General educational curriculum models in China

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Recent development of general education in China

**Policy(national) level**
- 1980s, "weakening specialization education, strengthening the foundation", "expanding the profession", "interdisciplinary learning penetration"
- In 1998, the Ministry of Education promulgated “Several Opinions on Strengthening College Students’ Cultural Quality Education” (《关于加强大学生文化素质教育的若干意见》)
- 1999 - 2006, a total of 93 Cultural Quality Education Bases
- 2012, the Ministry of Education’s “Twelfth Five-Year Plan for the Development of National Education” proposed “improving the quality of teaching standards and exploring a new model of general education”.
- 2016, the National 13th Five-Year Plan officially proposed to implement an “education system combining general education and professional education” in higher education.

**Institutional level**
- Curriculum change
- Reconstructing organization (e.g. interdisciplinary program, general education college, Shuyuan college)

**Cross-university/region general education coordination**
- University Suzhi(素质) education research conference (2011)
- University Shuyuan (accomodation college) education union (2014)
- University college union (2015)
Holistic development model

2.1

“Moral education, intelligent education, physical education, artistic education, community education” by Yiqi Mei (梅贻琦, 1889-1962)

2.2

“Our educational policy should enable educators to develop in moral, intellectual, and physical aspects.” by Zedong Mao (毛泽东, 1893-1976)

3

Traditional Confucius thoughts in ancient China

Five educations (military national education, practical education, civic moral education, world outlook education, and aesthetic education) by Yuanpei Cai (蔡元培, 1868-1960)
Holistic development model

1980s: Reflections on education system

1990s: Quality education and Cultural quality education

Epistemological foundation

C

A

B
Two approaches of holistic development model

Distribution Approach

- Moral curriculum
- Specialized curriculum
- Physical and psychological curriculum
- Cultural quality curriculum

Integration Approach

- Moral quality
- Intellectual quality
- Physical quality
- Cultural quality

- Humanities module
- Social science module
- Natural science module
Culturalism model

American experience

Hutchins “Great Books” model in the University of Chicago

Great Books model in Columbia University and Saint John’s College

Chinese wisdom

“for the saints of the past to continue learning” (为往圣继绝学) by Zai Zhang (张载, 1020-1077)

General education: “renew people” “construct national culture” (Yiqi Mei, 1889-1962)

University education should “developing a new spirit and creating a new atmosphere to help a university to accomplish its mission to the nation” (1897-1969)

Arguments since the 2000
Culturalism model

Reflections on the idea of cultural quality education

Reconceptualize the position of general education in undergraduate system

Renew Chinese educational culture and tradition

Educational arguments
- Enhance curriculum structure unity
- Single course based course
- Systematic designed great books model
- Pedagogical innovation
Utilitarian model

Western wisdom

- Newman: “liberal education is good, and good must be useful”
- Aldous Leonard Huxley (1825-1895): liberal education includes physical exercise and drills, home economics, intellectual training, and ethics and theological education.
- AACU: emphasizing generic skills which are useful for labour market

Chinese tradition

- “what is put into use cannot work, I will also deny its value” (用而不可，虽我亦将非之，且焉有善而不可用者。) (Mocius, 墨子《兼爱下》)
- “gentleman seeks for Dao rather than food……learning, and you will obtain the practical benefit” (君子谋道不谋食……学也禄，在其中矣) (Confucius, 《论语·卫灵公》)
- Arguments since 1950s
Utilitarian model

- **Response to national major needs**
  - E.g. innovation and enterprise

- **Response to future economic and societal needs**
  - E.g. foreign language and computer skill

- **Satisfy students' diverse needs and interest**
  - E.g. vocational training
Undergraduate program structure in China

- Specialized education: 100
- Moral education: 56
- Foreign language: 14
- Computer science: 12
- Physical and psychological education: 12
- Cultural quality education: 8
- Free electives: 6
Cultural quality education elective curriculum in Peking University
General education in Peking university

Cultural quality education electives

01  Module 1: Maths and natural science
02  Module 2: Social science
03  Module 3: Philosophy and psychology
04  Module 4: History
05  Module 5: Language, literature and arts
06  Module 6: Society and sustainability
General education in Peking University

General education core curriculum

Series 1: Chinese Civilization and Its Tradition
- Chinese traditional bureaucratic political system
- Ancient Chinese History (I)
- Zhuangzi philosophy

Series 2: Western civilization and its traditions
- Ancient Greek and Roman history classics
- History of Western Philosophy (Ancient and Medieval)
- Western political thought (ancient)
- Nietzsche, "Zaratostra"

Series 3: Modern society and its problems
- The establishment of modern China: institutions, trends and characters
- Principle of economics
- Islam and the modern world

Series 4: Humanities and Nature
- Chemistry and society
- Climate change: the scientific basis for global warming
- Biological evolution
General education in Tsinghua University

Humanities general course

01. Freshman seminar: University Road, Critical Thinking in Moral Reasoning

02. Literature: Self, Others and Society, Chinese Modern Literature Classics, 19th Century English Literature and Writing Training...

03. History: "Historical Records" study, early Chinese civilization: from the ancient times to the Western Han Dynasty, the history of the Sui and Tang Dynasties...

04. Philosophy: Study of Mencius, Western Classics and Modern Society, Western Ancient Cosmology...

05. Art: Art revelation, Italian Renaissance art, architecture and urban culture...

06. Social science: The vision of political science, sovereignty and human rights, modernity and postmodernity in international law and international relations...

07. Science: Scientific revolution, technological development and human civilization, observing cosmology: from the solar system to the depths of the universe...
General education in Tsinghua University

Mathematical General Studies

Calculus B (1)(2), Calculus A (1)(2), Higher Calculus (1)(2), Mathematical Analysis (1)(2)(Select a group of four)

Physics (1) (2) (3), University Physics A (1) (2), Basic Physics (1) (2) (3), Feynman Physics (1) (2) (3) (four groups Choose a group)

Algebra and geometry, linear algebra (reasonable), higher linear algebra (three-door selection)

Basic physics experiment
Conclusions

1. Blended models widely used
2. Leaning towards culturalism model
3. Inherent consistency V.S. educational unity
4. Institutional characteristics
Thanks for your attention