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Excellence through General Education: The Status of General Education Reform in Chinese Universities

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Excellence through General Education:

The Status of General Education Reform in Chinese Universities

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by

Xuehong Liao

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Excellence through General Education:

The Status of General Education Reform in Chinese Universities

by

Xuehong Liao

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2012

Professor John N. Hawkins, Co-Chair

Professor Val D. Rust, Co-Chair

In this dissertation, I explore the reasons behind general education reform in Chinese universities from a global and local perspective; I look at the status of general education in two top-tier universities, and, examining faculty members' participation in general education policy development and their experiences with general education practice on their campuses, I try to understand the difficulties of implementing general education in the Chinese university context. Theoretical frameworks include theories of globalization and the interaction of the global and the local, institutional theories from Meyer et al., and Weick's organizational theory of viewing an organization as a loosely coupled system. This study adopts a qualitative case study approach, and two top-tier Chinese universities were selected as cases. For each university, four to five administrators were interviewed to understand the university's general education reform process and its current status. Three to four faculty members from the Chinese departments and

chemistry departments were also interviewed in order to understand faculty members' participation and experience in the university's general education reform.

The findings include the following: General education reform in top-tier Chinese universities is part of these universities' response to changing local and global contexts, and is tied to the universities' need to broaden undergraduate curriculum and the goal of becoming world-class universities. The reform at both universities was a top-down initiative and most faculty members did not participate in the policy making and implementation process. Because of the lack of involvement in policy making and implementation, faculty members lack a shared view with the university administration sector as to what general education is trying to accomplish. Faculty members' participation in general education practice is mainly reflected in teaching general education courses. Because of the current faculty promotion criteria and the tradition of emphasizing one's specialty, faculty members usually are not interested in teaching general education courses unless they are really passionate about general education.

This study offers a more comprehensive perspective for looking at the larger context of general education reform in Chinese universities and helps to understand connections with the larger national and global background. It offers its reader a more inclusive understanding of how different shareholders on campus have participated and experienced the reform as well as some of the barriers that have hindered general education practice in the two institutions. The study presents valuable experiences to other Chinese universities that are trying to pursue general education reform. Since an increasing number of Chinese students are studying for graduate degrees in other countries, this study also introduces readers from English-speaking countries to the Chinese university's system of undergraduate education, its recent reform, and how it is connected to the larger global higher education system.

The dissertation of Xuehong Liao is approved.

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University of California, Los Angeles

2012

To my late father, Yunxi Liao, and my mother, Xiwen Liu,

For giving me life and raising me in Love;

To my husband, Shu Guan, who has been encouraging me and supporting me

In every possible way since the day we met;

To my daughter, Angelique Guan, who has been the inspiration of my life and made me want

To be a better woman each day!

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAC&U	Association of American Colleges & Universities
ECNU	East China Normal University
GE	General Education
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IIE	Institute of International Education
IRB	The Institutional Research Board (IRB)
MOE	Ministry of Education
PKU	Peking University
UCLA	The University of California, Los Angeles

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Xuehong (Cathy) Liao at UCLA

September 10, 2012

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Research Background

In the past ten years, general education, a creation of the American university (Thomas, 1962), has attracted much attention among Chinese universities. Many Chinese institutions of higher education have begun to discuss and explore their own general education (GE) practices. Articles and discussions about the concept, and the different models of GE practice at both Chinese and foreign institutions, are abundant in both academia as well as the general media. Nationwide forums on the subject have drawn the attention of scholars and administrators, as well as of college students. Some scholars, for instance Yang Gan, have become academic celebrities because of their arguments in favor of general education. It is no exaggeration that in the past decade, general education has been placed in the spotlight on the stage of China's higher education.

Yet, as widely discussed as the notion of GE has been, real changes that have taken place related to it could easily be called into question. Though innumerable news articles, papers, and books have been published on the subject championing the adoption of GE practice at the undergraduate level, though there are over 2000 regular institutions of higher education in China (Ministry of Education, 2011), when the practice of GE is discussed, only a handful of universities' names are regularly mentioned. These few are top-tier universities such as Peking University, Tsinghua University, Fudan University, Zhejiang University, and Sun Yat-sen University (e.g., see Zhao, 2008; Yu, 2003; Li, Yang, & Sun, 2001). Often, these programs lack an overall design, and GE courses are simple transformations of discipline courses (Ji, 2007; Li,

Yang, & Sun, 2001). And even within the few institutions well regarded for their GE practice, several of the administrators and professors I interviewed for my preliminary research expressed their real concern about the state and future direction of general education.

It has been more than ten years since some Chinese universities started their latest exploration of GE, yet the future seems unpredictable. It is, therefore, important that we step back and ask a few critical questions: Why did Chinese universities start to adopt GE practices around the turn of this century? What is the status of general education in Chinese universities after more than ten years of reform? How do major shareholders of Chinese universities view general education practices at their institutions? Like many other calls for change in present-day China, will the emphasis on general education fade away as once the overflowing attention of the media and academia on the subject subsides? Or will the concept become an integral part of Chinese universities in the future, as it is now part of American universities? And does this mean that Chinese universities are in the process of being Americanized in this increasingly globalized world, dominated (at least many would so argue) by the U.S.? My dissertation research starts with these intriguing questions.

1.2. Problem Statement

Foreign influences on education have played an important role in the educational reform of many countries, and the possibility of drawing on foreign experience in order to perfect one's own system has always been one focus of educational reform movements. Within the context of economic globalization, development of technological, economic and cultural exchange, as well as increasing global competition, such influences become even more obvious. In the past two decades, many Chinese scholars and practitioners see the potential of general education as an

important way to reform China's highly specialized postsecondary education system and as a way to better prepare students for life after a university education. There have been many discussions and publications about how general education is conceptualized and practiced in American universities, especially private universities such as Harvard, Yale, and Columbia (e.g., see Zhao, 2011; Lu, 2007; Fan, 2006). Yet there seems to be a huge gap between discussions and their implementation (Zhao, 2011; Wang, 2005; Qian, & Huang, 2005). There are several issues that are worthy of exploration.

First, in both the English and Chinese literature, there has been little exploration of how general education reform in Chinese universities is connected with changes that have been taking place in the Chinese, and worldwide higher education systems. Many scholars see foreign influence on GE reform in China, but how this happened has not been documented, nor how GE is related to other higher educational changes taking place within the national and global context. In the context of China, general education reform is often viewed only as part of curriculum change. But, according to Mohrman (2003, p. 39), "One of the overarching principles in Chinese reform efforts is comprehensiveness." With an existing system that is still very centralized, any reform at the institutional level cannot escape its connection with the larger system's restructuring. Therefore, one has to ask: in what contexts were discussions about GE reform in Chinese universities taking place? How was GE reform related to broad reform in other areas beyond curriculum reform (Mohrman, 2003)? A review of the overall context may help one understand the connection to other reforms taking place in Chinese higher education and to see some of the barriers this reform is facing.

Second, despite heated discussions about general education practice among educators and scholars, only a few top-tier universities have adopted major changes at the undergraduate level.

Most institutions of higher education are still at the stage of "wait and see" (Feng, 2007; Xu, 2007). Among the institutions that have taken action, I conducted preliminary research in the summer of 2008 at the Universities of Peking, Tsing-hua, Fudan, East China Normal, and Sun Yat-sen. When administrators and professors of education were asked about GE practice at their institutions, though they claimed either that their institutions view it very seriously or that they, themselves, think of it as very important, they were not so optimistic about its implementation. Why, then, despite the interest in GE practice among Chinese educators and the general media, has the implementation not presented a promising picture? What are the barriers to implementation of GE reform in Chinese universities? Answers to these questions will propel the further development of general education in China.

Third, despite an increasing interest in general education, it is surprising that so little empirical research has been conducted, especially on faculty members' experiences. Using general education as the key word in paper title, key words, and abstract, Fan (2007) conducted a statistic analysis of published papers in the National Knowledge Infrastructure, one of the biggest academic data bases known as CNKI in China, and concluded that though there is an increase in the number of publications related to general education, these publications focus on the introduction of GE in Hong Kong and Taiwan and developed countries, and these are mainly conceptual and theoretical analyses. Articles about general education in China mainly make curriculum comparisons between Chinese and foreign universities, and the analysis of the importance of general education; but GE curriculum development and implementation research is lacking.

Its faculty is one of the key shareholders on a university's campus. The faculty's attitudes and participation in educational reform are often decisive determinants of whether these

initiatives will be successfully implemented. As the study of Meacham and Ludwig (2001) concerning faculty development of general education courses shows, a new GE curriculum involves not merely changing course content; it is also about changing the faculty understanding of students and the teaching context. They point out that faculty members are the most enduring and valuable resource any institution has. When discussing changes in general education in the U.S. higher education context, Arnold and Civian (1997) also argue that the consequences for faculty can be significant: symbolically, there are philosophical and political implications of what is or is not included in a general education program, and declaring what all students must know reveals much about what an institution collectively thinks about the world; pragmatically, changes in GE curricular requirements can lead to shifts in the distribution of students among departments, have severe consequences for an institution's internal faculty labor market, and can affect the everyday working life of the faculty. In the context of Chinese higher education, there have been many individual faculty members who have written about their understanding, expectations, and participation in GE reform, but those who write are often champions for the reform. Studies are lacking that examine the attitudes of faculty members toward general education and their experience with how GE is practiced in their own institutions. Studies that examine faculty's participation, initiation, implementation, practice, and evaluation of general education on campus can contribute to advancing GE reform at a deeper level.

1.3. Purpose of the Study, Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore the reasons behind general education reform in Chinese universities from both a local and a global perspective, to examine the status of GE in two top-tier universities, and, through examining faculty members' participation in GE policy

development and their experience with the practice of GE on their campuses, to understand the difficulties of implementing general education at Chinese universities. My research questions are:

1. What has caused Chinese top-tier universities to engage in general education reform?
2. How have two of the top-tier Chinese universities implemented general education practices? In what ways do these Chinese universities rely on foreign experience in terms of their reform?
3. Did faculty members at the two Chinese universities participate in initiating and implementing these reform policies?
4. How do faculty members at these two Chinese universities view general education and what has been their experience with general education practices in their institutions?

1.4. Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative case study approach. To answer my first question, I review literature related to the global context of higher education, general education development and its historical trends, as well as the Chinese higher education system and its recent reforms. The purpose is to explore the national and global contexts of GE reform in China. To answer my last three questions, I used two top-tier Chinese universities as cases to use in conducting a qualitative multiple case study. Within each case, administrators and faculty members from the departments of Chinese and of chemistry were interviewed. The purpose was to explore the status of general education at these universities and the faculty's participation and experience with the process.

1.5. Theoretical Framework

Institutional theories and theories of globalization have influenced the overall design of this study.

1.5.1. Institutional Theories

Viewing higher education as an institution offers a unique framework for examining the background of GE reform. According to Meyer, Ramirez, Frank, and Schofer (2006, p. 3), "Institutional views stress the dependence of local social organization on wider environmental meanings, definitions, rules, and models," and "in institutional thinking, environments constitute local situations—establishing and defining their core entities, purposes, and relations." They argue that looking at higher education from an institutional perspective supports the recognition that local higher-educational arrangements are heavily dependent on broader institutions, and that this perspective directs one's attention to the cultural scripts and organizational rules that are built into wider national and world environments that establish the main features of local situations (Meyer et al., 2006).

The concept of general education originated at Western universities. Adopting an institutional perspective on GE reform at Chinese universities, requires one to look at the larger national and international context and to explore how the larger context of changes in higher education, both nationally and globally, have influenced general education reform in China.

Institutional theory indicates that there is often a gap between a legitimated institutional model and its immediate enactment, and it is often more important to embody the exogenous model than it is to adapt to local possibilities and demands (Meyer et al., 2006). Such a situation is often referred to as "loose coupling" or "decoupling" (Meyer et al., 2006; Weick, 1976). As

Meyer et al. point out: universities must observe proper standards formally, whether or not they can be maintained in practice. This perspective resonates with some organizational theories that argue that organizations, such as schools in an educational system, are not rational organizations (Weick, 1976; Cohen, March, & Olsen, 1972). Instead of treating schools and universities as rationally coordinated wholes, the concept of loosely coupled systems views these educational institutions as a series of stable subassemblies that are responsive to each other yet separate and independent. In the case of educational reform, this view helps us to see the potential limitations of an administrator's ability to shape the instructional process. In the particular case of GE reform on university campuses, the concept of loose coupling systems is useful to conceptualize the reform from both the administrators' and the faculty's perspectives in a parallel fashion without assuming that intended reform objectives and practices will necessarily lead to expected changes in the daily practices of the faculty. Together, institutional theory and the concept of loose coupling, offer a unique perspective for considering general education reform in Chinese universities.

1.5.2. The Dynamics of Global and Local Perspectives

In recent years, globalization has become an important concept in social science research. Some view globalization as a single path, resulting from converging forces that impose on local, regional, and national communities, but others see it as a force for recovering locality, regionalism, and the nation as meaningful and effective sites of social, economical, and political inventiveness (Newson, 1998). The expansion of a global market, the development of technology, especially communication technology, the flow of people and information, and other characteristics of globalization, have had some fundamental influence in higher education. The

university has made a connection with producing advanced knowledge and cultivating talents in a knowledge-based economy, and thus it has increased its status in a more and more globalized world. At the same time, the university has been challenged by decreasing public funding, and by increasing marketization and global competitiveness. The migration of people and ideas also requires the university to be aware of the social, cultural, and political challenges caused by this movement. All this demands that the university re-examine its educational aims.

Universities are also national institutions with their own traditions and cultures. Therefore, examining the reforms that have been adopted by universities, it is important to examine both the local and global contexts, and theories of globalization offer an appropriate framework.

1.6. Significance of the Study

This study will offer a more comprehensive perspective on the broad context of general education reform in Chinese universities, in order to understand this reform's connections with the larger global and national background. The study will offer a more inclusive understanding of how different shareholders on campuses, both administrators and faculty, have participated and experienced this reform. This study will help in understanding some of the barriers that have hindered GE practices in the two institutions. This study should also be valuable to other Chinese universities trying to pursue GE reform. Since an increasing number of Chinese students are studying for graduate degrees in other countries, this study can also help scholars outside China to understand more about Chinese universities' undergraduate education.

1.7. Chapter Arrangement

In chapter 2, in order to set the global context of GE reform in China, I will look at the development of general education in American universities. In chapter 3, I examine the Chinese higher education system and its recent reforms to set up the national context. From a perspective of the global and local interplay, I explore why, since the turn of the new century, GE reform has become the focus of top-tier Chinese universities. In chapter 4, I lay out the research design for the two qualitative case studies. In chapter 5 and chapter 6, I analyze the data from the two institutions as two separated cases and conclude with a comparative discussion in chapter 7.

Chapter 2

Globalization, Higher Education Reform and the Context of General Education

Both institutional and globalization theories emphasize global influence on local events. Institutional theory stresses the dependence of local organization on wider environments (Meyer et al., 2006), and globalization theories emphasize the interaction between global and local events. With these theoretical perspectives in mind, it is important to examine the global and national context of Chinese universities in order to explore what has driven GE reform at some top-tier universities. The concept of a general education originated at American universities. Throughout its development, how it was defined and expressed in curriculum formats has been changing ever since the idea first appeared. To understand what general education is, it is important to look at its development in its own context – the American universities. In this chapter, I examine the characteristics of globalization and explore its effects on higher education. I then turn to explore general education, examining its historical trends and current status; in the context of globalization I argue that universities need to embrace a GE component. By the end of the chapter, I will answer part of my first research question, by presenting the external influences that have driven GE reform in China.

2.1 Why Look at the Global Context?

The recent attention to general education reform is not limited to the Chinese higher education context and this is not accidental. For example, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) has worked intensively on the issue of GE reform since the early 1980s (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2012a). More recently, in 2005, with the

support of the Henry Luce Foundation, AAC&U launched a project called *General Education for Global Learning*. This is a network for curriculum and faculty development with the goal of exploring the best theory and practice of GE reform in the context of "a world of global change and interdependence" (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2012b). Another related project initiated by AAC&U is *Liberal Education and America's Promise*, and it is "a national advocacy, campus action, and research initiative that champions the importance of a twenty-first century liberal education—for individuals and for a nation dependent on economic creativity and democratic vitality" (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2012c). These activities reflect a collective effort to explore the scope of general education in the context of a new century characterized by globalization.

AAC&U's emphasis on general education is not unique. In 2007, after a comprehensive curricular review, Harvard released its *Report of the Task Force on General Education*, which outlined its new GE program in response to the changes of the twenty-first century (Harvard University, 2007). More recently, an expert group of European universities released a *Manifesto, Empowering European Universities,* and in part of the recommendation for European universities to provide the world's best possible education and research, the Manifesto suggests that "The development of general education in the introductory part of renovated curricula has the potential to enhance cultural awareness and democratic citizenship among students" (Expert Group on European Universities, 2010, p. 10). In 2001, the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) (University of California, Los Angeles, 2009), after a few years' pilot project, launched a new GE curriculum with an emphasis on interdisciplinary engagement. These activities, of course, are part of the university's regular reflection on its curriculum, especially in welcoming the new century, yet the emphases of these programs—whether it is Harvard's aim to connect

student's liberal education to life beyond college (Harvard University, 2007), or European universities' goal to enhance cultural awareness, or UCLA's expectation of laying interdisciplinary foundations—also reflect the need for readjusting GE programs in a changing global context. According to a national survey by AAC&U published in 2001, 57% of the institutions in the sample were conducting a formal review of their GE program, and the percentage of research universities was even higher and reached 68% (Ratcliff, Johnson, La Nasa, & Gaff, 2001). If one also considers the attention paid to GE reform in Taiwan for the past three decades (Huang, 2006), in order to identify the factors that have attracted the universities' recent attention to GE reform, not only in the U.S., but in many other parts of the world, it is necessary to look at the global context.

2.2 Globalization and Its Characteristics

2.2.1 Globalization

Globalization has no doubt become an important concept in social science research. Neubauer points out that globalization has changed "how people live, work, identify and aggregate, communicate and engage—locally, nationally, internationally, globally, and how they are educated" ((2007, p. 29). Globalization is also a highly contested term (Rizvi, 2007, p. 72). Scholars cannot agree on the origin of the term. Some find the roots of the term in the 1960s, in Marshall McLuhan's idea of a "global village" (Watson, 2004); others see it as only the most recent cycle of the many globalizations that human society has experienced and refer to the "contemporary globalization" (Neubauer, 2007; Coatsworth, 2004; Hopkins, 2002). Depending on the disciplinary lens one wears, different analysts have come up with distinct explanations of what globalization is and what forces produce it. For example, economists tend to focus on

material growth and the technological contributions; political scientists focus on the growing political influence of economic actors; and cultural analysts and anthropologists emphasize the role of cultural influences (Stromquist, 2002).

It is not the intention of this study to get involved in the theoretical debate about what globalization is and its origins, but it is helpful to look at how it has been captured and defined in our contemporary time, especially when it is seen as different, if not totally new, from other historical periods. David Held (quoted in Morrows & Torres, 2000, p. 29) defines globalization as "the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa." Such a descriptive definition captures some aspects of the phenomenon without exploring the forces behind it. Stromquist (2002) summarizes two complementary dynamics of globalization: "economic globalization through a neoliberal development model that emphasizes the market and a technological revolution that has increased the ubiquity and speed of production and information technologies" (p. 6). This perspective captures two important aspects of contemporary globalization: the emphasis on a global market and economy, and the development of new technology, both contributing to global interconnectivity and interdependence. And transnational corporations as well as the mass media become important actors in a globalization captured by this perspective. Torres and Rhoads (2006) view globalization as having "many manifestations that interact simultaneously in a fairly convoluted fashion" (p. 8). Instead of using one notion of globalization, they present five possible forms: *globalization from above*, which centers on the economic globalization and is framed by the ideology of neoliberalism; *globalization from below,* which is manifest in individual and social movements against the first type of globalization with the motto of *no globalization without representation;* globalization

represented by the movement and exchange of people and ideas and the subsequent influence on culture; globalization of human rights that emerges from increased international integration and places more emphasis on rights than on markets; and the globalization of the international war against terrorism (Torres & Rhoads, 2006). *Globalization from below* captures the different dimensions of globalization and offers alternatives to the popular belief in converging forces brought about by economic globalization; but on the other hand, the concept is so inclusive and general that it makes globalization to be anything that anyone wants it to be.

Though it is difficult to find one definition to cover the complicated concept of globalization, it is possible to look at scholars' different attitudes on what changes globalization can bring about in our life. Most advocates of the economic version of globalization see it as a single path of converging forces imposing itself on local, regional, and national communities (Newson, 1998). Within this context, because of the converging force of globalization, the world we are living in experiences a process of increasing homogeneity. Others think differently. For example, Davies and Guppy point out, "globalizing forces also provoke reactions from movements seeking increased local control" (1997, p. 458). Therefore, the opposite argument can be made: rather than extinguishing local differences, globalization becomes a force for recovering locality, regionalism, and the nation as meaningful and effective sites of social, cultural, political, and economic inventiveness (Newson, 1998). Perhaps Robertson's term "glocalization" (Robertson, 1995) expresses these processes best: globalization –in the broadest sense– the compression of the world, is a process that has increasingly involved the creation and the incorporation of locality, and such a process itself, in turn, largely shapes the compression of the world as a whole.

Whether globalization is viewed as a new phenomenon or an old one with new characteristics, whether we look just at the phenomenon itself or the forces behind it, and whether we believe in

its strong convergent force or emphasize local powers, globalization at least reminds us that local happenings are not isolated and that there might be a convergent force that influences the phenomenon we are examining. Therefore, it is important to explore how globalization has influenced the higher education sector in general and undergraduate education specifically, and the relationship of these factors to general education.

2.2.2 Development of ICT and Challenges to the Higher Education Sector

Several characteristics of globalization force the university to reexamine what its educational aims are. The roles of technology in contributing to a globalized world— especially information and communication technologies (ICT) — have been well recognized. Some scholars even argue that globalization is in part the product of the new global media and ICT, which instantaneously connect people, organization, and systems across distance (Suárez-Orozco & Qin-Hilliard, 2004). In contrast with previous times, today cell phones and the Internet connect people from all over the world. According to a 2010 report by the International Telecommunication Union (The International Telecommunication Union, 2010), almost all central governments around the world have a web presence and provide at least basic information to their citizens; eight-six percent of the world's population is covered by a mobile cellular network; by 2009, 1.7 billion people—or 26% of the world population—were online and 25 % of households had access to the Internet. By the end of March, 2012, the eight-year-old social networking company Facebook, has over 901 million active users from all over the world (Facebook, 2012); bear in mind that people in mainland China—the biggest county of the world in terms of population—cannot access Facebook. And these numbers are increasing on a daily base. These new technologies not only

influence how we interact with people, but also influence ways we do business with each other, and they have created opportunities as well as problems that did not exist before.

With the rapid development of technology, especially ICT, the connection made between the university and advanced knowledge has enhanced the importance of higher education's role both in the life of an individual and the development of society. Many believe that our human society has entered a new stage of history—a knowledge society, where advanced skills and sophisticated knowledge are heavily weighted in terms of the individual's and our society's overall development (Huang, 2006; Edquist & Riddell, 2000). Thus education, especially at the postsecondary level, is seen as an important means to facilitate the global competitiveness and overall development of both individuals and nation states. Universities are not only expected to cultivate graduates with knowledge and creativity, but also to conduct advanced research that will bring innovation to production and other fields of our social life.

In the area of education, the development of ICT has broadened both the ways that knowledge is spread and our access to that knowledge. We now have many different kinds of online programs available, both academic and non-academic. People can learn various skills through You Tube video clips; you see a three-year old holding an iPad and playing games designed with educational purpose; and iTunes U—a free Apple application geared to share educational resources—has moved many university classes to the Internet. Personal computers, Kindle and other electronic devices have changed many people's reading habits. While Google is still trying to add as many books as possible into its online digital library, one of its rivals, the Digital Public Library of America (The Digital Public Library of America, 2012), has already claimed that it will be up and running by April 2013, and its goal is to "make the cultural and scientific heritage of humanity available, free of charge, to all." With broadened access to

knowledge and information, the question for those of us in the universities is: if there are other ways to access knowledge and skills, what do universities have to offer to the individual and to society? In terms of curriculum content, what should the university teach?

Last but not least, the speed with which information and technology is updated is overwhelming. According to a popular You Tube video clip, "Did You Know[1]," nowadays a week's worth of the New York Times contains more information than a person was likely to come across in the 18th century in a lifetime, and the amount of new technical information is doubling in every two years. This is to say, it is not even possible for universities to match the speed of information development and the knowledge load, not to mention whether or not universities are able to teach the most recent knowledge and technology. These issues, again, point to the purpose of a university education: Is there something fundamental to humankind and human society development that the university should offer and teach? With the rapid development of technology and the explosion of information and knowledge, what role can and should universities play in students' learning experiences? Since technology has broadened the way knowledge is transferred to the individual and because it is not possible for a university to teach everything, what should the university teach? If it is to teach knowledge, what types of knowledge? If it is not to teach knowledge, then what? These are important issues that the university needs to ponder.

2.2.3 The Expansion of the Global Market and Challenges to Higher Education

[1] *Did You Know* is a series of PowerPoint presentations; the first one was originally prepared for a faculty meeting at Arapahoe High School in Centennial, Colorado in 2006. In the following few years, a series of presentations were launched on the Internet and has been viewed by over 20 million people since then. The video clip was retrieved on March 19th, 2012 from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ljbI-363A2Q.

A major feature of the current trend toward globalization is the emphasis on a global free market, which many believe is a constructed effort led by a neo-liberal vision (Torres, 2003; Kellner, 2002; Stromquist, 2002; Stromquist & Monkman, 2000). Neo-liberalism is viewed as "an economic doctrine that sees the market as the most effective way of determining production and satisfying people's needs" (Stromquist, 2002, p. 25). As Stromquist points out, the discourse of neo-liberalism calls for a less interventionist state in economic and social arenas, and it proposes such measures as deregulation, decentralization, and privatization, behind which is the principle of market control. Education in such a view is increasingly seen as a private good, providing benefits to the individual consumer (Rizvi, 2007) and it is also given a key role for the attainment of social mobility under the assumption that "the market does not discriminate and that the merit of individuals will naturally come to the surface, enabling the best and brightest to be recognized" (Stromquist, 2002, p. 28).

The emphasis on the market, especially the neoliberals' strong belief in the efficiency of the market, has profound influences on the education sector. Apple (2000) points out that, for neoliberals "there is one form of rationality more powerful than any other: economic rationality. Efficiency and an 'ethic' of cost-benefit analysis are the dominant norms." (p. 60). Public institutions such as schools are viewed as "black holes" into which money is poured and then seemingly disappears (Apple, 2000). The suggestion is, to bring to bear the effect of market competition, in order to improve the efficiency of public institutions. Specific solutions include adding competition in the education market through privatization (Apple, 2000; Stromquist, 2002) and holding public institutions accountable through measures such as standardized curriculum and testing, and establishing quality assurance systems (Mok, 2000).

To the higher education sector, especially the universities, this suggestion has great and complicated impact. Issues concerning who benefits from higher education, how higher education institutions should be funded, and how they should be managed, have aroused much discussion and debate. And different solutions associated with these issues have dominated the direction of higher education reform in different areas around the globe. Several aspects related to my topic need to be emphasized when discussing the market and its influence on higher education. First, higher education is increasingly viewed as a private good, and in many regions of the world, reform in the sector of higher education tends to go in the direction of reducing public funding and adopting the "user pays" practice (Currie, 1998). Second, with the market demand for postsecondary education, higher education systems in many parts of the world have entered into a "mass higher education" stage (Scott, 1998). Such massification on the one hand, has broadened access to postsecondary education; but on the other, has brought about the stratification of different higher education institutions within both national and global higher education systems. Under mass higher education systems, the old links between higher education and elite occupations are inevitably diluted (Scott, 1998) and students become more vulnerable as to what majors they choose to study. Consequently, competition among higher education institutions in both the global and national market has intensified. This not only reflects on the competition for creating "hot" majors and attracting student resources, but also on competition for faculty members, research funds, other resources, and better rankings. Institutions of higher education, especially universities, can no longer simply be seen as places where knowledge and talent is cultivated; they are also part of the market in which providers of higher education try to satisfy certain groups of consumers and to compete with each other.

How should higher education be funded? Should universities be responsive to market demands if they are paid by "users," or sponsored by industries? How would such mentality influence what programs the universities offer, curriculum structure, and the type of research that gets funded and conducted? Should the university teach or conduct research in response to market demands? That is, does this mean the university should teach and conduct research on whatever is demanded by the market? If that is the case, how is a university different from a vocational training school or a research institute within the industrial sector? If not, is there something more that the university needs to emphasize within its curriculum structure? What about the university's service function to the public? Do universities have choices, especially with the financial stress that many of them are facing? How can a university balance its teaching, research, and service roles under the pressure of increasing competition? These are crucial questions that need to be answered when we explore the role higher education plays in a global market.

2.2.4 The Migration of People and Ideas, and Challenges to Higher Education

In the past few decades, there have been new features of human mobility and the migration of peoples, and where people move is strongly connected to the development of economic globalization.[2] Large-scale, long-distance movements of people have taken place many times in the past, and such movements "have played a vital role in the structural transformation of economies throughout history" (United Nations Development Programme, 2009, p. 2). The development of a global economy triggers the movement of people, also. A report from the United Nations Development Programme shows that every year there are more than 5 million

[2] Though there is usually a difference from being forced to move because of wars or natural disasters and moving voluntarily (Sobe & Fischer, 2009), here it is the "voluntary" movement that is being considered.

people crossing international borders to go to live in a developed country, and the percentage of population moving within national borders is even higher (United Nations Development Programme, 2009). Movement, both within and between nations, is predominantly driven by the search for better opportunities—whether economically or educationally, and therefore the direction is dominantly to developed countries or, if it is within nation states, to relatively developed areas. The share of internationally migrated population in developed countries has more than doubled in the past few decades, from an average of 5% of the total population in 1960, to an average of more than 12% of the total population in 2005; in the case of the U.S., the share is 5.8% in 1960 and 13% in 2005. Among the migrant populations, there is also an over-representation of skilled and working-age people (United Nations Development Programme, 2009), and this affirms the impact of the global economy on the motivation of people's migration. It is also predicted that "the pressure for increased flows will grow in the coming decades in the face of divergent economic and demographic trends" (United Nations Development Programme, 2009, p. 46). Beyond the physical flow of people, one of the direct effects of population movement is the changing composition of the local demographic, and, consequently, the changing character of local culture. The migration of ideas is also accelerated by the development of ICT, all contributing to freeing people from both physical and ideological boundaries.

All this has brought new concerns and challenges to the education sector. For example, few Chinese public schools accept foreign students, and foreign school-aged students in China have to attend one of the few international schools. With the in-moving of many foreign citizens to China in the past decade, especially to metropolitan cities like Beijing and Shanghai, international schools in these cities have increased in number, and some public schools have

opened special international classes for students without Chinese language skills. Now there are 32 international schools in Shanghai (Shanghai Municipal Education Commission, 2012) and 19 in Beijing (Beijing Municipal Education Commission, 2012). This is just one example. Beyond the issue of access, how to integrate students from different language and cultural backgrounds in the classrooms becomes a challenge. In many countries, discussions about diversity, multiculturalism, and global citizenship have raised educators', as well as the general public's, awareness of related issues.

In higher education, the number of students who participate in institutional study-abroad programs and the number of foreign students studying outside their home countries have both expanded dramatically. Study-abroad programs have been viewed as improving students' cross-cultural competence and language skills, and such skills are especially valued in an increasingly globalized economy. According to the data of *Open Doors*, a key publication of the Institute of International Education (IIE) on international education in the U.S., between 1991/92 and 2009/10, the number of U.S. higher education students studying abroad for credit has increased from 71,154 in 1991/92, to 154,168 in 2000/2001, and to 270,604 in 2009/10, an increase of almost four times from 1991/92 to 2009/10 (Open Doors, 2012). Just as the number of migrated workers in developed countries has increased, there is increased representation of international students at universities in developed countries, especially at universities in English-speaking countries. Table 2.1 is adopted from UNESCO's *Institute for Statistics*, and it shows an increase in percentage of foreign students in tertiary education in Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom over a ten-year period. Though the percentage in the U.S. has been around 3.3 to 3.6, the actual number has also increased. Table 2.2, adapted from IIE, shows the changes of international students in American universities.

Table 2.1. Percentage of Foreign Students in Tertiary Education In Major English-Speaking Countries

Country	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Australia	12.51	13.93	17.75	18.7	16.65	17.28	17.76	19.52	20.63	21.47	21.25
New Zealand	4.77	6.23	9.58	13.48	17.02	16.99	...	13.62	12.92	14.58	14.23
UK	11.01	10.92	10.14	11.16	13.35	13.92	14.13	14.88	14.67	15.28	...

Note. Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, retrieved April 26, 2012 from http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=136&IF_Language=eng&BR_Topic=0.

Table 2.2. Changes of Foreign Students in Tertiary Education in the United States

Year	Total Int'l Students	% Change	Total U.S. Higher Education Enrollment	% Change
2000/01	547,867	6.4	15,312,000	3.6
2001/02	582,996	6.4	15,928,000	3.7
2002/03	586,323	0.6	16,612,000	3.5
2003/04	572,509	-2.4	16,911,000	3.4
2004/05	565,039	-1.3	17,272,000	3.3
2005/06	564,766	-0.05	17,487,000	3.2
2006/07	582,984	3.2	17,672,000	3.3
2007/08	623,805	7	17,958,000	3.5
2008/09	671,616	7.7	18,264,000	3.7
2009/10	690,923	2.9	20,428,000	3.4
2010/11	723,277	4.7	20,550,000	3.5

Note. Source: Institute of International Education retrieved May 4, 2012 from *http://www.iie.org/Who-We-Are/News-and-Events/Press-Center/Press-Releases/2011/~/media/Files/Corporate/Open-Doors/Fast-Facts/Fast%20Facts%202011.ashx*.

Whether it is the increasing participation in study-abroad programs or increase in numbers of international students flowing to English-speaking countries, such trends indicate not only people's desire to experience other cultures, but also reflect the labor market's demands for

people with cross-cultural experience. Whether it is individual desire or the labor market's demands, the university sector needs to rethink its student population, and to examine how the character of this new population might influence the learning experience of students from various backgrounds. For domestic students who do not participate in study-abroad programs, the university also needs to decide whether and how it will offer these students related cultural experiences without necessarily going abroad. And all this requires that universities readjust their curricula.

2.3 World Class Universities

With the march to a mass higher education system in many nations and the influence of a global market, competition among different universities around the world and within nation states has become one of the realities universities face. There is a stratification of higher education institutions, with the world's influential research universities at the top level globally; and many other layers of post-secondary institutions at either a global, national, or local level. Research universities play a critical role in training professionals, high-level specialists, scientists and researchers needed by the economy, and in generating new knowledge in support of national innovation systems (Salmi, 2009). The top research universities are seen not only as one of the indicators of a nation's scientific and cultural development but also of its global competitiveness (Chen, 2004). The influence of some research universities, especially in the U.S. and Europe, has been especially strong. The Shanghai Jiao Tong University global rankings in 2003 was the start of the world's annual university league table; other league tables followed the next year, such as the *Times Higher Education Supplement* in the U.K, and the *U.S. News World's Best Universities* ranking; global reference of higher education institutions has become a trend throughout the

world. Marginson calls this "a world class university movement" and argues, "We live in a more global time. The 'world class university movement' is transforming higher education" (Marginson, 2008, p. 1).

There is no agreement on what makes a university a world-class university. As Altbach (2004) points out, "Everyone wants a world-class university. No country feels it can do without one. The problem is that no one knows what a world class university is, and no one has figured out how to get one" (p. 1). Yet the desire for global referencing is strong and widespread, and the fundamental driving force, besides a university's pursuit of excellence, is the nation-state's global competitiveness on a global scale, through investment in higher education research (Marginson, 2008). And such global referencing is important not only to the universities themselves, but governments also want to have world-class universities, as well as business and industries that consume the end products of universities (whether it is university graduates or research results); but it is also important to students and families who become increasingly like consumers of higher education and see higher education as an investment in their own, or their children's future. Within these top research universities, graduate schools and professional schools play an important role in terms of conducting research in the various disciplines and in cooperating with industry, leaving undergraduate education at the increasingly basic level of postsecondary education.

The criteria for a world-class university, though not clear, reflects the norms and values of the world's dominant research-oriented academic institutions (Altbach, 2004), putting pressure on the universities of many developing countries to be more like institutions in developed countries. Such is the manifestation of globalization's converging force that works on one aspect of the field of higher education. Yet as Altbach (2004) warns us, though the debate about the

world-class university is important, this idea falls into the global sphere, and yet universities operate not only in a global context, but also in a national context. How global forces interact with the local context needs to be examined.

Globalization in economic, cultural, and social fields, especially with the development of technology and ICT, the emphasis on a global market, and the flow of people, have brought many new challenges to higher education. As Rizvi argues, the traditional approaches to thinking about educational aims are no longer sufficient "because they mostly remain nation-centric and do not adequately engage with the new global realities of transnational economic, political and cultural interconnectivities" (Rizvi, 2007, p. 64), and globalization demands that we re-think the aims of education. In the coming decades, whether in the economic, cultural, or political sense, students are facing an increasingly globalized world, and the qualifications that they need to be able to actively participate in the economic, cultural and political life are going to be different from the previous generations. With the speed of information technology and knowledge expansion, and the expansion of higher education at both undergraduate and graduate levels, it is difficult and almost impossible for the university to train its undergraduate students at an advanced level in their chosen disciplines, and undergraduate education has become increasingly like the basic level of the postsecondary education. With the development of the global economy and the amount of accompanying cultural exchange, the university also needs to cultivate its students' cross-cultural communication competence and to train students as global citizens. All these require the higher education sector to embrace a more flexible and less specialized curriculum at its undergraduate level, and general education in this context has attracted many educators' attention.

2.4 General Education in History

General education is one of the most important components of an undergraduate education in many American universities, and its development in American higher education history reflects the university's pursuit of what the general society has demanded from. To look at why general education has attracted so much attention in the past few decades, not only in the Chinese higher education context but also globally, it is necessary to examine the history of GE, and what it means to us today.

2.4.1 The Origin of General Education and its Historical Trends

General education is a creation of the American university based on its liberal education tradition inherited from European universities, and its development has been accompanied by the development of professional and specialized education, the individual's demands and the general society's expectations, and the university's reflections on its role in knowledge transfer from one generation to another. Though many educators think that the term "general education," as it is used to apply to American universities, is a product of the 20th century, Thomas (1962) points out that the phrase has been in continual use since the early nineteenth century. American universities were born out of the influence of European universities, and the curriculum in the colonial colleges[3] was a direct import of the classical studies of Europe universities, with little modification (Cohen, 1998). Liberal arts studies, which include grammar, rhetoric, logic, astronomy, arithmetic, geometry, and music, were the basic curriculum in these early American colleges and were adapted to religious purposes prescribed as the curriculum for "all who would count themselves among the learned" (Cohen, 1998, p. 31). In different individual institutions

[3] Cohen (1998) defines the period from 1636 to 1789 as the era for colonial colleges.

there were modifications, with most changes "in the direction of natural philosophy and greater emphasis on mathematics" (Cohen, 1998, p. 33). And modifications in curriculum continued, which, as Cohen argues, shows the colleges' struggle to break away from the influence of the church and adherence to the classics. Influenced by the Scottish universities of the 18th century, colleges began to assign specific subjects to professors, which laid the foundation for academic specialization (Cohen, 1998).

In late 18th and early 19th centuries, the trend toward a varied, vocationalized curriculum continued, accompanied by the struggle between advocates of classical studies and those who would introduce practical studies for a broader range of people and purposes (Cohen, 1998). The phrase "general education" appeared in the early 19th century "in the process of distinguishing between the functions of a broad liberal education and the more specialized functions of professional and vocational education" (Thomas, 1962, p. 11). According to Thomas, the first use of the term was by A.S. Packard of Bowdoin College in an article published in the *North American Review* in 1829:

> Our colleges are designed to give youth a general education, classical, literary, and scientific, as comprehensive as an education can well be, which is professedly preparatory alike for all the professions. They afford the means of instruction in all branches, with which it is desirable for a youth to have a general acquaintance before directing his attention to a particular course of study, while professional studies are pursued at separate institutions, the law, divinity, and medical schools dispersed over the land (Quoted in Thomas, 1962, p. 11; Packard, 1829, p. 300).

General education in Packard's words is "classical, literary, and scientific" and is a "comprehensive" education (Packard, 1829). Colleges in the 19th century were under great

pressure to extend the scope of their services to students who did not intend to enter major professions such as law and medicine, and to introduce new subject matter in consequence of the rapid expansion of knowledge. As pressure increased and various changes were introduced, there was a tendency to split the basic disciplinary and cultural functions of higher education from its many vocational functions. The idea of a general education evolved into a curriculum consisting of a common core of disciplines considered essential to all liberally educated students and as a course of preparatory study for further professional development. This was often referred to as "general education," "general studies," or "general training," a more flexible conception than liberal education (Thomas, 1962).

In the 19th century, several changes prepared the way for general education in American colleges. The expansion of human knowledge and the concerns of vocational technique shaped the idea of acquisition of some fundamental knowledge that was necessary for anyone no matter what their chosen career was. Colleges around this period also expanded their scope of services and moved away from prescribed classical studies to a new emphasis on education for basic disciplinary and classical functions as well as vocational concerns. Development of the elective system allowed faculty to teach in their own area of interest and enhanced their love for specialization; research-oriented graduate schools entered the picture, leaving undergraduate study to a less specialized focus (Bisesi, 1982). All these have made general education a regular and important component in many universities' undergraduate curriculum. Yet what to include in the GE curriculum differs at different times in different schools, depending on how general education is defined.

General education's development in American universities has experienced its ups and downs, and Boyer and Levine (1981) argue that reforms in general education in American

universities reflect the social concerns of their respective eras. They identify three waves of general education revival. The first revival occurred about the time of World War I with the introduction in 1914 of a survey course named *Social and Economic Institutions* by the president of Amherst College, Alexander Meiklejohn. One of the highlights of the course was designed as a wide-angle view of society to introduce students to the "humanistic sciences" and to provide them with an orientation to the larger world. In 1919 Columbia University also developed an integrated course in Western civilization with the declaration that "there was a certain minimum intellectual and spiritual tradition that people must understand if they were to be called educated" (Cohen, 1998, p. 144). The revival of general education in this period can be understood as a call to confront the thinking and conflict among the traditional curriculum, the demands for new disciplinary fields that had just entered the higher education curriculum, and the influences of World War I. But, with the coming of the Great Depression, student demands for vocational instruction, changing enrollment patterns, and decreasing attendance rates, the first revival of general education declined (Boyer & Levine, 1981). The second revival of general education also took place around a world war—World War II, with the 1945 Harvard Committee's report on *General Education in a Free Society*, also called the *Red Book*, as the national symbol of renewal. It was called to train citizens for public responsibility, to emphasize their common heritage, to promote "self-realization," and to help returning veterans and new immigrants to integrate themselves into American life (Boyer & Levine, 1981; Harvard Committee, 1945). In this period, citizenship education weighted heavily in people's understanding of what general education could do. This second revival was called into question by the social turbulence during the late 1960s and early 1970s, and general education requirements declined about 25 percent (Boyer & Levine, 1981). The third revival of general education, as defined by Boyer and Levine

(1981), is the "current" revival around the 1980s when their book was written. Both Bisesi (1982) and Ratcliff (1997) identify this period's GE changes in the direction of bringing coherence and quality to higher education. This could be understood against the background of higher education expansion and the fragmentation of the undergraduate curriculum. As Boyer and Levine (1981) point out, each revival of general education reflected the tension between the individual and the community: the elective portion of the curriculum and academic major acknowledges individualism—the right of each person to act independently and make personal choices; general education curriculum, on the other hand, shows that the individual is also connected to a larger community. With the knowledge economy as one of the defining characteristics for our increasingly globalized society and the roles that higher education plays both in the individual's life and in general society's development, this tension will continue to exist.

When considering our increasingly interdependent world today, a look at the development of general education in American universities brings us back to questioning the purpose of undergraduate education: What should be the objectives of an undergraduate education? When thinking about curriculum content, how do we deal with students' individual interests and demands, and the demands of an increasingly globalized world? Should undergraduate education focus on students' chosen major and prepare them for related jobs? Or is there something more about a university undergraduate education? What are those things that are beyond a career purpose in a college education and how should these be reflected in students' college experience? Is it citizenship, as defined by Harvard's *Red Book*? Is it cultural tradition? Or is it a combination of many different things? Considering what we have discussed about globalization and its influences, what should universities teach? Different answers to these questions represent different views of how people define general education and the ultimate curriculum choice.

2.4.2 General Education, Liberal Education, and Special or Professional Education

To define general education, inevitably one needs to examine liberal education, and special or professional education. The term *liberal education* can be traced back to the tradition of the liberal arts in medieval universities. Its root contains the idea of making men free; it was the education for the freeman, which, at its origin, was in opposition to the education for slaves, or vocational training (Harvard Committee, 1952). As has been discussed, when American colleges were founded in the colonial period, they borrowed the liberal tradition of the European universities (Cohen, 1998), but when more specialized knowledge started to make its way in American universities, the term general education appeared as a curriculum response defending the liberal tradition. Liberal education in the modern context is sometimes used in similar ways as the term general education, but includes more the sense of reflecting an educational ideal. In the *Red Book*, general education is viewed as the modern equivalent of the older idea of liberal education (Harvard Committee, 1952). The Association of American Colleges and Universities defines liberal education as "a philosophy of education that empowers individuals, liberates the mind from ignorance, and cultivates social responsibility" (quoted in Laird, Niskode, & Kuh, 2006, p. 4). In contrast, AAC&U considers general education to be "the part of the curriculum shared by all students. It provides broad exposure to multiple disciplines and forms the basis for developing important intellectual and civic capacities" (quoted in Laird et al., 2006, p. 4). In this sense, a liberal education implies an educational philosophy and its expected learning outcomes, and general education refers more to a common and core set of required courses in the curriculum design (Laird et al., 2006). Mohrman (2006) distinguishes these two terms in a similar way, and points out that American universities usually view liberal education as a

philosophical conversation at the macro level of mission statements, and general education as a discussion at the micro level of curriculum requirements.

Special education, or in some literature, professional education, indicates a different emphasis in a student's educational experience. It is the education about a student's chosen discipline or profession that the student wants to study, and it aims to train the student in that chosen specialty. As the *Red Book* indicates, while general education indicates the part of a student's whole education that looks first of all to the student's life as a responsible human being and citizen; special, or professional education, indicates that part which focuses on the student's competence in some occupation (Harvard Committee, 1952). Using the terms liberal education and professional education, *The Yale Report of 1828* clearly distinguishes the difference between the two:

> A liberal, is obviously distinct from a professional, education. The former is conversant with those topics, an acquaintance with which is necessary or convenient, in any situation of life, the latter, with those, which qualify the individual for a particular station, business or employment. The former is antecedent in time, the latter rests upon the former as its most appropriate foundation. A liberal education is fitted to occupy the mind, while its powers are opening and enlarging; a professional education requires an understanding already cultivated by study, and prepared by exercise for methodical and persevering efforts (Yale University, 1828, p. 21).

It is important to emphasize that special or professional education rests upon general education "as its most appropriate foundation" (p. 21). Nowadays, few of us would deny that both general and special education need to be part of a college education, but the challenges many universities

face are to keep a balance between the two, integrate the two, and to establish coherence between the two.

Then what exactly is general education? Often, general education is defined as part of the curriculum components: It is seen as "the breadth component of the undergraduate curriculum" (Levine, 1988, p. 3) or the common part that every liberally educated student should know. Yet how that breadth or commonality is defined has never been clear. It is often easier to show what it should contain as a curriculum component and what it should achieve rather than to show clearly what it is. Levine reviews many different perspectives and summarizes a long list of how general education has been described: general education was seen as the necessary prerequisite for specialized study; a corrective to the overemphasis of specialization; the necessary rudiments for common discourse; the universals of human culture; an integrative experience underlining the unity of knowledge; knowledge of the world around us; preparation for participation in a democratic society; knowledge necessary for a satisfying private life; education encouraging personal and moral development; a body of knowledge and methods of inquiry (Levine, 1988). Such a list shows different perspectives on general education: philosophically what it should do; culturally what it should do; in terms of knowledge transfer and human tradition, what it should do; and last but not least, what general education should do in terms of cultivating citizenship. This gives us an idea about how general education is related to existing issues in our society and society's expectation of the university. As Boyer and Levine summarize it, "General education is an institutional affirmation of society's claim on its members" (Boyer & Levine, 1981, p. 19).

Pang's (Pang, 2007) analysis of the concept offers a more comprehensive understanding. To him, the broadest way general education is discussed in current literature reflects different ideals about university education: the concept, in this sense, contains elements of the liberal education

tradition from medieval universities and lays out the philosophical foundation of what a university education should be. Another layer of the concept, which is narrower, concerns pure curriculum issues, and general education in this sense refers only to GE courses, which differ from the courses students have to take for their majors and that students are required to take in order to fulfill their degree requirements. A third layer of the concept includes systems and policies that are used to ensure practices of the philosophical connotation of general education. General education, in such a view, becomes a model for organizing undergraduate education with the guidance of the liberal education ideal. In this study, I adopt the term general education in its broadest sense: as a term that not only indicates an educational ideal similar to that of liberal education, but also refers to the undergraduate education model, which consists of different means of practicing such an ideal, but within which a general education curriculum is one major expression.

Since general education means different things to different people at different times, it is necessary to look at how it has been expressed in different curricular formats.

2.4.3 Some Common Practices of General Education in American Universities

There is no universal way of organizing GE curricula across different universities. As Newton points out, "The decentralized character of American higher education has meant and will continue to mean that there will be almost as many different general education programs as there are colleges—each responding to its own idiosyncratic history, organizational culture, and special mission" (Newton, 2000, p. 169). He describes three dominant models of general education in American universities: the great books model, the scholarly discipline model, and the effective citizen model. The great books model emphasizes the unity of knowledge and the

breadth of student learning while avoiding premature concentration on one discipline, and its content emphasizes questions raised in the classics of Western culture and maintains the importance of the canon. Hutchins' efforts to push undergraduate education reform at the University of Chicago in the 1930s and 1940s were towards this model. But, as Newton points out, such a model often flourishes in small liberal arts colleges where specialization and departmentalization are less pronounced (Newton, 2000).

General education of the scholarly discipline model proposes curricula that are basically an introduction to disciplines, and this model believes that the strongest general education is comprised of a series of rigorous introductory courses in various disciplines which should include the best contemporary understanding of the key concepts and their interrelationship in these disciplines (Newton, 2000). Such an approach is usually adopted in larger and complex universities with strong departments. In recent years with the realization of the interconnectedness of the problems that we human beings face (e.g., global warming), there is also an emphasis on the interdisciplinary approach, which I consider as a modification of the scholarly discipline model. The effective citizen model shifts from an emphasis on discipline knowledge to the demanding and rapidly changing society and the needs of students in such a democratic society (Newton, 2000).

The recent discussion of adding components of global citizenship fits this model. Another area of GE curriculum in recent years is courses related to skills and competence building. Computer skills and language proficiency, communication skills, and critical thinking skills are emphasized increasingly with the development of ICT in an increasingly globalized economy.

Division of different approaches does not mean that the differences among these models are clear. For example, as early as 1919, Columbia University established an interdisciplinary course

on *Peace Studies*. That course's name has been changed to *Contemporary Civilization*. The central purpose of this course is to introduce students to a range of issues concerning the kinds of communities that human beings construct for themselves (political, social, moral, and religious) and the values that inform and define such communities. Other required courses for general education at Columbia include courses in the humanities, university writing, and frontiers of science. Besides these GE requirements, students are also required to select some courses from several disciplines in its core curriculum, and these include science, major cultures, foreign language, and physical education (Columbia University, 2008). Here we see an example of a mixed way of emphasizing the interdisciplinary approach, discipline introduction, citizenship, as well as skills and competence.

If there is one thing that is clear about general education in American universities, it is its complexity. It is a way of organizing undergraduate education that is different from a sole emphasis on special or professional education. Depending on different social environments and the university's interpretation of its educational objectives and traditions, different universities adopt different ways of organizing their general education: some focus on the liberal education tradition, some on introducing students to different disciplines, and some on cultivating the modern citizen. But more often than not, we see a mixed way of approaching general education.

2.5 General Education, World Class University, and Chinese Universities

I began this chapter by reviewing the recent attention given to GE reform and by looking at how globalization has presented new challenges to the higher education sector. I have argued that the characteristics of globalization require the university to rethink its educational aims. Global referencing has also accelerated competition among top research universities around the world,

and their undergraduate education becomes more like the basic level of postsecondary education. This may explain why general education—the undergraduate curriculum component that historically has been used to emphasize prerequisites for specialized study, a corrective to the overemphasis on specialization, the common human heritage and shared experiences, citizenship building and individual moral development, etc—has attracted so much attention among universities, especially research universities. This, in a sense, also reflects the convergent force of globalization. On the other hand, as competition among these universities increases, developing innovative GE programs has become one of the effective ways to help universities create competitive advantage. As Arnold and Civian (1997) point out when talking about GE reform in American universities, "Another common agenda in general education reform is a desire by administrators to develop a 'distinctive' program that admissions office can use as a recruiting tool" (p. 21).

Global referencing requires certain common elements as referencing points and these common elements are usually dominated by criteria used to evaluate universities in developed countries, especially in English-speaking countries. For top-tier Chinese universities to join the competition for becoming world-class universities, it is natural for them to look at universities that have already been identified as world-class universities. And the majority of these are in the U.S. and Europe. In the next chapter, I briefly look at the internal factors that have influenced Chinese universities' general education reform.

Chapter 3

General Education Reform and Chinese Universities

In the past decade, general education reform has attracted much attention among some Chinese universities. Using "Tongshi Jiaoyu", the Chinese translation of general education, as a key word to do a single search of related articles from the *Chinese Journal Full-text Database*, there were 3346 related articles from 1999 to 2010 (September), whereas from 1979 to 1999, there were only 212 articles. Many universities have started to explore their own GE practices. Among these universities, Peking University and Fudan University are pioneers. In 2008 some scholars started the annual *National Forum of General Education* and since then, a *Summer Institute of General Education* for students has also been held. Though the discussion about general education is very popular among scholars, it has only been limited to the GE practices in a few top-tier Chinese universities. This leads one to question: for such a hotly debated issue, why is the discussion about its practice only limited to a few institutions? In this chapter, viewing the Chinese higher education system as the context in which GE reform is embedded, I analyze the national context of GE reform in Chinese top-tier universities. I first briefly look at the history of the Chinese higher education system. Then I explore some of the major reforms in the past 30 years to lay out why general education suddenly has attracted so much attention and yet its practice is very limited. I end this chapter with a discussion of examining the GE reform in Chinese universities from a global and local perspective, and exploring some major issues related to the reform.

3.1 Chinese Higher Education System and Its Recent Reforms

3.1.1 The Highly Specialized Higher Education System Established in the 1950s

Until the reforms of the 1990s, the higher education system in China under the then current regime was first modeled after the Soviet Union system with mainly specialized institutions of higher education. When the People's Republic of China was established in October of 1949, the higher education sector was fairly small. Of the 200 higher education institutions, 60 percent of them were publicly owned and 40 percent privately owned, or owned by foreign missionary organizations (Chen, 2002). The first large-scale reform of the Chinese higher education system was conducted between 1952 and 1953 under the full guidance of the Soviet Union model. The primary concern was to restructure the whole system in ways that would immediately serve the country's state-planned economic and political development objectives (Chen, 2002; Hayhoe, 1996). The basic principle guiding this reform was for each higher education institution and each program to have a specially designated mission oriented directly to an industrial sector or a specific product or technical process (Chen, 2002; Hayhoe, 1996).

The restructuring involved both the geographical rationalization of the higher education sector's layout, and the reestablishment of new types of institutions with special emphasis on the development of new engineering universities—both polytechnical and specialized, and of teachers colleges. The whole country was divided into six regions for political-administrative planning: North China, Northeast, East China, Central South, Southwest, Northwest; the idea was to ensure a rational geographic distribution of each functional type of higher education institution across the country (Yang, 2003; Hayhoe, 1996). Every region had only one to four comprehensive universities (Yang, 2003) and these universities were limited to the classic disciplines of the European tradition (Hayhoe, 1996). Normal universities had a similar set of departments as comprehensive universities, with the addition of education, fine arts, and music (Hayhoe, 1996). And all other institutions were "highly specialized and identified closely with

particular governmental sectors or product areas: agriculture, health, finance, justice, metallurgy, mechanical engineering, textiles, etc." (Hayhoe, 1996, p.78). All higher education institutions were put under scrutiny and reorganized by department and specialization owned and run by a variety of central industry ministries, the Ministry of Education, and the provincial governments (Chen, 2002; Hayhoe, 1996). In 1955, a national unified examination system, the College Entrance Exam, was set in place "to ensure a fair distribution of candidates to the different institutions according to their academic standing" (Hayhoe, 1996, p. 84) and a nationwide job-assigning system was also established (Hayhoe, 1996). The management of this system was highly centralized: the higher education division of the Ministry of Education managed all the teaching and curriculum issues; and every specialty had the same teaching plan and used the same syllabus and teaching materials (Yang, 2003). Students were admitted to colleges through the national College Entrance Exam held once a year, they were admitted to a specific major, they went through the same curriculum with other students in the same major, and they were assigned jobs through the centralized placement by state planning.

Not only were most universities identified as specialized institutions, within each university, there was a very specialized organizational format. As Hayhoe describes it:

> The core unit within each university was no longer the college or department, but the specialization, as this was the unit that was assigned a quota of students within the state plan each year. Each student's total program was carried out entirely within the auspices of one specialization. While faculty belonged to departments (the level of colleges within a university had been abolished), their work and lives were now organized within teaching and research groups, newly established on a Soviet model in the early 1950s. Each group consisted of from five to twenty faculty, and several

> groups were responsible for different parts of the teaching done in a particular specialization. For example, one group might be responsible for the specialist courses, another for the basic theory courses, and a third for the specialist theory courses. Specialist courses tended to have highest prestige, as these were offered mainly in the upper years, and had the highest level of academic content (Hayhoe, 1996, pp. 86-87).

Such a system emphasized the tight connection between the higher education sector and its strict supply to a planned economy. The focus of developing higher education was on those disciplines that were tightly connected with industrial sectors. With such changes, the overall structure of higher education had the tendency of what has been described as "valuing sciences and neglecting humanities" (Yang, 2003). In 1949, before the higher education sector's restructuring, students in the social sciences and humanities made up 33.1% of the college student population; whereas in 1953, the number dropped to 14.9%; and the number in 1962 hit the historical low point and was only 6.8% (Yang, 2003) The emphasis on the sciences, engineering, and technologies has had profound influence on Chinese society's social values, and ideas such as "a good mastery of math, physics, and chemistry is the key to success" or "social sciences and humanities are useless" became increasingly popular since then (Yang, 2003). Yang criticizes this as "a scientific and technological education without the spirit of the humanities" and it is one of the roots of many social problems that Chinese society faces today.

This highly specialized higher education system, though, experienced changes and dysfunction during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), but was restored in late 1970s as the basic model of the Chinese higher education system, and maintained its basic structure until the large scale reforms in the 1990s.

3.1.2 Major Reforms in the Past Three Decades

In the past three decades, China's economic model has transformed from a state planned model to a socialist market model, and such a fundamental change has resulted in changes in other areas, including the higher education sector. The economic reform itself took place through a piecemeal and experimental approach. In 1978, China adopted the open door policy, and reform in the economic sector began. The market began to re-enter China's economy after 30 years of Communist Party in power. At the beginning of the reform, in the case of production that was beyond the state plan, prices were allowed to be determined by the market. In 1985, transactions based on market prices outside the state plan won legal sanction (Chen, 2002), and a transitional dual-track price system was in place. Dual tracking refers to adopting some aspects of a market economy while simultaneously operating under the old planned economic model (Fan, 1994). In 1992, the ruling Communist Party officially adopted a "socialist market economy" as its goal for economic reform and China's economic reform entered into a new stage (Fan, 1994). After several years of negotiation, in 2001, China finally joined the World Trade Organization (Prime, 2002; Chow, 2001), and since then has become an important member of the world economic community and has played an important role in the global economy (Chow, 2001).

With this changing environment, the old institutional arrangement that served for a planned economic model, including education, needed to be adjusted to serve the newly adopted economic model. At the same time there were, and still are, both the pressure of catching up with western countries in terms of development in social and economic areas, and the pressure of competing with these developed countries at the global level at the same time. The higher education sector in China has been facing similar challenges.

At the very beginning of China's opening, Chinese leaders saw the important and strategic role that education plays in encountering these pressures. Xiaoping Deng, the person who had played a key leadership role in China's social and economic reform since 1978, commented famously on "rejuvenating the country through science and education"; this has been officially adopted as one of the strategies for China's overall development. The strategy of strengthening the country by means of human resources is also addressed (Ministry of Education, 2006). In the past 30 years, because of the emphases on science and technology, the demand for an advanced labor force, and the connections that are drawn between this and the higher education sector, China's higher education has experienced major changes guided by the central government adjusting in response to the new environment, and assisting the country's overall development and global competitiveness.

Three stages can be identified in the reform of the education sector. They are what Chen (2002) describes as, the brewing stage from 1985 to 1992, the restructure stage in the 1990s, and the full-scale advancement stage after 1998. In 1985, the Ministry of Education (MOE) declared that its first act would be to restructure education in order to keep up with reform in the economic sector. The document—*The Decisions about Reform in the Education Sector*, was promulgated, new ideas were widely publicized, and reform was encouraged (Chen, 2002). One of the experiments in higher education was the admission of fee-paying students. Prior to the 1980s, higher education institutions were constrained by the state plan as to the number of students they could admit. With increasing demand for higher education, universities were allowed to admit a new category of students, the fee-paying student. These were students of commissioned training enrolled beyond the state plan and were either sponsored by the students themselves or by the work units where these students would work for after graduation. The

period between 1985 and 1989 saw a considerable increase in the number of fee-paying students (Yin & White, 1993). The existence of fee-paying students beyond the state's plan was a clear indication of the university's response to market demands.

1992 was a critical year for Chinese economic reform; in that year China officially adopted the socialist market economy. In 1992, Xiaoping Deng delivered a series of speeches when he was visiting southern China to inspect the achievements of economic reform. One of the major themes in his speeches, was to further confirm the role of the market in China's economic development. He pointed out that socialist countries could also benefit from a market economy. With this spirit, China's social and economic reform entered a new stage toward a socialist market economy. One of the major goals for political reform in this period was to reposition the role of government in economic and social development; that is, to emphasize the government's role of macro-regulation in a market economy. Immediately following this, in 1993, the State Council of China issued *The Outline of Chinese Education Reform and Development* (hereafter, *the Outline*) through the State Education Commission[4] (State Education Commission, 1993), and it is clearly stated that, in the 1990s, China's education sector must be geared to the needs of the accelerated reform and drive to modernize the economic sector, and new approaches should be explored to enlarge the scope of higher education, to further rationalize its structure, and to improve quality and efficiency (State Education Commission, 1993; Ma, 2003). This document set the basic tone for educational reform in the 1990s. The document's three major themes are: (a) to diversify revenue sources of higher education institutions; (b) to decentralize the administrative structure and expand university autonomy; and (c) to restructure universities for efficiency, effectiveness, and reasonable expansion (State Education Commission, 1993).

[4] The State Education Commission was the previous Ministry of Education. The name was changed back to the Ministry of Education in 1998.

Four major mechanisms were used to decentralize and restructure the jurisdiction of Chinese postsecondary institutions: joint construction (*gongjian*), restructuring (*huanzhuan*), merger (*hebing*), and cooperation with other social sectors in institutional operation (*hezuo*) (Mok, 2005; Ma, 2003; Yang, 2000). Joint construction was conducted to build up the higher education sector through the efforts of both the central and the local governments, and to strengthen the capacity of provincial governments to develop higher education, so that it might better to serve local economic development and the local context; restructuring was aimed at transferring the administrative responsibility of some universities, especially the specialized institutions, from central ministries to local governments; mergers were to combine the previously separate specialized colleges to build comprehensive universities in order to enhance their efficiency and effectiveness and to respond to the new economic development; and cooperation was encouraged to bring about the participation of enterprises and to bring companies and research agencies into the management and administration of institutions of higher education in order to promote greater institutional responsiveness to social demands (Mok, 2005; Ma, 2003; Yang, 2000). These fundamental changes have changed the overall structure of the Chinese higher education system. By the year 2000, 566 adult and higher education institutions were merged into 232, and among these, higher education institutions were merged from a number of 387 to 212 (Yang, 2003). The form of governance in higher education has also been changing, from a state controlled, centralized model to a state supervised and more decentralized model, in order to improve the system's accountability and efficiency (Min, 1993). By 2000, there were 1018 higher education institutions in China, and among these, 71 of them were under the supervision of the MOE, 50 were under the supervision of the central ministries, and 897 were under the provincial governments (Yang, 2003). This arrangement, with more higher education institutions

under the provincial governments, better satisfies local economic and social development. This round of restructuring went in the opposite direction of the restructuring of the 1950s, and through these changes, some universities regained disciplines they had lost in the past and strengthened their status as comprehensive rather than as specialized institutions (Yang, 2003).

In 1998, the Ministry of Education published a document entitled *The Action Plan to Vitalize Education Facing the Twenty-first Century* (hereafter, *The Action Plan*) (Ministry of Education, 1998). Beyond continuing support for what had been described in the *Outline*, the *Action Plan* emphasized expanding higher education's enrollment to serve increasing demand. This expansion was also adopted as a strategy to counter the economic slump of 1997 by boosting domestic spending and postponing the pressure of college graduates on the job market (Xin & Normile, 2008; Yang, 2003). A rapid and wide expansion in enrollment can be observed starting from 1998. The total enrollment number in Chinese higher education jumped from 3.4 million in 1998 to 15.6 million in 2005, an increase of almost 5 times, and in comparing the age group of 18 to 22, enrollment increased from 9.8% in 1998 to 22% in 2006 (Ministry of Education, 2009). These numbers show that China's elite system of higher education is on its way towards developing a mass higher education system. And it is against this background that the discussion of general education began to attract people's attention and several universities began their general education practices.

3.2 General Education in Chinese Universities

3.2.1 The Development of General Education in Chinese Universities

In the late 19th century, the modern Chinese university was born out of the influence of its Western counterpart. Conversations about general education in modern Chinese universities date

back to the early years of their establishment. Returned American and European-trained Chinese scholars have been credited with these discussions (Bai, 2008). Yet, after 1949, with the restructuring of the Chinese higher education system using the highly specialized Soviet Union model, China established a tertiary education system with a variety of specialized postsecondary institutions. As has been stated in the previous section, the major objective of this system was to educate specialists to serve the country's economic and social development under a planned economic model. Accompanying the various postsecondary institutions were a set of subsystems and policies for admission processes, financing, faculty rewards, student management, and graduates' job allocation etc., that directly served the functional needs of this highly specialized system. General education within this system gave way to the education of specialists.

3.2.2 The Changing Demand for College Graduates: from Planned to a Market Economy

As has been described, with the transition from a planned economy to a socialist market economy, higher education experienced some fundamental changes, and these changes have had direct impact on the purpose of the university and consequentially on what the university teaches. General education is a natural call for curriculum change because a market economy model requires a work force with transferable skills and competences. Unlike the planned economy, in which graduates were trained for specific positions under the state's plan, and would probably be in that position for the rest of their lives, in a market economy, the types of college graduates needed are determined by the market's demand instead of by the state plan. And the market demand is not fixed; it is changing. Therefore, the previous fixed curriculum for one specialty across many universities no longer fitted the new economic development model. Universities needed to broaden their curriculum arrangement and prepare their students to be more flexible

about what they night do after their graduation. Starting in late 1980s, curriculum reform based on the principle of deemphasizing narrow specialization and offering students a strong and broad foundation in various disciplines was introduced in some top universities such as Peking University (Chen et al., 2008) and Tsinghua University (2006, Hu & Cheng). Some other universities also started to develop an elective system to facilitate students' knowledge learning beyond their specialties. Such is a natural reflection of the university's attempt to adjust itself according to its changing environment. With the adjustment of majors and specialties since the 1980s, the total number of specialties has decreased from 1343 before 1978, to 249 in 1998; and in the field that has most specialties, engineering, the number of specialties has dropped from over 500 to about 70 in 1998 (Hu & Chen, 2008). With the abolishment of the job-assigning system of the middle of the 1990s, the need for the university to prepare its students for broader choice of jobs became even more important.

3.2.3 Improving the Quality of Higher Education

The process of establishing a quality control system for higher education has pushed universities to review their undergraduate curriculum. The reform of education since late 1970s has been accompanied by an effort to establish an appropriate evaluation system for higher education. In 1985, the MOE issued *A Notice on Higher Engineering Education Evaluation*; it began pilot evaluation projects on the majors and curriculum of universities in several areas across the country (Higher Education Evaluation Center, 2012; Hu & Chen, 2008). In 1990, the then State Ministry Commission issued the first regulation on higher education evaluation, the *Draft Regulation of Higher Education Institution Evaluation*, which defined the nature, purposes, tasks, and basic formats of higher education evaluation (Higher Education Evaluation Center, 2012). In

1995, several *University Evaluation Standards Project*(s) were launched among different types of institutions, and all new baccalaureate degree-granting colleges were also required to undergo an evaluation process (Higher Education Evaluation Center, 2012). With the rapid expansion of higher education enrollment in a very short period that took place in the late 1990s, the quality of higher education has been particularly questioned and further efforts were made to ensure it. In 2002, the different types of evaluation projects were combined into one *Evaluation of University Baccalaureate Programs Project* and in 2003, another major document, *Action Plan of Education Innovation 2003-2007*, specifies that all higher education institutions undergo quality evaluation every five years (Higher Education Evaluation Center, 2012). The emphasis on quality is a direct effect of higher education's expansion: with more students attending universities and yet with limited resource expansion for teaching, it is reasonable to look at quality issues. The emphasis on quality control at the undergraduate level has prompted universities to review their undergraduate curriculum.

3.2.4 The Call for Quality Education

A test-oriented education system, and the general atmosphere of emphasizing the sciences and technology and neglecting students' cultural and humanist qualities have dominated both the general society and the university sector; and with the highly specialized training that university students were getting, cultivation of students' cultural and humanist qualities was lacking in the Chinese education system in general and in the university curriculum specifically. The *College Entrance Exam* has been accused as the baton that directs the practice of "teaching for the test and studying for the test" in schools, and students' overall development has been sacrificed. After 1977, with the recovery of the national College Entrance Exam, many who had lost higher

education opportunities during the age of the *Cultural Revolution* regained precious access to colleges through the test-oriented admission system. And yet because of such a test-oriented system, the basic education sector in China has increasingly emphasized test results but ignored students' overall development (Zhang, 2005). At the high school level, to prepare students for the exam, many schools have split the students' direction either towards the social sciences and humanities, or towards the sciences and engineering as early as after the first year in high school. This means that even in high school, students have already started to experience an education that either focuses on the social sciences and humanities or on the sciences. Before major reforms, students entered post-secondary institutions with predetermined majors; at the college stage, the curriculum was based on specialties and such a curriculum also neglected students' overall development beyond their specialties. This resulted in a situation in which, on the one hand, the popular beliefs, such as "social sciences and humanities are useless" and "a good mastery of math, physics, and chemistry is the key to success" continued to dominate people's minds; on the other hand, college graduates were accused of having knowledge but being uneducated, in other words, lacking moral and cultural qualities. As Yang (2003) points out, the long period of science and technology education without humanist cultivation has resulted in students' lack of social and cultural values, and many college students lack basic understanding of the important social, moral, environmental, and cultural issues that are beyond their majors. This is, of course, not just the university's fault, but such an accumulated problem worsened at the university level.

All this calls for an educational experience that emphasizes students' overall development. As early as 1985, Chinese leader Xiaoping Deng emphasized the important role of improving the labor force's quantity and quality for economic development; and the term "quality education,"

or in Chinese, *Suzhi Jiaoyu* (素质教育) started to appear in several important documents related to education reform, such as *the Outline* (Zhang, 2005). In 1995, the Ministry of Education began strongly to advocate "quality education" from primary school to the university level. "Quality education" emphasizes the cultivation of the students' ideological and moral quality, capacity building, character development, and physical health and mental health education. In 1998, the MOE established 32 bases in 53 universities to promote "cultural quality education" among university students (Zhou, Liu, & Yan, 2006). The special emphasis on "culture" at the college level is the reaction and effort of higher education to counter the overemphasis on the education of specialists, especially specialists in the fields of science and technology; instead of top technicians, the university needed to cultivate the "whole human being." When talking about "cultural quality education" and "general education," Hu and Cheng (2006) argue that they are interlinked: general education usually is misunderstood as just broadening the scope of students' knowledge; if we look at these two terms from the standpoint of unifying knowledge, capacity-building, and the cultivation of students' overall quality, they are interlinked.

3.2.5 Developing a "World-Class University"

Last but not least, the effort to develop a "world-class university" has also pushed some top tier universities to look at their foreign counterparts, and general education has become one of the important areas that these Chinese universities started to examine for the experience of undergraduate education. As early as the 1950s, the Chinese government had adopted the strategy of supporting the establishment of a few high level universities, accumulating experience, and thus bringing along the development of other universities (Wang & Lei, 2008). From 1954 to 1963, the Chinese government developed and recognized 68 national key

universities successively (Wang & Lei, 2008). Though such efforts were hit by the wave of the Cultural Revolution, the idea of developing high level universities was once again brought up in the late 1970s, and by the end of 1981, there were 96 key national universities (Wang & Lei, 2008). The government's efforts to invest in a few high level universities and some key disciplinary areas, were listed in the country's seventh five-year plan (1986-1990) and eighth five-year plan (1991-1995), which are the government's social and economic development initiatives published every fifth year. In 1991, *Project 211* was initiated and the goal was set to strengthen about 100 higher education institutions and key disciplinary areas as a national priority for the 21st century; in 1995, the project was officially launched, and by 2005, there were 107 *Project 211* universities (Wang & Lei, 2008). In further improving the university sector's global competitiveness, *Project 985* was also launched with the clear objective of developing a few world-class universities in ten to twenty years and having some world-renowned key disciplinary areas (Wang & Lei, 2008). In a document released in 2004 by the MOE, the *2003 to 2007 Action Plan to Invigorate Education*, it is clearly stated that *Project 985* needs to be continued in order to build a number of world-class universities and a number of internationally renowned high-level research universities, and *Project 211* also needs to be continued to further construct key disciplines, and to improve education quality, as well as the institutions' research ability and service functions (Ministry of Education, 2004). Developing world-class universities is connected with the strategy of rejuvenating the country through science and education and reinvigorating the country through human resource development (Ministry of Education, 2004).

Under these circumstances, some top-tier universities started to look at the experience of foreign universities and explore ways of developing world-class universities; general education became one of the important areas that they examined. Big names such as Harvard University

became part of almost every discussion about developing a world-class university, and Harvard's general education curriculum is quoted in almost every discussion about general education reform. Not only are some world-renowned universities mentioned in this process, some Chinese universities have chosen specific universities and looked to them as examples. For example, in the process of developing a world-class university, looking at the experience of Princeton University has become one of Nanjing University's strategic choices (Gong, 2004). And when Fudan University was preparing for its undergraduate college, it looked closely at Yale University to study Yale's undergraduate residential experience.[5] By the end of the first decade of 21st century, major top-tier universities, such as Peking, Tsinghua, Zhejiang, Fudan, Nanjing, and Sun Yat-sen University all began to institute general education practices.

Of course the discussion about general education reform is not limited to these aforementioned top-tier universities; in recent years, other universities have also started to explore GE practice in their campuses. For example, based on studying the GE course systems in several universities in Taiwan, comparing them with universities in mainland China, and conducting a survey about factors that affect students' choices of GE courses in agricultural and forestry universities, Zhou's recent doctoral dissertation research explores the possibility of establishing a GE curriculum system that is for agricultural and forestry universities (Zhou, 2011). By arguing for the necessity of general education and analyzing Tibet University's current curriculum system, Bai's master thesis explores the feasibility of having a GE component at the Tibet University (Bai, 2012). Sun's article also calls for the integration of general education and professional education in colleges of science and engineering (Sun, 2008).

[5] This information comes from my preliminary study resulting in my dissertation project.

Yet, these discussions about GE reform among less prestigious universities are limited in number, and the emphasis on GE practice has been mainly among top-tier universities. As in Ji's discussion (2007) about the characteristics of Chinese university's GE curriculum, he points out that the concept of general education has not been commonly accepted among all Chinese universities, and instead, two course systems—the commonly required courses and the public elective courses—serve the purpose of general education in many universities. The commonly required courses include ideological courses such as Principles of Marxist Philosophy and Principles of Marxist Political Economy, foreign languages, physical education, and computer sciences; these courses are required for college students in the whole nation and they take up about 30% of the total curriculum (Ji, 2007). It is the part of public elective courses that varies according to different universities, and they are mainly under the format of choosing courses from different grouped themes such as humanities, sciences, and arts, etc. (Ji, 2007). Most universities do not have independent organizational divisions specialized for general education, and GE is usually housed under the Academic Affairs Office (Ji. 2007). In different reviews of GE research among Chinese academics, one of the major criticisms of the published academic papers on general education is their focus on theory but there is a lack of empirical studies (Ji, 2007; Miao, 2007; Fan, 2006). When GE practices are mentioned, it is usually the few top tier universities' GE practices (e.g., see Chen, 2006; Yu, 2003; Li, Yang, & Sun, 2001). Li's reflection on the philosophy and the operational system of GE in Chinese universities from 1995 to 2005 may explain reasons behind such a phenomenon. She calls the process of constructing the concept of general education and establishing related system "a process let by the government and cultural elites in pursuit of consensus." The government uses its power to establish a model of cultivating modern talents by promoting the idea of "cultural quality

education," and academic elites use their influence to promote the idea and system of general education borrowed from Western institutions (Li, 2006). And Li (2006) argues that such consensus has not been reached yet. Chinese universities have not found an appropriate solution to embrace a GE component based on its local tradition and resources and lessons from outside the country (Li, 2006), and the GE exploration led by these elite institutions is still going on.

3.3 Where the Global Meets the Local

If one looks at the background of general education reform I have laid out, namely the development of a market economy in China and accompanying required changes in the higher education sector, higher education expansion in the late 1990s, calls for quality control, and the discourse about developing a world-class university, none of these themes are unique to the context of Chinese higher education. That is, none of these reforms or calls for reform is isolated. As discussed in chapter 2, there is also a global trend that calls for, or has caused, changes in these areas. As China joins the global economy and social and political life, its universities, especially the top-tier universities that seem to carry the country's highest expectation of facilitating and contributing to the country's global competitiveness, have simply responded to these challenges. General education reform is just one of the many responses. From the perspective of globalization, this trend could be viewed as the converging forces of globalization on higher education. From the perspective of an institutional theory, these developments could also be seen as the Chinese university's efforts to join the world model.

Yet, globalization theory reminds one that global forces also provoke local reactions (Torres & Rhoads, 2006; Davies & Guppy, 1997). Institutional theory also identifies the gap between the legitimated model and its immediate enactment in the local context (Meyer et al., 2006). Though

there seem to be forces that have activated general education reform in Chinese universities, how well this can be implemented is still in question, depending on many local factors.

Hawkins (2007) points out that educational restructuring and reform is occurring less from democratic, national development policy deliberation, and rather more from external processes and pressures linked to forces such as economic globalization. The question follows is, how the internal shareholders respond to these educational changes if the initiative comes from the external environment. When it comes to general education reform, how the faculty responds is especially important. As Arnold and Civian (1997) point out:

> Change in general education is organizational change, and the consequences for faculty—both symbolic and tangible—can be significant. To start, there are the philosophical and political implications of what is or is not included in a general education programs. Declaring what all students must know, after all, reveals much about what an institution collectively thinks of the world (p. 20).

How faculty members—the key to the implementation of any curriculum changes—understand, participate, and respond to general education practices directly influences the result of the reform. Since pressure for general education reform is at least partially from the external changing environment, it is important to look at whether and how faculty members have been involved in the reform. Yet in the existing literature their perspective is lacking.

In this chapter, I have reviewed the background of the Chinese higher education system and its recent major reforms. I then laid out the path of general education in China and made the connection of how it resonates with the changes in the global higher education context. I also pointed out that there is lack of understanding of how faculty members in Chinese universities

participate in the reform. In the next chapter, I present a research design for two qualitative case studies.

Chapter 4

Research Methods

In chapter 2, through a general analysis of the challenges of globalization on higher education systems around the world, and on the general education curriculum in particular, I laid out the connections between the current attention to general education and overall higher education reform. In chapter 3, I gave an overview of the Chinese higher education system since 1949 and the recent reforms of the past 30 years, to explain, from a local perspective why, around the turn of this century, general education was called upon. From the global and local perspectives, I have identified the local and global causes behind the attempts of top tier Chinese universities to carry out GE practices.

In order to have a better understanding of what has been going on at the university level, especially faculty members' views of general education, and to gain a sense of their participation and experience in education reform and practice, I adopted an empirical, qualitative case study approach. In this chapter, I first articulate why I chose to do a qualitative case study. Second, I describe the overall design of the two case studies, including sampling and access, and the data collection process. Third, I discuss my role as a researcher in this study. I conclude with a brief description of the data analysis process.

4.1 Why a Qualitative Case Study

Though there are many publications related to GE reform in China, there are few empirical studies (Fan, 2007), and, in particular, a lack of faculty members' perspectives. Those who write about general education are mainly scholars who think highly of it; they are the academics Li

(2006) calls "the intellectual elite." Li refers to this group as important intellectual figures, who have contributed to spreading the ideas of quality education and general education (Li, 2006). But what do faculty members who have been less active in promoting GE think of it? How have they participated in related policy-making and implementation? When it comes down to the faculty members who have the closest contact with students on a daily basis, what are their experiences with GE reform and GE practice? There is not much information available to answer these questions. In order to explore some of the barriers that GE reform is facing in Chinese higher education, I believe that it is important not only to describe the context in which GE reform took place, but it is also important to hear what the faculty thinks about it.

I adopt a qualitative case study approach for this research. When discussing the reasons to use a qualitative approach, Creswell (1998; 1994) states that a qualitative paradigm is appropriate in situations where the research is exploratory, variables are unknown, context is important, and there may be a lack of theory. The major purposes of this research—examining GE reform's status in the Chinese context and exploring potential barriers to its implementation—fit well with the nature of a qualitative approach. Merriam's (1998) comments on what qualitative researchers are looking for resonate with one of the other purposes of this study: to understand faculty members' participation and experiences in GE reform and practice. Merriam points out: "Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (1998, p. 6).

Creswell comments that, "Case study research holds a long distinguished history across many disciplines" (1998, p. 62). Its design is especially widely used in organizational studies and across the social sciences; and it is ideally suited for exploration of issues in depth (Kohlbacher,

2006; Creswell, 1998). To many, the case study is a research strategy, rather than a method (Kohlbacher, 2006; Yin, 1982; Yin, 1981). While a particular method usually involves a particular procedure, a strategy usually is less specific—a case study does not claim any particular method for data collection or data analysis (Merriam, 1998). When talking about the case study as a research strategy, Yin (1981) points out that the need to use the case study method arises whenever:

- An empirical inquiry must examine a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context,
- Boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (p. 98).

Merriam (1998) emphasizes that the single most defining characteristic of case study research is the case; she sees the case as "a thing, a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries" (p. 27). Such a "bounded system" is bound by time and space, and that is the case being studied—for example, an event or several events, a program, an activity, or individuals (Creswell, 1998). Depending on the purpose of the study, the case study could be categorized as exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory, and it may be based on a single case or on multiple cases (Kohlbacher, 2006; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1981).

The case study is the research design that fits best to this study's purposes. General education reform in Chinese universities is embedded in the larger context of higher education reform in China. The complex ways it is related to changes in other aspects of higher education reform makes it hard to predict where and how far the reform can go. However, studying successful individual cases in depth (or at least apparently successful ones), especially those within the Chinese higher education context, may offer valuable experience for the further development of GE in Chinese universities. I approached my research questions by looking at

GE reform in two universities, East China Normal University (ECNU) and Peking University (PKU). The overall design of my research is a multiple-case study and the two cases are the general education programs in these two universities. The qualitative case study approach allowed me to examine the process of GE reform in its natural context at an in-depth level, and thus focus on typical cases, in order to give meaningful policy recommendations.

4.2 Research Questions, Case Study Design, Sampling, and the Data Collection Process

4.2.1. Research Questions

The purpose of the empirical part of the current research is to examine general education's status in two top-tier universities, and through understanding faculty members' participation in GE policy development and their experiences with GE implementation and practice on their respective campuses, to explore the potential barriers they have been encountering. In preparing this dissertation I asked three questions:

(1) What led to these top-tier universities to institute general education reforms?

(2) How have these two Chinese universities implemented general education practice? In what ways do these universities rely on foreign experience to guide their reforms?

(3) How have faculty members at these two universities participated in initiating and implementing these policies?

Creswell (2003) points out that qualitative research is usually an emergent process rather than a tightly prefigured one: the research questions may change and be refined as the researcher learns what to ask and to whom it should be asked; and the data collection process might change as doors open and close. This has been exactly my experience with this study. After I arrived at the research site and began with the first few interviews with faculty members, I quickly realized

that their participation in the phase of initiating and implementing GE policies was very limited; and so I added one more research question and revised the original research questions as follows:

(1) What has caused Chinese top-tier universities to engage in general education reform?

(2) How have two top-tier Chinese universities implemented general education practice? In what ways do these universities rely on foreign experience in terms of their reforms?

(3) Did faculty members at the two universities participate in initiating and implementing these policies?

(4) How do faculty members at these two Chinese universities view general education and what has been their experience with GE practice in their institutions?

4.2.2. Case Study Research Design

Though many Chinese universities claim to have implemented GE reform, it is the top-tier universities that have adopted major changes. In order to answer my first research question, in chapters 2 and 3 I explored some reasons behind Chinese universities' GE reform from global and national perspectives. To understand the implementation and practice of GE reform in these top-tier universities and to answer my other research questions, I chose two top-tier Chinese universities, ECNU and PKU, to understand how these institutions have attempted to reform their GE component and how faculty members have experienced this reform. I will discuss the sampling process in next section.

Karl Weick's (1976) loose coupling theory guided the overall design of the two case studies. Many scholars have questioned the assumption that higher education institutions are rational organizations. For example, Cohen, March, and Olsen (1972) view universities as "organized

anarchies" characterized by problematic preferences, unclear technology, and fluid participation; and their "garbage can model" has potential to explain a university's inconsistent and ill-defined preferences. Weick challenges the assumption that organizations are rational, and points out that "parts of some organizations are heavily rationalized but many parts also prove intractable to analysis through rational assumptions" (1976, p. 1). The term "loose coupling" connotes things "that may be tied together either weakly or infrequently or slowly or within minimal interdependence" (Weick, 1976, p. 5). He suggests that educational organization can be seen as a loosely coupled system composed of loosely coupled elements.

From policy, to curriculum structure and implementation, to classroom instruction, even if there may be a rationalized process for making GE policy, GE practices in these universities may or may not be as rationally and tightly connected to what the policy has set out to do. Loose coupling theory offers a framework to look at both the administrative and the faculty lines for GE policy making and implementation, in order to understand general education's status in these two universities. With this in mind, I decided to interview relevant administrators in order to understand the GE policy's evolving process and implementation, and to interview some faculty members in two academic departments of each institution, in order to understand whether faculty members are involved in policy making and implementation, and what their experience with GE in their universities was like.

Before data collection, two interview protocols were developed, one for interviewing administrators and one for faculty members; I also began to research documents related to GE reform in ECNU and PKU. The university websites were my major sources for retrieving these documents and developing related interview questions. Articles in major education journals such as Peking University Education Review, Fudan General Education, and the Journal of Peking

University (of Philosophy and Social Sciences) were also consulted. For the interview protocol with administrators, questions focus on the university's perspective on GE, GE reform background, the policy development process, its implementation, difficulties encountered, and achievements in related areas. Interview protocol of faculty members' perspectives contained related questions: whether and how they were involved in policy development and implementation, whether and how they were involved with GE practice on campus and reasons behind that. The interview protocols are attached in the appendices. Before my trip, I was aware that these questions could differ depending on whom I would talk to, once I arrived at the two sites.

4.2.3. Sampling and Access Issues

The choosing of ECNU and PKU is based on a purposeful sampling strategy and considerations of access. Purposeful sampling is the most common sampling form for qualitative studies, and it is based on the assumption that "the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 1998). Since this study looks at Chinese universities that implemented some major changes in undergraduate GE curriculum and explores faculty experiences, existing issues and suggestions, a purposeful sampling was necessary in order to pick up cases that had already made some major changes in the GE area and could help me to gain insight. From a search of the literature and also media reports, such universities were easily identified as mainly top-tier universities in China. Accessibility was another major issue since with whom I could talk would directly influence the results of this study.

In the summer of 2008, I went to China and visited five such institutions and searched for opportunities to conduct my case study. These universities were Peking University and Tsinghua University in Beijing, Fudan University and East China Normal University in Shanghai, and Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou. I had informal conversations with administrators and faculty members and talked about the possibility of conducting case studies at their institutions. Originally the plan was to involve PKU and Fudan University. But because of the stronger connections I had with ECNU and PKU, especially ECNU where I had the chance to talk to one of their vice presidents, I decided to use these two universities as my case research sites.

Sampling within the case is necessary for this study. As Merriam (1998) points out, unless a researcher plans to interview, observe, or analyze all the people, activities, or documents within the case, it is necessary to do some sampling. For the overall design of this study, in each institution, administrators from related administrative departments were interviewed in order to understand the process of the GE reform. With access to the Internet, it was a straightforward task for me to identify the administrators with whom I needed to talk. When it came to the faculty line, it was neither necessary nor possible to interview all the faculty members. Therefore, I decided to choose faculty members from two different academic fields as my interviewees: Chinese language and literature, and chemistry. At ECNU, the academic units are the Department of Chinese Language and Literature and the Chemistry Department; and at PKU, they are the Department of Chinese Language and Literature and the College of Chemistry and Molecular Engineering. These two academic units were chosen because, first, they represent both the social sciences and humanities, and the sciences fields; and second, because I could get access to these departments. Within each department, four to five faculty members were interviewed. Just before my visit to each campus and based on availability, faculty members

were contacted through my contacts in these two universities. The faculty did not have to be involved in the teaching of GE courses. Besides availability, the only other requirement was that they had held full employment in the chosen departments for at least half a year.

Because my study involved human subjects, I applied for the approval of the Institutional Research Board (IRB) at UCLA for the ethics review process. Neither Chinese university in my study had such an ethics review board, and so this was not an issue. Once I got the approval from IRB at UCLA, I began sending emails to administrators, asking for interview opportunities. But this turned out not to be efficient and only three potential interviewees responded. I then asked my contacts at both universities to help me find my potential interviewees. But specific appointments with each individual could not be arranged while I was not present in person on the research sites. The only thing I could decide was the time for my field trip: April 2011; that month was the middle of a semester, and thus less busy for many working in the two institutions.

4.2.3. Brief Institution Profile, Data Collecting Process and Data Collected

A Brief Profile of ECNU

East China Normal University was founded in October 1951, based on Daxia University and Guanghua University's arts and science faculties; it also incorporated several departments from Fudan University, Tongji University, Hujiang University, and East Asia PE Academy (East China Normal University, 2011). Following the Soviet Union's higher education system, there were six national normal universities that were established in the six major geographic regions of China as the teacher training centers; ECNU in Shanghai was the leading institution for teacher training in the East China region (Hayhoe, Zha, & Li, 2011). In 1959, ECNU was officially

recognized by the national Ministry of Education as one of the 16 key universities in China (East China Normal University, 2011).

After China established its Open Door policy in the late 1970s, ECNU, like many other universities, experienced major reform and expansion, especially after the 1990s. Now ECNU has become a top comprehensive university without abandoning its traditional focus of teacher training. It is also sponsored by the prestigious national programs, *Project 211* and *Project 985* (East China Normal University, 2011). In 2007, the State Council approved the proposal of the Ministry of Education and several other national departments for the state to sponsor students in teacher training programs in the six normal universities under the MOE's direct supervision; ECNU is one of them. One of the challenges that ECNU faces is to balance its identity as a normal university, while simultaneously developing many new areas unrelated to teacher education so as to reach the goal of becoming a world-renowned university (Hayhoe, Zha, & Li, 2011).

General education at ECNU presents a mixed picture. Even though the university only started to use the term "general education" in the past ten years, ECNU had realized the importance of broadening its undergraduate curriculum since the 1980s and curriculum reform toward such a goal has been ongoing for over two decades. Right now when we talk about general education at ECNU, we are discussing two different tracks: general education of the undergraduate students from non teacher-training programs, and general education of the undergraduate students from teacher-training programs. As of 2011 when the data was collected, things were still in a state of flux.

A Brief Profile of PKU

Founded in 1898, Peking University was originally known as the Imperial University of Peking (Peking University, 2011). It was the first national university established by the last feudal society in Chinese history, the Qing Dynasty, and functioned as the highest administration for education from the beginning of its founding (Peking University, 2011). The university's early history was closely connected to the Chinese revolution and China's social, political, and cultural development in the early twentieth century; since then, PKU has played an important role in the recent history of Chinese higher education. Especially since the 1980s, within the larger context of changing social and economic development, PKU has been exploring various reforms to improve. In more recent years, as Chinese government has decided to focus disproportionate investment in a few universities in order to build "world-class universities" in the twenty-first century, it was natural to see that PKU would be one of the first two universities chosen to enter *Project 985* and carry out this national mission.

Peking University is one of the first few Chinese universities to have experimented with the practice of general education. GE reform at PKU has occurred along two different tracks: as a general requirement for undergraduate students with declared majors in various academic disciplines, and as an independent Yuanpei Program with a much smaller group of undergraduate students whose majors were not declared at the beginning of their undergraduate study. The Yuanpei Program was established in 2001 as an independent branch to experiment with the practice of general education within the *Yuanpei Experimental Class*. Yuanpei as an organizational branch was different from other regular academic departments: it did not have its own teaching faculty and it operated under the credit system and tutorial system by sharing resources with other academic departments. Unlike the other departments and colleges at Peking

University, students were admitted to Yuanpei based only on their science direction or social science direction without differentiation of major. Students have the freedom of choosing classes from other departments and colleges across PKU's campus and declare majors after they fulfill the GE component of their education. By 2005, the Yuanpei Program has developed into an independent college within PKU, Yuanpei College.

Data Collection Process

The research trip to China lasted about three weeks. Besides the travel time from site to site, I was at ECNU for about seven working days to conduct all my interviews, and then at PKU for about the same length of time. Because I had a stronger connection at ECNU and it was easier for me to be introduced to people, I decided to visit ECNU first. While at ECNU, I started to make detailed arrangements for my visit to PKU.

At ECNU, I was able to interview several administrators who were involved in the policy development and administration process. I interviewed the director of the Academic Affairs Office, one staff member from that office, and three former vice directors who were involved in general education policy development. I also had the opportunity to conduct an interview with one of the vice presidents of ECNU. The interview with the current director of the Academic Affairs Office was relatively short because of his busy schedule, but because I had already spoken with several of his colleagues before I spoke with him, it turned out to be helpful that we did not follow the rigorous interview protocol. Instead he highlighted some of the major challenges that they are facing. Nor did the interview with the vice president for academic affairs follow the interview protocol. Instead, it focused on the background of GE reform at ECNU. Interviews with faculty members followed my original plan. One of the faculty members from

the Department of Chemistry was also the vice chair of the department. Table 4.1 shows a list of my interviewees at ECNU and outlines of the interviews conducted there.

Table 4.1. Interviewee Information at ECNU

Label		Title	Content of Interviews
Administration Line	EA-1	Vice President	Background of GE reform at ECNU and major challenges
	EA-2	Director of the Academic Affairs Office	Achievements and Challenges of GE reform at ECNU
	EA-3	Staff member of the Academic Affairs Office	Implementation questions of GE programs at ECNU
	EA-4	Former Vice Director of Academic Affairs Office	Questions were centered around GE policy development, implementation process and major challenges
	EA-5		
	EA-6		
Faculty Line	EFChi-1	Female, Chinese Dept, associate professor	Followed the attached interview protocol strictly
	EFChi-2	Female, Chinese Dept, associate professor	
	EFChi-3	Male, Chinese Dept, associate professor	
	EFChi-4	Male, Chinese Dept, lecturer	
	EFChe-1	Male, Chemistry Dept, Professor, Vice Chair of the department	Followed the attached interview protocol, also with questions about the implementation of GE policies at the development level
	EFChe-2	Male, Chemistry Dept, Associate professor	Followed the attached interview protocol strictly
	EFChe-3	Female, Chemistry Dept, Associate professor	
	EFChe-4	Female, Chemistry Dept, Lecturer	

Because GE practices in PKU follow two tracks —Yuanpei College and regular undergraduate programs, I interviewed one administrator from Yuanpei College, and one of the vice directors of the Academic Affairs Office at the university level. Access to these

administrators at PKU was somewhat limited; therefore I relied heavily on published materials for statements regarding GE policy. Since the GE program for Yuanpei students also has the component of mentors from inside and outside of campus, I also interviewed one mentor from the university and one from outside of campus in order to see how that part of the program was functioning. Interviews with faculty members followed my original plan, and two of the faculty members, one from each department, also have administrative roles in their respective department. Table 4.2 shows a list of my interviewees at PKU and a brief outline of the interviews conducted there.

Table 4.2. Interviewee Information at PKU

Label		Title	Content of Interviews
Administration Line	PA- 1	Vice Director of the Academic Affairs Office	Background of GE reform at PKU and major challenges
	PA- 2	Administrator of Yuanpei College	History of Yuanpei College and its development in the past few years
	PA- 3	Yuanpei Student mentor within Yuanpei College	Roles as a Yuanpei mentor
	PA- 4	Yuanpei Student mentor from outside campus	Roles as a Yuanpei mentor
Faculty Line	PFChi-1	Male, Chinese Dept., Professor, Vice Chair	Followed the attached interview protocol with also questions about the implementation of GE policies at the development level
	PFChi-2	Male, Chinese Dept., Associate Professor,	Followed the attached interview protocol strictly
	PFChi-3	Male, Chinese Dept., Associate Professor,	
	PFChe-1	Male, Chemistry Dept, Professor, Vice Dean	Followed the attached interview protocol with additional questions about the implementation of GE policies at the college level
	PFChe-2	Male, Chemistry Dept, Professor	Followed the attached interview protocol strictly
	PFChe-3	Female, Chemistry Dept, Professor	
	PFChe-4	Male, Chemistry Dept, Professor	

Each interview lasted about thirty minutes to an hour, depending what the interviewees had to offer. All interviews were conducted in Chinese, and they were audio recorded with the interviewees' agreement. Interviews were conducted either in a quiet space chosen by the interviewee or, more often, the interviewee's office. At the beginning of each interview, I offered a very brief introduction about the purposes of my study, asked them to sign the consent form, and then started my interview with prepared interview protocols as guidance for detailed questions I would ask. As qualitative research is usually emergent, questions needed to be adjusted (Creswell, 2003), and detailed interview questions differed depending on each interviewee's experience with the GE program. I also collected some documents and related materials while I was visiting the two institutions. After returning from my trip and listening to the recorded interviews, I also contacted some interviewees through email to ask for related documents that were mentioned in the interviews.

4.3. My Role as a Researcher in the Study

The researchers themselves are usually the instruments of data collection, and their personal experiences, values, assumptions, and biases can affect the process of data collection and data analysis (Merriam, 1998; Creswell, 1994). As Merriam (1998) points out, the researcher as the primary instrument for gathering and analyzing data, can respond to the situation by maximizing opportunities for collecting and producing meaningful information. Qualitative researchers are also interpreters (Stake, 1995) and their own experiences also influence the way they interpret the world around them. In qualitative studies, "the personal-self becomes inseparable from the researcher-self" (Creswell, 2003, p.183). Therefore, it is necessary to clarify my role as a

researcher so that the readers can make their own judgment about how I, as the researcher, might have influenced the research findings.

All my education before graduate school was in China. My own undergraduate experience took place from 1996 to 2000, at one of the key Chinese universities; at that time Chinese universities were experiencing rapid expansion and change, and this is one of the primary reasons that I entered the field of higher education. In my undergraduate years, I was always struggling with what I wanted to learn and what I was supposed to learn in order to fulfill my degree requirements. Like many students at that time, I questioned the meaning of university life and the usefulness of what I was learning in college. And because of the many changes that were taking place during that particular time period—e.g., the merging of another institution to our campus, and the restructuring of the program I was in— I was quite upset about the impact of some of these changes on an ordinary student like myself. All these experiences led me to give up the chance to study the field of my chosen major in college, but after graduation, I entered the field of higher education. I worked in a private college for a half year in administration, and then for one year I taught at an independent college affiliated with a top-tier Chinese university. Then I came to North America to pursue my graduate degrees. All this gave me the opportunity to look at the changes taking place, from the perspectives of a staff member and of someone who was teaching in the system.

Merriam (1998) uses the metaphor of a detective to describe a qualitative researcher, and she emphasizes that the researcher needs to be sensitive, and to be a good communicator and listener. Because all interviews were conducted in Chinese and I am ethnically Chinese, and because I was educated in China and worked in the higher education sector for a year and a half, and have an intuitive understanding of Chinese culture, especially the university culture, I am in the

unique position of being a sensible detective. Looking back, I was able to establish initial bonds with my interviewees quickly; because of the Chinese language we all spoke, I was able to sense undertones during the interviews both because of my language skills and cultural sensitivity. At the same time, the fact that I was in North America for almost ten years and returned to China, put me in the position of an "outsider" and gave some of the interviewees the secure feeling that they could talk to me about the problems that they would normally not share with "insiders." The fact that I received my degree from a prestigious Canadian university in the field of higher education, and am pursuing my doctoral degree at a top-tier American university also produced their effect. Though I gave only a brief introduction about the purpose of my research before each interview, and tried to avoid talking about my own perspectives during the interviews, some faculty members saw me as someone who would enter the academic field, and therefore aligned with me, especially the younger generation of faculty members; while some administrators saw me as someone who experienced the foreign system and therefore assumed that I would be able to offer them some of my own thoughts and experience. Though I did not plan all this, I acknowledge the fact that my status of being there as a Chinese who came from the "outside" had an impact on how my interviewees responded to my questions.

A case researcher is also an interpreter. "The case researcher recognizes and substantiates new meanings. Whoever is a researcher has recognized a problem, a puzzlement, and studies it, hoping to connect it better with known things. Finding new connections, the researcher finds ways to make them comprehensible to others" and the researcher is the agent of new interpretation and new knowledge (Stake, 1995, p. 97). Viewing myself as an interpreter, I also acknowledge that my previous experiences not only influenced the way I gathered my data, but also how I made sense of the data.

4.4. Data Analysis

In qualitative studies, data collection and analysis is a simultaneous activity (Merriam, 1998). As Merriam (1998) points out:

> Analysis begins with the first interview, the first observation, the first document read. Emerging insights, hunches, and tentative hypotheses direct the next phase of data collection, which in turn leads to the refinement or reformulation of questions, and so on. It is an interactive process through out that allows the investigator to produce believable and trustworthy findings (p. 152).

Stake (1995) also points out "There is no particular moment when data analysis begins. Analysis is a matter of giving meaning to first impressions as well as to final compilations" (p. 71). As described in the previous section, each interview was conducted by considering the interviewee's role and involvement in general education and adjusting the interview protocol based on questions raised from interviews already conducted. In this sense, I started to analyze my data right after I started my first interview. After returning from my trip, I transcribed all the interviews into Chinese. While I was transcribing, I started to take notes about points that were interesting to me and started to make connections among different interviews. Though I attempted to use academic software to analyze the data while I was transcribing, because of the English version I was using, it was difficult to code the Chinese documents. Therefore, I chose to manually analyze the data.

Merriam (1998) describes qualitative data analysis as a "mysterious metamorphosis" and she points out that the process is highly intuitive. Creswell (1994) describes this process as a "reduction" and "interpretation": The researcher takes a voluminous amount of information and

reduces it to certain patterns, categories, or themes and then interprets the information by using some schema. Stake (1995) points out two ways that researchers make sense of cases, and they are "through direct interpretation of the individual instance and through aggregation of instances until something can be said about them as a class" (p. 74).

During the analysis of my research data, major categories were identified, and these themes appear as major findings supported by multiple perspectives from various individuals. Both direct interpretation and aggregation of instances were used in the process. Chapters 5 and 6 show the findings at ECNU and PKU respectively. In each chapter, the university's general education program is described based on documents and interview data from administrators. I specifically lay out achievements and challenges that were expressed by administrators. Then, faculty members' perspectives are laid out in the following themes: their understanding of general education, their participation in the policy development and implementation process, their experience of teaching or not teaching GE courses and the reasons behind their choices, and their overall evaluation of the GE program in their institutions. In chapter 7, I conduct a cross case analysis by looking at the common themes in both institutions.

Chapter 5

The Case of ECNU

In this chapter, I analyze the case of ECNU. First, I introduce the university's general education reform with supporting materials from my interviews with six administrators of the university. I do this by outlining the university's profile, describing its general education program, and summarizing administrators' views of the purpose of GE at ECNU, foreign influence on GE, achievements of GE reform at ECNU, and challenges the program is facing. Second, I look at the reform and its implementation from the perspective of several members of the faculty, and summarize the findings and themes of my interviews with them.

5.1 ECNU and Its General Education Reform

5.1.1 About ECNU

A Brief History of ECNU

East China Normal University is located in Shanghai, one of the largest metropolises in China and, indeed, the world. As briefly presented in chapter 4, ECNU was established in 1951 as one of six national normal universities, and it was the teacher-training center for the East China region (Hayhoe, Zha, & Li, 2011; Hayhoe, 1996). Normal universities originated in France in the late 18th century as institutions for training school teachers (Hayhoe et al., 2011). Though the Chinese higher education system as established in the 1950s was a highly specialized system, normal universities were required to have a similar set of departments as was to be found in "comprehensive universities," which had classic disciplines in the European tradition, with the addition of education, fine arts, and music (Hayhoe, 1996). In the case of ECNU, its

establishment during China's 1952 restructuring of the higher education system, incorporated two former private universities, Daxia University (founded in 1924) and Guanghua University (founded in 1925), as well as some disciplines in the arts and sciences drawn from several other prestigious universities in Shanghai and the neighboring provinces of Jiangsu and Zhejiang (Li, 2010; Hayhoe, 1996). Therefore, though ECNU was established mainly as a teacher-training university, compared with most other Chinese universities, it had a relatively complete set of academic disciplines. The university was also one of the 16 universities that were graded in 1959 as a Key National University (East China Normal University, 2011).

Recent Changes and Developments

Immediately after the Cultural Revolution in 1978, ECNU reaffirmed its National Key University status (East China Normal University, 2011). Its first president at that time, Liu Funian (president of ECNU from 1978 to 1984) had studied philosophy at Cambridge University, the University of Paris, and the *Ecole Normale Superieure* in France in the late 1930s; he envisioned a university with a strong foundation in the disciplines, an expanded graduate program, and research integrated into all aspects of the university's work (Hayhoe, Zha, & Li, 2011). This vision from the university's leadership reveals ECNU's development path toward a comprehensive research university even as early as the early 1980s. In 1979 the university only had 11 departments and 17 programs (East China Normal University, 2011). To establish a more comprehensive education field, ECNU gradually developed a number of new undergraduate programs such as computer science, electronic science and technology, preschool education, and special education (East China Normal University, 2011). The university also started to extend its programs into areas outside teacher education programs by establishing non-education related

departments (Hayhoe, Zha, & Li, 2011). By 1991, the university had 21 departments and 38 programs (East China Normal University, 2011). As for graduate education, right after 1978, the university began to recruit graduate students. With the launching of national higher education reform in the 1980s, in 1986 ECNU became one of the first 33 universities authorized by the State Council to establish graduate schools; by 1991, the university had established 28 doctoral programs (East China Normal University, 2011).

With the further development of higher education reform in China, especially in the 1990s, the pressure on ECNU to transform from a teacher education institution to a comprehensive university increased. As stated in chapter 3, three major areas of higher education reform were outlined in *The Outline of Chinese Education Reform and Development* in 1993: to diversify revenue sources of higher education institutions, to decentralize the administrative structure and expand university autonomy, and to restructure universities for efficiency, effectiveness, and reasonable expansion (State Education Commission, 1993). Thus, like many other universities in China, ECNU experienced a series of changes. The university-conducted reforms related to several major areas, for instance, its personnel and administrative systems (East China Normal University, 2011). In 1997 and 1998, the university incorporated three lower level educational institutions: Shanghai Preschool Normal Academy, Shanghai Education College, and Shanghai No. 2 Education College (East China Normal University, 2011; Li, 2010) and its field of education become more comprehensive. In 1996, the university also entered the national *Project 211* as one of the first group of Chinese universities (East China Normal University, 2011), which gave the university extra funding. And, last but not least, like many other Chinese universities, ECNU also experienced huge enrollment expansion toward the end of the last century. One of the results of the enrollment expansion was that, in addition to its original site in

Putuo District near the downtown Shanghai area, the university had to create a new campus in the Minhang District, southwest of Shanghai, in order to accommodate the increased student population (Hayhoe, Zha, & Li, 2011).

The opening of teacher education programs at other non-normal universities has also led normal universities to move in the direction of comprehensive education. Teacher education in the Chinese higher education system as established in the 1950s, was a closed and independent system with designated teacher training institutions at the national, provincial, county, and city levels for pre-service and in-service teacher education (Li, 2010). Non-normal institutions were not involved in teacher education. ECNU was a national normal university cultivating both pre-service and in-service teachers in its system. But, with the introduction of a market economy, the closed and independent teacher training system was challenged, and the call for opening teacher education to non-normal universities to meet the demand for qualified teachers increased (Li, 2010). In an official policy document entitled *The Decision of the CPC Central Committee and State Council on Deepening Education Reform and Promoting Comprehensive Quality Education,* released in June 1999, comprehensive universities and non-normal colleges were encouraged to participate in teacher cultivation and training, and comprehensive universities were encouraged to establish normal schools within themselves (Li, 2010). This no doubt has brought challenges to ECNU's status as a national normal university.

Therefore, facing challenges from mass higher education and competition with other key normal, and comprehensive, universities, ECNU developed a strategy of "becoming a top-ranking research university that is prestigious in a number of subjects and leads in China's teacher education in particular" (East China Normal University, 2011). Though ECNU had been included in the Project 211, it had received far less financial support than Fudan University or

Jiaotong University in Shanghai, which were also *Project 985* universities. The current president of ECNU, President Yu Lizhong, was the vice president of the university from 1997 to 2002, and became president in 2006. He viewed his most pressing and immediate challenge, getting ECNU included on the list of Project 985 universities (Hayhoe, Zha, & Li, 2011). Through persistent efforts going back to 2001, ECNU finally succeeded in being accepted as the 39th Project 985 university in 2006—the last one to get on board (Hayhoe et al., 2011), and the university included the statement of "developing a world-renowned, high-level research university" as its strategic plan (Yu, 2006). By 2006, the university released a statement of the university's guiding development plan; it says, "one central focus, two areas of particular emphasis, and three major strategies;" the one focus of the university refers to "nurturing creative talent," two areas of particular emphasis are "cross-disciplinary and integrative scholarship as an essential condition for creativity" and "internationalization," and the three major strategies are "to attract outstanding scholars, gather resources, and create excellence" (Yu, 2006; Hayhoe et al., 2011).

In 2007, the MOE implemented a policy of fee-waiving normal education in its six national normal universities to ensure a sufficient supply of quality teachers in the central and western regions of China (Hayhoe, Zha, & Li, 2011; Li, 2010). This was a boost for ECNU's teacher education programs (Li, 2010). Now ECNU has become a comprehensive research university with teacher education as one of its leading disciplines. It has 19 full-time schools and colleges covering major disciplines and professional schools, two unconventional colleges: College of Continuing Education and College of Distance Education, and five advanced research institutes, with 58 departments offering 70 undergraduate programs (East China Normal University, 2011). The university has a faculty body of over 4000, with over 2000 full-time teachers and over 1200 professors and associate professors; the total number of full-time undergraduate students is about

14,000, and graduate students, 12,000 (East China Normal University, 2011). Table 5.1 summarizes the changing number of faculty and student enrollment in three selected years:

Table 5.1. Changing Number of Student Enrollment and Full-time Faculty Number

	1995	**2000**	**2005**	**2010**
Undergraduate enrollment	5,913	9,913	12,256	**14,800**
Graduate enrollment	1,320	2,415	6,898	12,000
Full-time faculty	1,532	1,473	1,730	Over 2,000

Note. Data from this table are summarized from ECNU's website (East China Normal University, 2011) and Hayhoe, Zha, and Li's 2011 article (Hayhoe, Zha, & Li, 2011).

5.1.2 The Development of GE Practice at ECNU

Though the official launch of the current GE program at ECNU was in 2006 when the university was preparing for the *Evaluation of University Baccalaureate Programs* organized by the MOE [hereafter, the 2006 Evaluation], the preparation for it and the conditions for it to happen had taken place long before 2006. In this section, I describe the development of the GE program at ECNU according to relevant documents and my interviews with some of the administrators.

In 1993, ECNU started to promote the reform of a curriculum system based on credits and teaching content (East China Normal University, 2006a). Though there were only about 20 elective courses in the university (EA-5; EA-6), this broke the fixed curriculum structure of a specialized system and allowed students to have some choice. About the same time, the university established colleges and schools in order to group departments and create a foundation for broadened academic fields (East China Normal University, 2006a; Hayhoe, Zha, & Li, 2011). At both the university level and college or school level, common required and elective courses

were restructured or developed to give students the broader knowledge structure, while the department-level courses were mainly to serve requirements for their majors (East China Normal University, 2006a; EA-5).[6] Yet this was only at an exploratory stage. With the adding of more majors and new departments, and the restructuring of schools and colleges in the 1990s, the curriculum structure at that time was not stable. As one of the interviewees stated, the newly established curriculum structure did not last long (EA-5). But the development of new elective courses went on, and by the end of last century, there were about 100 elective courses for students (EA-5).

In 1999, the university made a clear policy decision to use the model of "basic requirements + need-based electives" as the guideline to formulate its university syllabus for undergraduate education (East China Normal University, 2006a). From then on, every year the university endeavored to revise these teaching plans. To implement the MOE's emphasis on the quality of baccalaureate teaching after the higher education enrollment expansion at the turn of the century, in 2003, the university further reformed its credit system and started gradually to implement a flexible/elastic length of undergraduate study period instead of the strict four-year requirement; in 2005, it also established the principle of reform guided by the needs of the community and society and in the direction of cultivating talent with "broadened requirements, a solid foundation, strong capacity, and high quality" (East China Normal University, 2006a, p. 32). In the 2006 baccalaureate program teaching plan, the university clearly used the term "general education" (通识教育) and "general education courses" (通识课) and established a curriculum structure with three basic areas: general education, specialty education, and teacher education (East China

[6] Though in ECNU's self-evaluation reform in 2006 (East China Normal University, 2006), the term "general education" was used as in its 1993 curriculum design, I went through several major documents in between of 1996 to 2005, there was no mention of the term "general education" or "general education courses." The term used was "common required courses" and "common elective courses."

Normal University, 2006a; East China Normal University, 2006b). Thus, the university officially launched a general education program focused on developing GE courses. It was clearly pointed out:

> General education courses are designed to further expand students' knowledge scope, to expand students' comprehensive perspective on multi-disciplines, to help students understand academic progress and frontier disciplines, to cultivate students' scientific spirit and humanistic quality, and to improve students' overall quality and social adaptability (East China Normal University, 2006a, p. 32).

GE Course Development

The university took the responsibility of setting up a platform for developing GE courses, and colleges and schools for specialty courses. General education courses were derived from two sources. Some of the GE courses were drawn from the commonly required courses for all undergraduate students under the old curriculum structure. These include: English, Physical Education, Training of Military Theory, Employment Guidance, Mao Zedong Thought and Theory of Socialism, Compendium of Chinese Modern and Contemporary History, Cultivation of Ideology and Morality and Foundation of Law, and Introduction to Fundamentals of Marxism.[7] Similar courses with slightly different course names are required for all undergraduate students across different universities in China, and therefore, these courses are also called "nationally required courses," or in Chinese, *guoding kecheng* (国定课程).

The other part of the GE curriculum is called GE electives, and these are either newly developed courses or existing elective courses regrouped under five major areas—languages,

[7] These course names are from the latest *syllabus for undergraduate* 2011(East China Normal University, 2011b).

humanities and arts, social sciences, natural sciences, and education and psychology (Meng, 2006; East China Normal University, 2006c).[8] Starting in 2005, the Academic Affairs Office began to allocate special funding to support faculty members developing new GE courses. The Academic Affairs Office formed a special interest group. This group reviewed GE programs in other world-renowned universities and national key universities, and developed a list of potential courses. After discussions with faculty representatives and with the approval of the University Academic Committee, this list was sent to faculty members, and faculty members were encouraged to apply for special funds to develop these courses (EA-4; EA-5; EA-6). Interested faculty members prepared their course syllabus and other required materials; they went through a process which was composed of a trial lecture and a Q&A session in front of a group of experts from different disciplines who were invited by the Academic Affairs Office. If they passed this process, they were allocated special funds to develop and teach the course, and they had to commit to teach the developed courses for at least two years. In the middle of these two years, they went through a review process. This course development process went on for several years, with adjustments in each year. For example, in 2008 the emphasis was on "infiltrating the humanities and the sciences"— that is, encouraging students from the humanities and social sciences to learn more about sciences, and students from the sciences and engineering to know more about the humanities and the social sciences— and so the Academic Affairs Office therefore organized people to develop eight courses: 1) *College Mathematics, 2) Mathematical Culture, 3) College Statistics*, and 4) *Methods of Statistical Investigation* for students majoring in the humanities and the social sciences; and 5) *Chinese Language and Literature*, 6) *History Outline, 7) Classical Sinology Reading*, and 8) *Confucian Thought and Contemporary Society*

[8] The author of this article is from ECNU and he uses ECNU's general education courses as examples.

for students from the sciences and engineering (EA-3; East China Normal University, 2011b). Students from the humanities and the social sciences are required to select one course from the four mathematical and statistics courses listed, and students from the sciences and engineering are required to select one course from the four cultural and humanity courses. These are called "designated GE electives."

With the incoming of fee-waiving students in the teacher education programs of 2007, the university started to emphasize GE electives in education fields for this group of students. It also established a residential hall named after its first president, Meng Xiancheng, called *Meng Xiancheng Academy*, to facilitate the cultivation of students in teacher education programs (East China Normal University, 2010c). By the time of my interviews, the Academic Affairs Office was organizing discussion sessions about setting up a platform for GE electives required for students in teacher education programs.

In 2005, for a student in a four-year undergraduate program at ECNU, the total credits were 160. Among these, 57 credits would be GE credits, which took 36% of the total credits; and among GE courses, the required courses were 41 credits, and took about 72% of the total GE credits. GE elective courses were 16 credits, and they took 28% of the total GE credits (Meng, 2006). By 2011, these requirements had changed, and the university developed a curriculum composed of GE courses, foundational courses for broader disciplines, specialist courses, and teacher education courses (see figure 5.1). There are 156 total credits for baccalaureate programs. Students in regular undergraduate programs take GE courses, disciplinary foundation courses and specialist courses. Among these credits, GE courses take 52 credits, or about 33%. Among these 52 credits, 38 credits are required GE courses for all, 2 credits are for the designated GE electives, and 12 credits are for GE electives. For the 12 GE elective credits, students can choose

from the following series: 1) language, humanities and arts; 2) social science; 3) information science; 4) natural science; 5) education and psychology; 6) Meng Xiancheng knowledge series lecture. For students in the teacher education program, the credit requirements are slightly different. Table 5.2 shows the credit requirements for students in regular programs and students in teacher education programs in the Department of Chinese Language and Literature and the Department of Chemistry.

Figure 5.1. ECNU's Current Curriculum Structure

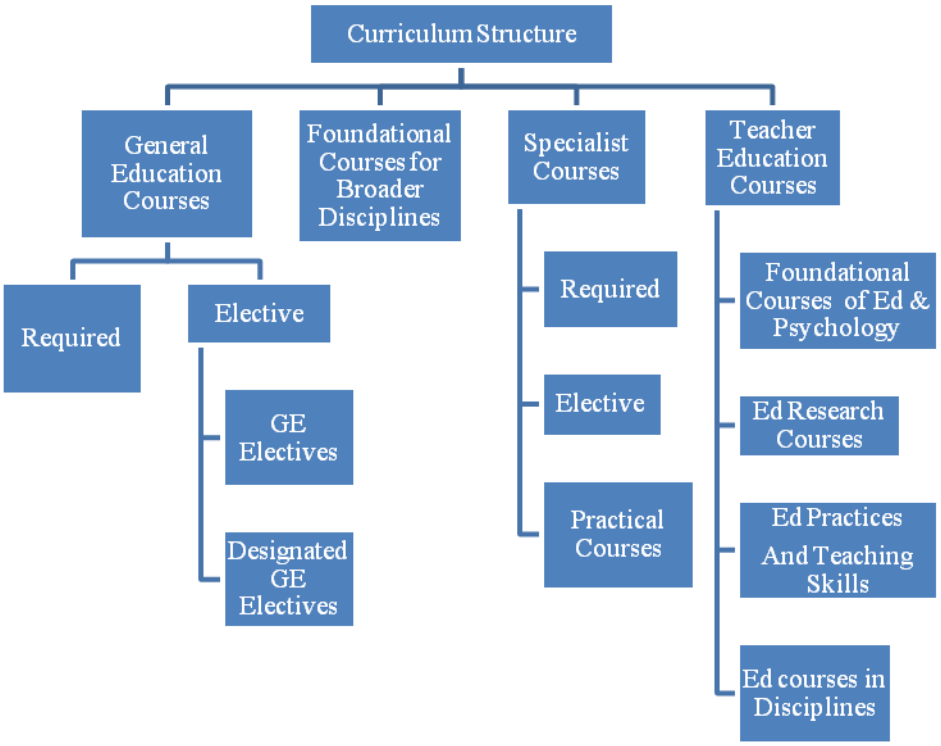

Figure 5.1 is adapted from "The Report of East China Normal University's Undergraduate Education Quality in 2010" (East China Normal University, 2011c, p. 5).

Table 5.2 Credit Requirements in the Two Selected Departments at ECNU

		Teacher Education Program (156 credits)				**Regular Program (156 credits)**		
		General Ed Courses	Disciplinary Foundation Courses	Specialist Courses	Teacher Ed Courses	**General Ed Courses**	Disciplinary Foundation Courses	Specialist Courses
Chinese and Lit Major	By Credits	**48 (38+2+8)**	3	80	25	**52 (38+2+12)**	9	95
	By Percentage	**31%**	2%	51%	16%	**33.3%**	5.7%	60.8%
Chemistry	By Credits	**48 (38+2+8)**	18 (Includes math)	65	25	**52 (38+2+12)**	13	91
	By Percentage	**31%**	12%	16%	16%	**33%**	8%	58%

Note. Data comes from "The Syllabus for undergraduate, East China Normal University" (East China Normal University, 2011b).

5.2 Looking at General Education at ECNU from the Administrators' Perspective

As shown in chapter 4 (see table 4.1), six administrators at ECNU were interviewed —one of the vice presidents of the university, the director and one of the staff members at the Academic Affairs Office, and three former vice directors of this office. Results of these interviews are summarized below according to theme.

5.2. 1 Background of GE Reform at ECNU

When discussing the background of ECNU's GE reform, depending on their positions or the former positions these administrators held, they view the reasons behind the reform from different perspectives. One of the former vice directors of the Academic Affairs Office pointed out that though the university is always a comprehensive university with strong traditions in the humanities, social sciences and sciences, and the university also has a long history of encouraging students to take courses from other disciplines, the clear articulation of general education was in 2006, when the university was preparing for the 2006 evaluation:

> In 2006, one of the biggest things to us is the evaluation of university baccalaureate programs. . . . You might have heard this: "Use the evaluation as the opportunity to improve management; use evaluation as the opportunity to construct."[9] After the higher education expansion, both the software and hardware of the universities could not reach certain standards, and there was no standard. Therefore they came up with standards and developed this large-scale evaluation. . . . So we participated in the MOE's evaluation in 2006 (Admin-4, p. 1).

This may be seen as the direct reason why ECNU started to develop the GE program, but as several interviewees mentioned, the implementation of the GE program at ECNU was an accumulated effect of the university's previous efforts in several aspects, and it can be traced back to the 1980s when the university started to develop elective courses and to encourage the disciplinary penetration of the humanities, social sciences, and sciences:

> After the open door policy, since 1978, the university started to develop a credit system. . . . One of the purposes of doing so was to increase students' freedom of selecting courses, and this is one of the basic conditions for the development of general education—the course selective system (EA-5, p. 1).

The university has had a comprehensive disciplinary foundation since its establishment, and it has made continuing effort in developing elective courses, adding new public elective courses, advocating the disciplinary penetration of the humanities, social sciences and sciences, and encouraging students to take courses from other disciplinary areas, all viewed as necessary conditions for the university to have been able to develop its GE program in 2006 (EA-1; EA-4;

[9] This is my translation of the slogan for the evaluation: 以评促管，以评促建.

EA-5; EA-6). From this perspective, the development of the GE program at ECNU was not a sudden move; it was part of the university's constant efforts to explore ways of responding to changes in the environment.

From the perspective of the university's leadership, GE reform was not an isolated event; it was a necessary move for the university, as the entire higher education system was marching from elite to mass education. And ECNU, examining its mission in such a changing environment, set as its goal, to become a "world renowned research university." The fact that Chinese higher education has entered a stage of mass higher education forces universities to rethink their mission and this contributes to the university's efforts to reorganize the undergraduate curriculum:

> Talking about the development of higher education system, we went from an elite system to a mass system**.** In a certain sense, the undergraduate level has become the basic level of the higher education system (EA-2, p. 1).

Unlike the specialized system in which undergraduate education was focused on cultivating top specialists, undergraduate education within a mass higher education system has to be broader. ECNU, a key university in the old system, also needs to keep up with its status. As the university sets its goal of becoming a high level, world class research university, the vice president pointed out it should definitely ask one question: what would the undergraduate education of a world-class university would look like?

> In the Boyer Report,[10] . . . (which traces) the changing trends of two indicators of the teaching reforms of the world's best research universities, one of (the trends) is to restructure the curriculum of general education . . .(in) the development of

[10] The full name for the *Boyer Report* is *Reinventing Undergraduate Education: A Blueprint for America's Research Universities.* It was published by the Carnegie Foundation's Boyer Commission in 1998.

> the world's higher education system, especially the development of a comprehensive university, there should be some general rules that might be followed. For comprehensive universities, if the best universities in the world are restructuring their general education curriculum, for your own university, if you want to be a world-renowned university, shouldn't you also be doing the same thing (EA-1, p. 2)?

The vice president also brought this to the level of the university's self-reflection on its mission in a changing environment:

> This is also a self-reflection about the reality that Chinese education—not just higher education—is facing. . . . Our country desires to be an innovative state. What is the biggest barrier that we are facing for such an objective? It may be the various trends of utilitarianism penetrating in all aspects of our social life when the country has been transforming from a closed society to a society open to the world. And utilitarianism is the natural enemy of innovation. . . . How do we reverse such a trend? . . . From the university's perspective, this is our responsibility. University is the source of innovation. University graduates should be able to promote social progress, and they should be innovative. In such a context, a university education should be able to say no to utilitarianism. This comes back to the essence of the university, and the university should be doing something that it is supposed to do (EA-1, p. 2).

When we put these together, we see that the adoption of GE practice at ECNU is a reasonable result when "the local" meets "the global": the nature of the university to pursue excellence makes demands on itself to respond constantly to changes outside the university and to make

adjustments accordingly—in the case of ECNU, the changing economic and political environment requires the university to change its curriculum and explore ways to fit into the new market economy; and the undergraduate education at world-class universities offers ECNU a model to look at in a changing environment.

5.2. 2 Understanding the Purpose of GE

It was not easy for interviewees to define general education directly. Their understanding of general education and its objectives are often based on its role in knowledge structure, its relationship to students' chosen majors, its role in students' future career, and its role in students' life in general. In terms of knowledge structure, one interviewee mentioned that:

> We hope to give students in the humanities, social science and sciences disciplines a common basic component in their curriculum so that their views can be broadened in the future. This is the purpose (EA-6, p. 2).

General education can also be understood in terms of its role in students' majors, and their future careers and lives:

> General education, in fact, is the education outside the students' study major. It is to improve students' personality. If the education in students' majors is for their careers in the future, general education in college is to help them become a whole person (EA-4, p. 3).

Another interviewee mentioned the purpose of general education as going beyond knowledge per se:

> In the past we had an elite education system. But now it is not about how deep you teach your students in terms of knowledge. . . . It is about letting them learn

> methods: to allow students to learn how to learn, to learn to live, and to learn to find the problem and be able to solve the problem when they encounter them once they step outside the university (EA-6, p. 6).

The vice president also described general education by going beyond knowledge per se, and emphasized the importance of teaching students scientific thinking and developing their morality:

> The goal of general education is not to improve students' knowledge structure, but . . . to establish (students') correct values and scientific ways of thinking (EA-1, p. 3).

While the above views more or less looked at general education from the perspective of students' personal development— that is, how GE contributes to an individual student's career or life, the director of the Academic Affairs Office helped to make the connection between individual and the society when he talked about the purpose of general education as citizenship building:

> I think general education is based more on cultivating a qualified person, not on educating a specialist. That is, how to educate a qualified citizen or a qualified person who is able to adapt to the future needs of the society (EA-2, p. 1).

To summarize, just as the literature has generally indicated about the situation in the United States (See Boyer & Levine, 1981), there is no universal understanding about what general education is and what goals it should be achieving among administrators at ECNU. Yet, whether it is to help students to broaden their scope of knowledge or to help them establish correct values and scientific ways of thinking, their understandings of GE reflect on these administrators' thinking about what a university education should achieve in terms of educating individual students as well as fulfilling social responsibilities to the general society in this changing environment.

5.2. 3 Influences from Other Institutions on Design of GE Practice at ECNU

When designing the GE program at ECNU, administrators did step out of the university and consulted with other top-tier universities in China on their practice of general education.

> For the purpose of the undergraduate evaluation (by the MOE), the university chose several areas that the university needed to establish standards for and to work on. Among these areas, program-teaching plans are the most basic ones that the evaluation team must look at. In order to work on this, we formed a special group to look up and consult other institutions' program teaching plans. Then we focused on institutions that are of similar status and have similar disciplinary layout as we do. . . . We looked at Beijing Normal University, Peking University, Tsinghua University. In Shanghai, we looked at Fudan University, because Fudan is also an institution known for its strong tradition in the liberal arts. So we looked up these universities' program teaching plans, considered our own characteristics, and developed the kind of plan that reflected the advantages of our university in having strong disciplines in both the humanities and social sciences disciplines as well as strong sciences (EA-4, p. 2).

The names mentioned here are all top-tier universities in China. Another interviewee also mentioned that internationally, ECNU looked at Stanford University and Harvard University, and within China, it looked at Fudan University and Beijing Normal University. Fudan and Shanghai Jiaotong Universities' names were also mentioned several times on other occasions by different interviewees, reflecting a rather competitive relationship among these top-tier institutions. As indicated, such learning from other institutions was not limited to learning from

Chinese universities, nor was it limited to general education. One interviewee also talked about his experience of leading a team to Hong Kong when the university was trying to develop a complete credit system:

> When we were trying to develop a complete credit system, a group of people went to the U.S. to do research. For another group, it was I who led the team to Hong Kong. We went to visit the University of Hong Kong and Chinese University of Hong Kong. We faced some confusion in reforming our credit system, and so we wanted to see how foreign universities deal with these issues (EA-6, p. 1).

And such experience had other effects as well:

> I was particularly interested in the Chinese University of Hong Kong. I felt the Chinese University of Hong Kong did have something unique in their general education practices. It has an academy—a residential college—that I think is really good. . . . In this college, its general education curriculum is very good, a bit better (than general GE curriculum at the university) (EA-6, p. 4).

I have had personal experience with such teams of administrators from China exploring practices in U.S. universities. During my own study at UCLA, in the fall of 2010, I was also involved in a site visit in which UCLA's administrators and faculty members welcomed a group of about 20 administrators from ECNU, led by one of ECNU's vice presidents. The group's major interest was about undergraduate teaching management. A lot of questions that the ECNU group raised up during the reception were about curriculum reform, including general education. The group had also visited Stanford University and took part in a similar session before coming to UCLA (East China Normal University, 2010).

Though the interviewees did not get into details about how these activities influenced their decision-making, from the GE model that the university has adopted, there are indications that such activities of learning from peer institutions at home and abroad did have some influences on ECNU's practice. For example at the beginning, the university adopted a commonly used approach: a distribution model that has been used by many comprehensive universities. With the ECNU team's visit to the Chinese University of Hong Kong, there was also the revision of adding a residential college for students in teacher education programs. Yet there is no evidence to suggest that the university directly copied from any particular GE model of other universities.

5.2. 4 Achievements of GE Practice at ECNU

After several years' development, ECNU has established a basic framework for GE practice and it is based on GE required courses, GE electives, and designated GE electives (See figure 5.1). A major achievement is its course development. Now in every semester, the university is able to offer over 200 GE electives in five themes to its students (EA-5). The university has also developed eight core GE courses as designated GE electives: *College Mathematics, Mathematical Culture*, *College Statistics*, and *Methods of Statistical Investigation* for humanities and social sciences majors; and *Chinese Language and Literature*, *History Outline, Classical Sinology Reading,* and *Confucian Thought and Contemporary Society* for students with science majors (EA-3). Some administrators gave credit for these achievements to the university's emphasis on general education, its strong comprehensive disciplinary foundations in the social sciences, humanities, and sciences, and the university's strong leadership. As one interviewee stated:

> To practice general education at ECNU, we have good conditions. . . . ECNU is a comprehensive university, and we have some very passionate faculty members. . . . And second, our leadership does emphasize general education (EA-5, p. 15).

This view was shared by several of the administrators interviewed. One of the interviewees even emphasized that only comprehensive universities could actually implement GE practices:

> Though many universities (in China) have implemented general education practices, only comprehensive universities have the conditions for practicing it well. . . . Only these universities, the best comprehensive universities in China — Peking University, Fudan University, Nanjing University, Sun Yat-sen University, and including ECNU – which have strong liberal arts and science disciplinary foundations [can do it]. Otherwise, you cannot even find people who can teach these types of courses (EA-1, p. 8).

Several administrators interviewed agree that, at the university's management level, there is an emphasis on general education. Another reflection of this emphasis is that, when the Academic Affairs Office first started to build GE courses, it also invited some of the most respected professors to develop them:

> To develop (GE) courses, our thoughts at that time were to invite our best professors to do this. I remember we did some top quality general education courses. . . . We invited about ten well-known experts at our universities to develop the first batch of these courses, including the two members of the Chinese Academy of Sciences[11] [from our university]—the member in the chemistry area

[11] Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) is the nation's highest academic institution in natural sciences, and the life-long honor of

> and in the computer area…. We invited them. That was in 2006 and 2007, and it did cause a sensation: they are the best in their fields, and yet they were teaching students who were not even majoring in their fields (EA-2, p. 2).

This shows how seriously the university was viewing the role of GE. As to strong leadership, one of its manifestations is the policy incentive of the university to encourage faculty members to develop GE courses. For example, according to one interviewee, the university gave special funds, ranging from 20,000 RMB (about 3000 in U.S. dollars) to 50,000 RMB (about 7000 in U.S. dollars), to support faculty member's development of GE courses; for the GE courses that obtain good evaluation results from students, the university also gives faculty members who teach these courses special rewards that are only awarded for GE courses. Yet it is necessary to point out that not everyone views this the same way. As it will be seen in next section, some interviewees did point out that the emphasis on GE reform has decreased after the 2006 evaluation.

5.2. 5 Challenges for Implementing the GE Program at ECNU

The Status of GE in Undergraduate Education

Despite the achievements mentioned above, there are challenges that the university faces. There are contradictory views as to whether faculty members and administrators see general education as an important component of undergraduate education or not. Though one administrator interviewed is very confident that most people in the university regard general education as very necessary and important, other administrators disagree:

CAS member is the highest academic title set up in science and technology in China.

> ECNU does have a group of people who have a rather clear understanding about (the importance of) general education; especially, the university has a very good education discipline. But frankly speaking, the whole university has not reached a consensus on this yet. We have so many specialties in the university, how does one recognize the necessity of general education from the perspective of his/her specialty? This will take a long time effort (EA-1, p. 9).

And several administrators interviewed think that this is especially true among faculty members. They feel general education often is put in opposition to specialty education, and this hinders the university's ability to attract good faculty members to teach GE courses. As one interviewee pointed out:

> People have misunderstood general education: general education is 'general' education: it is very general and shallow stuff; my stuff (specialist knowledge) is very sophisticated. Because of this type of view, good faculty members do not want to teach general education courses. . . . This is still the issue (EA-6, p. 3).

Another interviewee talked directly about the fact that the emphasis of undergraduate education is still the education of students' specialties:

> We only (emphasize) specialty education, and all the rest are just sidelights, the icing on the cake. General education as part of undergraduate education is not viewed, at least, as important as the education in a specialty (EA-4, p. 11).

This view of emphasizing specialist education is deeply rooted, not only among faculty members and within the university atmosphere, but also among the general society's expectations about a university education:

> Higher education in China has been developing for so many years, and the specialist education is still deeply rooted. Students come to a university and expect to graduate with a job in a related professional area. . . . We have so many people, and if what I am learning is not 'related' to my future career, how do I find a job? . . . The changing of such mentality is going to take a long time. … College education as a specialist education is ingrained not only in university faculty members, but also in the minds of the general public (EA-6, p. 13).

Realizing the importance of the university's members understanding the value of general education, the vice president described how he, as part of the leadership team, has been trying to improve the situation:

> At the university's management level, including the Academic Affairs Office, deans of the colleges, and department heads, we instill the concept to our faculty members through various meetings and daily communications. I always believe that only when one understands the concept, would one be able to take the initiative to practice it . . .I believe this can only be achieved by slowly working on it on a daily basis. . . .What is the best way to do this? Just keep it in mind and constantly remind people about it (EA-1, p. 9).

Modern universities are busy institutions with different activities going on (Kerr, 1966). Depending on the larger environment, the existence of other activities sometimes challenges the status of GE development. When talking about some of the original plans for GE reform, one interviewee stated:

> Now we only have two themes for designated general education electives. . . . In the future we want to expand these two themes to six or eight modules and let

> students choose from them. . . . But this plan has not started yet, because it is delayed by policies related to the current fee-waiving teacher education program (EA-5, p. 9).

To sum up, though some administrators see general education as an important component of ECNU's undergraduate education, not everyone shares this view. The emphasis on education in the specialty is still the dominant view, especially among faculty members. For all the members of the university to have a shared view about general education's value, it is going to take a long time, especially when the university has other priorities on its to-do list.

Challenges from Faculty Members, According to Administrators

From the administrators' point of view, another related major challenge comes from faculty members. The importance of faculty members in teaching GE courses is recognized:

> Faculty members who teach (these courses) are the most important. Their teaching experience, their academic level, their teaching methods, personal charm. . . . are very important for the quality of general education. . . . We are still looking for more (qualified faculty members) (EA-5, p. 12).

And yet as quoted above, some administrators feel that there is a mentality of emphasizing their specialties among faculty members, and it is hard to attract faculty members to teach GE courses. As another administrator also stated:

> Our faculty members do not even like to teach basic courses (in their disciplines), not to mention courses that are not for students majoring in their academic fields. So the question is, how can we attract the best teachers? (EA-2, p. 3)

Even if a faculty member is willing to teach GE courses, there still might be another issue related to their experience. As one interviewee, who also teaches in his own specialty, pointed out:

> We have grown up receiving specialty education. And you ask me to teach general education courses, I cannot! . . . This is why it is so hard to promote general education (EA-1, p. 7).

Another interviewee mentioned that challenges coming from faculty members are not limited to their attitude of preferring to teach courses in their specialties; it also comes from the existing faculty promotion system:

> For individual faculty members, the university's evaluation system is very strict. . . . Do you know what the requirements for faculty in Chinese universities are? To publish more papers, to have more research achievements, to carry on more research projects. When it comes to your teaching, it doesn't matter (EA-6, p. 14).

One other aspect contributing to this lack of faculty members' interests is related to the organizational structure called "management mechanism based on localization." This refers to the fact that the management of faculty members is at the level of their academic department:

> All our faculty members, though they are attached to the university, they are more attached to their specialties, their colleges or departments. . . . What problem does this cause? There are barriers for faculty members from different academic units to be appointed (for teaching courses) among different colleges or departments. . . . So is to share courses, since faculty members belong to different academic colleges or departments. . . . This system has not been overcome yet (EA-6, p. 8).

As the Director of the Academic Affairs Office said, the most obvious mechanisms that might be used to attract qualified faculty members to teach GE courses would be policy incentives in promoting faculty members' academic titles or financial incentives, and yet:

> These things are not a panacea. Some professors, they are not short of money, and they've been promoted to professorship already. So the key is that they should realize the importance of general education, understand its values, and then they may be able to fully engage in it (EA-2, p. 5).

This comes back to the issue of viewing general education as an important component of undergraduate education. To further promote general education at ECNU, the university will have to come up with some innovative mechanisms to not only continue to promote its value among faculty members, but also to attract and train them to teach GE courses.

Lack of an Overall Design

Another major criticism about GE practice at ECNU among administrators is the lack of an overall design and strict implementation plan; as discussed earlier, the direct implementation of GE practice at ECNU was in response to the 2006 Evaluation. As one interviewee stated:

> The assessment has passed, and we probably would not have the motivation anymore, to develop general education further; and no one would give it good consideration anymore (EA-6, p. 5).

This view might be a little bit permissive because several administrators did mention the lack of an overall design for ECNU's GE practice and they have the intention of readjusting it. It is understandable that when the university started to launch GE courses, it had to start with courses

that were available. One interviewee called the GE courses "courses based on the people," and he explained in detail what this meant:

> We offer whatever our faculty members can teach. If they can teach one certain kind of course, we'll list it in general education. We did not plan these courses according to some of the basic laws for cultivating talent (EA-6, p. 12).

Another interviewee put it in this way:

> Now it is because we have these courses, so we offer these courses; in the future, (it should be) we need to offer these courses and therefore we offer them. . . . the overall design is very important (EA-2, p. 4).

Another interviewee used the metaphor of the school cafeteria to describe the situation of GE practice at ECNU very well:

> For example, we went to the dining hall for a meal. There are many dishes I could choose from. But, what about nutrition? That is not obvious; it is not something you can tell immediately. Now you have many choices on the menu, but whether they fit students' appetites, or how nutritious they are, it is hard to tell. But at least I think the menu is richer, and students have much more choice now (EA-4, p. 11).

If the initial emphasis for developing general education at ECNU was, first, to have GE courses available to its students—or to use the metaphor, to have these dishes available on the menu—the challenge now has become to improve the nutritional value of the dishes.

Challenge of GE's Immediate Effects

The fact that it takes time to be able to see the effects of GE practice adds another layer of complexity to the list of challenges that general education is facing. As one interviewee pointed out:

> The biggest reward of education is the students we cultivate. Yet it is not until after ten to twenty years that we are able to see our students' achievements. So what we are working on (in the general education area) right now, it will be after twenty to thirty years that we can see the effects. Of course, we do it because we believe it is the right thing to do. But whether it is the right thing to do or not, the evaluation is not now (EA-1, p. 11).

If there is no consensus on general education's value among different groups in the university, without being able to show general education's immediate effects, the leadership of the university will have to constantly justify its emphasis.

Challenge of GE and Developing a World-Class University

Issues related to GE practice at ECNU are not just challenges that GE practice is facing. In a sense, the challenges are beyond general education. To the vice president, the challenges that GE faces at ECNU is related to the challenges that ECNU faces when it is transforming itself in order to reach its goal of becoming a world-renowned research university:

> General education itself is probably not just about ideas—of course ideas are very important—it is about our academic level; these are two issues that co-exist. I think to encounter the challenges we face in general education reform is crucial to our transformation toward a high level university. The reasons we cannot reach the objectives we set for general education are the same as why now we are not a

> high level university, a world-renowned university. They are exactly the same reasons. . . . Once we can have a batch of faculty members, hundreds of them who can take on the teaching tasks of general education courses, we probably will not be far from Yale University (EA-1, p. 9).

This view from the university's leadership reveals the connection that the university has made between general education and the status of a top-tier university: general education is seen as an important component of a world renowned university's undergraduate education, and its development reflects the university's move in such a direction. Another interviewee also echoes this:

> As a Project 985 university, with a tradition of having strong disciplinary foundations in the humanities, social sciences, and sciences, if your general education did not have any characteristic . . . then I am afraid that this is not commensurate with the status of your university (EA-6, p. 5).

Looked at from such a perspective, having a good GE program has become one of the criteria for universities to be able to be labeled a prestigious university.

To sum up, after several years' practice, general education at ECNU still faces many challenges. These challenges are related to people's understanding of the concept, faculty members' involvement in it, the reconsideration, after several years' implementation, of the overall design of GE courses, and of the university's overall objective to become a world-renowned university. And yet as one interviewee points out, it is important to at least get it going, and when people realize its value, its goal will eventually be reached (EA-6, p. 9).

5.3 Faculty Members' Experiences

It is the faculty members who end up teaching general education courses in the classrooms; their attitudes toward general education, and their involvement in related policy making and implementation will inevitably influence the results of GE reform. Therefore, for the further development of general education at any higher education institution, it is important to look at the experiences of faculty members. At ECNU I interviewed four faculty members from the Department of Chinese Language and Literature (hereafter, the Chinese department) and four faculty members from the Department of Chemistry. I sought to gain some perspective of how they view GE and their experiences with it. In the following sections, I look at faculty members' understanding of the purposes of undergraduate education and general education, their own involvement in the GE policymaking process, their experiences of teaching or not teaching GE courses, and their overall impression of GE reform at ECNU.

5.3. 1 Faculty Members' Understanding of the Purposes of Undergraduate Education

Faculty members were asked about their understandings of the purpose of undergraduate education before they were asked about their understanding of general education. Their answers reflect a very strong disciplinary focus. Most faculty members interviewed stress the importance of laying a strong disciplinary foundation for students at the undergraduate level. For example, one interviewee stated:

> The first requirement is that a reasonable knowledge foundation should be established, and this should be different for different disciplines. (EFChi-3, p. 2).

Interviewees from both departments share this view, and it is seen as a major characteristic of higher education, distinguishing it from basic and secondary education. One faculty member from the Department of Chemistry explained that this emphasis was determined by the

characteristics of Chemistry as an experimental science: if students did not have enough training, especially in conducting scientific experiments, it would be hard for them to further their study in this field at the graduate level. Faculty members, especially from the Chinese department, also emphasized citizenship building, moral cultivation, developing students' leadership and communication skills, and character building etc. as purposes of an undergraduate education. Using one faculty member's metaphor, the disciplinary foundation is the "hardware" or "hard power" of a college student and things like communication and leadership skills are "software" skills or "soft power," and a college education needs to emphasize both. Some faculty members' reflection on the purpose of undergraduate education also reveals their criticism of the current society and the university:

> In China now, economic development is above everything else. To some extent, students' moral cultivation is lacking (EFChe-2, p. 7).

And this faculty member thinks that cultivation of a moral and value system should be something a university education should include. Another interviewee pointed out:

> I think the university should pay attention to students' human qualities. But the emphasis on this may not be enough in the university (EFChi-3, p. 3).

Yet not everyone interviewed thinks that a university education should be dealing with these issues. For example, when I asked one faculty member—who defined the main purpose of undergraduate education as laying disciplinary foundations for students—what about citizenship building and moral development, she explained:

> I feel these are not the things that a university can solve alone. It is an integral action including family and the society. Because students have graduated from high school, and those 18 years of education (before college) may be very

> important. . . . The university could guide students (in those areas), but that should not be the main theme. . . . After all, they are 18 years old when they get into college, and they have their own thoughts about many things. . . .We cannot put all the burdens on the university level (EFChe-3, p. 7).

This view is important to consider when we try to define the purposes of undergraduate education. But it is clear that knowledge in a specialty is viewed as a very important component of an undergraduate education by interviewed faculty members.

5.3. 2 Faculty Members' Understanding of GE and Its Role at the Undergraduate Level

Understandings of GE

I asked every interviewee about their understanding of what general education is and the answers vary. When I first mentioned general education, two out of the eight faculty members asked me if I was referring to commonly elective courses, reflecting a clear confusion about the concept. Most faculty members see general education from a knowledge and discipline point of view and define it as something that students learn beyond the majors they are in:

> General education . . . is to increase students' understanding of other disciplines (EFChe-2, p. 4).

Another faculty member shared similar thoughts and also added his understanding of general education's benefit to students:

> My own understanding is that beside the major that you are in, you learn something from other disciplines. Of course not that you will master that field, but it might be useful if in the future you are conducting research in certain fields. And it broadens your view (EFChe-3, p. 2).

This reflects the faculty member's recognition of GE's possible contribution to cross-discipline research. One faculty member from Chemistry went beyond knowledge learning and pointed out that general education is not just about learning some knowledge points of another field, by giving examples of teaching students majoring in the social sciences and humanities, about chemistry:

> The purpose . . . is to let them learn about the scientific methods and improve their quality of natural sciences. . . . Eventually we want them to be able to perceive the essence through the phenomenon—through chemistry knowledge, principle, and chemistry perspective to understand some laws of natural sciences, so even if they only conduct research from social sciences and humanities fields, they can still get some inspiration (EFChe-1, p. 2).

From this point of view, the objective of teaching a GE course should be more about helping students learn the ways of thinking in different disciplines rather than helping them learn specific knowledge points. A faculty member from Chinese also reminded us:

> For a student from chemistry, it does not matter whether he knows how many different versions of *Dream of the Red Chamber* there are. But in the book there are lots of profound life experiences, deep insights into human nature, and the human heart. And these are the things (that are meaningful to him) (EFChi-3, p. 4).

Beyond this he also added that general education is a way of shaping students' characters:

> General education . . . is definitely not a simple knowledge transfer; the most important part is to cultivate students' healthy personality (EFChi-3, p. 5).

Another faculty member from the Chinese department especially mentioned that for students from science and engineering, general education could benefit them in several ways:

> My feeling is that for students with science and engineering majors, it might be more important for them to know things in the humanities and social sciences. Even if he is going to do scientific experiments in the future, his life might be more interesting, and . . . it might help him with the formation of his value system and personality (EFChi-2, p. 3).

In this view, general education is also an education about life.

General Education's Role at the University Level

Yet not every faculty member thinks that it is necessary to have general education courses at the university level. One faculty member from the Chinese department expressed this:

> To be honest, . . . I feel it is not necessary. . . . If we have to have general education (at the university level), it should only play a supporting role (EFChi-1, p. 7).

She also questioned whether general education has to be in the format of GE courses and whether it could be conducted in other ways from outside the university campus. Another faculty member from the Chinese department talked about his changing view toward general education:

> For a while in fact I rejected it. I felt it might look kind of nice (to have general education courses), but eventually how useful is it? That is something one should question (EFChi-4, p. 1).

But later this faculty member began to accept GE because, after encounters with more undergraduate students, he felt that students were interested in some GE courses and GE courses, in a sense, helps students to read:

> I have changed my attitude toward general education gradually. I feel it has a certain role. . . . To some degree, it helps students to read. . . . Before, for example, reading is something I choose my own time to do; but now, not just at ECNU, probably in all our universities, students have to study for so many credits: public required courses, required courses in majors, electives in specialty, and internship etc. Compared with the time I was in college, the time that students have to read is really much less. . . . So in fact, general education courses play such a role (EFChi-4, p. 2).

And even for faculty members who think it is necessary to have a general education component at the undergraduate level, it should only play an auxiliary role. As one faculty member stated:

> This (general education) can only play an auxiliary role. Because you are in a university now, you need to have your specialty. Learning about everything, I feel it is something you should have done before entering college (EFChe-3, p. 7).

To summarize, even with only eight faculty members from two departments, their understanding of what general education is and whether it is a necessary component of undergraduate curriculum varies.

5.3. 3 Faculty Members' Participation in Policy Making and Implementation

One of my original research questions was to ask how faculty members of my two cases have participated in initiating and implementing general education policies. From my first few

interviews with faculty members at ECNU, I realized that faculty members are not often involved in initiating GE policies, and so the research question was revised, to whether faculty members participated in initiating and implementing general education policies. Except for one of the faculty members from the Department of Chemistry, who was also the vice chair of the department, all the other faculty members interviewed at ECNU were not involved in either initiating or implementing GE policies at the university. The only participation format in general education for some of the faculty members was to teach a GE course. Even when I asked one faculty member about her understanding of general education, she suggested that I should ask someone from the leadership level for answers to that question. Another faculty member's description about the relationship between administration and faculty members more or less indicates a lack of faculty members' participation in the policy-making process in general, and specifically, the lack of faculty members' participation in GE policy making:

> Nowadays it is the administration that manages teaching. Yeah, it is better to use the word 'manage' (EFChi-1, p. 10)!

This faculty member also criticized the lack of faculty members' participation in many policy making processes of the university:

> Whether it was about globalization, or general education, or bilingual teaching, you feel a bit ashamed, because you know that before these things were proposed, there was no serious research done, nor was the public consulted extensively (EFChi-1, p. 13).

This does not mean that faculty members were not consulted at all. As mentioned in the previous section, the university did invite experts from different disciplines to share their opinions. The description of the composition of the teaching committee at the department level by one younger

generation faculty member—whose academic ranking was still lecturer —might reveal the reality of who gets to participate in the policy making process:

> There are over ten members in this committee about teaching, and they discuss and decide on (things related to teaching). Then there will be feedback. They are usually those very experienced faculty members, and the majority of them are full professors, and a few associate professors (EFChi-4, p. 9).

The vice chair of the Department of Chemistry spoke of his participation in meetings organized by the university and his experience in facilitating the implementation of GE policies at the department level. I will summarize his response in a separate section (5.3.5).

The communication channels for faculty members to learn about new policies and the university's new moves are usually through department meetings, emails from related administrative units and academic departments, and notices on respective websites. Most of the interviewed faculty members knew that they could apply for openings for GE courses through notices emailed to them, but as one faculty member stated, he did not know about this until 2009, which is three years after the policy was first out. This more or less reflects the lack of efficiency in communication of policies between the university and faculty members. As the vice chair of the Department of Chemistry stated:

> Basically the objectives mentioned in our university meetings about teaching . . . we sometimes would cover them briefly in our own (department) meetings, or nowadays the Internet is very developed, and we sent them through Internet. And the university's website also has it. But the level of interest, I think, people would not deliberately care about it, especially front-line teachers. . . . At least at the full professor level, some of them do not even read the notices. You wake up in the

> morning, and the first thing you think of is how the students' experiments are going, how you should revise this paper. I think it is like this at the full professor level. People like me who are in charge of teaching might read (those emails); the team leaders of the teaching and research groups might read it. Others, I doubt if they even open those emails (EFChe-1, p. 9).

This description of the reality of a faculty member's life is vivid, especially when faculty members talked about their own research loads; this will be presented in section 5.3.6.

5.3. 4 Faculty Members' Experiences of Teaching or Not Teaching GE Courses

Faculty members' participation in general education is mainly through teaching GE courses, and for those who have taught GE courses, they do so for different reasons. Most of the faculty members who have taught GE courses stated that they were interested in teaching these courses. As one pointed out:

> From the perspective of my specialty, and of my own interest, I teach this GE course . . . because I can communicate with them about our newly achieved research results in the field (EFChe-3, p. 3).

Another faculty member added that if students like what they are teaching, it is a big motivation:

> Because this course itself is what I have accumulated during my doctoral study, and it is something I am really interested in. And with students, if they really like my class, I feel very motivated (EFChe-4, p. 5).

Teaching GE courses is also less pressure:

> Because this is my research area, when I prepare for the class (for non-major students), it is less pressure (EFChe-3, p. 3).

And one faculty member sees how GE courses could be strategically used:

> It could also be a reserve because often one could lower the level of difficulty of an elective course in a specialty and bring it to the university level as a general education course. Or maybe you now have a general education course at the university level; with such a foundation, maybe later you could develop an elective course for students in your department by enriching it with some new materials, and improving its level of difficulty. These could all work out (EFChe-2, p. 7).

For junior faculty members, teaching GE courses also means getting experience and fulfilling their teaching loads:

> At ECNU, if you are newly graduated and employed as a faculty member, in the first few years you cannot teach specialist courses. Because to teach these courses one needs very strong disciplinary foundations, and we are required to observe these courses for two to three years. . . . If you just graduate (and become a faculty member), you can apply to teach GE courses (EFChe-4, p. 5).

For some faculty members, they were simply asked to teach these courses by their department:

> I once was asked to take the responsibility and teach a GE course in my field. . . . The university wanted to use some good faculty members to teach these courses and have a certain influence (EFChi-1, p. 3).

Just as not everyone feels GE is a necessary component for the college curriculum, not everyone likes to teach GE courses. The faculty member who was asked to teach the GE course mentioned the reason why she stopped doing it after one semester:

> My basic concern was that the set of curriculum was not scientific. . . . For me as an instructor, I felt it was really hard to teach a course like this. I could only cover very basic stuff, but I felt it was a waste of the university's resource to have such an excellent teacher[12] to teach such a course. Is it really worth it? . . . You will notice that many of our general education courses have become a shortcut for students to get credits. It is not that they are really interested in them, and their (students') understanding is that all general education courses should be easy (EFChi-1, p. 4).

Such a view, of course, might partially reflect faculty members' different views or even misunderstanding of general education and the teaching purposes of GE courses, but it does remind those who see value from general education that the value of a general education cannot be taken for granted.

5.3. 5 Dilemma of the Vice Chair

One of my interviewees was the vice chair of the Department of Chemistry. He is a full professor with administrative responsibilities. Some of his views reflect the dilemma of standing between the university and faculty members. He claims that most faculty members know the importance of general education, but when it comes to their daily life, the main pressure comes from their academic promotion: lecturers need to be promoted to associate professors, and associate professors to full professors. And the evaluation criteria for such academic promotion are basically about research: how many papers has one published and how much research funds does

[12] Students named this faculty member as "the most welcomed instructor" for almost every semester.

one have? As for teaching, as long as one has finished the basic teaching load, that will work. So he stated:

> Most of the faculty members, associate professor level and lecturer level, they will not take the initiative to apply to teach a general education course just because of the big objective—the objective of cultivating talent (EFChe-1, p. 2).

So he says that he has to force someone to teach these courses:

> Though most teachers will not be against this, you ask them to teach and they do it. Why? Because they need to finish their basic teaching loads anyway, so they are not against it. But there is not a lot of enthusiasm or initiative either; it is like completing a task (EFChe-1, p. 3).

As the leader who oversees the teaching of the department, he would like to see more GE courses from his own field, especially when one considers that chemistry is a traditional science field and there should be opportunities for students to learn more about it. But considering the difficulty of arranging teaching tasks, one just tries not to be too concerned:

> Sometimes it is really hard for us to arrange the teaching tasks. . . . Especially universities in our country frequently introduce talent from overseas. And these introduced talents seldom teach. They do teach; not that they do not do it at all, but not much. And so the teaching tasks fall on the shoulders of those faculty members who were cultivated within China. Then if you add new tasks to them, that is not fair (EFChe-1, p. 5).

Therefore, even though the university has a very clear policy— to encourage faculty members to teach general education courses – at the level of department management, there is a lack of teacher resources.

Another difficulty for the department is the consistency of policies from the university level. The faculty member stated that in recent years there are lots of new ideas and new moves in terms of reform coming from the university level:

> I supported them at the beginning, because theoretically, one two three four, they look reasonable, but in practice they usually turned out to be inefficient. . . . I said to the vice president who was in charge of the teaching, 'I hope you would be in charge of us at least for over 10 years, and in this way you can carry out these reforms step by step.' And that will have some effects. If one leader came with his/her thoughts and did it for five years and left, and then another one came in with a new set of things, that won't work (EFChe-1, p. 9).

In recent years, many new policies and initiatives come from the university and yet the major criteria for faculty promotion have not changed in any major way. In responding to this dilemma, the vice chair may choose to maintain the status quo.

5.3.6 Faculty Members' Overall Evaluation of the GE Program at ECNU

Faculty members were asked to talk about their comments on the university's GE practice. Some faculty members acknowledged the university's efforts in developing a GE program:

> I think our university has put quite a lot of emphases on general education. This might be because we are a comprehensive university: for a comprehensive university, if we institute general education, we have no problems with teaching resources. So I think we are pretty serious about it. (The university) emails you and encourages you to develop general education courses, and then (they) give you some financial support. And every week there is an allotted time for general

> education courses across the campus. I think we have worked hard (in this area) (EFChe-2, p. 10).

Another faculty member also mentioned that GE courses give students some choices and many students like it. But despite such recognition of the university's efforts in GE from most of the faculty members interviewed, there are some major criticisms from some faculty members about ECNU's general education reform. Some doubted whether the university did enough research before it adopted the current GE model:

> I want to know whether such a move (toward general education) was based on serious thinking, or it was just based on a fashion (EFChi-1, p. 5).

Another faculty member's comment echoes such questioning of the university's seriousness in adopting general education:

> Frankly speaking, I think the adoption of general education at that time was a little bit formalism. Why? The reason that the university was setting up general education courses was because we had an undergraduate program evaluation. So it was to complete an index. After the evaluation, the emphasis on general education just declined. . . . And one does not hear much emphasis on general education courses anymore (EFChi-3, p. 6).

This was criticized by this faculty member as "utilitarianism." And the follow-up emphasis on GE after the 2006 evaluation and its further development certainly was not enough:

> From the (decreasing) financial support for general education you can tell that it was because of the special occasion (of the evaluation). The university did support us in publishing general education materials and developing general education courses, and it was quite on time—these are all the things that are

> worthy of recognition—but as to the sustainable development of general education . . . I think the university did not do enough (EFChi-3, p. 8).

For the majority of faculty members interviewed, they spend more time on research, and teaching is a task that they need to do and to finish. For example, one faculty member describes the pressure of research in such a way:

> Research is like a bottomless pit. Now I feel I am like a laboratory rat—you go around and around, and once you start to run, even if you want to stop, you can't. That's how I feel (EFChe-3, p. 3).

About her teaching of the GE course, she stated:

> General education: to be honest, our main experience is in our own field. As to general education, I just teach a course because of my own interest. If you talk about high objectives, I don't think I have set up one for it. From the perspective of teaching a course, it is just to satisfy students' requirements, and I haven't really thought about higher expectations for this yet (EFChe-3, p. 9).

Another metaphor used for research is the "spiritual burden":

> You definitely need to spend more time on research. . . . I sometimes joke about this: research gives me this spiritual burden, and teaching gives me this physical burden (EFChi-4, p. 4).

The department's culture also seems to matter more to individual faculty members than the university's culture:

> The Chinese department has a very good tradition, and senior faculty members are really concerned about the younger generation's progress . . . I really like the atmosphere. . . . To be honest, I do not have a direct impression about how the

> atmosphere at ECNU is, because you are in the Chinese department, and that is to say you sense the atmosphere here in the department (EFChi-4, p. 9).

And at the department level, general education is usually not emphasized enough:

> Frankly speaking, departments or colleges might not spend enough energy on developing general education courses. . . . (Departments) spent more energy on courses in specialties. And from what I know, (developing) general education courses is basically an individual behavior (EFChi-2, p. 9).

And in this case, interested individual faculty members do hope that the university can improve certain aspects of GE practice:

> For example, the whole university needs to have a plan. . . . It should not be that whoever wants to teach general education courses can develop and teach them. The ideal situation would be that after inviting some experts to demonstrate, and after considering the needs of the university and the students—they might need general education in certain areas—such a comprehensive consideration should all be there (EFChi-2, p. 9).

In summary, general education as a clear concept was written into ECNU's policy of 2006, when the university was preparing for the MOE's Evaluation of University Baccalaureate Programs. However, the foundation of GE's development can be traced back to the university's efforts to establishing itself as a comprehensive university and, ever since the Opening Door policy, to pursuing excellence in a constantly changing environment. There was the recognition of breaking the narrow specialty boundaries and of the necessity to broaden students' scope of knowledge by adding elective components to the curriculum and giving students more choices. These internal development needs were also accelerated by the external pressures of the national

and global higher education system's changes, forcing the university to transform from a teacher education institution to a comprehensive university, and from being a key national university in China to the decision to become a world-renowned university. General education became one of the areas of undergraduate education that fits well with the university's development objectives. Using the MOE's evaluation in 2006 as an opportunity, the university was able to allocate resources and quickly implement a GE program that was focused on GE course development. Within a few years, the university has established its new curriculum structure with GE courses as one of its components.

Within the administration, GE is seen as an important component of the university's undergraduate education. But administrators are also aware that not everyone shares this view: they feel that an emphasis on education in a specialty is still the dominant view, especially among faculty members. To the administrators, how to attract qualified faculty members to teach GE courses is still a challenge. The adjustment of the current faculty members' evaluation system might be one of the solutions. The lack of an overall design of the GE courses is seen as another major defect of the current GE practice, and several administrators expressed their expectations on restructuring some of the GE courses.

Most faculty members did not participate in GE policy development and implementation. Their involvement in GE practices is mainly through teaching GE courses. Faculty members teach GE courses for different reasons, and besides their own interests, teaching general education courses has become one of the ways the younger generation of faculty members use to fulfill their teaching requirements and accumulate teaching experience. Faculty members' understanding of GE embraces major aspects of GE covered in the research literature, e.g. broadening students' knowledge foundations, training them to be familiar with ways of thinking

in other discipline areas, citizenship education, and moral education. Yet not every faculty member thinks that GE is a necessary component in undergraduate education. They ask whether pre-college education should have a greater role, whether the general society should have a role, and question the effectiveness of burdening universities with this broad problem. Most faculty members interviewed stressed the importance of laying a strong disciplinary foundation for students at the undergraduate level. For those faculty members who do see general education as an important component of an undergraduate education, they are more concerned about the sustainability of the university's GE policy.

In this chapter, I first described ECNU and its general education reform. I then explored the perspective of administrators, as well as the experience of faculty members, in this reform. In next chapter, I will look at general education at PKU.

Chapter 6

The Case of PKU

In this chapter, I introduce Peking University, and using secondary sources, give a profile of the university; I describe the process of its general education reform, and summarize some of the achievements and challenges this reform is facing. I examine the reform and its implementation from the perspective of members of the administration and faculty, summarizing the findings of these interviews according to theme.

I conducted four interviews with administrators involved in GE reform: the vice director of the Academic Affairs Office and an administrator of Yuanpei College; the two other interviews are with administrators of only one aspect of the Yuanpei program, the mentor program. I also interviewed seven members of the faculty. The interviews with administrators are combined with related documents, rather than set off by themselves in one separated section, as was the case in chapter 5. This seemed appropriate since the information and results of interviews with administrators at PKU followed closely with the documents I retrieved.

6.1 Peking University and its Recent Reforms

6.1.1 A Brief History of PKU

Peking University was first founded in 1898 "as part of an important but largely unsuccessful reform movement" (Hayhoe, Zha, & Yan, 2011, p. 96) during the last feudal dynasty of Chinese history, the Qing Dynasty. The original name of PKU was the Imperial University of Peking. Not only was the university China's first national university, it also served as the highest administration for education, from the beginning of its founding until 1904, when a national

Ministry of Education was established (Peking University, 2011; Hayhoe et al., 2011; Peking University, 2007). In May 1912, after the revolution of 1911, the Imperial University of Peking was renamed Peking University (Peking University, 2007).

In 1916, Cai Yuanpei, a renowned Chinese educator who studied in France and Germany from 1906 to 1911, became the chancellor of the university (Hayhoe, Zha, & Yan, 2011). Cai was able to establish forms of university governance that ensured some distance between the university and the national government, and on the principle that "professors should rule the school" (教授治校) he strengthened the academic senate (Hayhoe et al., 2011). He also advocated the concept of tolerating mutually contradictory ideas, emphasized basic theoretical knowledge, and ensured that the curriculum of PKU was composed of the basic sciences and humanities and moved the applied fields elsewhere (Hayhoe et al., 2011). Under his leadership, Peking University attracted leading scholars from diverse academic and political backgrounds, stimulated debate and discussion, and became the center of the New Culture Movement and the birthplace of the May Fourth Movement (Peking University, 2007). Peking University remained a leading center of scholarship throughout the Nationalist period, even during the Second World War, when, after the Japanese invasion in 1937, it moved to Kunming and shared a campus with Tsinghua University and Nankai University (Hayhoe et al., 2011; Peking University, 2007).

Upon moving back to Beijing in 1945, Peking University's curriculum broadened under the leadership of the American-educated philosopher Shi Hu, and the faculties of engineering, medicine and agriculture were added to its three original faculties of humanities, sciences, and law (Hayhoe, Zha, & Yan, 2011). In 1952, during the restructuring of the higher education system, PKU was defined as a new-style comprehensive university with basic sciences and humanities only, and the university also moved to its current campus, the Yan Garden (Peking

University, 2007). “The medical, engineering and agriculture faculties moved out to become specialist universities in the reorganized system,” and the university gained departments and leading scholars in the humanities and basic sciences from Tsinghua, Catholic Furen and Protestant Yenching universities (Hayhoe et al., 2011, p.99; Peking University, 2007). Even with the interruption of the Cultural Revolution, the university was, and still is, the leading educational institution in China.

6.1.2 The Recent Changes and Developments of the 1980s and 1990s

Right after the Cultural Revolution, in the changing economic and social environment, Peking University, as one of the leading institutions of higher education in China, began to explore talent-cultivation models. Starting in 1981, PKU began developing a credit system as the measure of students’ learning, and asked departments to increase the flexibility of their teaching plan (Li & Song, 2003). In 1989, based on the principle of not delaying students’ graduation years, the university also experimented with allowing students who were able, to study for a second major, if the two majors required similar basic courses (Peking University, 2010; Li & Song, 2003). From 1986 to 1988, sensing changes in the larger environment, the university conducted research and analysis about its graduates and the jobs that they were holding, and noticed that, after graduation, many students were not working in the areas in which they majored at the university, and that some students had difficulty finding jobs in the field in which they were trained. Therefore, the university formulated “a sixteen-character guideline” for the direction of future reform—strengthen students’ foundation (加强基础), weaken the emphasis on specialization (淡化专业), teach students in accordance with their aptitude (因材施教), and direct students to different tracks in their upper level (分流培养)—and further promoted the

credit system. It also developed public elective courses for students to have more choices (Li & Song, 2003; PA-1). And in the 1990s, with the call from MOE to improve quality of education, the university also developed quality education elective courses (Peking University, 2006). But as the vice director of the Academic Affairs Office stated, due to limited resources and the larger environment of the higher education system in the 1990s, the university was not able to work further in this area (PA-1). The university also readjusted its academic structure by reducing the number of specialties, establishing new academic fields and developing colleges that were based on bringing together several departments in similar academic disciplines (Hayhoe, Zha, & Yan, 2011; Peking University, 2006). Such changes with academic departments continued in the 1990s (Hayhoe et al., 2011)

During the 1990s, with the march of the Chinese higher education from an elite system to a system of mass higher education, Peking University, one of the most prestigious institutions of the elite system, gradually developed the goal of becoming a "world class university." At the university's 9th congress of party representatives in July 1994, Peking University set the goal of "developing into a world-class university" (Peking University, 2007). On May 4th, 1998 during the celebration of the university's 100th anniversary, Zemin Jiang, the then President of China, gave a speech and talked about the strategy of using "education and science to revitalize the nation" (科教兴国). Leaders of Peking University and Tsinghua University worked together to ask the government for significant funding to support more focused university development at the highest level, and this resulted in "Project 985;" and the development of "world-class universities" also became a national strategy (Hayhoe, Zha, & Yan, 2011; Peking University, 2007; PA-1). The university set a two-stage-development strategy toward this goal: the first stage is to use seven years to be prepared by adjusting the layout of its disciplines, propelling

educational reform and human resource policy and improving the level of academic research by facilitating the transition of an older generation faculty, to a younger one; at the second stage, the university plans to use ten years to develop a patch of advanced disciplinary fields at global level, and make profound progress in areas of talent cultivation, science and technology, and social development (Peking University, 2007).

In the past decade, based on the principles of internal unity and harmony of size, structure, and quality, the university focused on improving its level of teaching and research, dynamically controlling its scale, optimizing the structure, ensuring quality, and improving efficiency (Peking University, 2007). In terms of academic disciplinary development, for example, in 2000, Beijing Medical University merged with Peking University. The university also established a College of Information Science and Technology in 2002, and a College of Engineering in 2005 (Hayhoe, Zha, & Yan, 2011). One can observe PKU's attempts to control scale from its undergraduate enrollment. In the late 1990s, at a time when most higher education institutions in China expanded their undergraduate enrollment, Peking University deliberately controlled undergraduate expansion. With the 3,818 students in medical programs adding to PKU in 2000, the university's undergraduate enrollments only rose from 9,280 in 1995 to 13,328 in 2000 (Hayhoe et al., 2011). In 2005, undergraduate enrollment reached 15,125, reflecting increases in new programs in engineering—the number of engineering students increased from 550 in 2000 to 1,787 in 2005 (Hayhoe et al., 2011). And the university also implemented a series of reforms in undergraduate curriculum to ensure quality, which I will describe in the following section (6.2). By 2007, PKU had 14,170 regular undergraduate students, 11,249 graduate students pursuing master's degree, 5,979 doctoral students, and 2,587 international students from 80 countries (Peking University, 2007). The university has 2,926 full time faculty members and

five main academic sections in the areas of the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, information and engineering sciences, and medicine (Peking University, 2007).

6.2 The Development of General Education Practice at PKU

6.2.1 GE Background and Initiatives

General Education across Campus

With the goal of becoming "a world-class university," the university made it clear that it should "consider the national conditions of China and the characteristics of Peking University disciplines, draw on the successful experience of world-class universities, and make an effort to promote educational reform in teaching and other areas" (Peking University, 2007, p. 6). Curriculum reform became one of the areas that were emphasized (Ni & Yue, 2005). Around 1998 to 1999, the university started to discuss a proposal for GE practice, and in the fall semester 2000, the university started to implement the so-called *Peking University Quality Education General Education Elective Courses* (PA-1). My interviewee explained:

> Because in the 1990s we emphasized on the concept of "quality education," in order to link it up with general education, we superimposed the two concepts, [and it became] *Peking University Quality Education General Education Elective Courses*. At that time it might look rather confusing. When we designed it, we wanted to emphasize that students should not just [learn] their specialties—that is not enough. We wanted to broaden their view and cultivate their overall qualities. Among these, there were these considerations of being a human, citizenship education . . . cross-disciplinary viewpoints . . . and have access to classics. These

> are all the things we wanted to represent in designing general education practice (PA-1, p. 2).

In Fall 2000, the university opened 31 courses in this category for undergraduate students. The course selection manual explains that the purpose of these courses is "to introduce students to explore different academic disciplines, broaden their knowledge scope, learn ways of thinking and methods of different disciplines, further open up boundaries of specialties, broaden foundations, and strengthen students' qualities" (Peking University, 2000). The 31 courses were developed by different academic colleges and departments at the request of the Academic Affairs Office, and they were categorized into five different fields when they were first set: 1) mathematics and natural sciences; 2) social sciences; 3) philosophy and psychology; 4) history; and 5) languages, literature, and the arts (PA-1; Peking University, 2000). Students were required to have 16 credits in total, and a minimum of 2 credits in each field and at least 4 credits in language, literature and arts (Peking University, 2000).

Yuanpei Project

Peking University also started to develop an experimental project for the direction of general education reform—the *Yuanpei Project*. In June 2001, during the university's meeting for undergraduate education, the Xiangshan Meeting, representatives from the Academic Affairs Office proposed a new program called *Yuanpei Project* to experiment with a new reform direction for undergraduate education. The core idea of this project was "to practice general education in the lower divisions and broadened specialty education in the upper divisions, and gradually implement a free elective credit system and independent major selection with the support of a teaching plan and mentorship program" (Peking University, 2010, p. 1). As has been

noted, Yuanpei Cai (蔡元培) was one of the most influential presidents in Peking University's history, and the Chinese character *yuan* (元) also has the meaning of the beginning. Therefore, using *Yuanpei* (元培) as the name for this new experiment indicates the beginning of a new direction for the university's undergraduate education reform (PA-1). The basic strategies for the Yuanpei Project include two aspects: first, to establish a *Yuanpei Experiment Class* and explore the core educational ideas in the Yuanpei Project on a relatively small scale; and second, to gradually promote a series of teaching reforms at the university level and to lay a foundation for the further promotion of the core educational ideas of the Yuanpei Project (Peking University, 2010). One of my interviewees described Yuanpei's role in this way:

> The general education practice at Yuanpei is interconnected with the general education practice [at the university level], and the university adjusts its overall undergraduate reform according to Yuanpei's practice. Yuanpei is like an experimental field, and if we (Yuanpei) succeeded, we would promote it at the university level. . . . The university's teaching plan has the fruits of Yuanpei's experiment (PA-2, p. 6).

In September 2001, the *Yuanpei Project Management Committee* was established, consisting of the vice president in charge of academic affairs, administrators from the Academic Affairs Office, and experts from different academic departments and colleges (Peking University, 2006). Under the committee, there are two subcommittees—the teaching committee and the mentor committee, and they are responsible for the implementation of Yuanpei Project (Peking University, 2006). Unlike the other academic departments, Yuanpei students are admitted into PKU in only two broad categories: social sciences and humanities or sciences. After admission, they first take GE courses and various disciplinary foundation classes. Students choose the

courses they want to take and declare their majors with help from their supervisors after the third term of their study at the university. While most programs at PKU are four-year programs, Yuanpei students have a flexible study term ranging from three to six years. Unlike the management of students from other departments where students live in the same residential hall as students from their same academic departments, Yuanpei students' residential arrangement is a mixed one to encourage exchange and communication between students from different academic disciplines (Peking University, 2006). Yuanpei does not have its own faculty members, and all courses are offered by other departments. In September 2001, the first Yuanpei experiment class welcomed 82 students, drawn from students who had already been admitted by PKU (Peking University, 2006; PA-2). Starting from the second year, applicants apply to Yuanpei directly as they would apply to any other academic department at PKU (PA-2).

6.2.2 GE Related Changes in the Past Decade

Admission Policies

Several GE related changes have taken place after the university adopted GE practice at the university level and the Yuanpei Project as an experiment. In 2002, instead of the previous practice of admitting students in specific specialties, the university adopted the policy of admitting students into broad academic disciplinary fields in most of the departments and colleges, and students can finish the first two years' general education courses and basic discipline foundation courses in their departments and then decide their majors within their broad disciplines (Peking University, 2010; Peking University, 2006). By 2004, with the exception of majors in foreign language or in the field of medicine, all departments and colleges implemented this policy.

Course Development

The University constantly adjusts and develops its GE course system. To apply for developing these courses, PKU established a strict procedure: faculty members provide detailed application materials; the departments and colleges of the applicants need to review these materials and provide recommendations according to their evaluation; and a group of experts will do the final review to see if the courses are suitable to the GE course category (Peking University, 2012; Peking University, 2009). The university organizes researchers to conduct scientific research and to promote the construction of GE courses, and a series of papers and documents have been published to facilitate the implementation of GE reform (Peking University, 2006). Since the mid-1990s, PKU has a system of having a team of senior professors conducting regular class observation. In 2003 and 2005, the university gathered experts in related fields to evaluate the developed GE courses, and it adjusted some and eliminated a few as well, in order to improve the quality of the course offerings. Based on these evaluations, in 2006, the university general education course committee approved 25 key GE courses as the standing GE courses (Peking University, 2006).

In 2007, based on the experience of Yuanpei Experiment Class, the university established Yuanpei College, indicating a new stage of its GE exploration (Peking University, 2010). Unlike other colleges on campus, Yuanpei College is the only administrative division that does not have its own faculty members. It is through cooperation with other academic departments and colleges that Yuanpei College offers classes to its students. In recent years, the university started to develop cross-discipline majors, through Yuanpei College, such as paleontology (Peking University, 2010). As one of my interviewees indicated, Yuanpei has become a platform for

undergraduate education reform where the university can experiment with things that could not be practiced within individual academic departments or colleges (PA-2).

In 2009, the university organized a team to examine the 500-course inventory and approved over 280 courses as general education courses; by 2010, the university has 303 GE courses (Peking University, 2010). It also added another area to the five basic GE elective fields, sustainable social development (PA-1). Another curriculum adjustment was made by adding another category of courses into the existing curriculum system: broad foundational discipline courses.

> We started to emphasize, for similar disciplinary areas, to have some foundational basic courses. It is called *the broad foundational discipline courses*. For example, in science disciplines, we have mathematics, physics, and chemistry; and in the humanities and social sciences, we have some common courses as well (PA-1, p. 3).

At the same time, GE course credits were reduced from 16 credits in 2000 to 12 credits in 2009 (PA-1). In 2010, the university also started to establish a *General Education Core Curriculum System* (Peking University, 2010). One of the specific suggestions for developing this core curriculum is "to lay the common foundation of knowledge, ideas and values for Peking University's undergraduate students through the reading of classic texts and discussing basic common problems" (Peking University, 2010, pp. 6-7). In Spring 2010, the university introduced several GE core courses: *What Is Science, Intensive Reading of the Four Books*, and *Classic Western Thoughts*; the plan was to focus on developing three to five GE core curriculum courses every semester (Peking University, 2010).

Special Support

The university also allocated special funding to encourage the development of GE courses and to publish high quality teaching materials in general education. For example, for a GE course that opens to less than 50 students, the university provides the instructor 1000 RMB (a little less than 200 in U.S. dollars) for related costs, in addition to other funding that the instructor may get; for a course enrolling 50 to 99 students, it is 2000 Yuan (about 300 in U.S. dollars); for 100 to 199 student, it is 3000 Yuan (almost 500 in U.S. dollars); and over 200 students, 4000 Yuan (over 600 in U.S. dollars) (Peking University, 2006).

The university also established a platform for faculty members to exchange GE course teaching experiences. The vice director of Academic Affair Office gave an explanation of the procedures for the expert group's evaluations described above:

> At the university level, when we started to develop these courses, we started to do course evaluation. Students' feedback to these courses is one side. We also invited experts to observe these courses. . . . We hired over ten experts and used one semester to observe all these courses. . . . They did class observations, took notes, and gave us feedback and suggestions in terms of teaching effect. (PA-1, p. 5)

The university also set up a system of two-level senior professor teams called *the senior professor teaching research team* at the department and the university level to conduct similar activities (Peking University, 2010). Currently at the university level, there are 13 senior professors on this team who cover most of the disciplines in the university (Peking University, 2010). During the first few years of GE course development, the university also organized faculty seminars to exchange experiences:

> At the end of the first semester, we invited those who taught GE courses to do an analysis. At that time we had a meeting with all the 31 GE course instructors. We . . . introduced our ideas in designing the GE course system: our thoughts and requirements in teaching. We emphasized [ideas] such as encouraging students to read more books and participate in class discussions, and using teaching methods such as heuristic method of teaching. After one to two semesters of teaching these courses, we organized faculty members—those whose teaching results were good—to exchange their teaching experiences so that those who were applying to open these course would also share some of their thoughts and teaching methods (PA-1, p. 5).

Yet the vice director did explain that in the past two years there were no similar activities because general education has become a regular part of teaching activities at PKU (PA-1). But within Yuanpei College, such sharing has become one of the routine practices. For example, each year, Yuanpei convenes one or two meetings for Yuanpei's mentors to share experiences with each other (PA-2).

6.2.3 University's Understanding and Communication of GE Courses

Peking University has developed a number of ways for conveying the meaning of general education and the purposes of GE courses, and it has a very systematic method for recording related materials. In explaining to its students and faculty members why the university started to focus on general education, the course selection manual in 2000 states: "The major disadvantages of the current undergraduate education in our country are that the division of majors are too meticulous, knowledge foundation is too one-sided, and quality education is too

weak" (Peking University, 2000). Therefore, the purposes of GE courses were "to introduce students to explore different academic disciplines, broaden their knowledge scope, learn ways of thinking and methods of different disciplines, further open up boundaries of specialties, broaden foundations, and strengthen students' qualities" (Peking University, 2000). This definition of the purposes of GE courses appeared in almost all the published university documents; e.g. in the annually published *Course Selection Manual of Peking University Undergraduate Education*, there is a "Q&A section of general education courses" to explain why the university developed GE courses, the characteristics of GE courses, criteria for developing these courses, and GE credit requirements. The website of the Academic Affairs Office is used as a repository of many GE related policies. The university has also used its strength in research to organize research teams and conduct related research with both the Yuanpei Project and the university-level general education reforms. Several sources of literature on which this section draws, are from PKU's own publications.

6.2.4 Influences from and on Other Institutions when Designing GE Practice at PKU

One of the most prestigious universities in China with the goal of becoming a world-class university, Peking University has its own traditions, yet it is destined to be influenced by the best universities in the world. PKU will also undoubtedly influence other Chinese universities. The vice director of the Academic Affairs Office points out:

> When we started to work on the goal of developing into a world-class university, we did not know what the so-called "world-class university" was. . . . We had a group of experts reflecting on this concept, and in this process, we felt that Peking University has some really good traditions of its own. To develop into a world-

> class university means to inherit all the things that we have done really well, and one of the things among these was the general education tradition we had historically. Another aspect is that . . . the so-called "world-class" universities, like the top American universities, have some clear curriculum models, and they emphasize general education. For example, Harvard University's curriculum and Yale University's curriculum, they all emphasize the ideas of general education. So for Peking University, [we thought] we could combine our tradition with borrowing some of these things, and promote general education (PA-1, p. 4).

It is clear that the university had specifically looked at other world-class universities' curriculum structures. One of the interviewees also mentioned her experiences of visiting the University of Hong Kong, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Fudan University, and Zhejiang University, comparing their general education programs (PA-2).

The faculty composition at PKU has been increasingly internationalized. From 2000 to 2007, the university hired 854 doctoral degree holders as faculty members, and among them, 39.9% were trained overseas (Peking University, 2007). Each year the university also hires about 350 foreign instructors (Peking University, 2007). What these foreign-trained scholars bring to PKU is not only special knowledge in their specific academic disciplines but also experience with foreign educational systems. The vice director explained that the planning team for GE reform had members who had doctoral training at Harvard University and members who visited Harvard University as visiting scholars, and so there were influences from Harvard's GE core curriculum. But he also pointed out:

> Our model is not the same as the general education core curriculum at Harvard. We are in between the GE core curriculum model and the distribution requirement

> model of many American universities. It is a model of credit requirements in different disciplines and courses provided by academic colleges and departments (PA-1, pp. 2-3).

This might be the case at the beginning of adopting a GE component, and yet one of the university's recent move in the GE area, the decision to develop a GE core curriculum and to focus on developing three to five GE core curriculum courses every semester (Peking University, 2010), shows the deep influence of Harvard University. Even in the section about GE courses on the website of the Academic Affairs Office, the list of all the GE core curriculum courses from Harvard University is the only material that is related to foreign institutions.[13]

6.2.5 Achievements

By the time of this study, Peking University has officially conducted GE reform for over ten years. It should be pointed out that the university's move toward embracing a general education component at the undergraduate level has been a careful one, with two tracks of reform taking place at the same time; the Yuanpei Project and GE in other departments and colleges. The university has established a curriculum system with GE elective courses as a regular component required for all its undergraduate students. Figure 6.1 shows the university's curriculum system. Unlike ECNU, PKU does not include courses required across the nation as GE requirements. For most undergraduate students at PKU, the university has adopted a model of general education for the first two years and broad specialty education in the last two years. Students from Yuanpei College go through a similar process with the flexibility of declaring their majors after three terms of study. As a result of freely choosing courses from different academic fields, many

[13] See the university's website: http://dean.pku.edu.cn/txkzl/txkzl_main.htm.

Yuanpei students take cross-disciplinary courses and some of them go on to pursue their second degrees (PA-2). By June 2012, the university developed over 305 GE elective courses under six different categories that students may choose for credit: 1) mathematics and the natural sciences; 2) the social sciences; 3) philosophy and psychology; 4) history; 5) languages, literature, and arts; and 6) sustainable social development (Peking University, 2012). The university has conducted several evaluations of GE courses to ensure their quality. It has also furthered the reform by starting to develop its own core GE curriculum. During the implementation of the GE elective curriculum and the Yuanpei Project, the university took advantage of conducting related educational research and has involved its faculty members. Because of its special status among universities in Mainland China—either top one or top two in all kinds of ranking system— its move toward general education at the undergraduate level also influences educators in many other Chinese universities' reflections on the direction of undergraduate education. After Peking University adopted its GE reforms, other top-tier universities in China, including Fudan University, Nanjing University, Sun Yat-Sen University, and many others have started their own reforms in the area of general education.

Figure 6.1. Peking University Curriculum System

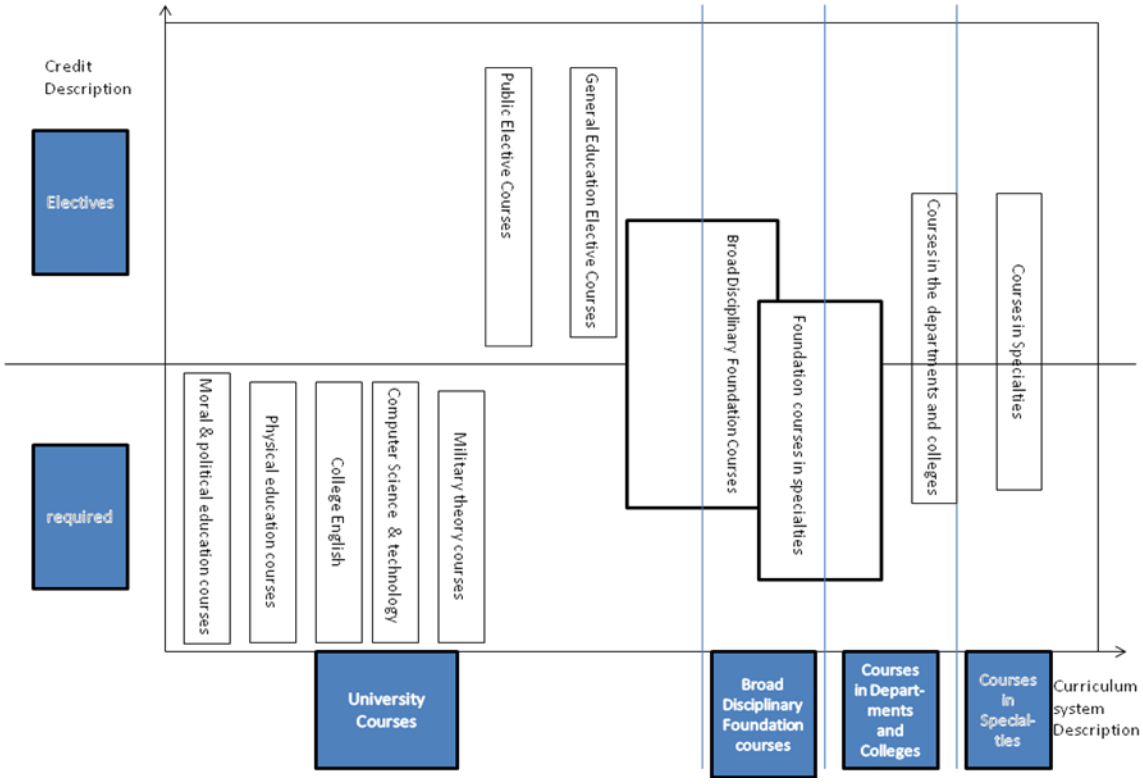

Figure 6.1. is adapted from "The Course Selection Manual of Peking University in 2009" (Peking University, 2009).

6.2.6 Challenges and Strategies

Challenges from a Management Perspective

Major challenges come from two sources: management issues, and concerns about the value of general education. The original thought behind implementing the Yuanpei Project was to expect it to be a model for an undergraduate college for the university's further educational reform; the Yuanpei Project as a pilot project has already helped the university to promote general education in the larger university context. However, at the time I conducted my interviews, the university

had not yet intended to expand the size of Yuanpei College. The vice director of the Academic Affairs Office explained that the major problem comes from the management system and resources:

> How we are going to do it in the next step, that's an issue. … It (Yuanpei) is a new system. I feel the existing management system of Chinese universities is the major (problem). Before, we divided departments and colleges by specialties. . . . And the division of the specialties was very fine, so was the division of departments. The management and organization of faculty members and students were through departments and colleges, and through specialties. That was the basic framework. . . . But Yuanpei is a totally different framework, and it requires us to break the disciplinary boundaries. . . . This is a new way of organizing. . . . How do we organize students to help them select courses, mentor them, and plan student activities for them? . . . In the tradition of Chinese universities, we divided students into units to organize some activities. . . . But now we have not done enough exploration. How do we organize them after we break down [the disciplinary boundaries]? It is not clear yet. So we cannot expand it or promote it in a larger scale (PA-1, p. 7).

The interviewee from Yuanpei College provided some detailed examples related to management problems. For example, in Chinese universities, students usually are organized as small classes within their majors; managing students through classes within departments and colleges and building class culture through many extracurricular activities for students' development is an important component of Chinese universities. But with Yuanpei's students scattering in different parts of the university and taking courses from all over the campus, it has

been hard for the student affairs officer at Yuanpei College to plan student activities for them. And the advantages of having an experimental site revealed its value in solving these detailed issues:

> Yuanpei students scatter in all kinds of courses across the university. We do not know if they are attending their classes or not; students do not meet their peers… So we have to plan many activities to set up a platform for students to communicate with each other. . . . Now we have lowered the requirements for the participation rates for these activities, . . . and even if we only get 30% of the students to come, that's ok. [Because] we now plan lots of activities, and if the student is not in this one, s/he can be in that one (PA-2, p. 16).

Gradual adjustments like this have penetrated many other aspects, such as scheduling examinations and sharing course resources, reflect the detailed conflict between the old management system and the new one. One of the administrators even talked about his will to learn directly from the U.S. experience:

> I want to get involved in an American university and to learn how they run and manage [some of the problems we have met]. In fact, for us the core problem is the implementation. For ideas and understandings, it is easy to communicate, but technically how you implement it, we do not have a reasonable design yet. . . . But there are others who have already had some existing good practices. . . . I really want to go to the site and to learn how they run certain things (PA-1, p. 12).

Resource issues are also highlighted during different interviews with administrators. One of the major challenges is related to the idea of having students choosing their majors freely:

> If students decide their majors after they enter Peking University, their demands in certain disciplines may be challenging to us too (PA-1, p. 7).

Students of Yuanpei College can choose their majors after entering the university, but with limited resources in certain popular majors, there have already been limitations on their choices because of resource issues:

> For some departments and colleges . . . they can accept Yuanpei students only when they have enough resources. So we have limited our numbers of students who want to major in economy and mathematics. . . . For those departments, we cannot exceed certain numbers (of students who want to major in those areas) each year (PA-2, p. 17).

Therefore, if the university were to expand general education without majors in the first year or two, it will have to find a way to balance students' choices for different majors.

Interviews with Yuanpei Mentors

The short interview I had with one of Yuanpei's student mentors from outside campus may also indicate some of the implementation issues. Mentorship is a very important component of the Yuanpei Project. Yuanpei has two full-time mentors within Yuanpei College and over 40 part-time mentors from other departments and colleges or from outside the university to help students with their course choices, majors and career plans. My interview with one outside mentor was very short mainly because the mentor was involved in only a few activities with Yuanpei, and did not know some of the basic characteristics of Yuanpei Project. This leads me to question the effect of having outside mentors on students' career plans. I also interviewed one of the two full-time mentors for Yuanpei students. Some of his views will be summarized in the faculty section.

Concerns about the Value of GE

According to the administrators interviewed, another major challenge comes from university shareholders' acceptance of general education. Some faculty members worry that with the emphasis on general education, especially with the implementation of Yuanpei Project, the disciplinary cultures will be diluted:

> When we first started the Yuanpei Project, some faculty members were not in favor of it. Because if you separated the management of students from departments and colleges, they worry that their disciplinary cultures are diluted. They emphasize the discipline traditions a lot. For example, the disciplinary tradition of literature, of history, they have had great influences in the history of Peking University. Yuanpei detaches students from their departments and colleges . . . then how can students enter these disciplines and create an atmosphere with these disciplines? Many faculty members worry about this (PA-1, p. 8).

Such worries resonate with some of the faculty members I interviewed, which I will show in the following sections. This reflects some of the faculty members' strong emphases on academic disciplines. But not everyone has such concerns. In fact, the vice director pointed out that the Yuanpei Project came from faculty members' initiatives as well:

> When we did the planning for general education courses and the Yuanpei Project, first it came from our faculty members. There were a portion of faculty members who had such strong voices . . . and so we absorbed faculty members' opinions (PA-1, p. 9).

During the discussion sessions about GE policy planning, there were even faculty members who, at the very beginning of the reform, suggested implementing the Yuanpei Project at the whole university level (PA-1). But, with the opposition of others, the university chose to experiment with it on a small scale:

> Because Peking University is a very sensitive place . . . at that time our way of thinking was to not to advertise it (Yuanpei Project) and to implement it first. … So the first and second year, some faculty members did not know much about it. When it came to the third and fourth year, the university starts to publicize it, especially that it attracted media reports [from outside]. . . . With these reports, our faculty members started to notice it . . . and gradually to recognize it (PA-1, p. 10).

The university leadership particularly absorbed faculty members in order to conduct research related to GE reform and the Yuanpei Project, to ensure that the voices of the reform included faculty experts:

> Our thinking was that the voices about it (GE and Yuanpei) should include faculty members. So we invited XXX who has been one of the members of our strategic planning group, to conduct a follow-up study (PA-1, p. 10).

One of the administrators also stated that from the beginning of GE reform, the university particularly involved different voices from faculty members:

> We had a professor from XXX department who did not agree with the idea of Yuanpei. But he was willing to be involved as one of the mentors for Yuanpei students. Every time when we had seminars together, he would voice out different opinions. But that's ok. We felt that we needed it (PA-2, p. 13).

In the minutes of the *Third Teaching Seminar on Peking University's General Education Courses,* it recorded speeches by nine faculty members about how they taught GE courses, and three senior professors' suggestions on GE courses, indicating the university's emphasis on involving faculty members in the reform process (Peking University, 2002). One of the interviewees also talked about the previous university leader's emphasis on general education; but with the changing of university leadership at the point of my interview there was a concern about the university's new leadership's emphasis on Yuanpei and general education.

6.3 Faculty Members Experiences

I interviewed three faculty members from the Department of Chinese Language and Literature [hereafter, the Chinese department] and four faculty members from the College of Chemistry and Molecular Engineering [hereafter, the Chemistry College]. Among the faculty members from the Chinese department, one was the vice chair of the department who was in charge of teaching. Another also had some administrative responsibilities in the department besides being a faculty member. Of the four faculty members from the Chemistry College, three of them were returned PhD holders from top American universities and two of them were also taking administrative responsibilities. One of the full-time mentors interviewed was a retired professor. Though from his current position he was categorized on the administrator's side, his views reflect more of a faculty members' role. Therefore, his views are also included in this section. In the following sections, I look at faculty members' understanding of general education, their own participation in GE policy-making and implementation, their experiences with teaching or not teaching GE courses, and their overall impression of GE reform at PKU.

6.3.1 Faculty Members' Understanding of the Purpose of Undergraduate Education and GE

Purpose of Undergraduate Education

When asked about the purpose of an undergraduate education, whether it was faculty members from the Chinese department or Chemistry college, several interviewees emphasized the importance of laying a strong disciplinary foundation, developing students' learning capacity, and helping them to become moral and healthy human beings. For example, one faculty member summarized these clearly:

> For undergraduate teaching, the first is to lay a profound disciplinary foundation—a strong professional basis and classical learning, and every discipline has some classic works. The second aspect is [to develop] the capacity to learn and good learning methods—not just learning capacity, it also includes critical thinking, the ability of researching a problem, and effective scientific methods. . . . [We need to train students] to be good at finding the issue, thinking it over, and solving the problem . . . the third major aspect is that college students need to have an education of values, and such a value education is, to a great extent, related to his whole personality (PFChi-3, p. 12).

The third aspect, whether different faculty members call it "value education" or "moral education" or "all-around education," is often brought up by criticizing current society, the larger environment and their negative influence on students. For example, several faculty members criticized students' utilitarianism, self-centeredness, and lack of responsibilities, and they attribute these to the consequences of the one-child policy:

> One most basic thing, students' morals and personalities are not healthy. Some students are just not healthy human beings, and they do not know the

> responsibilities that a human being needs to take in the community. This is very problematic! We have analyzed it a lot and it must be because they are the only child in their family—completely selfish and irresponsible (PFChe-2, p. 3)!

The above criticism might be extreme, but several faculty members interviewed share this perspective, and it quite often leads to faculty members' emphases on the importance of helping students to grow beyond the scope of knowledge:

> Because I think the major problems that college students are having are not the problems related to learning scientific knowledge. And to a large extent, they are related to the chaos of our society. . . . Really, what's going on in the society has naturally invaded into students' life, because their parents and friends have a set of mechanism to evaluate them. Do you assume those things won't have an impact on college students? So I think how to make this highly educated group of people to have a very sound body and mind, personality, worldview and values is very, very important. . . . I think that courses should not exclude value education . . . it should guide students to seek truth and goodness. . . . No matter what kind of value system, it must be those that seek truth and goodness (PFChi-3, p. 12).

This perspective is shared by several interviewees and resonates with some faculty members' emphasis on having a general education component in undergraduate education.

Understanding of General Education

When I outlined possible things that might be related to a general education, it was a surprise to me that one of the interviewees from the Chemistry College did not know much about the term,

except the fact that students could take electives. For those who had some understanding of general education or the university's GE practice, they talked about general education from a disciplinary perspective—what should be included in GE courses, capacity building, and the perspective of education for life. And these aspects were often interwoven together. As one faculty member pointed out:

> I feel that the humanities are the most important basis for general education. The humanities were the initial starting point of general education, and they are the most important basis. . . . One feature about general education is to [help students] be able to solve . . . a variety of problems— the problems related to the human mind, society, nature, various problems. To solve these problems, one needs various abilities, and I think these abilities are the things that general education can provide. . . .The humanities . . . is one aspect; . . . [so is] the social sciences . . . and the natural sciences, including sciences and engineering (PFChi-2, pp. 2-3).

Another faculty member also added the aspect of "cultivating students' interests" (PA-3). Most interviewees think that a general education is very important, that colleagues around them agree with this view, and they recognize the importance of having some sort of general education component in a university education. But their observations about the effectiveness of current GE practice on campus make them doubt how GE reform should be taken to the next stage. I will summarize their observations in the following sections.

6.3.2 Faculty Members' Participation in Policy-Making and Implementation

Understanding of What Is Going on, and Participation

Besides the one interviewee who did not know much about general education in general and GE practice on the PKU campus specifically, all the other faculty members had some basic information about the Yuanpei Project and GE elective courses at the university level. One basic fact is that those faculty members who have been involved with administrative responsibilities know more about what is going on. As one faculty member stated:

> I know a bit about what's going on, but not very comprehensively. . . . In the past few years, with the changing social environment, Peking University has played some role in general education reform (in China), and from such a perspective, the university does pay special attention to general education in recent years. But as to what specific things have been done, in terms of our ordinary faculty members, we do not particularly know in a comprehensive way (PFChi-2, p. 1).

When talking about channels of policy communication, one faculty member also mentioned a similar issue:

> If I were an ordinary faculty member [without administrative responsibilities], I would not know . . . . [As for the teaching seminar] ordinary faculty members are not required to participate in it. . . . Ordinary faculty members at Peking University are still relatively far away from the school management system. . . . They (the information) might be available on the Internet, but who is going to pay attention to that? No one (PFChi-3, p. 6)!

As has been stated, the university did try to absorb faculty members' perspectives during the policy- making process by inviting them to the planning meetings and sharing sessions, but only those who are involved in related administrative work are invited to related discussions. Of the seven faculty members and one mentor interviewed, the mentor, the vice chair of the Chinese

department, and two other faculty members in the Chemistry College have been in some of these meetings getting information about the Yuanpei Project and GE courses at the university level and they had the opportunity to offer suggestions and give feedback. So in this sense, these faculty members participated in GE policy-making by offering feedback and also participated in the GE implementation process. The vice chair mentioned three different ways that these faculty members get to be involved in GE policy making and implementation: first, the system of having senior professors observing classes and offering feedback; second, the course evaluation system and meetings for fine adjustment of GE courses organized by the Academic Affairs Office to respond to the evaluation results; and third, teaching conferences with faculty representatives (PFChi-1).

But to the majority of faculty members, who do not participate in administrative responsibilities, they neither participate in policy making nor in GE program implementation; their involvement in general education — if they choose to do so — is mainly through teaching courses.

As to faculty members' willingness to teach GE courses, it is a mixed picture. The two faculty members who held administrative positions in the two departments reported that since faculty members do have a teaching load, they usually do not mind teaching GE courses. But other interviewees, who did not have administration responsibilities, feel that generally faculty members do not prefer to teach GE courses. One of the interviewees talked about the process by which a GE course is offered:

> Some of the courses that the university needs to open, or the departments needs to open, they will ask the teaching research groups within academic departments. These different teaching research groups will need to check their own course

> inventory and to decide which courses could be included in the GE category and offered to students from the whole university. These courses will be picked out, and the departments will make the decision as to which ones best fit the category and recommend them to the Academic Affairs Office. And if approved, faculty members would teach these courses. But for faculty members, there is more passivity in this process than activity. That's just the situation. . . . Faculty members are just not interested in it (PFChi-2, p. 2).

And he attributes this lack of interest in teaching GE courses to the fact that faculty members seldom participate in the course designing and preparation stage:

> In fact many of our faculty members do not emphasize GE courses, and the reason is that they are passive rather than active: our faculty members do not actively design many courses. . . .We can design our courses, but in fact, it is a top-down process. So many faculty members just simplify courses in their specialties. . . .That is the way it is done in reality. Of course you won't say this when you report to your head, but that's the way it is done. You cannot just blame faculty members for doing so; these are the problems occurring during the designing and implementing stage (PFChi-2, p. 2).

6.3.3 Faculty Members' Experience of Teaching or Not Teaching GE Courses

In the case of the Chemistry College, the younger generation faculty members in this study do not teach GE courses and the teaching load is on experienced faculty members. Of the four faculty members from Chemistry, three whose PhD training was from American universities did not have experience teaching GE courses. Of these three, one was a newly returned faculty

member and so his focus was basically on setting up his lab facility and research team, and getting his research team going. He talked about the related university policy:

> Our college's policy is that for those of us who returned from overseas, we do not have a teaching load for the first three years, and it is after the third year that we are assigned teaching responsibilities (PFChe-4, p. 8).

But because of a lack of faculty members at the time he returned, he did accept teaching tasks for graduate students. The other two faculty members' teaching loads are also focused on the graduate level and then lab courses. One interviewee pointed out that some experienced senior faculty members take more responsibilities in teaching in general, and in teaching GE courses specifically (PFChe-1). He explained his understanding of the reasons behind this:

> There are historical reasons for this. The development of research in our country's universities is less than thirty years—or at the most, only after the Cultural Revolution. And before this time, there were many faculty members, … and they do better in teaching. Their research competitiveness is not that strong, but they teach really well. Including those general education courses, it is they who teach those (PFChe-1, p. 3).

There was also this understanding that teaching GE courses requires more experience. As the new chemistry faculty member points out:

> The more general the course is, the harder it is to teach it. . . . For knowledge in our field, we are dealing with them on a daily base. But for more general stuff, one thing is that we are out of practice because we don't use them often, and the other thing is that the audiences are young students who just enter university and it is hard to teach them. For example, if you ask me to be a chemistry teacher in

> middle school, I cannot do it well: I don't even know the scoring points for tests (PFChe-4, p. 2).

The one interviewee who is an experienced faculty member in chemistry has taught a GE course collaboratively with a team of faculty members. He also thinks that experienced faculty members should take more teaching responsibilities:

> General education courses require more from faculty members than courses in their specialties. Instructors for general education courses need to be experts in the field in order to be able to teach these courses well (PFChe-2, p. 7).

For the three faculty members in the Chinese department, one has not taught GE courses before and two of them have. When the interviewee who has not taught GE course before was asked about the reasons behind it, he explained:

> I am too busy because I have taken some administrative responsibilities. . . . Young generation faculty members like me have great pressure in work, and we have research to do. And if you add one more course, there is just too much pressure. . . . And there is another situation—like a hidden way of thinking. Many faculty members would think that it is better to spend more time on writing some academic papers than on teaching such a course (PFChi-3, p. 8).

One of the interviewees in the Chinese department who has taught GE courses before, indicated that for him, it was more of a passive action than an active initiation. The other interviewee's explanation explains what the "passive" means when he explained why he has chosen to teach GE courses:

> It was also related to the department. . . . The department feels that some faculty members might be suitable to teach GE courses; they will talk to these faculty

> members. Or if some of the courses are relatively mature, faculty members are willing to offer them as general education courses (PFChi-1, p. 3).

In both cases, though faculty members will not be directly assigned to teach GE courses, the departments' policy, their proactive way of approaching faculty members, and their arrangements play an important role in the decision of who teaches these courses.

6.3.4 Faculty Members' Assessment of GE at PKU

Achievements

When faculty members were asked about their overall impression of PKU's GE practice, I realized that some of the faculty members, especially those in the Chinese department, have seriously considered this topic, reflecting the complex nature of GE reform. Most faculty members see the leading role of PKU in GE reform in China, and acknowledge the university leadership's emphasis on it. They recognize the important experimental role that the Yuanpei Project is playing in the university's GE reform. Some faculty members recognize the positive contribution of some of the established systems in improving teaching quality, e.g. the use of senior or retired professors to observe classes, and Yuanpei's sharing sessions for mentors' experiences with students. And in general, faculty members also recognize the achievements of GE reform related to the GE courses at the university level, and the opportunities provided by the Yuanpei Project for students to self-select their majors. But most of the time, conversations focused more on issues and challenges, which I will discuss in the following section.

Challenges

Though most faculty members in this study recognized the achievements of the university in GE reform, especially GE courses at the university level, their views on the further development of the Yuanpai Project at the university level differ. The vice chair of the Chinese department frankly spoke about his wish of not having Yuanpei expanded to the university level:

> The university might want to promote it (Yuanpei), and it probably wants to expand its enrollment. But my own personal feeling is to maintain the status quo. Yuanpei has its benefits, that is, students can go to different departments and colleges to study and Yuanpei students do take more courses than other students. But after they chose to study in the Chinese department in the second year, . . . courses are harder for them. Yuanpei students in the Chinese department encounter more problems: they cannot follow [the second year curriculum of the department] (PFChi-1, p .6).

One other faculty member from the Chinese department agrees with this, and he believes that there is the problem with "the sense of belonging" for Yuanpei students (PFChi-3). Such a lack of "the sense of belonging" is a direct result of how Chinese universities manage students and student activities traditionally:

> [Yuanpei] students' sense of belonging is very weak. . . . Other academic departments have their own management mechanism for students, students have a strong sense of belonging in their academic departments, and they have a strong professional identity and collective sense of belonging. . . . But the majority of the Yuanpei students are free outside such a range. There is a lack of professional atmosphere and lack of sense of belonging (PFChi-3, p. 3).

This issue not only reflects the conflicts of academic culture, but also specific management issues caused by establishing a new system on the base of the old structure.

Though faculty members see the achievements in GE reform, there is a common feeling that the university needs to refine its structure and specific courses to make GE practice at PKU better. One of the interviewees stated:

> We've done a lot, and have adopted many methods and measures, but my feeling is that we haven't done enough review and summary. . . . I feel for some important and tangible things, e.g. the effectiveness of classroom teaching, there is a lack of actual analysis and understanding（PFChe-2, p. 7).

Some other faculty members also talked about the need for reviewing existing courses, improving their quality, and improving the overall design of GE courses.

Another criticism about GE reform relates to the system of evaluating faculty members in universities:

> A university like us, we emphasize research because we are a research university, and so an individual faculty member does not emphasize teaching that much (PFChi-2, p. 8).

Another professor touched the same issue and offered his solutions:

> Many teachers do not pay enough attention to teaching, and they emphasize research. If one teaches well, there is no obvious reward. But if one has more research papers, he can be promoted to associate professor. . . . So faculty members do not see teaching as important. . . . . Leaders (of the university) say that they attach great importance to teaching. . . . What does it mean by saying "attaching great importance to teaching?" It is the evaluation of its faculty

> members—if you consider teaching as an important indicator for faculty promotion, that's called "attaching great importance to teaching." Simply saying that you emphasize teaching, that's useless (PA-3, p. 4).

But as some interviewees point out, the core issue is "how we evaluate whether teaching is good or not" (PFChe-2; PFChi-2).

Beyond these criticisms toward the university itself, faculty members also talked about the larger environment's influence on the university and GE reform. For example, the university has suffered from a lack of funding and the invasion of private business on its campus:

> There are many profitable companies in Peking University, and they have a lot of training classes to make money. That allure is very attractive. For a university, it is a place to do research, pursue truth, and innovate. But these cannot help one make instant money. Is it like if I put in enough work, can I harvest the fruit of innovation? No, that's not guaranteed. Efforts of a lifetime are not necessarily to be able to produce useful knowledge (PA-3, p. 2).

To this faculty member, the government needs to give the university more funding so that the university can focus on its mission of pursuing the truth. One faculty member spoke about the connection of the college system to the K-12 system:

> There is the issue about the transition from high school to university. When our secondary education does not make any adjustment, and the university education starts to adjust itself in a rush, there will be problems of . . . connecting the two parts (PFChi-3, p. 4).

Such issues go beyond university's control and will depend on promoting reforms in the college admission criteria to influence the focus of the K-12 educational system. Another broader issue has to do with the larger political system:

> Our recognition of the importance of education is, indeed, profound in talking. But the actual operation can be inoperable. And the reasons behind this are both a political and an economic one— they are caused by these two factors (PFChi-2, p. 13).

This faculty member spoke about the Ministry of Education's control of Chinese universities through allocating resources and controlling ideology:

> It is mainly related to the ideology of the national government. They make universities the base for producing people who serve the government, and so there is a fixed set of ideologies. And they control the university through the Ministry of Education—ideology control. And so that causes all kinds of problems (PFChi-2, p. 11).

These problems seem to be beyond the university's control and there will have to be some fundamental changes in order to solve some of these issues.

But there are things that PKU can do, and one of them is to use the rich university resources to develop an extra curriculum GE component. Several faculty members, both from the chemistry and Chinese departments, brought up all the rich academic and cultural events that are occurring on a daily basis on Peking University's campus. On the one hand, this raises the question of whether a GE course is the only way to provide the necessary GE component in undergraduate education, or if there are alternatives using the rich resources the university attracts.

In summary, PKU is a leading university in general education reform in China, and also has a long tradition of valuing general education in its history. PKU administrators have adopted a careful approach toward GE reform by creating the Yuanpei Project as an experiment in the university's undergraduate education. It also tries to embrace faculty members' contributions and in the past planned on promoting the Yuanpei Project further. Faculty members, in general, recognize the university's efforts in the area, but some of them felt strongly about certain issues. One of them is that ordinary faculty members did not participate in policymaking and implementation, and that their interest in teaching GE courses is low. There are issues related to the co-existence of Yuanpei College's general education model and the GE elective course model at the university level. Changes in faculty member evaluation criteria and in the connection mechanism between pre-college education and post-secondary education needs to be made, in order to further improve GE reform at PKU.

In this chapter, I first described the case of PKU and its general education reform. I then looked at GE reform from the perspective of the administrators, and then from the experiences of faculty members. In the last chapter, I will draw conclusions from my study.

Chapter 7

Conclusions

The primary purpose of my research was to explore the reasons behind general education reform in Chinese universities from a global and local perspective, to look at the status of GE in two top-tier universities, and through examining faculty members' participation in GE policy development and their experience with GE practice on their campuses, to understand the difficulties of implementing general education in the context of Chinese universities. My research questions include:

(1) What caused Chinese top-tier universities to engage in general education reform?

(2) How have two Chinese universities implemented general education practice? In what ways do these universities rely on foreign experience in terms of their reform?

(3) Did faculty members at the two Chinese universities participate in initiating and implementing these policies?

(4) How do faculty members at two Chinese universities view general education and what are their experiences with general education practices in their institutions?

In the first section, I will answer my research questions based on secondary literature and my two case studies. I will especially focus on the challenges that Chinese universities encounter while conducting GE reform, based on a comparative view of my two case studies. In the next section, I will try to explore some possible directions that Chinese universities could go in regards to the development of GE reform. I will conclude this chapter with recommendations for future research.

7.1 Answering the Research Questions

7.1.1 GE as One of the Focuses of Undergraduate Education Reform in Top-Tier Chinese Universities

My first research question asks, what has caused top-tier Chinese universities to engage in general education reform? I focused on top-tier universities because it is these universities that have emphasized GE reform in the past decade. In order to seek reasons behind the reform, in chapters 2 and 3, I examined both the global and the Chinese local context of the reform. From a global perspective, several conclusions were drawn. First, the major characteristics of globalization and its impact on higher education institutions have increasingly required undergraduate education in post-secondary education to adopt a general education model. The development of Information and Communication Technologies has broadened both the ways that knowledge is spread, the speed that knowledge is produced, and our access to knowledge, making it neither necessary nor possible to focus the undergraduate education on specialized or professionalized training. Undergraduate education in such a context needs to focus more on the foundation of various academic disciplines and learning methods in terms of knowledge transfer. With the influences of a market ideology, higher education has been increasingly viewed as a private good that can be exchanged in the marketplace, and public support for higher education has been decreasing as well. In this context, the massification of higher education has become not only the way that the university sector satisfies market demand, but also the way that higher education institutions support themselves. The stratification of different higher education institutions within both the national and global context has become a reality as a consequence of such market competition. The zone of competition for national top-tier universities has spread to the global level**.** With the migration of people and ideas intensified, the higher education sector

needs to prepare its students for an increasingly globalized social and cultural context. Qualities such as understanding, tolerance, and communication skills become increasingly important to an educated person and to students' future success. All this calls for undergraduate education to be more general, emphasizing prerequisites for specialized or professional study, stressing the common human heritage and shared experience, and building citizenship at both the local and global level.

Second, the trend of world-class universities has placed the best research universities, especially those in the United States, on the top of the global higher education system, and top-tier universities in other nations want to be one of these. The need for global reference in the higher education sector is not only important for universities themselves to understand where they are in the global context, it is also important for governments, businesses, and students which, in a sense, are all consumers of higher education services in one way or another. With different ranking systems putting American research universities on the top of such league tables, these universities' features become references for other universities that want to become world class, and in these circumstances, general education in American universities becomes one aspect that universities in other nations may look at. According to the findings of the two case studies in this dissertation, these two top-tier Chinese universities emphasize the objective of becoming world-class universities, and general education reform is one aspect of their efforts in the pursuit of that goal.

Third, the local context of Chinese universities makes it necessary for these universities to broaden the goals of their undergraduate curriculums, and general education becomes one of the driving directions for top-tier research universities' undergraduate education reform. Before the Cultural Revolution, China established a specialized higher education system to satisfy social

and economic development characterized by a planned economy. This specialized system not only had specific goals of educating specialists for designated academic areas, it also had the tendency to emphasize majors in science and engineering, neglecting the social sciences and humanities. With the adoption of a socialized market economy and increased awareness of the importance of the social sciences and humanities in college education, the demand for a more generally oriented undergraduate education became apparent. As the Chinese higher education system marched toward a mass higher education system, the undergraduate stage has become the basic level of the post-secondary education system. At the same time, because of the rapid expansion of higher education in a relatively short period of time, there was a call for strengthening its quality. The national strategy of "rejuvenating the country through science and education" (Ministry of Education, 2006) also placed higher education in the position of the nation's development priority. With all these local and global factors interacting with each other, top-tier Chinese universities also joined the trend of becoming world-class universities, and general education has become one of the focuses of their undergraduate education reform.

7.1.2 The Status of GE Reform in the Two Top-Tier Universities

Several conclusions were made that summarize the status of GE reform in the two universities. First, the development of GE practice in both universities is not only the result of the universities' self reflection on the need to broaden the goals of their undergraduate education, in response to the new social and economic context, and breaking the limitations of a highly specialized higher education system, it is also part of both universities' efforts to develop into world-class universities. This common background for the development of GE practice in both institutions resonates with the analysis in chapters 2 and 3, reflecting the interaction of the global

and local factors impacting the adoption of a general education model in top-tier Chinese universities.

Second, though the GE practice in these two cases is mainly focused on the GE course system development, the development of GE practice in both universities cannot be viewed as an isolated process. In each institution, GE reform was part of undergraduate education reform, and administrators emphasized the concept of giving students more choice of courses. Prior to GE reform, both institutions had experienced the process of developing an elective system and credit system, laying the foundation for developing GE electives as part of the undergraduate curriculum. After they had established the basic curriculum structure, both universities also started to refine their GE course system. The case of PKU is especially obvious since its GE practice has been developed for more than a decade based on a pilot program; whileas since ECNU's GE practice is relatively new, its reviewing and readjusting had just begun. And at least from the administrators' perspective, both universities claimed that GE reform was one of the important aspects of their undergraduate education reform.

Third, both universities claim that they have looked at other top-tier universities' GE practices abroad as well as in China in order to develop (or improve, in the case of PKU) their own GE practice. Specific references include looking at other institutions' curriculum structures, reviewing their program teaching plans in the case of other top-tier Chinese universities, and visiting these campuses for direct communication. In the case of PKU, the university also deliberately utilized the oversea experiences of some of its faculty members in top American universities in designing its GE system. Yet these references to other institutions do not set limitations in only looking at the area of general education; it is the overall undergraduate education that the two universities have examined; but besides the general framework, it is not

clear what specific aspects of general education that these two universities have borrowed from other institutions.

Fourth, the undergraduate evaluation project organized by MOE has played an important role in propelling both universities to use the evaluation as an opportunity to review the quality of its undergraduate education, and GE has been one of the important aspects in such a review for both institutions. In the case of PKU, it provided an opportunity for the university to review and readjust its GE course system after it has been established for a few years; and in the case of ECNU, the evaluation was one of the direct causes for the university to officially embrace general education as a formal component of its undergraduate curriculum and to allocate special resources to develop GE courses.

Fifth, in the two cases, the development of general education was both supported and constrained by its context, reflecting the complexity of changing one aspect of a system in relation to the whole system. For example, both universities were able to utilize their multi-disciplinary foundations to quickly implement a GE practice based on the course distribution model, and both universities were able to increase their GE course pool from around 30 courses to over hundreds of them within a short period. And yet, the further development of GE in both institutions is constrained by changes that need to happen in the university's local context as well as in the education system in China – for example, the faculty reward system that is used to evaluate faculty members in order to attract qualified instructors to teach GE courses, and the dividing of students in the direction of science or the humanities and social sciences as early as at the high school level. Further development of GE will depend on changes in related areas in the larger system.

Sixth, the changing of personnel at the management level in both institutions has added uncertainty in the process of each university's GE reform direction, putting the sustainability or further development of their programs into question. In the case of ECNU, it was the change of the vice-directors responsible for planning the GE program at the Academic Affairs Office, and in the case of PKU, it was the departure of the vice president who had strongly supported GE development at the university. This not only reflects the importance of the role of campus leadership in supporting GE initiatives, but in another aspect, reflects the need for further promotion of the GE concept among all shareholders so that it might become a self-sustaining part of the regular undergraduate components.

Last but not least, in both cases, administrators talked about the lack of acceptance of the GE concept among at least some of the faculty members, and the design and implementation of GE reform reflected a clear top-down path. In both universities, GE initiatives were from a small group of administrators facilitated by suggestions from a small body of faculty expertise, leaving the majority of faculty members out of the initiating and implementing stages. In the case of PKU, the university did make an effort to have faculty members engaged in the process, reflecting a strong tradition of having faculty involvement in the university's management. The university also tried to use the university's research ability to enhance the implementation of GE practice by providing supporting research results. But even such deliberate efforts for getting faculty members involved do not seem to be effective, and this is mainly reflected by the lack of faculty members' awareness of GE policy initiatives. At both institutions, administrators talked about getting the GE reform implemented first and then gradually pursuing recognition among larger shareholders on campus.

7.1.3 Faculty Members' Experience with GE Reform

The third research question asks whether faculty members at these two Chinese universities participated in initiating and implementing these policies. As already stated, the majority of faculty members in both institutions did not participate in GE policy initiation or implementation. In GE policy initiation and implementation, both universities tried to involve faculty members' perspectives by consulting a small group of faculty experts. In the case of ECNU, it was a few faculty experts in different disciplinary areas who were involved in the process of selecting and reviewing GE courses. In the case of PKU, it was a few faculty members with overseas experience who were involved in the process of designing the Yuanpei Project, and some senior faculty experts and faculty members with administrative responsibilities who were involved in the process of readjusting GE courses. As stated by interviewees in both institutions, the majority of faculty members do not participate in decision making about GE related policies or their implementation.

Faculty members' major involvement in GE practice was through teaching GE courses. In the case of ECNU, faculty members who were interviewed taught GE courses for different reasons: some wanted to, some were asked to, and others did it simply to satisfy their teaching load requirements. The latter two situations were especially true of younger generation faculty members. In the case of PKU, the situation in the Chemistry College was quite different from the situation in the Department of Chinese, partially because of the backgrounds of the selected interviewees. In the Chemistry College, it was the experienced faculty members who took the teaching load of GE courses. Younger generation faculty members from that division with PhD training from American universities were not involved in teaching GE courses, but were involved in teaching specialized courses. In the Chinese Department, the department advocated

GE courses as one way of increasing the disciplinary influence of the department and encouraged faculty members who had been teaching some related courses to bring these courses to the university level. Both universities generally espoused the view that GE courses should be best taught by faculty members with rich experience in their disciplines, but in practice exactly who ended up teaching these courses was a decision made at the mid-management level through negotiation with individual faculty members.

7.1.4 Major Challenges to GE Reform

One of the major purposes of conducting this study was to understand the challenges and difficulties that Chinese universities are encountering in the process of implementing GE reform. Most published work around such issues is mainly from the perspective of those who were involved in policy making or implementation, and ordinary faculty members' views were often neglected. Yet organizational theories remind us that universities are not the rational organizations we may imagine (Weick, 1976; Cohen, March & Olsen, 1972); they are a series of stable subassemblies that are responsive to each other, yet separate and independent (Weick, 1976). In the university context, the administrative line and the academic line sometimes are like two subassemblies. What the administration does or plans to do and what the faculty does quite often does not come across to each other as effectively as one would assume. Viewing universities this way, this study was able to examine the status of GE at the two universities from both the administrators' and faculty members' perspectives, and thus get a more comprehensive view of what challenges that the reform is facing.

One of the major challenges is related to the lack of a shared view of general education among the administration and the faculty. As stated, for the cases in this study, the decisions

about how each university defines general education and how each one designs its GE program came from a small group of related administrators and faculty experts, and the majority of faculty members were not involved in discussions; they were mainly involved in teaching GE courses. And yet, this study shows that ordinary faculty members do have their own understanding of what general education is and what it should be focused on. Faculty members' understanding of general education is often connected to their personal understanding of what the student is lacking in order to function well in society after graduation in addition to the student's academic major. Those aspects mentioned by faculty members include learning knowledge of areas beyond the student's major, cultivating interest in other disciplines, preparing for future cross-disciplinary studies, moral education, cultural cultivation, citizenship education, improving comprehensive capacities, and the ability to solve problems. Collectively, this reflects a comprehensive understanding of what general education is. But when one looks at each individual response to the question of what general education is, quite often, it includes only one aspect or two of the above-mentioned areas. For example, one interviewee at ECNU talked about general education as learning something beyond the student's major and to increase their interests in other disciplines; she shared her own experience with an overspecialized disciplinary training. When she was asked about her opinions on aspects of citizenship and culture, this interviewee emphasized college education as being a higher level of education, and that it cannot cover everything. One of the direct results is that the university has its own understanding of GE and those who actually teach general education courses in classrooms have their own understanding as well. The nature of faculty members' relatively autonomous status also makes it difficult for the university to convey its conceptualization of general education to faculty members. Faculty members are the most enduring and valuable resources of any

university, and creating and sustaining a sense of shared educational purpose and passion for teaching is of paramount importance (Meacham & Ludwig, 2001). If the university's understanding of GE is based on absorbing faculty members' perceptions in policy making and implementing, individual faculty member's understanding of GE would reflect a more shared view of what general education is. Meacham and Ludwig (2001) argue that changes related to curriculum will have little impact unless the institutional and classroom contexts and the delivery systems for those courses are better understood by the faculty who teach the courses. From the faculty's experience with GE reform in this study, lack of such understanding from the faculty results in their lack of interest in teaching GE courses, and this directly hurts the very purpose of improving undergraduate education quality through GE reform.

One other major challenge to general education that was expressed at ECNU is the lack of overall design. PKU approached GE reform in a very careful way, using the Yuanpei Project as a pilot study for the university's every move toward new directions. Though it has its own issues (the conflict of "two systems with one body"), it gives the university time and space to adjust those conflicts and explore effective ways before being implemented in the larger context. And the project was also followed up by related research, providing possible support for the further expanded use of GE at the university level. But at ECNU, both administrators and faculty members criticized its GE program's lack of overall design. This is partially the result of the university's quick launch of the program in response to the MOE's evaluation. Such an "unthoughtful," or at least, seemingly "unthoughtful" decision to conduct GE reform with a quick push by the administration is another expression of the lack of faculty members' participation in the policy making process, and though at ECNU the administration did have a real concern about the why of conducting GE reform, the lack of participation from the side of

the faculty resulted in resistance from some faculty members. In fact, in both institutions, faculty members questioned the seriousness of the administration's related decisions in GE reform. It might be important, as some administrators had suggested, to get it started first, and once the framework is established, to readjust. But this study shows that faculty members have thoughtful concerns related to educational quality. Systematically consulting faculty members' valuable opinions and embracing those into the decision making process could have resulted in not only a better overall design but also shared views between the administration and the faculty.

Challenges to the implementation of a GE program are expressed in several ways: lack of faculty interest, lack of qualified faculty members to teach related courses, and conflict between the newly adopted GE program and the existing system. Whether at ECNU or at PKU, there was a lack of interest among faculty members in teaching GE courses. This again echoes back to the lack of consultation with the faculty during policy formation. The lack of interest is also partially the result of how faculty members are evaluated. Both universities are research oriented, and both have set a goal of becoming a world-class institution. Research is heavily emphasized when it comes to an individual faculty member's promotion. Teaching, on the other hand, is viewed as a basic criterion that everyone should be able to meet. Compared with counting research projects and published papers, it is also much more difficult to evaluate teaching, making it difficult for teaching to be emphasized in faculty promotion. Even within the scope of teaching, this study shows that the majority faculty members prefer to teach courses in their specialties, not GE courses. This, as indicated by some interviewees, comes from the tradition of emphasizing one's specialties within the Chinese university context. In such circumstances, unless a faculty member is really passionate about general education, it would be hard for the teaching of a GE course to be attractive. Both administrators and faculty members also recognized that GE courses would

best be taught by faculty members with experience in their disciplines, but in the case of ECNU, in fact, these courses were taught more by younger generation faculty. The tension between faculty members who were trained from prestigious overseas universities and those who were trained locally in the field of chemistry at ECNU can also be sensed. This was less the case at PKU's Chemistry College because of the greater number of internationally trained faculty, but the locally trained faculty felt the stress of having to perform as well as their internationally trained colleagues in terms of research. At the mid-level management at both ECNU (chemistry) and PKU (Chinese language), academic department leaders had to talk to faculty members and really motivate them in order to have them teach GE courses.

At PKU, there is another set of challenges related to implementation—specific issues related to the co-existence of the Yuanpei Project and the broader undergraduate system that operates in a different way. The strong disciplinary culture in Chinese universities is reflected at the department level by many traditional practices, for example, arranging students' residential life in a way that students from the same majors stay together so that they might have peer influences on each other. It is also convenient for the department to organize student activities that could cultivate them in their chosen academic disciplinary fields. But the Yuanpei Project brought in new forms of practice including different ways of organizing students. Faculty members at PKU were concerned about Yuanpei student's engagement after they had declared their majors in academic departments. The academic departments have strong disciplinary cultures built in from day one when their own students enter into the fields of study. Innovative practices need to be explored to solve the details of these potential management issues.

Some challenges come from the larger context beyond universities, and changes need to take place there if GE reform is to take the next step in Chinese universities. In both universities,

whether it was faculty members from chemistry or from the Chinese language department, they all stated that necessary changes need to take place in the school system and the College Entrance Exam if the universities were to adopt a more general education at the undergraduate level. For example, the practice of dividing students into a social sciences and humanities direction or a sciences and engineering direction as early as high school has already pushed students toward a more specialized direction by the time they enter college, and this practice is itself a product of the national College Entrance Exam. Related changes in college admission practices will need to take place in order to solve these issues. The pressure from the general public to ensure university graduates have a high employment rate and to use that as one of the criteria to evaluate university performance by the MOE pushes both students and universities to emphasize the importance of having practical skills and specialized knowledge in order to be employable after graduation. Thus aspects that general education emphasizes are left unattended. These few examples demonstrate the complexity of educational reform when we see universities as organizations in a larger system, where the external environment provides resources for the university but also sets formal and informal expectations for institutional outputs (Bess & Dee, 2008). How to adjust the conflicts caused by these challenges and expectations from the outside and at the same time, to fulfill the university's self development mission, depends on how the university perceives its own social responsibilities to the larger society.

To summarize the challenges and problems that may hinder GE reform in the Chinese university context, I have looked at three aspects of these challenges: understanding the concept of GE, issues related to its implementation, and issues related to the larger context of the university system. Viewed from another perspective, these challenges come from the process of settling in, when a new practice from another culture is brought into the local context. Issues

related to the local acceptance of the concept and the conditions for it to grow are critical to its status. With the current promotion system for faculty members being based mainly on research and the traditional emphasis on specialties, faculty members have to have a strong passion in order to devote themselves to the teaching of GE courses. And yet for the majority of the faculty members in this study, though they have their own understanding of what general education is, they generally do not have passion for GE reform because they did not participate in initiating and implementing GE policies. The context that the university is in as an organization is also complex, offering complicated and even conflicting expectations for the individual institution. On the one hand, top-tier Chinese universities are expected to become world-class universities in order to fulfill its own need to pursue excellence as well as to enhance the nation's global competitiveness; on the other hand, the very nature of this pursuit reflects global institutional standards based on the norms and values of the world's dominant research-oriented universities (Altbach, 2004). From the perspective of GE reform, general education is one important aspect of the existing institutional model for a world-class university and it also holds the power to correct the overspecialization of the Chinese university, but its implementation on campuses is also negatively affected by the overemphasis on research—another important standard for evaluating world-class universities.

7.2 How Can General Education in Chinese Top-tier Universities Become Better?

This study started with exploring the reasons behind GE reform in Chinese universities from both a global and local point of view, and it pointed out some of the major reasons behind GE reform in top-tier Chinese universities. . And yet as discussed in the previous section, the implementation of GE, especially seen from the faculty's perspective, still faces challenges that

hinder GE's further development, and two major challenges come from the lack of faculty interest and conflict with the existing system. In this section, I will offer some of my own thoughts based on related literature.

The starting point is to establish a system of effective faculty participation in policy making and implementation. Faculty members have direct contact with students and directly influence students' learning experiences. And yet, as some studies have shown, methods of classroom teaching are virtually unaffected by organizational or administrative factors (Meacham & Ludwig, 2001; Deal & Celotti, 1980). This study shows that faculty members have insights on what students are lacking and they share a passion for teaching. And embracing their wisdom and passion in GE policy making and implementation will not only improve the policy itself, but also will give them a sense of ownership and stimulate their passion for teaching GE courses. Rather than feeling like a policy being imposed on them, extensively involving faculty members in the policy making process will also lead to a shared understanding by both the administration and faculty of the university's educational goals and social responsibilities.

Modifying the promotion criteria for the faculty and stressing the importance of teaching is also crucial. Organization theories, especially the social systems model, use two parallel tracks to explain human behavior in organizations: 1) the components of those forces from the organizational system, roles, and expectations; and 2) personality, learned beliefs, and individual needs (Bess & Dee, 2008). For individuals, it is important to maintain a balance of these two tracks (Bess & Dee). Faculty promotion criteria not only reflect the university's expectations of faculty members, but the promotion itself ultimately satisfies faculty members' personal needs and, in a sense, defines what is important to the faculty. Without giving teaching enough credit in the faculty promotion process and putting emphasis solely on research will influence faculty's

decision to participate in teaching. Therefore, it is important for the university to embrace creative ways of counting the teaching of GE courses into its faculty reward and promotion system.

Last but not least, in the process of learning from other institutions' experience, it is important for the university to look not only at the practice and the ideas behind it, but also the context in which such practice exists. At the same time, the university also needs to examine its own traditions and to explore local factors that could possibly influence the practice both positively and negatively. Thorough comparative study of the larger context beyond the policy practice itself is both necessary and important to lead to successful implementation. PKU's experience of starting a pilot project within the local context proves to be an effective way in implementing GE practice in the university context. The university's efforts to use its research capacity, monitoring students' achievements, and communicating the results to the larger community are also an inspiring reference point for other universities.

7.3 Recommendations to Future Researchers

Unlike education in specialties and profession, where immediate results can be measured, general education embraces some foundational liberal education traditions that will take years to be self-evident. And yet, as it has been argued in both chapter 2 and chapter 3, the embracing of a general education model at the undergraduate level in Chinese universities is needed for both the universities' internal and external development in the context of globalization, and the universities' efforts to overcome its overspecialization. Thus, how to promote GE practice in the context of Chinese universities, especially when one cannot explicitly prove its effectiveness in a short period, becomes one of the major goals of this study. It is with such thoughts in mind that I

recommend that future researchers pay special attention to the following aspects when conducting future research in related areas. First, quantitative studies that capture the views of faculty on general education will be valuable. This study looked at faculty members' experiences from a qualitative perspective, and is limited by the number of faculty members that could be included. Quantitative studies with a broader inclusion of faculty members from more disciplinary areas will result in a broader view of faculty experiences and produce more powerful policy recommendations. Second, future researchers might also look at existing literature that documents faculty members' participation in GE reform in Western universities, and explore possible ways of trusting GE reform in faculty members' hands. Existing Chinese research usually looks only at the curriculum components without making a detailed analysis of whether and how foreign institutions engage the faculty in policy initiation and implementation. And yet engaging the faculty in such a process will be invaluable to Chinese institutions in order to further develop their own GE reform. Third, since there are still acceptance issues, longitudinal studies that monitor the effects of GE programs will provide possible support that will encourage the continuing efforts in this area.

An old Chinese saying goes like this, "it takes ten years to grow a tree, but a hundred years to bring up a generation of people." Likewise, it may take years to see the benefits of general education reform. Yet a well-developed GE program not only contributes to an individual's overall development but also benefits the whole society. It is with such a firm belief in general education's potential that provides educators with hope for advancing its implementation in post-secondary institutions.

Appendix 1: Interview Protocol for Administrators in English

General Education Practices' Beginning Stage:

1) Can you tell me about the background of general education reform at PKU/ECNU?
    a. When did the initiative start?
    b. What were the identified issues that had led the university to explore general education reform at first place?
    c. Did the university look at general education models of other countries or other universities in China when planning the form?
    d. How did the university define general education?
    e. What were the visions/goals/objectives of implementing such a reform initiative?
2) Can you talk about the general education model that was adopted at the beginning of the reform from the following aspects?
    a. required general education credits for graduation
    b. targeted student groups (e.g. freshmen, sophomore)
    c. for Yuanpei College at PKU: admission
    d. general education contents other than general education courses
    e. curriculum development
    f. the teaching of general education courses
    g. related organizational adjustment (e.g. general education committee)
    h. information flow (How did the university educate different groups about the reform initiative?)
    i. feedback system (How did the university evaluate general education practices?)
    j. Who were involved in the process?
        i. How was the decision made to get these people involved?
        ii. Were faculty members consulted in terms of these initiatives? How?
3) Did the university consult its faculty members about the general education initiative at the beginning stage? If yes, how?
4) What were faculty members' responses toward general education reform in general at the beginning?

Changes in the past few years:

1) How has general education program changed over the past 10 years in the following aspects?
    a. required general education credits for graduation
    b. enrollment changes in the case of Yuanpei College
    c. curriculum development
    d. related organizational adjustment
    e. general education contents other than general education courses
    f. others

2) What about faculty members' participation in this process? (different mechanisms of faculty participation in this reform)
    a. curriculum development
    b. teaching — (e.g. do you see more teachers getting involved in teaching general education courses? Esp. in terms of faculty members in different academic ranking levels; innovation in teaching etc.)
    c. service — e.g., faculty committee
    d. other channels attracting faculty members' participation
3) Do the university administrators see it as important to get faculty members' participation in this reform? Why or why not?
4) How have universities promoted the concept of general education, its related reform policies, new curriculum development etc.? (Newsletter? Leader's public speech? etc.)
5) How does the university evaluate general education, especially the effects of general education courses?
6) Do faculty members have channels to share problems/challenges/experiences they have had in teaching general education courses?
7) Is there any faculty development program to facilitate the teaching of general education courses? If so, please describe the program. (technical and social support for faculty who are motivated to improve their involvement in GE courses and their teaching)
8) What about the reward system for faculty who teach GE courses or participate in general education reform in other ways?
9) Have you observed changes of the faculty members' attitudes toward general education program at PKU/ECNU? If yes, please give me some specific examples.
10) What are the obstacles or inspirations that have prevented or encouraged faculty members' participations in different ways of contributing to general education? How has the office managed to encounter these obstacles?
11) After a decade of efforts, what has PKU/ECNU accomplished in terms of general education?
12) What are the major challenges that PKU/ECNU encounter in terms of general education reform?
13) Is there anything you want to add? Or any materials that you think would help me with understanding some of the above questions?
14) If I want to know more about the above questions, who else do you suggest me to talk to?

Appendix 2: Interview Protocol for Administrators in Chinese

通识教育初始阶段：

1） 您能否简单介绍一下北大/华师大通识教育改革的相关背景？

a. 学校是从什么时候开始筹划通识教育改革的？(启动时间)
b. 有什么内外因素促使学校开始考虑和实施在本科教育中加入通识教育元素？(启动此项改革背后的原因)
c. 学校有没有参照国内外兄弟院校通识教育的模式？
d. 学校是怎样界定通识教育的？（理念）
e. 学校对通识教育改革初始设定的目标和期望到达的效果是怎么样的？(初始目标和期望)

2） 您能否从以下几方面介绍一下在通识教育改革初期学校所采纳的通识教育模式？

a. 通识课程的学分要求
b. 针对的学生：是集中在大学一二年级还是整个四年的本科生教育阶段？
c. 招生情况：主要是元培班的招生情况
d. 除课程以外其它形式的通识教育内容
e. 通识课程的开发、设置，以及负责的部门
f. 教学任务如何分配：课程有谁负责开设？
g. 相应的组织结构安排：有没有相应的通识教育委员会？由谁组成？或者有没有设立新的办公室管理此项工作？或者哪个原有机构负责此项工作？
h. 信息交流：学校关于通识教育的相关政策及其实施是怎样传递到教师环节的？
i. 信息反馈---学校怎样对通识教育进行评估（课程、管理）

3） 在通识教育改革的初始阶段过，学校有没有通过什么途径来征求教师的意见？

4） 在通识教育实施初期，教师的反应如何？学校是怎样到这些信息的？

通识教育的实施及转变：

1) 在过去的 10 年中，从以下几方面来看，学校的通识教育经历了那些变化？

a. 课程学分要求的变化
b. 招生情况（元培学院招生情况的变化）
c. 新课程的开发及课程设置
d. 主管通识教育的行政组织
e. 课程外其它通识教育元素

f. 其它

2) 教师在这个过程中的参与情况如何？
   a. 通识教育课程开发、设置方面
   b. 通识课程的教学方面---（e.g. 参与通识课程教学的老师增减情况；参与教学老师的职称；教学方面的创新）
   c. 参与通识教育非教学相关工作方面---e.g. 教师参与通识教育委员会等的情况
   d. 教师参与通识教育的其它途径---e.g.导师、通识讲座 等等
3) 学校管理层是否认为让教师参与通识教育改革很重要？（表现在那些方面？）
4) 学校通过哪些途径来传播推广通识教育改革的理念、政策、新课程开发及通识教育的实施等？
5) 学校怎样评估通识教育，尤其是通识课程的教学效果？
6) 教师之间间有没有什么途径来交流分享通识课教学过程中遇到的问题以及积累的经验？
7) 学校有没有专门针对担任通识课程教学的教师的培训计划？如果有，请您介绍一下。
8) 对于参与通识课程教学的老师或者是参与通识教育改革其它方面工作的老师，学校有什么样的鼓励或者奖励制度？
9) 在通识教育实施的过程中，您是否看到广大教师对通识教育的态度有所转变？能否举例说明？
10) 您认为有哪些因素制约或者鼓励了教师参与到通识教育改革这个过程中来？学校通过哪些方式来解决这方面存在的问题？
11) 经过 10 年左右的努力，北大/华师大的通识教育取得了哪些成绩？
12) 您认为目前学校的通识教育改革主要面临哪些挑战？
13) 您还有哪些方面需要补充？您有没有什么资料可以帮我更好的了解贵校通识教育的进展情况？
14) 如果我想深入了解以上问题，您觉得我还需要访谈哪些关键人物？

Appendix 3: Interview Protocol for Faculty Members in English

1） In your opinion, what should be the objectives of undergraduate education on university campuses?

2） In your opinion, what aspects should be covered in an ideal undergraduate education?

3） In your opinion, what should be the focus of undergraduate education?

4） In your opinion, as a key university in China, what should be the objectives of undergraduate education in PKU/ECNU? (What kind of graduates should PKU/ECNU cultivate?

5） To what degree do you know about the general education at your university? (Objectives, the model adopted, students' course requirements, responsible offices etc.)

6） In your opinion, what is general education? (Or liberal education?)

7） In your opinion, should general education be one of the important parts of undergraduate education?

   a. If yes, in your opinion, what areas should the general education at PKU/ECNU cover? (e.g. foundations of different disciplines, citizenship education etc.)

8） As a faculty member from Chinese/Chemistry Department, do you think general education is related to your daily teaching? Why?

9） Have you been involved in developing and/or teaching general education courses?

   a. If your answer is yes:
      a) Please talk about your experience
      b) How was the general education course that you taught/teach developed?
      c) Did you have clear objectives of what you are going to accomplish through the course?
      d) What about your teaching methodology?
      e) To what degree do you feel that you've accomplished what you set up to achieve? Please talk about it in details.
      f) Did you have chances to communicate about your work in this area?
      g) Can you comment on the department or university's support to your work in general education area?
      h) How satisfied are you with the department or the university's support to your work in this area? Please be specific.
      i) What obstacles or inspirations have you encountered that either have prevented you from participating or encouraged you to participate in general education initiatives?

b. If your answer is no, can you tell me why you haven't participated yet? (e.g. not informed, not interested, no time etc.)

10） How do you feel about whether the university has done enough in general education area? Why?

11） Do you feel whether the general education practices adopted by the university will help the university to achieve the objectives that it sets up for general education reform?

12） Do you feel whether the general education model adopted by your university is the ideal general education model that the university should adopt? Why?

13） What is your overall comment on PKU/ECNU's general education reform?

14） Is there anything you want to add?

Appendix 4: Interview Protocol for Faculty Members in Chinese

1) 您认为大学本科教育的目标应该是什么？
2) 您认为理想的大学本科教育应该包括哪些方面？(给学生怎样的经历？)
3) 您觉得本科教育的重点是什么？
4) 具体到本校，作为一所全国的重点院校，您认为北大/华师大应该培养怎样的本科毕业生？
5) 您对北大/华师大的本科阶段通识教育有什么了解？（通识教育改革开始的时间、学校通识教育目标、模式、对学生课程的要求、负责通识教育的行政部门等等）
6) 您认为什么是通识教育？（如果没有认识，也可以谈自由教育。）
7) 您觉得通识教育是本科教育的重要组成部分么？为什么？
    a. 如果通识教育对于本科阶段很重要，您认为通识教育应该涵盖哪些方面？
8) 您认为作为中文系/化学系的教师，通识教育与您日常的教学工作相关么？为什么？
9) 您是否参与过通识教育课程的开发与教学？
    a. 如果是的话：
        a) 请谈谈您的经历
        b) 您所教的通识课是怎样开发出来的？
        c) 您在教授通识课时，是否有一个清晰的目标？（如果有，是什么？）
        d) 在教学上是否沿用传统方法？或者有什么与以往不同的教学方法？）
        e) 您觉得您所教授的通识课程的效果有没有达到您的期望？请具体谈谈。
        f) 您有没有机会和同事交流这些通识课教学上的经验？请具体谈谈（正式或者非正式的渠道）。
        g) 能否谈谈系里和学校对您教授通识课程的支持力度？
        h) 您对系里或者学校的支持是否满意？请具体谈谈。
        i) 您在参与通识课程开发或者教学过程中遇到过什么鼓励或者阻力么？请具体谈谈。
    b. 如果没有参与过通识教育具体工作的话，请谈谈您 为什么没有参与呢？（没有信息、不感兴趣、没有时间 etc.）
10) 您如何评价北大/华师大目前对通识教育的强调的力度？（为什么？）
11) 您认为北大/华师大目前采取的通识教育模式是否有助于学校实现其所设立的通识教育改革的目标？

12) 您认为北大/华师大目前采取的通识教育模式是否是您理想中通识教育模式？请具体谈谈。

13) 您对目前北大/华师大本科教育的通识教育部分的总体评价如何？

您还有什么要补充的么？

Appendix 5: Consent Form in English (Version of 04/16/2010)

University of California, Los Angeles

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Excellence through General Education: The Status of General Education Reform in Chinese Universities

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Xuehong Liao (M.A.) and Professor Val Rust (Ph.D.) from the Department of Education at the University of California, Los Angeles. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because either you are an administrator whose job responsibilities involve general education practice at your university or because you are a faculty member from humanities, social sciences or natural sciences and engineering. Your participation in this research study is voluntary.

Why is this study being done?

I am writing a dissertation about the status of general education reform in Chinese universities. In order to understand the general education reform at your university and faculty members' participation in the process, I need information about the general education practice at your university and/or your participation in it.

What will happen if I take part in this research study?

If you volunteer to participate in this study, the researcher will ask you to do the following:

I will ask you to answer some of my questions about the general education reform at your university, and how you have participated or not participated in the reform.

How long will I be in the research study?

Participation in the study will take a total of about half an hour to an hour.
.

Are there any potential risks or discomforts that I can expect from this study?

I do not expect any risks and discomforts that this study will cause.

Are there any potential benefits if I participate?

You will not directly benefit from your participation in this research. However, the results of the research may shed light on the further development of general education in Chinese universities.

Will I receive any payment if I participate in this study?

You will receive no payment for your participation.

Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can identify you will remain confidential. It will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of not showing the participant identifiers on the information.

Withdrawal of participation by the investigator

The investigator may withdraw you from participating in this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. If something that forces us to discontinue the research, such as natural disaster, you may have to drop out, even if you would like to continue. The investigator will make the decision and let you know if it is not possible for you to continue.

What are my rights if I take part in this study?

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty or loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled.

You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may leave the study at any time without consequences of any kind. You are not waiving any of your legal rights if you choose to be in this research study. You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

Who can answer questions I might have about this study?

If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, you can talk to the one of the researchers. Please contact Xuehong Liao and Professor Val Rust by email: cathyxhliao@ucla.edu; rust@gseis.ucla.edu.

If you wish to ask questions about your rights as a research participant or if you wish to voice any problems or concerns you may have about the study to someone other than the researchers, please call the Office of the Human Research Protection Program at (310) 825-7122 or write to Office of the Human Research Protection Program, UCLA, 11000 Kinross Avenue, Suite 102, Box 951694, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1694.

SIGNATURE OF STUDY PARTICIPANT

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Participant	
Signature of Participant	Date

SIGNATURE OF PERSON OBTAINING CONSENT

In my judgment the participant is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent and possesses the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study.

Xuehong Liao	310-570-5972
Name of Person Obtaining Consent	Contact Number
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent	Date

Appendix 6: Consent Form in Chinese (Version of 04/16/2010)

加州大学洛杉矶分校

参与研究计划的同意书

关于通识教育改革在中国大学现状的研究

您受邀参与一项由美国加州大学洛杉矶分校教育系廖学红（硕士研究生学历）和 Val Rust 教授(博士学历)设计执行的研究。您被邀请参与该项研究是因为您参与过贵校通识教育改革或者是因为您执教于贵校。您对本研究的参与应建立在自愿原则上。

为什么要进行本研究？

我在进行博士论文的调查研究，我的题目是关于中国大学通识教育改革现状。为了了解通识教育改革在贵校的现状及教师在这个过程中的参与状况，我需要一些信息。

参与该研究对我意味着什么？

如果你自愿参与本研究，研究人员将问您以下相关问题：

我会提问您关于通识教育改革在贵校的进程和现状以及您在这当中的参与情况。

参与需要多长时间？

你的参与将会在半个小时到一个小时之间。

.

参与该研究对我有无潜在危险？

研究过程中您不会经历任何危险或不适。

参与该研究对我有无潜在受益？

您不会因为参与该研究而获得任何物质回报。但是，研究的结果将有可能对进一步深化中国大学通识教育改革作出贡献。

参与该研究会不会有物质回报？

您的参与不享受任何物质回报。

我的参与及我提供的信息是否会受到保密保护？

任何关于您个人的信息都会受到保护。只有在您同意或者是相关法律规定的前提下您的信息才会被公开。研究收集的数据不包括您个人信息。

因研究者原因而被迫退出该研究

如果发生特殊情况，研究者保持要求您退出该研究的权力。如果我们被迫终止您的参与，例如因为自然灾害的发生，您将必须终止您的参与行为。研究者将对类似情况做出判断。

我参与该研究的权力包括哪些？

您随时可以退出该项研究，您之前所享受的利益将不会因您的退出而受到任何损伤。

您可以选择是否参与该项研究。如果您自愿参与本研究，您可以在任何时间决定终止您的参与而不受到任何影响。您的参与不会使您放弃您所享受的任何法律权限。对于您不愿意回答的问题，您可以选择不作答，即使这样，您还是可以继续参与本研究。

谁可以解答我对你们的研究所持有的问题？

如果您有关于本研究的任何问题，您也可以与我们联络：廖学红 cathyxhliao@ucla.edu; Val Rust 教授 rust@gseis.ucla.edu。

如果您对于您作为研究参与者的权力有所疑问，或者您对该研究对其他非研究成员的影响有所顾虑，请与加收大学保护研究参与人员权益的办公室联系： 电话(310) 825-7122；地址：Office of the Human Research Protection Program, UCLA, 11000 Kinross Avenue, Suite 102, Box 951694, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1694.

研究参与人员签名：

我明白以上所述的程序。我所持有的疑问得到了解决，我同意自愿参与该项研究。我得到了一份该文件的复本。

_____

参与者姓名

_____ _____

参与者签名 日期

该项目研究人员签名：

根据我判断，参与人员已经得到关于本研究的相关信息，有能力自己决定是否参与本研究，是否参与本研究的决定出于自愿。

廖学红	310-570-5972
研究人员姓名	联系电话
研究人员签名	日期

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