

# School-Based Research Report

## —Investigation and Analysis on Undergraduate General Education of W University in China

Huimin Feng Gan Xiong Ling Shen Binbin Huang

Academy of Educational Scientific Research of Wuhan University, Wuhan, Hubei, 430071, China

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.26549/jetm.v1i1.294>

As one of the national key comprehensive universities with a long history of China, W University has always been forefront in reforming general education. The implementation of general education has been started since 2003, at the same time some beneficial exploitations were conducted in W University, which thus was considered as one of the three modes of general education in mainland's universities and colleges<sup>[1]</sup>. In 2013, W University carried out the second round of reform of general education, and now the third wave is undergoing, that was based on a university-wide discussion on reform of undergraduate education in August, 2015<sup>[2]</sup>. The discussion focused on the reform of general education and stimulated people's interest on these changes. Therefore, this research team carried out two university-wide large-scale questionnaire surveys separately in May 2015 and November 2016 to find out undergraduates and instructors' opinions about the previous two reforms. Through analysis of status quo of implementation and undergraduates and instructors' questions and suggestions, this paper can provide references for new reforms.

### 1. Survey Subjects and Methods

Two large-scale questionnaire surveys were carried out for this research: the first survey used questionnaires among university-wide undergraduates and general education instructors in May 2015. Via the online link named "W university undergraduate general education implementation questionnaire (student part)" which was created by discussion topic on undergraduate education reform launched by the official website of W University, students could have direct access to the website to fulfill the questionnaires. 1759 effective questionnaires were collected from freshmen to seniors, covered arts, science, engineering, medicine and other disciplines. While 172 effective questionnaires were collected from both online and printed questionnaires among general education instructors. The second survey on satisfaction to the general education of W University was conducted in form of semi-structure questionnaire, collecting 395 effective questionnaires on site from sophomores to seniors<sup>①</sup> in November 2016.

## 2. Survey Content and Result Analysis

### 2.1 Survey Content

The whole content includes students survey and instructors' survey.

The students' survey involves:

- (1) Students' cognition and attitude to the philosophy of W University's general education;
- (2) The factors when choosing an elective course;
- (3) The degree of satisfaction and opinions to the number of general education course, the field division of general curriculum, MOOC general education course, elective system, class size, schedule of classes, methods of delivery and assessment, teaching effects etc.

**Table 1.** Satisfaction to Several Aspects of General Education Ranking by Scores (N=395)

Variable	Satisfaction Score	Ranking
Teaching content	2.97	1
Curriculum difficulty	2.95	2
Method of assessment	2.95	3
Method of delivery	2.94	4
Schedule of class	2.92	5
Assignments after class	2.84	6
Class size	2.83	7
Field division of general curriculum	2.82	8
Number of course	2.79	9
Teaching effects	2.7	10
MOOC general education course	2.69	11
Elective system	2.36	12

(4=quite satisfied, 3=satisfied, 2=unsatisfied, 1=very unsatisfied)

The instructors' survey involves:

- (1) Instructors' cognition and attitude to the philosophy of W University's general education;
- (2) Reasons for teaching general education course;
- (3) Method of general curriculum delivery;
- (4) The grasp of the difficulty, depth and breadth of course content;
- (5) Opinions and suggestions about the general education course of W University etc.

### 2.2 Survey Result Analysis

#### 2.2.1 The Philosophy of General Education has Been Basically Recognized by Students and Instructors, but It Still Needs to Devote More Efforts to Propaganda

Combined two large-scale surveys' data and compared with previous ones, it is obvious that W University has propelled the reform of general education so that the philosophy has been built up and spread. When the first reform of general education enacted in W University in 2003, a questionnaire survey was conducted among students, only 53.3% of which supported the implementation of general education, 9.4% disagreed because of the interference to major development, and 37.3% sat on the fence for the general education was too idealism to implement<sup>[3]</sup>.

The questionnaire survey of 2015 reveals that 91.3% of instructors agree the implementation of general education, while only 4.1% disagree and still 4.7% neither endorse nor oppose.

On the student level, the situation is less optimistic than that on structure. In this survey, 66.06% of students know a little, only 15.29% know a lot, 13.76% have little idea and 4.89% totally have no idea when asking What Is General Education. It can be seen from above data that more than 80% of the students have some insights into the general education, which reveals that the implementation of general education has aroused students' attention; even though, almost 20% have little or totally no idea about general education, illustrating that a minority of students select course with sort of blindness and it is essential for university to enhance the propaganda of general education.

The further analysis finds out that among the group of Have Little Idea about General Education, freshmen comprise 28.18%, and sophomores 11.91%, juniors 8.06%, seniors 6.45%. Reasons accounting for this data maybe freshmen have few accesses to general education course for the term has begun not too long (Note: this survey was conducted during the last semester of first grade), leaving these students barely having any idea. While with the growth of grade, students have more exposure to general education course so that they raise more awareness, which also reflects the lack of propaganda and popularization at the beginning of admission.

#### 2.2.2 Students Select Courses Mainly Based on Interests and Doodling for Credits is Gradually Getting Less

To know the students' motivation of selecting one general course, this questionnaire designs an item What's Your

First Priority When Choosing A General Course, and the results reveal that students are getting more and more active in general education course and place own interesting the first. Data from 2003 shows that among the factors, interest takes 41.5%, to complete knowledge structure takes 24.3%, to get credits more easily takes 15.9%, for personal schedule takes 9.1% and other reasons takes 9.2%. Data from 2015 indicates the proportion consists of 9.2% interest, 15.9% to complete knowledge structure, 9.2% to get credits more easily, 7.4% for personal schedule and 1.1% for other reasons. By contrast, obvious increase in interest can be seen.

### 2.2.3 The Curriculum System Is to be Improved

To adapt to the change of educational goals and students' needs, W University has been revising the Undergraduate Talents Cultivation Plan, and divide the general electives in present program into 7 parts:

- (1) Communication and writing,
- (2) Mathematics and Reasoning,
- (3) Humanities and Society,
- (4) Nature and Engineering,
- (5) Art and Appreciation,
- (6) China and Global,
- (7) Research and Leadership.

More than 500 general education courses have been opened, meanwhile a curriculum system of general education with its own characteristics has basically been formed and a batch of high quality general education courses have been built. However, there are still problems in curriculum setting and other aspects, which are mainly manifested as following:

1) Unreasonable curriculum filed division of general education.

For the present, W University has 7 categories of general education curriculum:

- (1) Communication and writing,
- (2) Mathematics and Reasoning,
- (3) Humanities and Society,
- (4) Nature and Engineering,
- (5) Art and Appreciation,
- (6) China and Global,
- (7) Research and Leadership.

Although this classification highlights the requirements of high-quality talents in Research Universities, there are still three questions: firstly, there is no standard unified method of curriculum field division—some courses in areas such as China and global, research and leadership, division of these two areas and other areas are not in the same dimension and level; there's no clear direction in the Chinese and global courses; research and leadership is a part of the humanities and social class; what lessons can be included in the field of research and leadership is not easy to determine. Secondly, the names of some curriculum fields are prone to ambiguity, such as nature and engineering — this division will disguise some of the highly specialized engineering courses into the general education system, which is contrary to the spirit of general education. Thirdly, some fields are too narrow to facilitate the curriculum setting, nor is it benefits to students' course selection. To take an obvious example, the research and leadership, includes only 45 courses, with a total number of 41 classes actually set up and 5091 students attended, meaning an average of 124 students per class, and only 13 were opened successfully for 2014 and 2015. As the school training program stipulates that every students must fulfill two credits in each area, on the one hand, the number of students in the field is too much, affecting the teaching quality; on the other hand, the lack of course in this field makes students unable to get 2 credits, resulting in delayed graduation.

2) Unbalanced number of general education course in different fields.

W University opened 513 general education courses, and the total number of lessons is 1159, which generally made students content. Survey in 2016 shows 74.9% of students are satisfied with the number of general courses while 25.1% unsatisfied.

However, the unbalanced number of general education course in different fields indeed brings about troubles to students' course selection, and this problem is mainly embodied in three aspects:

(1) The curriculum field of general education is too narrow, and the number of courses in some areas is too small. For example, research and leadership, communication and writing classes can not offer many courses for students to choose from;

(2) The number of natural engineering courses is too large, while the number of humanities and social science courses is too small;

(3) The number of popular courses is too small, keep-

ing unavailable to many students interested by these course.

**Table 2.** Curriculum of Different Fields of W University in 2016

Curriculum field	Number of course	Number of class	Average students' number per class
Communication and Writing	23	47	111
Humanities and Society	107	253	103
Mathematics and Reasoning	53	216	59
Research and Leadership	27	48	124
Art and Appreciation	49	101	102
China and Global	35	74	116
Nature and Engineering	175	364	96
Other fields	44	56	53
Total number	513	1159	

The survey data also shows that 40.5% of the students have interests in the general course of literary and art, 28.4% in social science courses, 13.5% in interdisciplinary curriculum, and only 17.6% in natural science course, which concludes that nearly 70% of students have interests in humanities and social science courses, but the natural science and engineering course still account for the largest proportion in general curriculum system, up to more than 30%. Therefore, the number of general courses of W University offered in various fields should be balanced based on the requirements for students' credits.

3) Some general education courses are considered as no value to be opened.

23.25% of the students believe that all elective courses are valuable, 63.59% consider most of elective courses are valuable, 11.26% claim that most have no value, 1.93% think all elective courses have no value. This shows that most of the general education courses are accepted by students, but there are still some courses being considered to be useless to students, as a result the department of setting curriculum should screen the courses seriously.

### **2.2.4 Teaching Management Should be Improved and Especially the Elective System has been Pushed on the Cusp of Students' Complaints**

Problems of the teaching management are conspicuous in following aspects:

1) The schedule and frequency of general education courses are not reasonable.

At present, nearly 70% of the general education courses in W University are arranged at the 11th-13th night class from Monday to Friday. The survey data shows that only 1/3 of the students approve such schedule, nearly half have no opinions, and 13.4% think the time is unsuitable. 24.6% of the students reflect that the elective general course they like will have time conflict with other courses, indicating that the university can not meet the needs of a fair number of students in the time schedule of general education courses. In terms of frequency, 56.9% of the students argue that many general courses are unavailable to select, among which a considerable number of students comment and suggest that "popular courses are full of people", "popular courses can't be chosen", "hope more famous teachers to teach" and so on. This indicates the lack of high-quality general course-opening frequency is not enough, failing to meet a lot of students' interests and needs.

2) The elective system is in urgent need to be improved.

Survey data exhibits that 51.6% of the students are not satisfied with the general course elective system. Integrated all students' opinions, the following six aspects can be seen:

(1) During the peak period the server is not stable, and the system is easy to collapse; (2) The treatment period after submission is too long; (3) Students can't have accurate estimation on the possibility of selecting the course since the system only displays the remaining places without chosen number that day; (4) The classification of the general course in the elective system is unreasonable; (5) The system prioritizes senior students, resulting in the lower grade students often unable to select what they want; (6) The lack of course information etc. There are obvious differences between general courses and specialized courses elective systems: specialized courses are mainly for the professional students, with narrower audience and unified set by its own college pointing at specific major, while the general courses are for all faculties and students, which puts forward higher requirements for the elective system.

### **2.2.5 An Excessive Number of Students in General Education Course**

1) There are too many students in general education courses.

According to the 2016 general course curriculum provided by W University's undergraduate college, among seven areas of general education courses, there are aver-

age more than 100 students per class, except for two fields — mathematical reasoning and natural course and engineering; and the largest number appears in the "ancient Greek civilization" courses, up to 324 persons. Two main drawbacks obviously exist. Firstly, too many classes are not conducive for flexible classroom arrangement, courses with a large number of students can only be taught in a limited number of classrooms, and small classroom is difficult to accommodate such a huge amount of students, if there are any changes, it is difficult to allow classroom turnover. Secondly, too large size of class is adverse to the development of general education curriculum, since teachers are difficult to engage in teaching interaction and group discussion, and teaching methods are limited to lectures, likewise, the form and method of mid-term and final assessment will be confined to simplified assignment or test, which affect the teaching quality.

2) There is a lack of learning guidance for students.

On the one hand, interaction between professors and students is rare, and general education instructors just "coming for the class and leaving in the end". As a result students rarely have the opportunity for face-to-face communication with instructors, much less teacher's guidance, which greatly reduce the effect of general education. On the other hand, the university's guidance of general education for students is not enough, leading to some students have no clear grasp of the purpose of curriculum fields division and the meaning of general education. For example, 23.1% of the students are not fully aware of the purpose of the general curriculum, and think the general curriculum is to lay a foundation for the study of professional courses, and even some engineering students only want to learn natural science courses and professional courses, having little motivation for humanities and social sciences course which are considered as meaningless. In addition, 23.2% of the students are not satisfied with the curriculum fields division of general education, and nearly 30% of the students argue that there should be no restrictions on the field, such as "why classification should exist", "students should choose freely without division restriction", "credit should not be required according to different fields division as long as students get enough credits", "general education should not be divided into different areas", "given the essence of general education, students should have more autonomy to choose their favorite courses, rather than restrict the field so that students choose some uninterested courses" and so on. It can be seen that a considerable number of students believe general education courses should be fully in accordance with their own interest, meanwhile most students are still unclear about the

purpose of curriculum fields division. The reasons exist in the lack of communication between the students and the school, the general curriculum instructors, and of appropriate guidance for the students in general curriculum selection, leaving students prone to blind, random and utilitarian when selecting course which brings to significant reduction of teaching effect.

### **2.2.6 The Teaching Faculty Construction Should be Strengthened**

1) Some instructors lack enough knowledge of general education.

The survey results show that 51.16% of the general curriculum instructors have deep understanding of general education, 41.86% have a certain understanding, while 6.98% still only heard of the concept. The majority of general education instructors, up to 91.28%, approve the promotion of general education, 4.65% neither agree nor oppose, and 4.07% do not agree to the implementation of general education. In terms of the difference of course teaching between general curriculum and specialized curriculum, 23.26% of the instructors think two teaching modes differ greatly, 52.91% argue that there exists relatively large differences, 22.09% think two teaching methods have a little difference, and only 1.74% think there is no difference.

With regard to reasons of taking general curriculum, half of the instructors are willing to assume general education courses out of their duties, 36.05% for personal interest. 13.37% indicate it is inescapable task assigned by university, and 0.58% for the curriculum easier to teach with fewer burden.

A survey on the reasons why some teachers are reluctant to undertake the teaching of general education shows that 50.58% of teachers think that compared with specialized course and scientific research served as KPI, general curriculum is not a mandatory requirement, 44.77% hold that there are no incentive measures, besides their endeavor brings little outcome, and 4.65% of the teachers think their incapability is the only reason.

In general, the vast majority of general course instructors have uncertain degree of understanding of general education, but there are a small number of teachers still grasp little about general education, and even have no idea of the difference between general course and specialized course. The most significant difference is that general education is not only a process of knowledge transfer but also a process of cultivating students' comprehensive abilities, free personality and ethical responsibilities, which makes

the contents and goals of general education curriculum differ from specialized course and further determines the different teaching methods. A clear cognition of difference between general course and specialized course is beneficial to improve the teaching effect.

In addition, there are still a few teachers who disagree the implementation of general education and only take these courses in accordance with the authority of the university. It calls on further propaganda for general education curriculum among teachers.

2) There is a low proportion of excellent instructors and famous instructors in general education.

Survey shows that associate professors take 45.35%, ranking the highest, professors 27.33%, lecturers 23.84%, and assistant 3.49%, indicating that it is young and mid-aged instructors with title of associate professor or lecturer that mainly undertake the task of general education while the proportion of excellent instructors and famous instructors is low.

The school does not have a strict selection criteria for general education instructors' qualifications, so they can declare the course as long as they have the willing. Some instructors without enough qualifications to set up general education courses do this, while qualified ones are reluctant to offer general education courses.

It is difficult to be a qualified general education instructor which spends long time and energy. Young and mid-aged instructors are in the formation process of educational literacy with limited experiences; while excellence and famous professors generally have profound learning and good literacy, excellent academic attainments, as well as superb teaching art and personality charm. Although outstanding and famous professors are not the most important criteria for the selection of general education instructors, in general, they tend to meet the needs because of excellent qualification.

3) The teaching ability of general education course has yet to be improved.

The overall quality of general education instructors in W University is relatively high and the vast majority prepare lessons seriously and carefully, and constantly improve their teaching methods. However, from the survey results, teaching ability of general education instructors in our university needs to be further improved.

(1) Teaching methods need to be improved.

According to the survey, 68.28% of the students consider the lecture method is mainly used in general course,

1.65% think mainly by students' discussion, 29.39% believe the mixture of lecture and discussion, and 0.68% of the students choose other methods, indicating most general courses are delivered by lecture, part of courses by lecture & discussion and a few by students' discussion.

Further investigation revealed that 12.17% of the students are quite satisfied with the teaching methods of general course; 50.14% basically content; 31.67% think most methods are just-so-so; 5.40% relatively unsatisfied with most methods; 0.63% totally unsatisfied with most methods, indicating that most of the students are content with or accustomed to the current teaching methods, but there are still a small part of the students are not satisfied. It means there is still room of improvement for teaching methods.

(2) Teaching effect needs to be elevated.

The results of the students' evaluation of the general electives' teaching effect show that 18.87% of the students think that the effect is good; 57.59% hold that most are relatively effective; 17.23% believe that teaching effect of most general electives is relatively poor; and 6.31% of students think that teaching effect of all general curriculum is relatively poor. It is gratifying to note that 3/4 of the students recognize the teaching effect of the general curriculum. But there are still 1/4 of students disapproving the teaching effect, indicating that the teaching quality of some general course has yet to be improved.

(3) The control of depth and breadth of general education curriculum need to be strengthened.

The depth of teaching content mainly refers to its difficulty, and the control of difficulty is one of the evaluations of general course instructor's teaching ability. Survey data reveals that 80.8% of the general curriculum instructors design content with a moderate degree of difficulty; 15.1% very simple, removing more difficult part; and 4.1% as difficult as specialized courses.

The vast majority of instructors keep moderate difficulty in depth, ensuring the integrity of the discipline's basic structure. But there is 15.1% general course instructors design too simple content to set challenges to students and stimulate students' learning enthusiasm and initiative, for these instructors misunderstanding the general course of popular education course, at the same time underestimating students' thinking and accepting ability. In addition, a small number of general course instructors make general content the same difficulty with professional content, considering general course as the foundation of specialized course, not even taking into account the differences of

basic knowledge between students of different majors.

The control of content's breadth of general education curriculum is another indicator of evaluating the instructors' teaching ability. Survey data shows that 34.3% of the general course instructors' teaching content is across a wide range of disciplines; 55.2% across close disciplines; and 10.5% not interdisciplinary. Most of the instructors take the general curriculum with an interdisciplinary nature, indicating that these teachers not only grasp the goal of general education to cultivate students' ability of multi-angle understanding and thinking a problem, but also possess enough high literacy of general education to interdisciplinary teaching. But there is still part of general course instructors' teaching content and is not interdisciplinary, indicating that these teachers have not thoroughly understood the connotation of general education, or their own conditions limited interdisciplinary teaching. The general curriculum teaching has put forward higher requirements on the teachers' professional quality, not only in their own profession with higher academic attainments, but also a wide range of knowledge, meanwhile these instructors have to use knowledge of their own major to analyze and solve problems in other disciplines and analyze and solve problems of their own major from perspectives of different disciplines. At present, some teachers lack this ability, resulting in little difference between their general course and specialized course.

### **3. Countermeasures and Suggestions for Improving General Education**

Based on the data analysis of two large-scale general education survey, this paper puts forward following recommendations for improving the general education of W University.

#### **3.1 To Optimize the Constructor of General Education System**

It is urgent to optimize the general education curriculum setting. First of all, to increase humanities and social Sciences general curriculum of high quality as the major component of general education which aims mainly at cultivating students' humanistic quality. W University, a comprehensive university with a long history, has powerful humanities and social sciences, and relevant curriculums are very popular among students. So the school can take advantage of humanities and social sciences resources to offer more high-quality humanities and social science general curriculum for students to select, so as to meet the students' learning interest. Meanwhile, science

and engineering instructors should be encouraged to offer interdisciplinary general course combined with humanities and social science to elevate the teaching effect of natural science general education.

Secondly, to revise the talent training program efficiently. W University has adjusted the curriculum field division of general education this year, which is divided into 4 areas:

(1) Chinese culture and world civilization, (2) scientific spirit and life care, (3) social science and modern society, (4) art experience and aesthetic appreciation. Each field contains core general curriculum and common general curriculum, which effectively solves the prior problems such as field division is too narrow, a number of general curriculum in some fields is too small, curriculum setting is out of balance etc. As a result, the new program will balance the number of different areas as well as reduce students' pressure of selecting course. But with the program in process of revision, the new requirements of general elective credits not officially released, the general curriculum is still in accordance with the previous 7 areas: communication and writing, humanities and social, mathematical and reasoning, research and leadership, art and appreciation, China and the global, natural and engineering. According to the survey result, nearly 90% of the students expect to learn general curriculum followed by the new field division. Therefore, the school should speed up the revision work of talent training program, and reclassify general courses according to the new method of curriculum field division as well as balance the number of general curriculum in each field, and accordingly revise the requirements of credits in each general area.

Thirdly, promote and make full use of MOOC general education course. The school should set up new MOOC general courses every year, to increase its number, especially encourage some popular general courses to be opened in MOOC form to meet the requirements of students' course selection.

#### **3.2 To Strengthen the Teaching Management of General Education Curriculum**

To adjust the arrangements of general curriculum. In order to learn about the students' opinions on the teaching management of general curriculum, the research team conducted a special interview and open questionnaire survey with 100 undergraduates randomly selected within W University. According to the student's proposals, this study summarizes the management recommendations as follows: firstly, to well order the schedule of different general curriculum, and try to set aside a specific period

during the daytime for general education curriculum. Secondly, to add weekends' time for general course so as to avoid conflicts with professional courses. At present, schools do not arrange specialized courses on weekends, so these time should be the ideal for students to take general courses they are interested in.

Thirdly, increase the teaching frequency of instructors taking high-quality and popular general course. To set more classes for general courses of large size, and encourage popular instructors to offer more classes. There are several ways: Firstly, instructors of popular, high-quality course should set up two or more classes a week for the same course. In general, most of the general courses only open a class every semester, although there are large classrooms accommodating two or three hundreds of students, contrast to the needs of thousands of students, it is far from enough. The second is to encourage many instructors to declare and open the same general curriculum, to increase the frequency of this course.

Fourth, to ensure the stability of the general course elective system. Maintain and upgrade the hardware equipment-information technology platform of general education courses, and regularly update the elective system and management system of general courses. More faculties should be arranged to maintain and manage the elective system in the peak period of students' selecting course (the first two weeks of each new semester), to ensure the fluency and stability of the system. In addition, the function of the curriculum elective system should be improved, it means the system should not only show the remaining places but also the enrollment took each day so that the students can judge the possibility and decide whether to replace this course with another. Instructors should also deal with students' application timely during the peak period, and try to shorten processing cycle to give prompt feedback to students.

### 3.3 To Improve the Teaching Methods of General Education Course

To carry out the method of teaching in big-size class and discussion in small-size class. This method is a combination of traditional big-size class teaching and small-size class discussion. The former method focuses on delivering knowledge, grasping the emphasis of the course and difficult points of teaching, while the latter method mainly discusses practical problems and solves problems puzzled students to improve students' learning quality of core general curriculum.

To explore an effective combination of MOOC and

the method of teaching in big-size class and discussion in small-size class is also worth a try. Make full use of modern network information technology, through online and offline mixed teaching methods, to reduce students' pressure of general course selection and ensure the quality of general education courses.

To organize activities regularly allows students to interact with excellent instructors face to face. Different universities have special methods to carry out the interactive activities, for example, Fudan University introduces a tutorial system, and the instructors' team consists of professors and associate professors acting as academic tutor, and counselors coupled with other staff dealing with students' affairs as permanent instructor, and a small number of invited mentors. Each tutor is responsible for 3 to 5 students in study and life<sup>[4]</sup>. Fudan University integrates all the teacher resource to allow students to keep in touch with different instructors of various majors, so as to get guidance on general education. Another example is the collage of Chemistry and Molecular Sciences of Wuhan University, which has officially launched "the expert luncheon" since March of this year, which regulates every Tuesday and Thursday, an expert and four undergraduates have lunch together. Through this platform, undergraduates have opportunities to communicate face with the academicians, the Yangtze River scholars, the National Outstanding Youths, nation-wide famous teachers, persons from Young Overseas High-level Talents Introduction Plan and other experts to get their guidance for learning and life. Such interactive activity can be extended to the whole school: to integrate teacher resource of the whole school and regularly organize face-to-face activities such as the Luncheon or famous teacher's meeting to break the boundaries of different disciplines, so that students have access to guidance for general education.

### 3.4 To Strengthen the Constructor of General Education Instructor Teams

The construction of teachers' team of general education courses can proceed from the following three aspects:

Firstly, to attach importance to selection for instructors of general education course. As a comprehensive university with a long history, Wuhan University has complete subject structure, including arts, law, science, engineering, business, medicine etc. Meanwhile professors have broader vision than those of a university of single category. All these are advantages for implementing general education in Wuhan University, which should be made full use of to carefully select high-quality instructors to ensure the teaching effect.

The value of general education lies in "general". Therefore, a university should try to select senior teachers with high academic quality, rich teaching experience and broad vision to set up general education courses. Instructors who are truly academic, enthusiastic, and well versed in instruction are qualified to stand on the platform to deliver general education courses.

Secondly, to strengthen the construction of teachers' echelon of general education courses. On the one hand, university should advocate the famous teachers to undertake general course; on the other hand, it is important to cultivate reserve forces and encourage young instructors to offer general courses, at the same time organize them to observe excellent general courses in and out of campus, so as to learn experience, and effectively improve the general teaching ability.

To improve the training and further education mechanism for general education instructors. The actual effect of a general teaching method is directly related to the instructors' self-cultivation of teaching methodology and the specific conditions of their mastering and applying a method. The training and further education of general course instructors are designed to update teachers' concepts and teaching methods in form of communication research, and constantly improve their professional ability and quality. Most of general course instructors grow in the atmosphere of professional education, lack of comprehensive quality training, resulting in the difficulty to get rid of the interference of professional teaching. Therefore the training and further education are necessary for all the general course instructors to master the latest concepts and methods of general education with the changes of the times. Although for present there are some small-range seminars of general instructors, a systematical training and further education mechanism has not been established, which is urgent to be solved for a sustainable development of general education.

To encourage instructors to actively participate in academic seminars on general education, and constantly improve the awareness, teaching skills, teaching abilities of general education. Universities should regularly organize seminars on general education, and arrange specialists of general education to give lectures to general course instructors of different disciplines, aiming to allow the instructors to process a deeper understanding of the connotation and purpose of general education and help to determine the teaching objectives that are appropriate for their general curriculum, as

well as teaching program<sup>[5]</sup>.

Thirdly, to Establish an Incentive Mechanism of General Education and improve the teaching Initiative of general course instructors. Given the school's assessments for teachers mainly concentrate on the professional teaching and science and research results, plenty of teachers spend most of time and energy on professional teaching and science and research, paying little attention to general education courses. Therefore, it is necessary to

(1) Enhance the incentive for general course instructors;

(2) Increase the weight of general education in the overall evaluation of teachers, meanwhile rationally allocate the proportions of general course teaching, professional teaching and science and research achievements;

(3) Establish a reward system of general education, to reward these excellent and popular instructors with high quality, good effect and innovative method of general teaching, meanwhile give these teachers more priority in title assessment;

(4) Increase the pay of general education curriculum instructors, to stimulate the teaching initiative.

## References

- [1] Shaoming Luo. Chinese university general education report[M]. Guangzhou: Jinan University Press, 2009. (in Chinese)
- [2] Andong Xiao, Lingling Qi, Yun Wang. Reform and development of general electives in Wuhan University[J]. Science Teaching Journal, 2015(21):26-28. (in Chinese)
- [3] Huimin Feng, Dejun Zeng. Report on investigation and analysis of general education in Wuhan University[J]. Wuhan University Journal (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition), 2003,56(4):522-527. (in Chinese)
- [4] Jun Guo. Thinking on the rise and development of academy education[J]. Journal of Higher Education, 2013(8):76-83. (in Chinese)
- [5] Huimin Feng, Li Li. The latest trend and Enlightenment of Harvard's core curriculum reform[J]. Wuhan University Journal (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition), 2008,61(4):46-47. (in Chinese)

## annotation

- ① The second survey took into account that the sophomores had not attend any general electives only for two months after the term began so that these students could not have true reflections about general education ,therefore concerning data was removed in this survey.