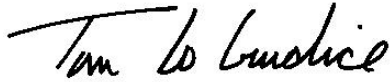


THE COMPARISON BETWEEN PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA (CHINESE) AND  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (USA) UNDERGRADUATE CLASSES

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Lo Giudice". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the beginning.

Approved

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THE COMPARISON BETWEEN PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA (CHINESE) AND  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICAN (USA) UNDERGRADUTE COURSES.

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## Abstract

Undergraduate education in China emphasizes the cultural value of collectivism, whereas the American one pays more attention to the cultural value of individuality. Even though both undergraduate educations focused on students' employment, the American education is more innovative than the Chinese one. Chinese education is exam-oriented, professor-centered. American education is more diverse and student-centered. The teaching methods of Chinese professors are very similar and the teaching methods of Americans are quite varied. By comparing the two education systems, it is a reasonable inference that the American one pays more attention to the practical usages for the future employment and personal development whereas Chinese education just fosters large scale of excellent test takers. Innovation in education will probably be necessary as China becomes an important world player. In an increasingly global world all nations to be competitive must develop concepts of globalization that encourage creativity and productivity. All nations must utilize and innovate in technology.

## Chapter One

### INTRODUCTION

This is a challenging time in undergraduate education in all developed countries. All countries are facing the challenge of globalization. One American scholar with both Chinese and American education as part of the education experience (Zhao, 2009) has studied education in the age of globalization and has noted the works of several scholars that call education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century to be focused on digital age literacy, and life and career skills as well the traditional core subjects (pp, 146-47).

Education is one of the most important factors that can decide one's prosperity and development. Comparing education systems is one essential way of understanding the nature of a country's impetus for development. Chinese undergraduate system and American undergraduate system are widely discussed; and the discussion has a great impact on both countries and their people. One is viewed as the most advanced innovative system in the world, and the other is a heavy-content, demanding system for students, which pushes students in a rote study. A Chinese professor who is now working in the United States defines that American education is a "talent show," which means that it provides equal opportunity to students with different backgrounds, and ensures they can display their unique geniuses (Zhao, 2009). Therefore, innovative ability and individuality are highly recommended in American classes.

The Chinese undergraduate education system is an exam-oriented system. Because of the nature of the exams, the system forces and requires the young generation to have a memorization study method. Uncompleted education regulations, lower respect for teachers, and traditional ideologies of Chinese test culture have made higher education system in China more

complicated. Chinese test culture makes the education system more likely to serve the future career of the young generation. In other words, the university in China is more like a center that trains people how to prepare for all different kinds of exams. There are some concerns about Chinese undergraduate system that can contribute to the improvement of Chinese education system.

Innovative education in a global world is a challenge for all countries. As Chinese education meets the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century changes in the traditional system will come with respect to content, changes must come from state ministry of education. Content changes are unlikely to come in any other way given Chinese tradition and history. In past decades, the Educational Ministry has made significant changes, for example, in English literacy expectation and in physics laboratory applications.

Changes have been coming about in China in recent years. For example, the ministry has approved cooperative learning and multiple intelligence approaches, and the use of technology is prevalent in all urban areas. Also, even the most casual observer will note the use of multiple languages in addition to Chinese in the classroom.

The American undergraduate system is more creative and student-centered. The system pays more attention to the student's individual ability. Professors and students are equal, and professors are more likely to encourage students when the difficulties are encountered rather than revealing the students' weaknesses. Yet, in American undergraduate classroom, more diverse teaching methods that help students get familiar with the study materials and also trying to provide students a platform so that teachers and students can communicate more comfortably.

### **Statement of the Problem**

How do Chinese and USA undergraduate classes differ in content, teaching methods, assessments, and the role of the professors? How is Chinese teaching changing? What is the Chinese professor's point of view towards the changes?

### **Definitions of Terms**

Undergraduate: A student at a college or university who have not yet earned a bachelor's or equivalent degree.

Class: An occasion when students meet with their teacher for instruction; a lesson.  
(Merriam Webster)

Professor: A person who affirms a faith in or allegiance to something. (Merriam Webster)

### **Delimitations**

The study was done using several search engines available through Ebscohost including ERIC. The literature was done over a period of ninety days. The survey will be done with volunteering professors by responding a questionnaire at a south central university in China.

### **Methods**

The survey was a form of action research has only face validity (no reliability was established). The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

### **The Significance of the Research**

Cross-cultural understanding of the two systems is important to students of comparative education.

## **The Purpose of the Research**

The Purpose of the study was to provide a review of the literature and survey results from professors.

## Chapter Two

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Educational institutions play the key roles in the development of countries. The concern for the higher education can play a positive role that relates to one country's progress. It is not only essential to think about the improvement of undergraduate education in an internal aspect, but also very useful to have a better understanding of the flaws from the globalization perspective. Good and advanced philosophies of undergraduate education should be viewed as salutary references. As a big economy, China's impact in the world cannot be neglected; and its education which has fostered many elites for the society can be one of the most essential factors that has influenced the prosperity of the country. Since the end of the dynasty periods American education ideas have influenced China, especially in the period following the revolution that lead to the modern period following the fall of the last emperor as well as the period of the "opening" starting in the in the 1970s.

The American undergraduate education is famous for its students-centered structure, innovation, and individuality whereas the Chinese undergraduate education is famous for its professor-centered structure, rote study, and exam system. The outstanding of the qualities of American universities or colleges in the world are great examples to be learned by Chinese. The nature of change in education is a big issue that involves many participants. The advantage of fostering elites in Chinese undergraduate education has become a powerful force that drives the development of the country; however, some complex issues which have interfered in the perfection of the development of the society, needs to think about. By reviewing these issues one by one in the terms of teaching, training for the job, preparing for the exam and curricula buildings in Chinese undergraduate education and American undergraduate education, and

giving some deliberate analysis and comparison between these two different education systems, some ideas could be given and some resolutions for the weakness of Chinese undergraduate education will come to light.

### **Defining Undergraduate Education**

Undergraduate education is a very complicated topic to probe and ponder because it is closely dependent on the culture, academics, and social connections. Students in universities or colleges are forming their outlook on life, the world, and values. Therefore, students in universities or colleges have their own ideas to the world. From this view, undergraduate students can resist some aspects of their education. Therefore, this bypassed truth of the receivers of undergraduate education makes the goal of ensuring a bright future more difficult.

Undergraduate education not only forces students obtaining knowledge. It should be useful for them. Obtaining knowledge is endless. Professors in universities should primarily put the feeling of students in the most important place. Because the undergraduate education is directly related to the future employment of students, its goal is full of purposes which manifest differently in undergraduate education from the elementary, middle, and high school education. Its goal needs to be practical and beneficial to students and the society.

One article of undergraduate education (Kaysen,1974) points out that an ideal undergraduate education should be liberal education which means students can determine their own learning goals in the context of broad university goals related to written and oral communication, the humanities, the social sciences, performing arts, and science. Additionally, students have some choice in terms of the course related to the major(s) they pursue. Students should be satisfied with their majors after they graduate. The liberal education should “have a well-developed capacity and taste for critical thought, especially in relation to problems of value

--- what constitutes the good or virtuous or beautiful life, the model society” (Kaysen,1974, p.180 ). This education should be used for the improvement of the quality of personal life. Therefore, the motivation of receiving undergraduate education is heartfelt and without compulsivity. Such an education should be a great platform that helps students to enlarge horizons. The horizon should not be narrowed down on some specific areas that people are interested in, but should be a view towards the world and life. The purpose of enlarging horizons is to have a better life in the future. Only when students are well-developed, equipped with virtues, sound mentalities, and superb skills, will their life be better and they will be more beneficial from the higher education. The phase of attending to universities or colleges is a time of reconstructing their personalities and perfecting of their understanding of the society and the world. When they are equipped with the capacity of critical thought, they will truly understand the necessity of receiving the higher education. Undergraduate education is not just the delivery of knowledge; if it is, there no difference between the professors from universities and the teachers from high schools and elementary schools.

Of course, undergraduate education involves students taking classes and taking exams to finish their degrees. In the United States, especially in universities that use a cafeteria approach to general education a student’s life is to some degree a “self- motivated and self-directed way” (Kaysen, 1974). The cafeteria approach to general education is a system of choosing classes by students. Because the receivers are self-motivated and self-directed, they should have ideas on what kind of classes they want to take and what they want to be in the future after they finish the academic goals, and the system of choosing classes in undergraduate education should be respect for the intentions and decisions of students. In the United States, most of the universities or colleges provide students in majors’ choice sheets for them to meet requirements in the various

areas of general education. In contrast, Chinese universities emphasize testing and expect student to have accomplished general or liberal education in high school. Chinese undergraduate students can also choose their majors, but their choosing process is after their colleges or universities entrance examinations and before attending universities or colleges. This means, their results of the exam is the main stepping-stone to the fields of universities or colleges they like. If the results are not good, many students have to give up the majors they like. Actually, before choosing these majors, many students or parents have no idea what these majors are about; out of their expectations are the normal in China. Students are admitted to universities based on their performance on tests. The requirements in Chinese universities or colleges are clearly outlined for each major and are designed to meet the collective needs of China. But in the United States, although many students they have taken SAT, before attending universities or colleges, they do not need to decide what majors or minors they want to choose for their future employment; students can have at least one year to think about that and few of them will regret for their decisions. Furthermore, even though some students have already chose their majors, they still can change them if they want and the process of changing majors is easy. Thus, American universities are more considerate of the individual needs than the Chinese counterparts. The American idea is that everyone is unique, so the control of the autonomy should be in students' hands rather than their parents or advisors. Learning to choose is an essential lesson in American university life. Of course, the society in both countries places an emphasis on the role of the university in career preparation.

The university training is a preparation for the applicability of the occupations. As Kaysen (1974) says “in practice, college education viewed over the whole spectrum of institutions that offer the four-year B.A. or B.S. degree today is a supermarket in which each

student is expected to do his own thing by choosing from the enormously wide display” (p.180). Based on the diverse majors, students can cultivate what they want to be and what their advantages are for the future employment. Although a university prepares students for the future employment, it is quite different from a training institution in the society. A university or a college should provide flexible lessons, interesting environment for the students. It also requires that the leader role of professors should be respected by the students. It requires the communication between students and professors. The image of the professor should not depend on the delivery of knowledge, but rather, an image that helps students to reestablish their health mentalities and personalities. Besides of learning, this kind of preparation for the future also includes skills of dealing personal relationships and the abilities of relieving pressures. Even though the degree certificates are essential for the students, the experience of being an undergraduate student is important as well. People will witness their grow-up during this period.

However, even though education should be served for the future employment, it is like talking about stratagems on paper, especially for the students whose majors are connected with some practical experiments. This is very common for most universities. Because of limited resources, most students have no practical experience in their fields. This kind of problem is very popular in recent Chinese higher education and in some majors in universities in the United States. As undergraduate education is the liberal education, it refers to the “serious involvement with the various kinds of intellectual experience represented by the humanities, the natural sciences, the social sciences, and, more recently, the (nonverbal) arts--combined with some degree of deeper entry into one of them” (Kaysen,1974, p. 181). The majors are full of diversities and try to be satisfied with everyone’s needs; thus, the practical requirements should be concerned.

Ultimately, the purpose of undergraduate education is to provide a way of protecting culture and prosper a nation. This should not focus on only a few developed places. Integral development is more important. Trying to complete the allocation of educational resources is good a method. Everyone is unique and everyone should have a chance to receive the higher education regardless of their social status; and it is good for the society. Only in this way, can individual get the same opportunity in the development of education. And the essence of protection and prosperity can be guaranteed. To quote Kaysen (1974) again, “the definition of the primary purpose of a college education would do much to restore the connection between the culture of the academy and the culture of the larger community that it looks to for support” (p.183 ). The final purpose of higher education should be the prosperity of a country and a protection of a culture. Education cannot be separated from the culture and the society; it should be a revival and rebirth of the culture, or the interpretations of the quintessence of the culture. For the Chinese one, it should be the fostering and enhancing the virtue of Chinese culture; and for the American one, it should be the spreading and flourishing the characteristic of innovation. As long as the connection between culture and academics can be retained and protected, our education can be valuable and useful.

### **The Concept of the Role of Professors in Undergraduate Education**

The role of professors can be the vital factor that contributes to the development of higher education. When discussing about the role of professors, it is complicated and difficult to define. However, Benson (2007) has suggested that role theory can be useful to explain the importance of the professor. According to the role theories, there several classified concepts can help interpret the roles: “Role theories may be classified into five distinctive groups: functional role theory; symbolic interaction role theory; structural role theory; organizational role theory; and

cognitive role theory” (Benson, 2007, p.2). It is clear that the role of professors should be connected with these aspects. These aspects can interpret the fundamental task of the professor in higher education.

The primary concern is about what professors do in higher education. This can be the professor’s functional role. The professor should have a sense that how to improve teaching ability so that can make sure every student has a better understanding toward the content in classes. This should be the main concern to figure out, discuss, and cultivate. When one figures out what professors do in higher education, the purpose of education is settled down, and problems in higher education can be easily resolved. Therefore, it is very necessary to crystallize professors’ duties.

Second, professors should play a symbolic interaction role in education. The educational activities need interaction which will positively create an easy-going environment for and be favored by students. The independent individual roles are linked to the particular way in which each individual performs it (Benson, 2007, p.2). Special needs of students will require to drive unique ways of teaching and lecturing without respect to the nature of the society. Good teachers respect the nature of their society and culture. The argument here is not related to the teacher’s political understanding. However, there are challenges in terms of how curriculum and teaching methods are managed. Without these challenges of responsiveness to student needs, professors cannot survive in the competitive career of teaching. Only in the way of interaction with students, can professors know what they should concern on the improvement of their fields as educators.

At the same time, professors also are playing the structural roles in education which means they are a part of education system. They can be the foundation of educational

establishment and development. Their behaviors in the academics affect the understanding of the students towards the higher education and help the students to construct their confidence system and learning system. The structural roles focus on the importance of social structures which means that professors are training elites for the society. Higher education is very important for the future employment; thus, the social role of professors is vital. The professors' values towards lives and the world inevitably affect students.

Furthermore, organizational role and cognitive role theory are very significant to discuss. Higher educational institutions are more closely connected with the society and are not like the high schools which are more isolated from the society. Higher educational institutions such as universities can be social organizations which have pre-educated students on the real life of cooperation. In these social organizations, professors can work together to organize the study and thoughts of students, help them have a positive cognition on the world. Professors also help the students who are lack of confidence on their future to overcome troubles that are tough to handle. Right cognitions towards the world is quite essential and it should be the part of higher education. The essence of higher education should be the construction of healthy personality and reestablishment the right values towards the world. After experiencing the higher education, students should be more optimistic and be more confident when they facing troubles, they know how to handle them successfully as well. Knowledge in books are the primarily phase for human development. The construction of healthy personality is a more advanced way. Higher education should be an advanced way of improving personal and social development so that the student is effective in career and society.

## **The Historical Background of Chinese Exam System**

Chinese education has a very long history which dates back to ancient China. When talking about the education, the exam system is the priority. In ancient China, the exam system played as the most important role in the life of the grassroots because of their ambitious for being governmental officials to make their ancestors illustrious, and of course, this was the only way to change their own fates for the society was full of hierarchies. The Finnish Board of Education in a document prepared to help Finnish students considering higher education in China provide a view of the roots of in the booklet *Higher Education in the People's Republic of China* (n.d.) .The authors say, in part:

The roots of a formal system of education in China can be traced back at least as far as the 16th century B.C. later Shang Dynasty (1523 - 1027 B.C.). Throughout this period education was the privilege of the elite few, and for the most part existed for no other purpose than to produce government officials. Early on, the curriculum centered on the so-called "Six Arts": Rites, Music, Archery, Chariot-Riding, History, and Mathematics (p.2).

From the overview of the book, the exam in the ancient China required that the candidates need to memorize the fixed content that come from books and varieties of subjects which connected to the traditional Chinese culture and values. All the exams are administrated in the same way, appealing for the memorization of the content rather than demanding the practical usages in different fields. These kinds of exams largely and righteously advocate the intrinsic cognition of the exam system which locked the notion that if people did not become the exam machine they would not have an opportunity to change their fate. This kind of advocate could seriously obliterate people's pursuit of individuality and creativity. This kind of exam system was a good

governing tool which was like a “spiritual chains” to serve for the ancient Chinese political scheme which demanded people’s absolute obedience towards the emperor. The ancient Chinese political system exaggerated the importance of the exam system which successfully sustained the rule of the emperor. The ancient Chinese society was hierarchical, officials stressed safeguarding the authority of the ruling class, and ignored people’s individual rights which also indicated that personal development was not encouraged and favored by the government. The broad environment discouraged the individuality, so did the establishment of the exam system.

Some traditional ideologies and philosophies were rooted in China. As the booklet *Higher Education in the People’s Republic of China* points out, “However, based on the teachings of Confucius (551 - 479 B.C.) during the spring and autumn and Warring States periods (770 - 221 B.C.), the curriculum gradually gave way to one based on the Four Books and the Five Classics. These works outlined the principles of society and government. Confucian philosophy exerted a fundamental influence on virtually all aspects of life” (p.2). Confucius was first educator in Chinese history. Advocating Confucius ideology in the exam system decided that Chinese’s innate characteristics of piety and loyalty towards parents and friends. It also has made a contribution to the respect towards teachers. Therefore, in Chinese traditional value, teacher is an occupation that should be respected and full of glory because it helped many students to change their fate, and become the glory of their families. The Confucius ideology is the most important element that can explain why Chinese young generations are obedient towards their families, and why the role of parents is so important in Chinese education. If the young generations do not follow the traditional way of taking exams to step into the official road in which their parents want them to, they will feel shameful and other people will think they were not impious. This will be a great humiliation for them. Above all, Chinese traditional

culture advocates the virtue like piety. Taking exams as an only way to change their fate can be certainly approved by their parents even though the system is not completed and objective when it is reviewed by now. But in ancient China, it did help many families to change their fates. Its existence is reasonable.

At that time, the social relationship was so popular that people would wish some of their relatives and friends have some connections with the emperor. In the feudal society, the emperor decided everything and adopted the exam system to select his officials. When someone was to be chosen and become an official, it was said that glory brought to the whole family of this person and life of the family would be changed and prosperous although this person used to be poor and being looked down upon by others before getting high grade in the exam. The conventional cognition of grade and the exam in China has not yet changed for thousands years till today. This could be the earliest explanation for Chinese students' high skills in taking exams and getting high grades; and in other words, this could be an evidence of showing a strong learning ability.

In ancient China, content and forms of exams were analogical and unified, demanding for the rote study and controlling thoughts without any individual ideologies that presented in participants' answer sheets. This kind of exam on one hand, gave a good platform for grassroots who previously had no other way to change their fates, but could make their future better by attending exams; even though the results was unknown, they still want to have a try; however, on the other hand, it made the learners more like machines and did not require any active and innovative studies. The most important was that people would become utilitarian and more suspicious for themselves. This was a way of brainwashing and obliterating their enthusiasm for the life for the failure in the exam meant failure in the life. Those people who failed in exams would feel guilty, desperate and sensitive towards the way others saw them.

As in the modern era, fortunately, many things are changing now; people will no longer be bothered by the decisions which are determined by the results of exams. However, for ancient people, the exam was the only way of changing their future. That's why there was a famous story about a person who was failure in exams for many times and finally successful; but unfortunately, he was mentally unbalanced after he got the good news of admission. From this story, some problems of the exam system can be concerned and the blindly advocate of grades need to be revised. The ingrained exam system largely affects the establishment of modern Chinese undergraduate education. The current society is changing, being increasingly enlightened.

### **The Introduction of the Chinese Undergraduate Education**

This profound ideology discussed in the last section is deeply rooted in the Chinese tradition. This kind of blindly advocate of grade in the exams has already become one of the culture with Chinese characteristics. It not only has something to do with education but more likely with the society. Unfortunately, the undergraduate education in China is stepping into an industrial road. It now adds some commercial elements. Even though the surface goal of the undergraduate education is to serve for students and foster elites for the society, the results of the employments in a variety of fields are not that good. Many students after graduating from the universities and colleges, even hold master degrees still feel desperate for their future and dissatisfied with their occupations. Previously respect for the knowledge is disappearing. The arrangement of classes in universities and colleges serves for the future employment. People's sole criterion for the undergraduate education is replaced by the high income after graduating rather than what they can learn from universities or colleges. The exam system still exists because this is a relatively fair method of choosing elites for the society.

The undergraduate education in China is not completed. Its goal is not explicit enough both for the purpose of employment and personal interests. Some people would say there is no need to receive a higher education as long as they can find a high income job to feed their families. Chinese undergraduate education is now experiencing the widening of access to higher education which means substantially broaden the ideas about higher education (Chen, 2004, p.24). Indeed, in recent China, some unexpected examples in practical situation has demonstrated that many people have had a very good life even without attending universities or colleges. Thus, some questions come out here. Why do most of us need to attend to the universities? What is difference between the people who had received higher education and the people who had not? Is that worthwhile to spend four year to be educated in the universities in China? These kinds of questions are asked many times in people's minds and needed to concern about. But the answer should be positive for the higher education in China, because many people can have a different four-year learning experience when they attend to the classes in the universities. The four-year experience should be a good chance to make them a better understanding for themselves.

Furthermore, after receiving higher education, more opportunities can be provided for students for their future even though many of these choices are not favored by them. In theory, students, who have enrolled in higher education, can enjoy the chance of choice. Education cannot be just limited by exam grades. Like Chen (2004) said, "the definitions of human ability and of human educability has become more generous, and the chance of receiving the higher education should be available for the potential students" (2004). But this issue of broadening the access of the higher education makes people suspicious about the quality of the education in universities because most Chinese think that "engaging in higher learning is so lofty and dignified a goal that only a few can do this and those who have it can deservedly win high social

status and respect” (Chen, 2004, p. 25). However, the truth in recent China is that there are so many “higher education receivers” and many employers devalue these people. Many employers want their people to have higher degree certificates to ensure their abilities. On one hand, recent China should be a lower credit society, and on the other hand, this is a challenge for Chinese universities to think about to improve the quality of education. Generally speaking, most people who have experienced the time with intelligent professors earned the most valuable, inspiring experience. These professors in universities certainly positively affect students’ way of thinking and doing, and fortunately, can be students’ lifelong friends that can give them advice when they are facing troubles. In some certain aspects, university brings them some invaluable personal relationships which largely are connected to their future. Although higher education truly provides more chances for the people who have the potential to have a better future, its quality needs to be improved.

The reason of broadening the access to the higher education can be owed to the government and the need for fostering the elites for the society. Chen (2004) has noted that, “China has witnessed a steady and rapid growth in the 1990s; the gross enrollment rate went from percent 3.6 in 1990 to percent 11 in 2000” (Chen, 2004, p. 23). The last premier Zhu Rongji said, “Enrollments in institutions of higher learning should be further encouraged” (Chen, 2004, p. 24). The drastic expansion has something do to with pressure of competition among universities and stimulating the economy (Chen, 2004). As it is foreseen, some problems have appeared due to higher education’s different requirements for undergraduate students. If some solutions need to be displayed, the main participant, the professor, should be considered primarily. It is probably good to know how the teaching of professors works in the class so that the education quality can be improved.

An example of reforming in China is changing traditions in measuring English language competencies. Forms of exams are moving from the focus on the basic second language acquisition including the vocabulary acquisition and the grammar usage to a communicative competence approach. The growing emphasis in the assessment is on the student's competence for use.

### **The Role of Professors in Chinese Undergraduate Education**

In China, professionals who have higher degrees, usually above master's degree in a specific field can apply for jobs as professors. Before their career, these people worked very hard and had already gone through different assessments for their professional skills in their fields. Most of these people are from top-ranked universities in China which can ensure the quality of higher education. However, as former Chinese higher education lacked comprehensive majors for students, these former professors could not have enough professional knowledge in their fields. In China, a professor sometimes is responding more to societal needs than personal inclinations. There has been a tradition in China for individuals to be assigned to roles in life. Thus, some professionals have limited interest in developing teaching skills. In contemporary China, the role of the teacher is changing but some residuals of the former system remain. To be good at studying does not necessarily translate into "being good at teaching". Some universities choose the former students who are good at study without realizing the importance of teaching skills. Even though previous learning experience can be used in teaching when the new teachers are giving lectures, the professional teaching theories and practices cannot be ignored. A tradition of lecturing as the primary mode of instruction and recitation as the primary role of the student does not necessarily lead to good teaching or learning.

Chinese undergraduate education is professor- centered. The typical picture of instruction in Chinese undergraduate classroom is quiet; and students are good at taking notes; the only voice is from the professor. And Chinese undergraduate students prefer to stay quiet rather than expressing their opinions in class because of their concerns of being looked down upon by others or even by the professors. It is necessary to recognize the problems that exist and the challenges that being encountered.

One scholar Zhou Ji (2009) said, “Training personnel is the fundamental mission of institutions of higher education, and teaching is the main channel of education” (Zhou, 2009, p.10). The main task and function of the higher education is to provide elites for the society. What the society needs for now is not only the elite on the academics, but also the talent in the interpersonal relationship. What challenges for elites are not solely connected with their major knowledge, the more important is the way they deal the complicated personal relationships. This kind of training should also be the essential lesson in higher education, not just obtaining knowledge. The only channel of “training” is teaching. In other words, the professor as the group leader in teaching decides the development and perfection of the construction of the channel. The professors in universities and colleges can be the main force that prosper or ruin the quality of higher education which also has a tight connection to the future of graduates. Therefore, professors can be the resources that encourage students to work hard and help them to have a brilliant future.

Professors in Chinese undergraduate education should be in the key place of teaching because of their higher qualifications in their fields. However, their leading position cannot be secured. Chinese professors are usually working hard with high pressure, lacking flexible time and the right of autonomy in their fields. They have no satisfaction to their careers. Their

teaching plans and methods cannot be decided by themselves, but rather officials of the administrative department. This kind of management system in universities or colleges largely takes away their initiative and enthusiasm of teaching, and doing researches in their fields. Their works are circumscribed by the general requirement of the educational department regardless of the regional difference.

There are two types of professors in Chinese universities or colleges. The first is the professor who is good at teaching, and the second is the professor who is good at doing research. However, it is possible for a professor to be good at teaching and good at research given the appropriate support. However, as Chinese faculties affected by the traditional culture, the teaching is a kind of responsibility for them, and they feel they need to work hard to become competitive. Usually, professors' teaching methods and contents cannot be decided by themselves, and even the general requirement do not allow professors displaying the individuality and creativity in their teaching styles. (Western readers need to appreciate that the role of supervisors, deans and department chairs is much more directive in terms of teaching methods and assessment than in western universities). Faculties receive teaching assignments from the heads of the department and the leaders who take charge of their class evaluation. Furthermore, any kinds of innovations which are not previously applied before or applied for the permission from the administration officials probably cannot be encouraged.

In the sense of the previous paragraph, many educators in China are very conservative. Many professors are afraid that the teaching method is not useful for students or not to be praised by others, or probably, cannot be recognized in their careers. For many faculties, working as the professor is not just a job, its complexity and high pressure in pursuit of high reputation from others makes them feel exhausted. On one hand, they feel that it is necessary to be concerned

about the needs of students. On the other hand, their own pursuit to good reputations may mean that conventions are best followed. The pursuit of good reputations is the way of survival in their fields.

The professors in undergraduate education are in an awkward position. Administrative departments have the power to choose what kind of people universities or colleges want to hire. The primary power of making decisions on the candidates of the professor is not the on the hands of groups of veterans who are good at teaching and doing researches on the academics. Instead, these veterans can only discuss about the related topics but cannot decide who can be the qualified. Sometimes, the elements of choosing these people is based on a number of criteria . The current western tradition that emphasizes student evaluation that depends on the teaching skills, (and popularity as well) are not a part of the Chinese experience of teaching,

To some significant degree, it is important to understand that curriculum content and assessment and grade scales are decisions that the professor does not make. Also, universities are viewed as critical in preparing students for careers. Students and society may be critical of universities if students face fierce competitiveness in the employment after their graduation. The heavy loads of fostering elites for the society and trying to teach what students want to learn are put on the shoulder of faculties due to their awkward position of pursuit of high reputation and responsibility towards students.

However, not like professors in American undergraduate education, “the role of college English teachers in China is largely regulated and limitedly open. Teachers have no say in terms of selection of textbooks, teaching goals or curriculum design. Though they may adjust their teaching methodology and classroom activities to some extent, they all have to achieve one common goal” (Benson, 2007, p. 6). Professors in universities in China cannot decide what kinds

of classes they want to demonstrate to students. They are assigned the common goal from the administrative department. This is a unique fact that teaching affairs are taken charged by officials of the administrative department.

When discussing the university environment in China, scholars Mohrman, Geng, and Wang (2011) describe the load of professors. They says “Professors at the Communication University of China—a 211 Program member, and considered one of the top 100 institutions nationwide—are expected to teach at least two main courses independently every five years, and should teach a minimum of 96 credit hours every year. Full professors at local institutions are often expected to teach three courses a semester. Young faculty members usually teach more courses than senior colleagues, regardless of institutional status (p. 92). It seems that professors in Chinese universities have a lot of teaching assignments regardless of the class scales and the quality. It also suggests that the fulfillment of teaching assignments links to their salaries. But typically speaking, in Chinese society, income of professors is found to be inadequate for needs, especially for those new hired professors. Most of these new professors usually find other ways to earn money by taking full use of their leisure time to teach others.

The unbalanced allocation of teaching resources is still a big issue. There is one interesting fact that “prestigious universities tend to have a larger share of associate and full professors. In contrast, more than half of the faculty members at ordinary universities and vocational colleges are associate professors and lecturers” (Mohrman, 2011, p.87). This survey suggests that the prestigious universities in China have more opportunities to foster more elites because their good academic resources. Big cities in China are more likely establish more prestigious universities or colleges than remote places. Obviously, the unbalanced allocation of teaching resources can create the gap in educational quality between the universities or colleges

in big cities and those in remote places. The establishment of prestigious universities or colleges can create more useful human resources whereas some higher educational institutions in remote places have less possibility to foster elites.

### **Teaching Methods**

As noted, professor-centered system in for teaching is common in China. One view is that the undergraduate education emphasizes the reputation of universities or colleges themselves rather than concerning about what students want to learn. This is to be expected in an exam-oriented education. Students on campus are good at taking notes while professors are lecturing in the class. The student in Chinese higher education tends to be receiver rather than the cooperater with the professor. Students only need to listen to professors and do their assignments after class. They are more likely affected by professors' ideas rather than putting forward their own thoughts to share with others in the class. Critical thinking is rare. Critical thinking in the class sometimes is treated as disrespect towards the professor and the authority.

The professor in Chinese education is the symbol of authority. People, in conventional values, respect the professor. Professors are the master of knowledge. And in China, knowledge is precious and is the best way to be successful. Teaching methods should not be criticized and suspected by others. However, this kind of blindly belief in the authority of the professor contributes to the overconfidence of professors towards their jobs, and makes the reform of education in Chinese universities or colleges more difficult. Some parents with lower literary levels completely believe what professors say to them without concerning about the unique situation of their children.

Some professors also are spoken highly of their teaching methods by publishing the books that can help students to get high grade. Even though it seems that these books can only be

used for preparing exams, people still pay money and time on them, only for a good result. The process of this kind of learning is a torture for most students, especially for those who do not have a very good financial condition that can support their study. Above all, the higher education in China is still not common. Rural areas may not be able to provide the opportunities that are available in urban areas. Their poor families do not have enough money to support them in life, let alone the costs of study. Even though they can ask for loans from the government, they still cannot get enough money to order reference books to study. The lack of extra help either from books, or from the specialized education institutions, makes them less competitive. Some exercises are also provided for students so that they can practice for exams rather than being instructed by professors in class. Some professors even do not give the explanations to the answers and some others even ignore students' confusions. On the other side, students try to remember the answers without any understanding for the questions. Their primarily purpose for taking classes is to get a good grade for themselves without concerning about teaching methods. All their concerns towards the questions are neglected. Even the students themselves default this kind of situation without asking for the explanations from professors. Both students and professors think that asking these kind of questions are wasting of time. They just care about the results of exams.

Professors collect all kinds of study materials for students to prepare exams. They also find some extra information for students to study. In some way, professors who are good at preparing for tests and teaching students how to take exams are the key important elements that decide them to be good professors. Many professors have their part time job to do some specialized training for the test takers. They have the sense of understanding what kinds of forms and contents will be in the tests. They can have a very intensive understanding towards the main

theme of tests. Students prefer to have some lectures from these professors for the practical usages in exams.

The teaching method is used for the purpose of getting good jobs. Like English major in Chinese universities, it is roughly divided into three emphases, literature, translation, and business English. Usually, as a literature major, students can be hired as a teacher after finishing their degrees; as a translation major, they can go to some companies to be translator or interpreters, or probably, can go to the publish department and become some English editors; as a business English major, can mostly choose to go to companies.

However, as the exam-oriented system is deeply rooted in the Chinese traditional values, the only way of choosing elites from these graduates is taking tests or exams. Getting a good job in China, therefore, is based on the recognition of being good at taking tests. The idea of finding a good job largely affects people's understanding for the life. But the standard of a good job is vague, people's understanding of it has no identical meaning. Typically, people's so-called good jobs are based on these elements: high income, stable situation, high social status, good reputation, and sufficient leisure time for families. These so-called good jobs usually have higher requirements on the academics which needs people to get some certificates in the specific areas. However, getting certificates needs to take exams as well. Therefore, the teaching methods are somehow connected with the trainings so that students can get certificates which can be beneficial in the employment.

As Chinese classroom usually provides for large scale of students to have each lecture, professors cannot concern about the importance of their interactions with students. They have no chance to get understanding towards every student. The time period for each class is limited, and they have assigned tasks from their departments. Their teaching planning is pre-decided. Their

time in the class does not allow them to hear more ideas from students. Usually, when professors want to cultivate the creativities of students in class participation, they prefer students to have a large group to finish their assignments. So they pay more attention to the group's work. Professors just roughly grade the whole group's work rather than evaluating the individual performance in the class. There is no way to deeply evaluate everyone's ability. It seems that there is no trend for professors to have a pursuit to the diversity since it will be difficult for them to organize the class.

Professors in China are more likely to point out the disadvantages or weaknesses of students because they think it is a way of improve students' abilities. When professors give the assignments to students, they prefer to find out what are problems of students in the class. When they have a conversation with students in the class, professors will give some valuable advice for the development of the students in the future. This kind of teaching method or the way of communicating with students sometimes reduces students' confidence and enthusiasm in the study.

### **Assessments**

The assessment in Chinese undergraduate education is mostly exam-oriented. This is a system deeply rooted in the ideology of hierarchy in the society. Some majors like English, will easily become the advocate of exam system. Through the exams, professors can have a better understanding on the performance of students in the study. There some certain level exams that can measure the abilities of the English language among Chinese students because it is a compulsory class for all the students in all majors.

In traditional English classes, as a second language for Chinese people, it requires the basic skills like listening and reading. So the assignments from professors are basic. Most of the

educational goal ignore the importance of using the language as a tool to communicate rather than taking tests. English as the first widely used language in the world should be put in a serious place, but this kind of measurement towards Chinese students will badly discourage them and lower their interests in knowing the outside culture.

As the exams are moving toward English “communicative competence,” there may be a change in practice. Increasingly, there is an emphasis on being able to use the language. There is also an increased emphasis in China, as well as in all developed countries on globalization.

Professors also need to spend some time on explaining the answers which students are confused about. Learning second language should not be based on the test requirements. Even though students can remember and recognize a lot of vocabularies, but they still cannot speak and cannot communicate. And even though some people do a lot of English exercises and taking extra English classes besides their own lessons, they cannot understand what foreigners are saying and what the meaning of the books they have read.

Actually, like English, many majors should not just use exams to do the assessment towards students. Measuring what they have learned can using different ways such as writing papers which can help students to have a great conversation with professors. Others who are not good at writing, can just make like personal presentations to show what they have learned.

For many other natural science majors, exams can just be the basic foundation of perfecting their skills. But most of these exams cannot make any sense. Because most of these natural science majors need students work together rather than remembering the content from books. If these kinds of learning methods can make any sense, then people will feel frustrated when they get real jobs. They will never think that practical problems are not consists of

knowledge points. More practical skills are more important. Thus, the professors should lead their ways of thinking when problems come out rather than telling the results of the experiments.

This kind exam-oriented system fostered Chinese who are good test takers. Increasingly, it is realized that other needs must be recognized in a competitive world. Therefore, there are critics of the exam system. And the existence of the exam system is controversial.

### **Problems and Issues**

There are some negative influences on the exam-oriented system. Kilpatrick (2011) says, “In modern communities, testing is to control the educational system in a scientific and unbiased manner. Tests are one of the ways of evaluating learning and teaching efficacy. Testing exists to (1) create or reinforce the identity of the state, (2) increase the sense of belonging to the state, (3) select and allocate individuals to roles or tasks that benefit the collective, and (4) introduce hyper-accountability to ensure uniformity and standardization”(p. 37). However, its higher standardization requires the same goals for students, which largely destroys the imagination and creativity of students. Students lose their motivations in learning. If this kind of situation still exists, it will not be good for students to acquiring new skills for their employment.

Like Kilpatrick (2011) notes, “An exam-centric education assigns student aptitude based only on test scores, oftentimes leading to the marginalization, if not outright disregard, of lower performing students; an exam-oriented education system not only increases a students' burden but also restricts a student's ability to learn using techniques that a particular student finds most effective ” (p. 40). Students have high pressure in study. Parents make full use of their leisure time to attend different training institutions so that can make sure their kids can get high grade in exams. It is common that Chinese innovative abilities are weak. They are good test-takers but not good problem-solvers in the practical situation.

According to Zhou (2009) some problems in Chinese higher education that are of concern include the following: “(a) China’s higher education is still unable to meet the requirements of economic and social development in terms of numbers and quality; problems of quality are especially salient. (b) The tasks of deepening the reforms are still quite arduous; the reforms of education and teaching, in particular, still face profound and arduous tasks. (c) Investments in education and teaching are insufficient and unable to meet the needs of improving the quality of education; education work at institutions of higher education, in particular, is faced with the problem of insufficient inputs of energy and funds”(p. 8). China is the largest population in the world and its needs for fostering well-rounded adults are endless. Because of its limited teaching and academic resources with quite large group of learners, Chinese higher education face more difficulties than other countries in rational allocation of educational resources including professors, educational facilities, study materials, and any other supports. Improving the quality of higher education means to focus on more individual needs instead of general needs in a whole group. This demands professors to be more considerate and give professors more pressure. Due to unbalanced regional economic and educational development, many higher education institutions cannot get enough financial support to make sure their normal operation in teaching and doing researches. Therefore, the reform in higher education is a huge project for it will be a nationwide activity; however, each region in the country is different, the reform should adjust measures to local conditions.

Due to the higher education is a preparation for the future career, however, its purpose is not obvious. Some problems come out. That is to say, these reports tend to complain (1) that college graduates have not mastered the arts of written and spoken communication and the textual tradition in which those arts are preserved and exemplified; (2) that colleges have not

inculcated graduates with a sense of values and, in particular, the obligations of citizenship that are owed to the republic and other communities to which they belong; (3) that college graduates are not provided with a substantively unified and coherent general education that will prepare them to address many different kinds of problems and issues, be they political, economic, aesthetic, religious, or technological; (4) and finally that professors care less about teaching than about pursuing their own somewhat introverted, and perhaps self-indulgent, investigations (Kimball, 1988, p. 305). Students cannot get the basic skills that will let them to adjust the requirements in the employment in the future. Their lack of critical thinking will make them less competitive and become more anxious about their future. They cannot handle issues when they are working. Their interpersonal abilities are weak. They even do not know how communicate with their leaders and fellows in their work. Therefore, they cannot be qualified to become a good citizen.

### **Comparing Chinese and American Education Systems**

In the book *Catching Up or Leading the Way: American Education in the Age of Globalization* the author Yong Zhao (2009), claims that American education is a series of “talent shows.” That is, American education emphasis the discovery on the individualities (pp. 46-47). American education undergraduate education has limited discipline standards and evaluation is not standardized; the greater emphasis is on creativity and innovation, a positive plus for American culture (Zhao, 2009, p. 47). In typical American culture, the “fundamental rights of the individual, respect for and celebration of individual difference” are deeply ingrained (Zhao, 2009, p. 47). This is quite different from Chinese education. The appreciation for the individual ability positively provides equal opportunities for people to receive high quality education. This system not only exists in the higher education, but also throughout their education patterns in all

levels. Thus, people in American culture value individual abilities and talents. They think everyone is unique and everyone can be successful. Because of this kind of ideology in people's mind, the entrance exams to universities become fairer to students, and the grade of the exam is not the only criterion to admit the candidates. Universities have a deeper understanding towards the candidates by implanting face-to-face interviews with them. The writings on the paper cannot comprehensively measure the individual potentials in the future development. American education is cultivating more talents for the world.

From American history, the ideology of independence and equality is a certainty, which has predicted that education in America should be on the basis of independence and equality. Zhao says, "The United States of America was founded on the principle that all people have equal rights and that government is responsible to, and derives its power from, its individual citizens. Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights make clear that very foundation of government rests on the inalienable rights of the people and of each individual" (p.47). Its recognition of the individuality contributes to the cultural diversity. The recognition towards the individual difference provides more chance to discovery their advantages and tries to avoiding their weaknesses. Also as the equality is the central theme in the education, it is good for the social labor division which is good for the development of the society in the United States. That should be the reason why the American classes do not have the same pattern when the professors are giving lectures.

When the chance is equal, and their achievements are encouraged by others, people will have more enthusiasm on cultivating the methods of improve the quality of their works. This will be a benign development for the students, and students will try to advance themselves in the study abilities. They will be more actively sharing their ideas and thoughts to the professors

without being afraid of making mistakes for no one will look down upon their thoughts. By making mistakes they will know how to handle that kind of problems next time. This is a learning progress rather than a competition.

### **The Main Task of American Undergraduate Education**

The message of American undergraduate education may be expressed in the following manner to students according to one American student of education.

First, American undergraduate education emphasizes on essential skills such as reading or writing for personal developments. American undergraduate education thinks that the basic abilities are important as well as the relevant training in special needs. The American classes spend more time on improving the abilities of the students' writings because it is the basic skills that will help them to have a better future. Students in American universities or colleges can read well, and they can do a self-study which helps them have a lifelong learning. Students in America can write incisively, and therefore, can deliver deliberate ideas in their writings; usually, they can strengthen their express ability by writing. All these kinds of basic skills are quite necessary for all people. People should learn self-study and should have the ability of expressing their ideas to others. People are not living in the vacuum. The future should be dependent on others. People need to be appreciated by others. Thus, learning basic skills cannot be ignored. When basic skills are the solid foundation of knowledge building, students can further develop their professional abilities in their fields. Students, whether in their future development or not, will benefit from this kind of learning pattern. Some concerns about the basic learning abilities of students displayed: "It is said that language study deserves a great deal more attention because present college graduates cannot read, write, or speak effectively"

(Kimball, 1988, pp. 295-296). Undergraduate education's expectation is to let students intensively obtain some useful learning skills that can help them to have a better future.

### **The Goal of American Undergraduate Education**

Even though undergraduate education should be the preparation for the employment, it discourages the purposiveness. After graduate from universities, students should be equipped with some strong abilities that can help them to find a satisfied job. The scholar of undergraduate education Kimball (1988) says:

Colleges do not and should inculcate a sense of "values" in their graduates. A virtuous student is neither "materialistic," as the 1985 AAC report suggests, nor self-centered, as Boyer notes in arguing that students are not as egoistic as most observers have said. Taken together, these two indices of an absence of values-materialism and self-centeredness-are said to be manifested in the vocationalism or "careerism" of undergraduates (pp. 295-296).

It is very normal that undergraduate education become the cradle of fostering the materialistic and careerism due to its purposive training towards the students in the specific areas. However, American unselfish studying model is very popular among students. Students will like to study together and share their ideas with their peers without any hesitation. Even though exams of each class make them become alarmed on their competitiveness among their classmates, they still show their generous help to others. It is a very precious virtue that should be praised. Even though students will be afraid of being caught up by others, they will not be mean to give help to others because they think they can learn from each other. This is the reason why American professors prefer to have a group discussion in the classes. It is a good chance to learn from others. Even though it becomes kinds of "careerism" for the students, the society will tell them

that group work still very important in their jobs. The concept of “careerism” should not be separated from other individuals. When people learn from each other in their fields, they will realize they can give others chance when learning from others and others will give them the equal chance to them. Careerism needs cooperation.

Even though undergraduate education should be the career preparation for students, its goal of fostering qualified citizens for the country is also very important. Again to emphasize Kimball (1988) says:

Career preparation their primary goal or one of two primary goals of their college education. College graduates should become good citizens. Working Party on Undergraduate Education stressed as a central theme the importance of elevating individuals' commitment and service to the society and the body politic. This study stressed as its primary rationale that “nonspecialists” must acquire “the scientific and technical knowledge needed to fulfill civic responsibilities in society (p. 296).

This emphasis on citizenship refers not only to the nation but to all communities to which students belong (p. 296). It suggests that the practical usages of majors in US. They hope to foster innovative elites so that they can serve for the whole communities and nations. They hope students in colleges can be the real elites which can give more contributions to the society. This kind of contribution is not only on the basis of economic development, but also on the basis of the harmonious social relationship. Good social divisions will help to improve the people’s standard of living.

## **The Student-Centered Education System**

The undergraduate education in U.S. is student-centered. The professor is the person who only leads them into students' majors. The professor provides different kinds of teaching methods to cultivate students' learning enthusiasm in the class. Students are the main roles in the classes and professors grade them by reviewing their individual performances. Professors usually have office hours after classes so that they can answer students' questions. This largely ensure the interactive communication with students and certainly can satisfy the needs of students.

In the aspect of teaching methods, professors from different classes will choose different ways of instructing. The most common teaching method is letting students to have presentations in class. Sometimes the presentations are individually, and others are team works. No matter what kinds of presentations are, these are perfect opportunities for students to share ideas with others and to establish confidence since presenting in class will be the focus, and students can learn from each other. Furthermore, the topics of presentations are usually chosen by students themselves, if they have no ideas what should be presented, professors would like to help them during their office hours. Choosing the topics that students like can largely strengthen their learning interests.

Group discussion is another typical teaching method that is commonly used in class. Some professors in order to ensure the principle of equity, they will periodically let students change their seats so that everyone can get the same chance in class to ask and answer questions. Group discussion can avoid the individual disadvantages in thinking and can freely learn from others. It can easily create an easier going environment for students to study. This put students in the main roles in study and gives them enough change to learn from each other.

For some natural science classes such as biology and engineering, the class usually consists of two parts, one is about theory, and another is about the practical usages which will be displayed in labs. Natural science classes need to be practical. For this part, many American classes give enough resources for students to learn and students are instructed by the elites who are good at these fields.

For many humanity classes, professors do quizzes for students to make sure everyone finish the homework and digest knowledge they have instructed on time. Most of humanity classes assign large scale of readings to students and professors will require students to have preview for every class period. By doing quizzes in class, professors can ensure that the class quality and make sure to follow the progress of the syllabus. These regular quizzes can make sure students understand every class and can be used in class discussion. Even though this can give students pressure in the study, but it is very effective for them.

American higher education focuses more on the basic study such as writing. For undergraduate students, no matter what majors are they, they are required to take composition classes which will be beneficial for them. Writing can be an effective way of communicating with others, and can be useful for them in the employment. But for this basic skill, no tests for students are administered in the class. The goal of this class is to help students improve their writings and give them good advice in writing. Writing can help us to display our ideas and help us to organize our thoughts; and most important is, it can earn some good opportunities when apply for jobs via emails. It is very necessary to improve students' writing ability.

Professors encourage students to go writing centers to revise their writing assignments. This is quite different from Chinese undergraduate education. In China, comparing with English courses, composition is not a compulsory that should be given for all Chinese in universities.

Some educators point that it will negatively affect Chinese writing abilities and the way of calmly dealing with difficulties. Not like Chinese universities, American ones usually will encourage students to ask for help from others, especially from the professional people. In writing class, it give students a lot of materials so that students can choose. It also give students enough information so that students know how to deal with their problems in writings. Some good writing reference books will be introduced by professors in class as well. Chinese universities do not have this kind of service for students, and students are afraid of making mistakes, therefore, students will never ask for special help from professors. In American universities, professors encourage students to ask questions, even though some students are shy in class, there still have offices hours can be available for them to articulate their needs for the class for professors.

Usually, American higher education fosters more well-rounded students, which means all classes except for those extreme professional ones, should be open for all students on campus. This is quite different from China. Due to Chinese special condition, large population and limited teaching resources, many classes are not open for students who are not the majors even though they are interested in. In order to ensure everyone can understand every class, professors need to consider how to choose the content and topics that will inspire students in class. Therefore, students with diverse backgrounds r in different fields demand the diversity of classes. For instance, a literature class professor will assign a social issue to students to discuss in group instead of discussing professional literature concepts only. They would like students to choose what they are interested in for their individual projects or assignments so that can fully display their advantages in study. They encourage students who are good math debate with them in terms of humanity fields as well. Professors think that math students can have different angles to view

some issues. After these ideas are presented in class, other students can learn new ways of thinking and professors can learn something useful as well.

American class is flowing which means that students can have different classmates in different class and make new friends as well. This largely encourages students themselves need to make learning plans for themselves rather than being organized by others. This kind of class needs a strong self-discipline, because besides the communication with professors in class, students need to try to communicate with different students so that can figure out what they are confused in class. And no one reminds homework to them, students need to remind themselves and design their study plans. For this aspect, students' direct communication with professors in US, is common. If they are not good at dealing with different personal relationships for finishing their homework, they prefer to stop by professors' offices. However, in China, the class is not flowing, and everyone knows each other, so students will not worry about their study. This could foster their lazy study habits. American class can largely foster students self-learning ability.

There are no limited assessments in American undergraduate classes, and different classes have diverse ways of assessments. American undergraduate pay more attention to students' individual performances in study. Therefore, the way professors choose to do assessments is diverse. Taking exams are not only methods that they choose for students. Many classes in the Department of Liberal arts and Education, such as philosophy, do not encourage rote study in class; it encourages students to have discussions with professors, and its finals are usually take-home assignments, which are more likely writing papers, and the topics can be chosen by students themselves. Students can even look into online resources to finish their finals with proper format. The assessment encourages the ways of self-learning, which will be beneficial for students in the future. Professors do not have fixed answers to the questions. They

prefer a more divergent thinking among students. They would like to hear from different ideas and encourage innovation. Divergent thinking is more important than a fixed answer for it can be practical in solving problems.

Furthermore, every undergraduate have an advisor for their academic needs and the advisor usually give some useful suggestions on the study and taking classes. The first week of each semester, students need to make an appointment with their advisors so that they can discuss their academic problems. For every major, the advisor will present their graduation requirement and consider about everyone's special condition in their study. American undergraduate education require students to take 120 credits and finish each major's graduation project, after following all these goals, students can successfully get their degrees. And American universities have requirement in GPA, if students cannot reach this goal, they cannot get their degrees. Therefore, American students pay more attention to their final grades. Advisors are the helpers who can introduce students some good learning ways for their majors so that students can get higher grade. Advisor is the key role in American higher education. Their advice for students in taking classes can largely affect students' establishment of confidence in study.

However, for most Chinese students, they cannot enjoy this kind of chance to communicate with professors. There is no "advisor" concept for them. This should be a serious attitude for education. For most students in China, even though they are confused about their study and majors, they have no idea what they should do and who they can talk to. Students in China stand higher pressure than students in US. The advisor in American universities are usually the professors that related to the majors of students, so their concerns for students are very promising and constructive for their personal development and further study in the future. Chinese students are not lucky as American ones. First, this is because Chinese higher education

has limited teaching resources, but because of large groups of students, professors have more pressure in teaching and cannot do advising affairs for students; the second, is there are no systematical requirements for students' degrees, the graduation process is easy comparing with American universities. If Chinese universities raise their demands for students in their majors, Chinese universities or colleges do need advisors to help students.

Besides students' academic performance, American higher education provides equal chance for students and pays more attention to students' social experience as well. They think higher education should contribute to their social lives and social experience can enrich their learning abilities on campus. These two factors cannot be separated. On campus, there are a lot of clubs and working opportunities offer to students in their leisure time. One difference from Chinese higher education is that American undergraduate students are usually making money to pay the tuition themselves. Students in universities work hard and cherish the study chance on campus. However, for most Chinese students tuition come from parents' income, many students do not cherish the chance for they have less social experience and cannot understand of the hardships in the work. Also, there are a lot of final aids for the students who have bad financial conditions but still have high GPA in universities. Equal chances can be ensured for students. The way of dealing with the relationship between study and working experience in American higher education is good to be learned by Chinese for some campus occupations have some special requirements in students' GPA. This can ensure students' part-time job will not affect their academic performance. However, in China, many students do not sense the importance of acting well in academics and universities will finally let them to graduate. This is not good for their future development.

Even though higher education should be served for the future employment, students' main task should focus on the study in their majors. Balancing the relationship between part time jobs and study is essential. Undergraduate study should be the golden time for students to consolidate their fundamentals, strengthen their self-study and critical thinking. This is what Chinese educators need to concern about to improve the higher education. Blindly advocating the importance of social experience while students on campus should be removed; on the other side, balancing the relationship between the social experience and major study is necessary, and putting the incidental before the fundamental is improper.

Finally, according to Riley's research (1982, p. 173), it suggests American higher education has provide a variety of job preparations for students. Students' expectations in United States towards their jobs are better than Chinese students. They feel after receiving higher education, their majors are applicable in jobs. It is said that American higher education pay more attentions to the applicability in students' careers, and provides them more opportunities to get them specialized in some majors so that they can be more competitive. Also, their concerns for students' individual performance in future employment are included as well in teaching plans.

### **Summary**

Chinese higher education is professor-centered and adopt unified teaching methods in order to easily select elites whereas American higher education is student-centered, which can fully concern students' needs, and diversity is welcome in the class. Chinese exam-oriented system largely restricts students' innovative abilities in the study, which is not good for their lifelong self-study after leaving universities or colleges. American education system provides more choices for students, including those who are not good at study but still need time to work hard to finish their degrees. American culture respects everyone's efforts and encourages

students' different or even divergent opinions. American education is characterized by its strong inclusiveness towards individuals. Chinese higher education, although has already greatly improved than before, because of limited teaching resources and unbalanced regional development, and increasing demand for knowledge and high income occupations, the exam system is still in a critical place. By using the exam system, it can weed out some people that are less competitive. However, American higher education do not only foster elites that are in academics or in some practical fields; American universities or colleges respect all sorts of elites, they try to provide as many as possible opportunities for students to improve their skills; and finally, students can be what they really want to be.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methods**

An open-ended questionnaire was used to survey 9 professors in China. A series of typical questions that can represent the characteristics of Chinese undergraduate system designed in the questionnaire. The questionnaire had 6 parts that included background information, class content, teaching, equality, professor-centered teaching pattern, and exam-oriented educational system. All these questions were filled out by Chinese professors representing the disciplines of introduction to pharmacy, pharmacology, document retrieval, traditional Chinese medicine outline, molecular pharmacology, data structure, electric circuit analysis, engineering drafting, principles of chemical engineering, pharmaceutical polymers, International settlement, international business English, foreign business English conversation, foreign trade documents, and English language and literature. Because the participants are Chinese professors and instructors, the questionnaire was in the Chinese language for their convenience. However, before the approval document being issued by the Institutional Review Board for Subject Research (IRB) in University of Wisconsin-Platteville, the original questionnaire was an English version for the convenience of the reviewers. For the practical administration, the questionnaire was translated into Chinese.

The questionnaire was informal. No measures of validity or reliability were established. Some attention to face validity was given. The researcher stated the purpose of the questions and one American research professor reviewed the appropriateness of the questions. The IRB committee also reviewed the questions.

The method was anonymous, which means the name of the participants will not appear in the paper. The participants of the questionnaire are a group of instructors or professors in different majors with disparate experience in teaching and education. Most of them were born from 1960s-1980s, which means they are experienced people in higher education. They have spent a lot of time on campus and know how to be professional in their careers. They also witnessed or are experiencing the change of demands in higher education towards universities and colleges or professors and instructors. In other words, they are considering about how to make Chinese higher education better as well. Some probably have tried to change their teaching methods as they expected to before. Some are still groping their ways for more completed means as most educators are still confused by the recent Chinese education environment and struggled by the social situation. Thus, they can be the qualified persons to provide some advice for the transforming of Chinese higher education.

The purpose of administering the questionnaire aims at finding out what kinds of problems existed in Chinese undergraduate system, and therefore, can think about how to make imitation and reference from the American one. By comparing the two different education systems, some more students-centered and practical ideas, and teaching methods can inspire Chinese educators to think about the improvement of the future of higher education in China.

The questionnaire was administered via e-mail over the summer of 2015.

## **Chapter Four**

### **SURVEY RESULTS**

#### **Family Background**

In China, the family background information is one of the most important elements that can motivate people's choice of attending to universities. This questionnaire is standing on the views of instructors and professors as they once played the role of students before. They have already transferred their roles from students to educators. Traditionally, Chinese family values and education are critical for people. Family provides sufficient material support for the education. These "previous students" have their own personal experience of how to be well-educated since their recent accomplishments cannot be separated with the family element, or in other words, the influence of their parents. Therefore, the influence of family background of the instructors needs to be taken account into this research as well. Parents' expectations and desire affects the choice of these Chinese educators. Furthermore, parents' good education contributes to their recent introspection towards Chinese higher education in terms of universities or colleges and even the whole society.

According to the questionnaire responses, eight of the participants display that the expectations of parents are the main motivations to receive the higher education, and primary reason that contribute to their positive attitudes toward education. Only one person says that parents did not pay much attention to her education. This suggests family influence is quite important. For most Chinese people, family factor in education is not delivering knowledge itself as the typical function of education applied on campus; however, most of the answers by these

intelligent and perspicacious participants suggest that their current achievements can hardly be inseparable from the establishment of sound personality that derives from the domestic education of their parents. The parents' legacy of being enthusiastic, earnest, insistent toward their goals, and being modest, studious, diligent, hardy toward life is their most precious gift that being inherited.

For this part, eight participants have got their doctor's degrees and one, is a doctoral student in a university. This suggests that teaching in higher education is high-demanding, only high degree educators can take charge of teaching. In the aspect of the professional title, 6 of these are associate professors, 2 of them are professors with more than 10 years in teaching. Usually, the professional title is depended on the teaching ability of educators as well as their ability in doing research. According to the questionnaire, professors are have more experience in teaching and can give more constructive suggestions for the improvement of teaching in higher education.

### **Class Content and Teaching**

In the aspect of class content, 8 participants think that there are some modifications and changes in their courses, only one think there is no change in the teaching. These changes obviously displayed in the demand of students' future employment and class periods. For these professors and instructors are teaching more practical courses, as the needs of development of China, higher demands for future elites is inevitable. Most of educators realized this kind of change, therefore, they make some changes for the new development. For example, one professor said that methods of document retrieval is changing, and there are also more innovative ways of retrieving documents for new research; furthermore, document retrieval has strong timeliness and variation, it encourages diversity, the improvement of this class is necessary.

For the content of every discipline, 2 of the participants think that they roughly follow the teaching outlines that are designed by the education department, and they can make some little changes on the basis of students' demands and examination outlines. However, even though, examination outlines are important for students to prepare for their mid-exams or finals, 7 of the participants think, no matter what kinds of majors they are teaching, providing students some effective learning methods are more meaningful, rather than just giving them every part of knowledge points. The professor is only the person that guides them, but the rest of their study should be self-conscious and follow these methods. Knowledge is updating and need to cultivate them by using these meaningful methods. They only leading students to a good study condition in their fields and help them to consolidate their fundamental basic knowledge in their professions. Most participants respond that, mastering correct study methods and learning laws can benefit students lifelong.

In the part of results of the class content for future employment, one participant suggests that results of each students in study is different for everyone's learning ability, study methods, study environment, and future occupation are diverse; at the same time, this participant also suggest that, according to her students' responses, only about 20% of professional knowledge that taught in class will be used in their practical workplaces; learning knowledge structure and acquiring excellent study quality will be more welcome and useful. There are four participants think that their class can help students consolidate the basic knowledge in their professions. Six participants class content can at a certain level, can strength the logical thinking ability and study ability. The rest of them think that their class can improve the abilities of dealing with different personal relationships and adapting the competitive environment of the employment.

In the part of the proportion of finals in the total grade, most participants suggest that their finals are 50%-74%, only one suggests that the final proportion in that course is less than 50%. One of these participants suggests that there are some changes in the humanity department in the university: some professors who teach classes in the humanity department choose to lower the proportion of the finals, trying to focus on students' performance of each class period; others are learning from universities or colleges in the United States, allowing students submitting a final project as their finals instead of taking tests. This profession think the finals should be lower since focus on students' performance will be more comprehensive and objective.

For most professors, they usually need to spend some time to prepare their classes and the review the homework of students. According to the questionnaire, 5 of the participants spend 5-10 hours per week for the preparation of their classes, 2 of them spend 11-19 hours per week, and another two spend more than 20 hours per week for preparations. The two who are spend more than 20 hours per week to prepare have not a long teaching years and they are relative young comparing with others. In the part of reviewing students' homework, it suggests that 8 of these participants spend 5-10 hours per week, and only one spend 11-19 hours per week.

Teaching methods can be one of the most important part in higher education. According to the responses to the questionnaire, the most popular methods are giving lectures, using Power Point, and explaining the exercises in the textbooks. Except above four teaching methods, there are other ways displayed in the questionnaire. Four participants use reading assignments, data analysis, writings (lab reports), and group discussions in their classes; two of them let students have presentations, playing roles in their classes; three of them let students to do the oral reports in their classes, and have individual communication with students. One professor suggests that she will focus more on the students' individual performance in the class, and this professor

almost circle all the choices in the questionnaire which means that her teaching is diverse and can be more objectively measure students' learning results.

### **The Principle of Equity**

The principle of equity in higher education is essential for it can ensure the quality of education and can provide equal chance for everyone in study. In the part of principle of equity, the questionnaire suggests these participants' opinions on how secure the equity in their classes. In terms of exam, one suggests that detailing the answers to the exams and objectively grading are useful. Some suggest that the exam forms are very critical for they consider to use the open book exams as their assessments, and they encourage the divergent thinking in their answers. Four professors that they follow the teaching principles of the university and delivery the right learning attitude to students, they think this kind of positive attitude will affect their performance in the exams. Another two think that exams cannot be specialized for some certain students, and instructions should be more generalized in class. In terms of providing equal chance in study, one suggests that in her class, students' seats are periodically changed for this can provide the same chance for students to have group discussions, ask and answer questions. Most of them think their instructions are on the basis of the whole class rather than focus on individuals; however, if some students have questions in the class, they will answer them; the content will not focus on the difficult knowledge points, and will ensure everyone can make sense. One suggests, her progress of teaching will depend on the specific situation of each class so that can make sure the equity. Two professors in the questionnaire, points out that they will answer students' questions after class if students stop by their offices, and if these questions are representative, they will spend time in the class to explain to all students. By using these methods, they think they can try their best to ensure the equal chance for students in study.

For the students who need special care, 6 participants in the questionnaire think that creating a friendly environment is very essential; they think students' solidarity can help them; they treat them like common people. One participant suggests he never met this kind of students in his class. The other two even though respond that they have never met before, but concern that if they have met some students with high pressure or mental problems, they still would like individually to spend time communicating with them, and helping them get rid of their troubles.

Concerning on the relationship between the major and future employment is quite essential for most students in China have lower satisfaction towards their occupations after they graduating from universities. One professor in the questionnaire responses that there are three reasons that cause this problem. Firstly, many students do not have a deeply understanding to their majors when they are choosing, and when they are graduating, they still have not a completed understanding; secondly, because of the competitive society, many students cannot find the jobs that related with their majors; finally, there is no practical or professional majors in the undergraduate period, only 20% of students can furthermore study in some certain majors, and others get the jobs that has nothing to do with their majors. Therefore, her suggestion is students should try to choose the major that they really like for interests are best teachers.

When discussing about the practical majors, one points that there are no real practical majors; if people do like their majors, they will be good at them and have no problem in the employment. This professor thinks every major has its reason of existence for the society has different demands for people. As the change in the employment, higher education has to be changed. Therefore, there are no real practical majors, and the practical ones should depend on the students' expectations. The most important is, as the professor responses that students need to

understand themselves well and know how to come over their disadvantages and make full use of their advantages. By understanding themselves, they can apply for ideal jobs.

Three professors think that, in undergraduate study, the main task of students should be focus on how to think, how to deal with different people. And the most important is how to improve their learning abilities so that they can self-study lifelong. Practical majors will need the test of time after they have worked for several years. But the study in undergraduate education, should master the learning methods. After acquiring these useful learning methods, it will be beneficial for them to obtain new knowledge in new fields.

### **The Professor-Centered Patterns in Teaching**

According to the response to the questionnaire, three of the participants think professors can have some positive impact on students, however, as they indicates, this not means that professors can decide everything in teaching. In the traditional Chinese view to professors, people respect professors and listen to what professors say in class. But from these professors, one suggests that the professor cannot decide anything, impose their individual will on students, and should obey teaching laws. Another professor suggests that, higher education class should neither be professor-centered pattern nor be student-centered pattern; the relationship between the student and the professor should be inter restricted, correlated, which means the two can learn from each other and can progress together. A professor admits the popularity of the professor-centered pattern in Chinese higher education class, however, the reason that contributes it is Chinese limited teaching resources with large group of learners with increasing needs for education. This professor says it need time to revise the condition. Four professors suggest that even though the professor can plan what to teach in class, but higher education

should put students in the focus, the role of professor is just leading, cannot decide anything in education.

In terms of ensuring the quality of classes, 7 professors says that they cannot ensure students' high grade but can try to stimulate their interests in study; they think every student is unique and cannot generalize them by using the same ways of instructing; most important is to cultivate their desire for self-study. Understanding every student is essential as well. Professors can provide some better teaching and learning methods to encourage students.

The attitudes of these professors for the relationship between the professor and the student are diverse. All professors in the questionnaire agree that the professor and the student are personally equal; however, this kind of equal cannot be easy defined. One professor thinks that the equal relationship should depend on the professor's attitude to the student and different situation; two professors think that in class, professor cannot be equal with students since the professor can design classes and like the director in a film, this needs the professor to stand in a higher level to evaluate students' performance in class. Others think that the professor needs to hear from the student, and to ensure ideology of equality in instructing for the student. Professors should provide enough chance to listen to students. Furthermore, professors should be more specialized in the academics than students and can give students more constructive advice.

In the definition of being a qualified professor, there are three aspects to consider. According to the questionnaire, most participants think that to be a qualified professor should be an expert in a certain field; besides professional achievements, they think that a good professor should concern more about the needs of students. Furthermore, in terms of the development, they think a qualified should full of virtues that can affect students; a qualified professor should has a

sense of responsibility and be patient to students. One participant points that, a good professor should have talent in teaching, should love teaching and students.

The professor's influence on students' employment cannot be ignored. In the aspect of helping students in employment, most participants consider that professors do have some help for students in applying jobs. Three participants suggest that professors share the working experience with students, and some social relationships can be provided for students so that students can get more chances and be more competitive in employment. Two think that if students will ask them about how apply for a good job, they will consider to find some former students to give meetings so that students can borrow the experience. Four think that students in undergraduate education should acquire the study methods and some useful ways of dealing personal relationships; professors can also help to cultivate their advantages and strengths, but only introduce some available employment information and platform for students, but the success of employment should depend on students themselves.

There is one participant give some interesting ideas on the topic of the influence of professor in students' employment. Three points displayed in the response. First, professors are the members of the society, their social relationship cannot be separated from students; their social experience is the part of their knowledge structure; they can unconsciously influence students by giving lectures and give some help to them. Second, professors have more chances to keep in touch with the society than students, therefore, professors have better understanding on the social needs, and students can learn from professors. Third, professors can easily get some useful employment information that can be related with students' majors, and can also do an orientation for students' employment. Students from the employment orientation can know how to effectively introduce themselves to employers.

## **Exam-Oriented Education in China**

According to the questionnaire, participants all agree that the assessment can be one of the most important parts in Chinese higher education. The exam can be the main way of assessment. A professor responds that the exam has impact not only on the student but also on the professor; for students, taking exams can be a measurement for their learning abilities and a way for them to find out their problems in the study; for professors, the exam can be a good way of measuring the teaching' quality, and professors can do some adjustments in their teaching methods, class content by reviewing students' performance in exams; from the exam, professors can understand what kinds problems students have in the learning process and what problems they need spend more time to explain in class to students. This is an effective way of gathering teaching experience.

A professor points out that, for that course, only two exams(mid-term exam and final exam) per semester are used to measure students' abilities; this professor suggests even though exams cannot truly and comprehensively reflect students' study ability and results, there are still three reasons that can explain its necessity. Firstly, the exam can provide a tool of regulating and measuring to students; the result of the exam can give some pressure to students so that they work hard. Secondly, in some certain aspects, it can fairly and objectively reflect students' learning abilities and attitudes. Thirdly, because of limited educational resources, it can certainly be a good way of distributing resources to those who have strong learning abilities, and it can help the society to select elites. Even though the exam has a lot of disadvantages, but it do help many students to get chance to receive higher education. In recent Chinese higher education, there is no other way that can provide students more fair platform to demonstrate themselves.

Three professors think it is necessary to take exams because exams can reflect students' knowledge acceptability and comprehension ability; furthermore, they also agree that if exams are removed from higher education, the Chinese education will be in a mess. They think that the exam is popular all around the world, but they consider that Chinese professors can think about to diversify forms of exams, adopting more open forms to measure students' abilities. One professor the exam is necessary in study, however, if the importance of exam is exaggerated, students cannot correctly evaluate themselves and can amplify their weaknesses, which are not good for them. Other three participants in questionnaire suggest, exams should not only be in the same patterns, can be modified by different major requirements.

There is an interesting point put in the questionnaire. The fairness of the exam is a controversial issue. Five professors suggest that the exam is not the only way of reflecting students' real abilities in study and should provide more choices for students. Three suggest only comprehensive forms of exams can reflect students' learning results; they also suggest a course test can use a variety of forms such as specialized ones and basic ones to measure students. One even think that, exams cannot comprehensively reflect students' learning results, but can display learning gaps, which can be a reference for the employers to choose elites. Most professors think that the exam system should be improved and completed.

## **Chapter Five**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

#### **Chinese and USA Undergraduate Classes differences in Content, Teaching Methods, Assessments, and the Role of the Professors**

The class content of Chinese undergraduate education is designed by the educational department. Many Chinese universities use the same textbooks whereas American ones have no specific requirements for the choice of textbooks. The syllabus in Chinese class cannot be designed by professors themselves. Due to Chinese special educational condition of limited teaching resources and large population, Chinese class is professor-centered, and students have less opportunities to communicate with professors. Because of the common teaching goals, which are served for exam system, professors have no enough time to response students' questions and concerns. However, American classes are small scale; students can fully demonstrate their personal advantages and have directly communicate with professors in classes.

Teaching method in China is professor-centered whereas American one is student centered. The main teaching method in Chinese higher education is giving lectures to students whereas professors in US are more likely to let students do presentation and group discussions

for some certain topics. Chinese professors have heavily loaded classes with limited time, therefore, students have no time to have personal performance. American professors have more flexible time in the class and can decide how much they can teach for each class period, they have no pressure on this. Chinese teaching method focus on delivering knowledge, but lacks enough innovative thinking; American teaching method is diverse and can largely raise the interests of student in study.

In the aspect of assessment, both of these two education system will choose exams as the most common way for students. However, except exams, American professors will choose more diverse measurements such as, take-home exams, personal projects, essays, presentations and papers. Even though assessments can measure students' learning ability, American professors prefer not to make assessments in a large proportion in the total grade. This is opposite from Chinese higher education. Usually, most of courses in Chinese universities or colleges, only have one exam per semester, therefore, the proportion in the total grade will be more than 50%. If there are more than two exams per semester, it will give much work for professors for Chinese higher educational institutions have limited professors or instructors; and therefore, they cannot have enough time to prepare for teaching and class content. Some students who are not good taking exams will not like this kind of assessments.

In the role of the professor in higher education, Chinese professors have less autonomy right in teaching whereas academics in US is more free. The professor in China usually respected by students and the relationship between the student and the professor are not equal. According to the questionnaire, professors should have more social experience than students and can give some useful suggestions for students' employment. However, American professors have more autonomy rights in their class; they can design what kinds of contents to teach and they can

design the forms of assessments to measure students' learning ability. The relationship between the professor and the student is more equal in American higher education than the one in Chinese higher education. Because professors in US can freely choose what content students like, they can have more harmonious relationships. Most Chinese professors think that a qualified professor should have a sense of responsibility for students.

### **Changes**

Chinese higher education is reforming in recent years. Many majors' changes demonstrate in class content. For instance, the associate professor of international settlement and foreign trade documents, has made some changes in the class since the international conventions is changing; these two classes need to consider about the practical situation; the professor need to think about the higher demands for the future businessmen. Documents retrieval is also another good example to discuss. According to the questionnaire, two participants respond that the information updating is quick, their students need to know how to obtain the first hand materials by using the Internet. This is an open era, people can learn a lot from a long distance.

### **Suggestions**

In the aspect of the changes of assessments, many professors suggest that there should not only adopt the exam as the mainly method to measure abilities of students. Some think that professors can use interview or oral test in their classes. Interview is face-to-face, and professors can have a direct communication with students; furthermore, interview can test students' random response capabilities. Oral test can be another good choice. This is a good way of measuring students' psychological quality and ability of verbal expression. Both of these qualities can be essential for students' further employment.

Furthermore, even though exam can be used as a way of measuring the ability of the student in universities, professors think that the forms of exams should be more comprehensive and objectively. Some even think that professors can allow students designs forms of exams themselves, students can learn how to effectively obtain knowledge. Some professors also suggest their courses can learn from American professors who allow students to use open resources in their final exams or doing projects in groups rather than submitting personal assignments. They want more students participate in the process of assessments so that students can understand what kind of knowledge they have to obtain, what kind they do not. This is a good way to foster their self-study abilities and critical thinking.

In terms of teaching methods, some professors suggest that few Chinese universities are change their classes, which means they are using small scale of classes for students. Some Chinese universities have already realized the disadvantages of limited teaching resources in higher education. In order to make sure the quality of each class, they divide one class section into several ones. This can give more chances to understand the class content since the population of each class becomes smaller students can have more possibility to be interactive in class.

There are some changes in Chinese higher education and it do need some improvements. Even though Chinese special social condition cannot ensure everyone the same chance of receiving a good quality of higher education, its responsibility to make sure every student to be interactive in class is necessary. It can raise students' learning interests by encouraging them using their own ways of learning. Many professors think interests are best teachers in their study. Professors can only give them some constructive ways of self-study.

According to the questionnaire, in terms of assessments, some professors suggest that if there are possibilities, professors should allow students design their ways of assessments or turn pure paper exams into the process of sharing study experience with each other. Some professors think they can give some content that are related with exams so that students can study themselves, and also, design more open questions for students. The questions and forms of exams can be designed by different professors, this can ensure the diversity and comprehensiveness of learning content. For some practical class, some suggest that they can let students to do case studies and do self-evaluation if it is possible.

Universities can use academic outstanding candidates as their professors and give them enough chance to have further learning in their majors. Furthermore, in terms of hiring new professors for universities, Chinese education is imitating American ones so that academic outstanding professors have more opportunities. Scholars Mohrmann, Geng, and Wang (2011) say the following about the changing faculty life in some universities or colleges in recent China:

Most universities attempted to enhance faculty quality and productivity by adopting new recruitment and promotion procedures. The hiring process looks more like the American system, with active faculty participation and with ability and achievement as the main hiring and firing criteria. Many top universities adopted an American-style tenure system, though only a few senior professors have tenure while all others work under annual or three-year contracts. Faculty members were no longer confined to one institution for their entire careers but actual faculty mobility remains negligible. These reforms, in short, changed the principles governing the faculty personnel system, though not necessarily the practices (p.88).

This kind of changes can respect the diversity of academics of professors. It can more chances to some good professors. Once professors get their tenure in universities, they can focus on the teaching and researches. For those who have not yet get their tenures, they feel pressure and they will work hard in their fields. This is a good way to conserve high quality professors for Chinese higher education. Also, some professors are not be confined in a certain institution, they can have more choice in their careers. This means many professors can work at different places and can be more experienced in higher education. These veterans know what kind of academic environment they prefer. Therefore, these experienced professors can have more chance in their fields.

On the other hand, hiring veterans in teaching for the higher education is a good idea. It can reduce the cost of hiring new good teachers. In America, many retired professors can still be re-hired in universities. They have a lot of teaching experience than many others, and they can give some suggestions for the new professors when they are facing troubles in teaching and dealing with the relationships with students. They witnessed a variety of students with different educational backgrounds. These people know how to lead students in right ways of learning, and how to cultivate their advantages. They know how to improve the system because they have already witnessed the shortages of the education. They have more easy relationship with students than new teachers.

Teaching reform is key to improve the quality of higher education. Teaching methods should be based on the needs of students and also concern about the practical situation of the employment. Teaching content should be more practical rather than just delivering knowledge and encouragement for the student is necessary. The professor and the student should be an interactive relationship and can learn from each. Establishing sound personality can benefit students as well as teaching them useful learning methods.

In terms of management in higher educational institutions, the government should give professors more academic freedom in higher education and make education more liberal. Liberal education should be based on the professors' liberal choice of teaching. Only in this way, professors can have less pressure, can focus on improving the quality of teaching, and therefore, can truly think about the needs of students. Government and the administrative department should be gentler to universities or colleges, and professors by considering their special conditions and needs in teaching. Also, the diversity in assessments is good to improve the qualities of education in China, because everyone is unique. Finally, the concept of blindly pursuit for the higher degree in some careers should be changed. It will be good for the distribution of human resources.

Unbalanced development in education in different places is another issue. This can stifle talents which will not be good for the development for the society. In order to give more opportunities to improve the teaching in universities or colleges, the government or the educational department can give more financial support so that higher education institutions can be equipped with advanced facilities which can ensure students enjoy good study environments. This can narrow the gap in education in different places. Once these education resources can be allocated properly, this issue can be slowly resolved.

In the applicability of higher education in jobs, Chinese higher education classes should make them more applicable for students in jobs. According to the study by Riley (1982), it suggests that American higher educational institutions are fulfilling their social responsibility for providing the necessary technical training to enable individuals to perform adequately in their jobs; it also suggests that the apparent match between the college major and job requirements is cost effective for firms in that training costs will be held down by employing college graduates;

relevance of college major in jobs is closely linked to specialized college majors; an individual's job performance is closely tied to college training as well as on-the-job training; The college training should be a necessary prerequisite for on-the-job training (Riley, 1982, p. 173). Chinese higher education majors should think more about the needs for the society. At the same time, it should realize that some majors should be specialized to students for their employment purpose. When applying jobs, some special skills can be used if they have already instructed to students early. Once graduates have obtained these essential advantages, employers like to hire them for they help them to save the costs.

### **Implications and Conclusions.**

The exam system is still the essential part of Chinese higher education for it can help select elites for the society. It does need some improvements. Many professors agree that exam system cannot be removed from Chinese higher education, but its form should be improved and diverse. Chinese large population contributes to its competitive society; because of limited teaching resources, Chinese higher education need resources allocation to make sure that excellent students can get more opportunities. There is no other way can effectively measure learning abilities of students than the exam; the exam in a large population country can be critical, higher education should make full use of its advantages and try to use multi-faced forms to display students' strength in studies. Some professors also suggest that assessment can allow students' participation. Professors can only review contents and forms of assessments for its objectiveness and comprehensiveness. When the exam system can fully display its advantages in selecting elites in higher education for the society, it can positively contribute to the development of the reform of higher education in China.

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## **Appendices**

**Note:**

The Institutional Review Board of the University of Wisconsin-Platteville approved the action research project that is the subject of the study. A copy of the document is available upon request from the author of this study.

**Appendix Item A**  
**The English version of the questionnaire**  
**A Survey of Chinese Professors on Undergraduate Curriculum**

**A. Background information**

1. Your Survey Number
2. Date of Birth
3. Gender Male/Female (circle one)
4. Years of Teaching Experience at the university level
5. Your Teaching Rank
- Your Level of Education (circle one) BS/BA          Masters          PhD/EdD
6. Courses you currently teach
7. Your undergraduate major
8. Your parents' role in your education

**B. Curriculum Content**

9. Which of the following is most true for you? (circle one)
- a. Curriculum in my teaching area has remained the same for many years
  - b. Curriculum in my teaching area has changed in the past ten years
  - c. Curriculum in my teaching area is expected to change in the future.

Explain your answer (for example English language area has increasing emphasis on communicative competence)

10. How do you see curriculum content in your teaching area in terms of preparing students for Ministry of Education tests?

11. How do you see curriculum content in your teaching area in terms of preparing students for exams required by employers?

12. What percentage does your final exam count toward the grade in courses you teach?

Circle one

100%      76-99 percent      75 percent      50-74 percent      Less than 50 percent

## **C. Teaching**

13. How much time do you spend preparing for teaching each week? (circle one)

5-10 hours

11-19 hours

20 or more hours

14. What are your typical homework assignments each week?

15. How much of your time each week is spent on reviewing homework? (circle one)

5-10 hours

11-19 hours

20 or more hours

16. What teaching techniques do you use? Circle each one you use during a term

Lecture

Reading Assignments

Use of Power Points

Multi-Media including videos

Writing Assignments (including laboratory reports)

Laboratory work

Small group work

Role-Playing

Computer (including data processing)

Individual appointments with students

Student Projects

Student Presentations

Student Speeches

Textbook exercises

Textbook activities

Other (explains)

17. Which of the teaching techniques above is most used by you?

## **E. Equality**

18. How can student be equally treated in exam?

19. Tell me how equal opportunities for students to study are obtained?

20. How do you show the care for the disabilities?

21. After graduating from the university, many students did not feel good to find a job which accords with their major. What is the problem of this kind of situation? In other words, do you think it is important to choose a practical major rather than depending on your own interests? (Be specific)

22. What do you think of the teaching methods used in your class? What do you use? What would you like to use?

## **F. Professor - Centered System**

23. What do you think of the professor-centered education system? Does that mean professor must decide everything?

24. Professors are important roles in the class. How do they lead and encourage students to learn? How do professors to make sure their students get good grades and have a better understanding to the content?

25. Do you think professor need to responsible for the student's academic success? How responsible is the student for academic success?

26. Is there an equal relationship between professors and students? Why or Why not?

27. What qualities do you think is the most important that decides that someone be a good professors? In other words, how do you define a good professors? (Be specific)

28. In nowadays, the situation of the employment in China become very competitive. How do professors in the universities help their students to get a better future? (Hint: *Social relationship is very important elements for those people who want to find a good job. And professors will be their first social resources which can help them. . You can think this way and unfold your ideas about this question.*)

## **G. Exam-Oriented Education**

29. How does teacher use exam to measure students' learning abilities?

Why exam is so important? Does exam is the only effective way to measure students?

30, Chinese undergraduate education is kind of exam-oriented education system. How do you view it? What do you benefit from it?

31. However, this kind of education is deeply rooted in the ideology of Chinese culture. How do you evaluate it? What is its advantages and disadvantages?

32. The, exam is viewed as a fair way to assess the quality of the students in the study. Do you think it can ensure the real ability of every students?

33. If the exam system needs to be revised, what would you suggest?

34. The exam-oriented education drive many parents in view of blindly pursuing high grades which means, grade-oriented education; in other words, grades will decide everything. Lower grades students will get less chance than higher grades students. What do you think of this?

35. The exam in China is everywhere even though you graduate from the university, you still need to prepare for your exams when you need to apply a job.

There are many helps in Chinese society to help people with these exams.

You teach students in the major? How well are students prepared for the employment in your major area?

## Appendix Item B

### Chinese version of the questionnaire

关于中国大学教授对本科课程安排的调查表

#### A. 背景信息

1. 调查号
2. 生日
3. 性别
4. 在大学任职期限
5. 您的职称  
您的学历：（选一）本科/ 硕士/ 博士
6. 目前您所教授课程
7. 您的本科专业
8. 您父母对您教育的影响

#### B. 课程内容

9. 以下三个选项中，哪一个最符合您的实际情况？（选一）
  - A. 您所教授的课程多年来总是一成不变的
  - B. 你所教授的课程在过去十年中，已经有些变化了
  - C. 您希望在今后的教学中，课程会有所变化

请解释一下您的回答（例如英语语言教学方面已经在逐渐变化了，因为现在对语言交际能力更为重视）

10. 就为学生准备国家教育部所组织的大型考试的方面来说，您怎么看待您的教学内容？

11. 对于学生今后就业这一方面，您怎么看待您的教学内容所带来的效果？

12. 在您所教的课程中，期末考试所占总分的比例通常为多少

A. 100% B. 76%-99% C. 75% D. 50%-74% E 小于 50%

### C. 教学

13. 您每周备课需要多长时间？（选一）

5-10 小时

11-19 小时

大于 20 小时

14. 您每周给学生布置的任务一般是什么类型的？

15. 您每周花多少时间批阅学生作业？（选一）

5-10 小时

11-19 小时

大于 20 小时

16. 您一般采用什么样的教学方法？请在以下选项内选择，可以多选：

讲课

阅读

采用 PPT

多媒体教学法包括用播放短片的方式

写作（实验报告）

实验

小组任务

角色扮演

计算机（数据处理）

单独和学生讨论

学生的个人设计

学生的个人演讲

学生口头报告

课本课后练习

其它

17. 以上这些哪些你采用的最多？为什么？

#### **D 平等**

18. 您怎么保证在考试中学生是平等的？

19. 您是如何给学生提供平等学习的机会的？

20. 您是怎么帮助哪些需要特殊帮助的学生的？（比如哪些行动不便的学生）

21. 很多学生毕了业以后，就感觉发现他们的专业并不利于他们的求职。您认为是什么造成这一现象的？换句话说，您认为选择一个实用性更强的专业好，还是应该选择学生自己喜欢的专业呢？（请详述）

22. 您喜欢采用什么样的教学方式？您认为哪一种刚最好？

#### **F. 以教授为中心的教学模式**

23. 你怎么看待以教授为中心的教学模式的？是不是这就意味着，教授能够决定一切？

24. 教授在教学中扮演着很重要的角色。那么教授是怎么鼓励学生学习的？教授又应该怎样保证学生获得高分并且听懂每堂课呢？

25. 学生和教授的关系是平等么？为什么是或不是？

26. 您认为想要当一名合格的教授应该具备哪些素质和条件？换句话说，您怎么定义好教授？（请详述）

27. 目前，就业的形势越来越严峻，那么作为老师应该如何帮助学生获得一个美好的未来呢？（比如说一些社会关系，教授也可以看做是社会关系的一种。您可以从这一点来谈。）

## **G. 以考试为主导的教育体制**

28. 教授是怎么采用考试的方式来衡量学生的学习能力的？为什么考试很重要？

29. 那么考试只是唯一有效检测学生学习状况的方式么？

30. 中国的本科教育还是主要以考试为主来推动的。您是怎么看待这个问题的？您能从中收获些什么？

31. 您对此的评价是什么？利弊有哪些？

32. 考试被看做是一种很公平的检测方式。您认为考试真的能够检测出学生的真实水平么？

33. 如果考试模式能够有所改变，您有哪些建议？

34. 以考试为主导的教育体制让学生和家长盲目的追求高分，这就引发出了分数来主导一切的现象。高分者能够获得更多的机会，而低分者就获得更少的机会。您是怎么看待这个问题的？

35. 考试在中国随处可见，即使是学生毕业了也同样面临各种考试，比如公务员考试，比如公司的面试考试。那么就这个问题，您是怎么看待的？如果您的学生以后从事和您所教专业相关的工作，您一般会怎么建议他们或者给予怎么样的帮助呢？

