

Get Out of the Difficulties of General Education Elective Courses in Colleges and Universities

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Abstract. General education is a model of talent cultivation to broaden the knowledge scope of college students. General education elective course is the richest part of general education. However, the general education elective courses in most colleges and universities have stepped into a bottleneck period. In order to make general education elective courses play the role of broadening the horizon of college students and cultivating their humanistic quality, this paper deeply analyzes the reasons for current difficulties from schools, teachers and students and proposes corresponding solutions.

Introduction

General education is an important part of higher education as well as the important part of modern university system. General education aims to cultivate national citizens and social men with ideals, beliefs, sense of social responsibility, healthy mind and body and comprehensive development. General education focuses on extensive, non-professional and non-utilitarian education of basic knowledge, skills, ideas and attitudes. It is not a professional education but places emphasis on overall development of people. It focuses on cultivating national citizens with overall development and sense of social responsibility from extensive interests, healthy personality, humanity with positive energy and other aspects. This paper argues that general education focuses on education of human beings. If professional education focuses on professional men, general education focuses on independent, whole and thoughtful social men.

General education elective course is an important part of general education. General education elective courses aim to broaden basic knowledge of college students and enhance their humanistic quality. The ocean of knowledge is vast, and college students have different requirements for knowledge. It is the general demand of college students to develop interests, cultivate hobbies and express personality. According to investigations, science students believe they are most lack of humanity and social science courses, and art students believe they are most lack of science courses. It is deeply reflected in the interviews with students [2]. General education elective courses can provide college students with a variety of knowledge to meet their interests and demands. It plays a vital role in cultivating rich interests in study and life of college students, guiding them to discover and enrich themselves through continuous exploration and attempt and turning them into mentally and physically healthy people with a rich inner world.

Difficulties of General Education Elective Courses and Reasons for the Difficulties

The difficulties of general education elective courses mainly come from three aspects, including schools, teachers and students.

In Terms of Schools, There Are Many Deficiencies in Teaching Management of General Education Elective Courses in Schools. Education and teaching management usually refers to education and teaching of professional courses. It rarely focuses on general education and focuses less on teaching of general education elective courses. At present, general education elective courses have become marginalized in some schools. Although many schools advocate such courses, they still pay little attention to them for a variety of subjective and objective reasons. There is no

mature system in schools in setting of general education elective courses. Teachers apply by themselves and teaching management department takes charge of approval when most schools set up general education elective courses. However, the teaching management department usually fails to examine the teaching content and qualifications of teachers or consider whether the proportion of different courses is reasonable or not, resulting in mixed teaching content, unreasonable proportion of science and art courses, the phenomena that the courses favored by students become overcrowded and unpopular courses have to be cancelled and other phenomena [3]. Schools are lack of regulation in general education elective courses. It makes the teachers focus less on general education elective courses from the perspective of management [4]. The regulation is often weak, which makes teachers teach classes the way they want and students skip classes. Schools lack regulation in teachers' teaching, and teachers lack regulation in students' learning.

In Terms of Teachers, Preparing Process, Teaching Content and Teaching Methods will Affect the Teaching Effect of General Education Elective Courses. Some teachers cannot fully analyze the objects of elective courses, select exquisite teaching content, organize excellent class teaching process or communicate sincerely with teachers if they do not fully prepare the general education elective courses. If they are not willing to invest time and energy in analyzing the characteristics, interests, needs of students and selecting teaching contents that can arouse student's interests or resonance, they will not be able to meet the demands of students. In the age of knowledge and information explosion, we cannot attract the attention of modern college students or make them willing to feel the charm of knowledge in classroom without the unique and exquisite contents beyond the Internet.

Some teachers of general education elective courses adopt the teaching materials of specialized course and teach specialized knowledge by reducing the depth of specialized knowledge, but they are too theoretical and logical for non-professional students and they may find it difficult to understand the course. As a result, students begin to skip the classes.

Most general education elective courses still continue the teaching way of specialized courses with monotonous form and less classroom interaction [5]. Teachers turn the general education elective courses into the less specialized courses. Teachers of public elective courses usually say "students are unwilling to listen to what teacher teach in public elective courses" and "we just need to teach with simple explanation as students do not listen to us". It seems that students' behavior of breaking class rules makes teachers focus less on class. Educators are not willing to analyze the reasons or make efforts to improve the situation by forgetting their guiding role. Some other teachers launch general education elective courses in order to add their work amount. Such opinions and attitudes will inevitably affect the attitude and teaching method of teachers, which will affect the students in an intangible way. Furthermore, they will turn a blind eye when students arrive late or leave early, play their mobile phones, read extra-curricular books, whisper or do homework of other courses.

In Terms of Students, They Misunderstand General Education Elective Courses, Do not Comply with Class Rules and Disrupt the Classroom Order. A number of students think they choose general education elective courses to get credits. They are unimportant and irrelevant. So the students skip the classes. In the context of professional education, college students mainly focus on the study of professional courses. They even attend the exams of certificates by focusing on their major in order to make them more qualified when hunting a job. It is correct for a professional man. However, according to Marxist philosophy, the essence of human development is human with all-round development. The purpose of higher education is not only to cultivate top talents in a professional field but also to educate people, train all-round development people and cultivate people with high moral character and broad mind.

Nowadays, most of college students were born after 1990s. They are in the age of rich information with comfortable family and college life. It makes them focus more on their personality and inner feeling. They will follow their psychological feelings when choosing courses and attending classes. If they choose the courses that they dislike or cannot meet their knowledge base or spiritual demands, they will not accept the courses and even skip the classes. Similarly, if they

teaching content, teaching style or teaching links of teachers fail to attract the college students and make them feel good or make them dislike the course, they will be likely to disrupt the classroom order [6].

Wrong behaviors result in wrong opinions, which can be conveyed from schools to educators and educates. The vicious circle over time will make general education elective courses disliked by participators and become more marginalized educational part. It will become a difficult problem that everybody thinks general education elective courses meaningful but the practical implementation unsatisfactory. The teaching and management will become formalistic, resulting in the waste of human and material resources in teaching.

Solutions to the Difficulties of General Education Elective Courses in Higher Education

This paper proposes the following solutions to get rid of the difficulties by analyzing the reasons for the difficulties of general education elective courses.

Education and Teaching Management, Namely Schools Should Continue to Pay Great Attention to the Significance and Importance of General Education. General education is an essential part of higher education. General education elective courses contain the richest content of general education and provide the energetic basic knowledge for different fields. In order to focus on general education ideologically, they need to deeply understand the essence of higher education, which is cultivating all-round development man. In the current society filled with the “practical” and “useful” opinions, as a part of society, colleges and universities will be affected by social ideas inevitably. Thus, the educators of higher education should follow the educational essence of “the foundation of higher education is moral education” proposed by the General Secretary Mr. Xi in National Higher Education Ideological and Political Work Conference.

In terms of systems, we need to strengthen general education teaching management, enhance regulation of general education elective courses and make general education elective courses standard and ordered [7]. Supervision is the best impetus. Strengthening teaching supervision is helpful for reducing violation of class rules, which can change teachers and students’ understanding of general education elective courses by changing their behaviors.

In guidance and operation of course selection of students, schools should provide students with course nature, syllabus, teachers and other information so that students can select course according to their own needs and interests in order to avoid blind selection of courses according to course name. In addition, schools should continue to improve course selection technology and offer students the opportunity to select courses they like. Through the class survey of my general education elective course —*Into the Psychology*, about one-third of the students choose the course as they fail to select the courses [8]. As they are not interested in the course and the course is not the specialized course, they choose them only for getting credits, thereby leading to the behaviors of disrupting class order.

In Terms of Teachers, Teachers are Educators who Are Responsible for Imparting Knowledge and Educating People. Both specialized course and general education course, whether launching general education elective course is the compulsory requirement of schools or is for teaching assessment of teachers, no matter what the purpose of the course, teachers should place the greatest emphasis on course as long as they teach in class. Teachers should learn a lot of knowledge for teaching and set a good example for educating people. The words and behaviors of teachers in class will deeply affect the students. Enhancing understanding of general education elective courses, deepening understanding of the essence of higher education and holding a positive teaching attitude is the prerequisite for teachers to prepare class and teach seriously in class.

General education elective course is different from specialized course, which is selected by people from different majors and backgrounds. A part of students do not have any foundation in this major. Thus, we need to choose teaching content carefully in order to introduce a field to a group without any professional background [9]. Taking *Into the Psychology* for example, the contents of psychology are vast. The teaching content of general education elective course should be the knowledge of psychology in which college students are interested, such as self-knowledge, handling

of interpersonal relationship, interpretation of emotions and so on. Teachers can give the examples that usually happen in daily life of college students. They can make professional knowledge life-related and simple so that students can benefit from the knowledge. According to class investigation, almost all the students dislike too theoretical and professional teaching contents. This paper argues that teaching content of general education elective courses should meet the interests and needs of students rather than be too theoretical. The teaching methods should vary from each other. According to class investigation, students are interested in videos and video interpretation, mental games, mental measurement, mental investigation, mental mailbox for answering mental questions and other forms related to teaching contents. Meanwhile, the diverse teaching method has enhanced the exchange and interaction between teachers and students in an intangible way and increased the emotional and spiritual communication between students and teachers in knowledge teaching process [10]. In diverse class that students connect with teachers emotionally, the unlimited vitality and magic attract the students to attend class timely and obey the class rules. This paper believes that rich class content, diversified teaching methods and good emotional connection is one of the magic weapons for attracting students to favor general education elective courses.

Students should Avoid Selecting Courses Blindly or According to Course Name. Before course selection, they should understand course content, personal information of teachers and other information to select courses according to their own interests and needs as much as possible. Interest and demand-oriented course selection is meaningful for students. They should choose courses not only for passing the exam or not calling the roll by the teacher. Otherwise, it will be a waste of resources if they do not attend course seriously after selecting the course. Besides, they will develop a bad learning attitude. Students should realize that general education elective course is an important part of accepting education. It can broaden their scope of knowledge, enhance their humanistic cultivation and strengthen their mental and physical health. Therefore, attending class seriously is necessary for gaining knowledge and wealth. This paper believes that a good understanding before course selection and attending class after course selection is a way for students to make use of general education elective courses for self-improvement.

In summary, the wonderful classroom teaching of general education elective courses can offer college students the unlimited room for growth. Educators should pay attention to the current plight of general education elective courses and actively get out of the plight to realize the real meaning of educating people of general education elective courses. Education focuses on development and cultivation of humanity. Educators should hope college students will become professional talents and own the quality of understanding and balance. Human life needs to be meaningful and valuable. College students need to learn professional knowledge and have ideals, good taste, broad mind and the “sense” of choosing the good. They hope to improve the classroom teaching of general education elective courses to offer college students a good outlook on life, healthy psychology and wise view to cultivate more physically and mentally healthy and all-round development talents.

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