

The Implementation Level of General Education in Regular Normal Universities

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ABSTRACT

With general education becoming more and more important, numerous research have been done among universities of celebrity, like 985 or 211. However, only few research has been done in regular schools, whose importance is as vital as famous schools. Therefore, this essay aims at the general education in regular normal universities to find problems and solve them. Literature research method and qualitative interview method are taken in this article. Through research, there are a lot of problems in the implementation process of general education, which can be found from schools to students, in regular normal universities, like poor cognitive positioning of general education, low satisfaction with general education courses and others. Correspondingly, some useful suggestions are given by the author. This paper advocates that government and education experts should put more focus on normal schools general education, which exerts a essential impetus to improve basic education.

Keywords: *general education, normal universities, course allocation*

1. INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of 1990, the department and officials of Education began to emphasized the general education with the influence of American's model, many universities view the general education as the center of teaching and curriculum reform, trying to combine the mode of general education and professional education [1].

Besides, under the background of the new era and face the new demand for talents, the education of China, specially the general education, is constantly reforming. What is more, with the popularization and development of general education in China, colleges and universities, mainly the universities of celebrity: 985 or 211 universities, like Peking University, Tsinghua University, People's University, Beijing Normal University, have become the key research objects of general education and implemented it. However, there are few surveys on regular normal colleges and universities, and the level of implementation is not inspected quite well, according to the author's research of journals, observation and real experience. In particular, ordinary normal schools play a role in cultivating a broad range of elementary and middle school teachers, and their contribution to China's basic education cannot be underestimated. Besides, with the rapid economic development and the goal of building a well-off society in an all-round way, the original requirements for teacher quality can no longer meet the needs of the development of the times, which requires general education work its function to foster a comprehensive personality, like moral quality, cultural quality, professional quality, and psychological quality [2].

This research mainly focuses on the implementation of regular normal universities. By interviewing students of regular normal universities from different majors, the problems about the implementation of general education will be found out and solutions and suggestions will be give as well, respectively.

2. THE METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

In order to better understand the current situation of general education in regular normal universities, two research methods were used, literature research Method and qualitative interview method.

Firstly, the author collected literature through the library, the Internet, and Chinese and foreign texts sub-databases and the talent training program of this college of general education. By reading Chinese and foreign authors journals, like Li Manli, Cheng Xingming, Gan Yan, Zhao Ting Ting, Hen Qinghua, Yan Haibo and others, the definition of the general schools and the current situation were found out. Besides, Thomas Russell, Alexander Meikelejohn, Louis T. Benezet, Aristophanes, served also as literature source, through which the difference of general education of two different countries were analyzed. In this way, more useful and thoughtful suggestions can be given.

In addition, qualitative interview method is taken as well. The interviewees are divided into two sections, liberal arts and science. The students of liberal arts-liberal arts are mainly from, liberal arts political history, foreign languages, Chinese Language and Literature; students of science-mathematics are mainly from applied mathematics, physics, chemistry, which can be seen from table 1. The

total number of interviewees is 6. The interview method is one to one conversation (because of covid-19, the form of interview is taken online) and the author ask questions according to table 2. The statistics of respondents' answer are through an app- See table. Table 3 shows the interview results. It can clearly see the vies of different people from

different majors about general education and details will be explained below. Besides, the percentage in table 3 are given a standard and interviewees are asked to score according to this: 0~20% very dissatisfied, 20~40% dissatisfied, 40~60% general, 60~80% satisfied, 80~100% very satisfied.

Table 1 Interviewing presentation

	Departments	Interviewers	Interviewee	Interview Time	Interview Method
1	liberal arts political history	Dani	A	2020-09-08	phone call
2	Foreign languages	Dani	B	2020-09-08	phone call
3	Chinese Language and Lit...	Dani	C	2020-09-08	WeChat
4	Applied Mathematics	Dani	D	2020-09-08	phone call
5	physics	Dani	E	2020-09-08	phone call
6	chemistry	Dani	F	2020-09-08	WeChat

Table 2 Interviewing Questions

Interviewing Questions	
1.	Do you know what general education is?
2.	Do you think the general education courses you are taking have improved your overall ability?
3.	As a student in normal colleges, what areas do you think should be developed?
4.	Are you satisfied with the current class method and content?
5.	Do you have any suggestions for the implementation of general education in ordinary universities in the future?

Table 3 The interview results

	the Knowledge level of general education	How is he implementation	the satisfaction of current teaching method and content of general education
liberal arts political history	40%	50%	50%
Foreign languages	50%	50%	50%
Chinese Language and Literature	40%	60%	40%
Applied Mathematics	80%	70%	60%
Physics	40%	50%	50%
Chemistry	40%	60%	40%

Table 4 General education research institutions and the number of publications since 2000 [3]

Universities	Numbers	Universities	Numbers
Nanjing University	50	Tsinghua University	28
Peking University	41	Xiamen University	25
Fudan University	35	Renmin University of China	25
Wuhan University	32	East China Normal University	24
Zhejiang University	30	Hunan Normal University	23

Table 4 is a comprehensive analysis of general education research in my country since the 21st century. It is based on the research on general education in core journals since 2000 in CNKI data. It can be clearly seen from this table that Nanjing University has more than 50 research papers on general education, followed by Peking University and Fudan University, and these universities are basically "985" or "211" project key construction universities, and

most of them are comprehensive universities, distributed in the eastern coastal areas of China [3]. Therefore, this table clearly distributes that most researches are focus on celebrity universities and a few research about general education are on local universities, which stimulates author to do a specific research about general education on regular normal schools.

3. RESEARCH RESULT

3.1. Poor cognitive and inaccurate positioning of general education

Table 5 The Knowledge level of general education

	40%	50%	80%
Liberal Arts Political History	1		
Applied Mathematics			1
Chemistry	1		
Chinese Language and Literature	1		
Foreign Languages		1	
Physics	1		
Total Number	4	1	1

Table 6 General courses and credits

	Course Title	Scores
1	Outline of Modern Chinese History	2
2	Moral Cultivation and Fundamentals of Laws	2
3	An Introduction to the Basic Principles of Marxism	2
4	An Introduction to Mao Zedong thought and Theory of Building Socialism with Chinese Characteristic	4
5	Situation and Policy	2
6	Computer Basic Training	4
7	College English	4
8	Mental Health Education of College Students	1
9	Career Development Planing	1

(from: general description of the preparation of the 2019 talent training plan)

From the table 4, the degree of recognition is not rather high and the accurate definition is vague. Among all the interviewees, only one person knew the general education well, while the rests views are not comprehensive. Five students say that they have no idea about it. However, after being explained the exactly meaning of the world, they have an overview of it. Normally, the five interviewee said that they know what are courses of general education after the author explained, but not pay much attention to general courses. Therefore, the situation of it can be explained from three different perspectives, the school and teachers and students. For the school, table 6, according to the talent training program, it can clearly see that even though the school emphasized the importance of the general education from the average

credits, the general education courses are mainly humanities and social instead of covering a wide range, including mathematics and natural sciences, arts, political skills, morality and so on. What is more, the knowledge and skills are focused on job prospects instead of comprehensive abilities which will be beneficial for their whole life. For teachers, they are usually from other sections or as assistant teachers rather than a specific area, which results that teacher do not have deeper understanding of general education which they teach and they can only teach superficial things. For students interviewed, they do not know what the general education is or how many kinds of general education we have at most times.

3.2. Dissatisfaction of the general education

Table 7 The satisfaction of Current Teaching Method and Content of General Education

	40%	50%	60%
Liberal Arts Political History		1	
Applied Mathematics			1
Chemistry	1		
Chinese Language and Literature	1		
Foreign Languages		1	
Physics	1	1	
Total Number	2	3	1

The satisfaction of current teaching method and content of general education clearly shows that above half of students are not satisfied with the implementation of general education, which can be inferred that among 60% of students in regular normal education are not contented with the courses. According to the content of interview, this problem contains many perspectives: satisfaction with teachers, course content, teaching method and teaching assessment. First one is the low satisfaction with teachers, because the majority of students view that their teachers professional competence is far away from their expectation, like knowledge reserve ability, expression ability and professionalism. The teaching contents, sometimes, are outdated. For example, the teaching materials cannot match the actual teaching content of primary and secondary schools and cannot keep up with the rapid development of the times. What is more, the teaching content does not combine theory and practice together, since theory is emphasized, while the practice part is missing. For example, the teaching textbooks have been updated to the newest version, but most teachers in regular normal universities still tell their students to use old version to prepare a class. As a result, the talents cultivated by universities unable to meet the needs of today's society [4]. Thirdly, according to the interview, three students said that the teaching method is single and traditional, simply using teaching materials and PowerPoint taught in large classes with two or three classes together. Eventually, as for assessment program, it does not pay attention to formative evaluation, but only pays attention to summative evaluation, bringing about that students usually do not listen to the class seriously, rarely participate in discussions and passively accept knowledge. Basically, they just can memorize key contents few days before the test and they can pass the test [5].

4. SUGGESTIONS

4.1. Raise awareness of general education

Based on c.t .Lee saying that regular normal universities should know that the general education, an indispensable part and necessity in universities or college, should cultivate high-talented civilized people and wholesome personality which includes great visions , thoughtful insight, liberal spirit and aesthetic feelings [6]. Therefore, the department of Education in China should let experts who charge their implementation of general courses from different level of universities-the higher one and lower one, exchange their identity to stay and survey each others universities for a period of time. During this period of time, they will learn advantages and discover disadvantages from each schools. Hence when they come back to their own schools, they will know how to implement in an efficient and successful way. Then for teachers, universities should organize and train a bunch of

professional teachers of general education instead of laymen to improve professionalism. For example, the regular general universities can take Gan Yang measure, adding "teaching assistant system" as one of the method, letting postgraduate students to work as assistants in general courses, which will help not only the course itself, but also enhance the way fostering skilled postgraduate students and doctoral students [7]. For students, when they enter into universities as freshmen, they should have a class, called the general knowledge course of general education, to let them know what the general education is and have a awareness of how important it is to them. However, people should realize that schools and teachers also put a lot effort to implement general education and some of improvement have been made, like treating general education courses as compulsory courses and setting a specific part for developing general education on the talent training program. As a result, students should know that class is not the only way to obtain knowledge of general courses, but others. They should take fully advantage of their extra time at campus life, to automatically know other knowledge and to supply the missing parts of existing knowledge. In order to do this, schools and teachers can emphasis the importance of self-learning and life-long learning from time to time. Consequently, general education can achieve its value to a greater extent.

4.2. Optimize and innovate the teaching system

According to the interview, most of the students are unsatisfied of average teachers ability, like the pronunciation of mandarin, knowledge reserve capacity, professional skills and so on. There are some reasons to explain it. Most teachers in regular normal universities are not in a higher standard. They are mainly graduate from universities in local areas instead of well-known one, because those people who graduate from celebrity college prefer to well-developed places to work. Hence, the first is to improve the standardization of teachers in regular normal universities or colleges. Though this kind of schools is restricted by the level region and economic development, it still can give some bonus to stimulate more capable and qualified teachers to work here or get national hand-out, like policy preferences-social insurance subsidies and public welfare job subsidies. Arguably, teachers are like the domino effect, which will cause chain reaction. That is to say if a teacher is capable of anything, the students she or he teaches will be more likely to imitate from them and learn the best essence of them, so some officials and departments should focus on it. Then, the teaching content should follow up the changing speed of the time, which can be done in the following. Teachers can combine traditional method with creative one, such as group discussion and group research, to tell them use today new events and topics related to the courses they have to do some researches as one of their assignments. Forms are not limited, like movie, essay, presentation and others so as to trigger students interest on general courses.

In this way, there are more evaluation can be put into formative assessment, including personal performance and teamwork. Lastly, courses can be divided into smaller classes or based on students performance on study, which will be more efficiency and effective. Consequently, teaching will go smoothly and the teaching objectives and key points will have more specific direction.

5. CONCLUSION

This research have given some analysis of general education in regular normal universities and colleges like poor cognitive and inaccurate positioning of it form 3 different perspectives and give also problems in teaching system (teachers, content, teaching method, assessment), giving practical and useful suggestions, respectively. All of these can lay a good and basic foundation for the development of regular normal universities, which contains a big proportion in China. However, this research also exists some disadvantages. The analysis is not enough, and also lack of a large amount of data and samples to give some details to support, only based on considerable literature and a few qualitative interview. Therefore, in the future, more analysis and data will be put and find some objects of comparison to dig more about general education.

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