to train talents with integrated development. People hold different opinions on how to better integrate liberal education with professional education. Discussion on how to integrate liberal education in financial management major is proposed in this paper.

**Keywords**—liberal education; professional education; integration; financial management

### I. INTRODUCTION

At present, higher education focuses on training students’ professional ability. New courses that meet demands of employment market are added to traditional professional courses. However, too dispersed major forcibly separates knowledge system, stresses depth and neglects width. The deficiency of natural and humanistic education goes against students’ integrated development. At the beginning of the 19th century, “liberal education” was first proposed by America to integrate with college education.

### II. CONCEPT AND MEANING OF LIBERAL EDUCATION

So far, no uniform explanation on concept of liberal education has existed. More than fifty authoritative explanations on its definition have existed since it was first proposed at the beginning of the 19th century. It is widely believed that “liberal education” in modern sense at least has the following characteristics: first, liberal education faces all students; second, liberal education is non-professional and non-utilitarian; third, liberal education makes up for the deficiency of professional education to gain common knowledge and improve cultural quality and literacy; last, liberal education enlightens students to pursue all-round self-development.

Liberal education emphasizes training students’ comprehensive quality, which includes proper ethical ideology and ability to solve problems. Correct moral outlook makes students optimistic and positive and know black from white, namely trains ability. Ability is the fundamental to solve all problems. For example, learning ability can make students

draw inferences about other cases from one instance and comprehend by analogy. The basis to form ability comes from extensive knowledge and practice.

### III. NECESSITY TO INTEGRATE LIBERAL EDUCATION WITH PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

Mainstream educational pattern in colleges is professional education, pursuing deep excavation of knowledge. Professional education trains first-class professionals who lack extensive knowledge. It easily neglects students’ integrated development even trains students into professional tools and cannot meet higher requirements of social development for talents. Liberal education surpasses limitations of disciplines and involves extensive knowledge. A scholar once said “love learning but content with superficial understanding”. However, if liberal education is advocated blindly, students will lack professional skills. The booming development of economy in China has requirements for professional ability and quality of talents. Therefore, liberal education and professional education must collaborate and integrate, in order to train all-round talents.

However, the integration of the two educations is not so easy. Different ideas and demands make it difficult in implementation.

### IV. PROBLEMS IN INTEGRATION OF LIBERAL EDUCATION WITH PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

#### A. Students Fail to Thoroughly Understand Liberal Education

Most students hold the attitude that they spare no efforts for college entrance examination not to learn and live in good university but to enter good university and find a good job after graduation. Finding a good job is the main reason why they insist learning in colleges. Students consult how to choose professional courses and optional courses and ask teacher which courses contribute to employment. Similarly, students listen carefully in classes of enterprise accounting and financial management but lack enthusiasm for budget accounting used in administrative institutions. They absorb in reviewing junior account examination. They address budget accounting is no use because they do not intend to enter administrative institutions. They select courses to obtain

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credits. College students learn according to market demands and select courses to get all credits and graduate smoothly. They have insufficient understanding of learning extensive knowledge and training learning ability.

#### *B. Social Demand Makes Universities Blindly Pursue Professional Education*

According to demands of employment market, colleges add new occupational disciplines. Traditional disciplines are transformed and become more applied, especially in application-oriented colleges. The indicator of “graduates’ employment rate” predominates in evaluating success degree of application-oriented colleges in running school. Attentions are paid to results instead of educational process. In recent years, the development of application-oriented university and vocational college is supported to train talents who meet social demands. “Talents who meet social demands” is easily explained as “talents who have practical professional manipulative skills”. What kind of talents does today’s society need? The answer is talents with strong comprehensive quality instead of only professional skills. Many application-oriented universities and vocational colleges think professional skills prevail and develop disciplines of application and operation and equate college education to vocational training, which leads to bad results. For example, graduates only familiar with finance are promoted to financial executive but they will fail to adapt because financial executive requires not only professional skills but also management skills that require the coordination of leadership, communication skills, expression ability and coordination skills.

#### *C. Liberal Education Lacks Teaching Staff*

Professional teachers are required to teach courses of liberal education. However, at present, most teachers of application-oriented universities are full-time teachers of related majors who teach many courses of liberal education in part time. These courses are optional courses. On one hand, teachers of liberal education are unprofessional so education received by students fails to achieve the desired results; on the other hand, optional courses have low assessment requirements for students. Students just need to attend class. Teachers turn a blind eye to those who don’t listen. Students obtain credits after the class is over, but they fail to learn knowledge. Liberal education becomes formalistic.

### **V. MEASURES TO SOLVE PROBLEMS IN INTEGRATING LIBERAL EDUCATION WITH PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION**

According to problems in integrating liberal education and professional education, feasible suggestions such as course reform in financial management major and strengthen teaching staff are proposed.

#### *A. Course Reform*

Courses of liberal education are not related to major, in order to train students’ moral cultivation, analytical ability, logical ability, expression ability and ability to use tools. The course contents include college Chinese, college English, advanced mathematics, probability theory, statistics, computer

information system, psychology, logic and moral principles. Students can develop the following five qualities through learning these basic courses: have proper ethical ideology, write wonderful financial analysis report, speak foreign language fluently, and grasp methods of quantitative analysis and expertly operate computer software, which will be useful for students in future work.

The integration of liberal education with professional education means guiding students to apply what they learn to thinking and practice. How to do? It is necessary to regularly give lessons with special topics. The teacher guides students to think and discuss. For example, in special topic of “effective investment”, discuss how to choose investment objects. Students are guided to analyze through knowledge that they have learned from different perspectives and determine investment objects. Teachers can guide from enterprise value assessment and require students to apply professional knowledge of value assessment. Besides, they should look into alternative investment objects, understand its economic condition, industry’s prospect, history and culture of enterprise as well as product positioning, conclude written message collected, carry out computational analysis of data through knowledge of statistics as well as analyze motivation of fund raisers from the perspective of psychology. Teachers can only provide guidance and help and students think deeply. In this way, students absorb others’ opinions, broaden mind, strengthen what they learn and further improve comprehensive abilities through independent thinking. Therefore, in the integration of liberal education with professional education, it is important to practice with solid theoretical basis and solve professional problems through abilities obtained from liberal education and further strengthen it.

With soaring development of science and technology and ever-changing information, the teaching contents of liberal education should keep pace with the times and add the newest research results and opinions properly according to characteristics of different courses, in order to make the teaching contents reach academic forefront and international advanced level.

#### *B. Strengthen Teaching Staff*

Liberal education lacks professional teachers. It is unrealistic for most colleges to specifically introduce full-time teachers of liberal education. After all, higher education in our country focuses on professional education. We can imitate the practice of providing open class at abroad. Famous teachers are invited to give lectures in lecture hall. On one hand, experienced and professional famous lecturers of liberal education can attract students to participate; on the other hand, it saves costs in employing full-time teachers for a long time. The open class of “equity and justice” of Harvard University that leads trend in open class is very successful example. We hope to see all seats are occupied in our universities. The provision of open class lectures given by renowned teachers should require full-time teachers to participate, in order to strengthen their comprehensive literacy and ability and make them teach with ease.

### C. Create More Opportunities for Practice and Training

Application-oriented universities train practical talents and their abilities in thinking and operation. We must create more opportunities for students to think and solve problems independently, check the integration of knowledge and ability and the improvement of students' comprehensive ability, including the ability to solve problems. Except for seminar, practice and training as well as regular quality expansion are required. Practical training in financial management major refers to the training that simulates real scenes in enterprises, builds roles of financial management for students and check whether they can use professional knowledge and skills to analyze financial index of enterprises and carry out financial decision-making through case operation. However, the provision of training courses has only one way and one standard answer. It goes against students' divergent thinking and creativity. We should provide more opportunities for students to practice and let them contact actual financial management. Except for give full play to students' subjective creativity, instructors should regularly check practice results, support and encourage students with obvious improvement.

## VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the dominant position of professional education in higher education is unshakable. Liberal education should make up for the deficiencies of humanistic education and education for sustainable development caused by professional education. Liberal education and professional education must develop harmoniously and promote each other, in order to train college graduates with integrated personality, all-round development, professional skills and comprehensive quality and better serve the society.

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