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The Yuanpei Program in Peking University: A case study of curriculum innovation. Wanying Wang. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer, 2014. xvii+165 pp., (paperback), 109.99€, ISBN: 978-364-243-803-5.

General education, one of the most prominent themes in contemporary higher education, has attracted wide attention from international academia during the last few decades. Wang's newly published book, *The Yuanpei Program in Peking University: A case study of curriculum innovation*, is a pioneering study attempting to find out how general education reforms have evolved in the context of China. Within the goal of developing world-class universities, this book contributes to both theory and practice.

The author examines the Yuanpei Program, a pilot program of general education, which started in 2001 and became Peking University's Yuanpei College in 2009. Set in a framework of conflict theory, this book provides a holistic and in-depth analysis of conflict in the process of initiation and implementation, including how conflict evolved and what its sources were, based on multiple data sets drawn from observation, documentation, and interviews with administrators, teachers and students.

The Yuanpei Program not only stands as an example of curriculum innovation but also as a pioneering and exploratory experiment in talent cultivation, which aims to equip students with broad-based knowledge, the spirit of innovation and strong adaptability. It is more like a top-down than a bottom-up reform, although suggestions for improvements have been solicited to a certain extent during implementation. As a parallel organization co-existing with other traditional colleges, the Yuanpei Program was given institutional privileges by university administrators, such as freedom of course selection and choice of majors, a flexible learning system, and availability of faculty advisors for undergraduate students. The dual-track system on campus has led inevitably to multiple interactions among various agents, which result in cooperation, competition and conflict.

In this book, conflict is classified into two broad categories: conflict over conceptual issues and conflict in the process of implementation. The author points out that there is a dialectical relationship between the two kinds of conflict and further presents a vivid picture of three conceptual conflicts and four

practical conflicts. Each conceptual conflict has gone through similar stages involving issues, confrontations, and an integration of claims on both sides. For practical conflict, factors contributing to the escalation, de-escalation and moderation were identified. Besides escalating factors such as the polarization of attitudes and de-escalating factors such as effective communication, the gradually decreasing differences between Yuanpei and traditional colleges may de-escalate or moderate conflict. For instance, with the implementation of the Yuanpei Program, students in other colleges are also required to take general education elective courses and allowed to choose their majors within the scope of their own colleges after enrolment. Such strategies and reactions of traditional colleges are worthy of being further investigated when the dynamic state of conflict is examined.

The book provides a detailed description of four sources of conflict: different roles, incompatible values, contested resources, and structural constraints. In addition, there are certain conflicts deriving from the gap between students' expectations and reality. According to their enrollment motivations, Yuanpei students can be divided into three groups: students who know little about which major to take and expect to postpone their decisions on it for one or two years; students who have specific major interests but have no access to those "popular majors" under the restriction of their College Entrance Examination scores; and students for whom the idea of general education has an appeal. Generally speaking, the former two groups of students are more likely to experience conflict. The first group of students tends to feel confused in the process of course selection and major choices, given limited tutorials, especially those with little sense of autonomy. The second group of students realizes over time that the freedom of major choice is limited to a certain extent, especially for "popular majors." The larger the gap between expectations and reality, the more conflict students may experience.

While the author provides an in-depth analysis of the evolution and sources of the conflict, some readers might expect to learn more about the impact of the conflict. For example, how the conflict impacts general education reforms, and how curriculum innovation impacts students' development under the circumstances of conflict. Failure to address this question has affected the integrity of the overall research to a certain extent.

It is worth mentioning that the Yuanpei Program is in a phase of rapid

development. For instance, in 2012, the Residential College was established with a public library, discussion rooms, and counselors. In 2014 two interdisciplinary majors were established: “integrated science” combining mathematics, physics, and biology, and “data science” combining mathematics, statistics, and computer science. Furthermore, a sophomore training camp and sophomore seminars were initiated to assist Yuanpei students in adapting to college life and making course and major choices. Conflict may be further escalated, de-escalated or moderated as the Yuanpei Program develops. More follow-up research and long-term inquiry using qualitative and quantitative methods are needed to evaluate what conflict has evolved and how the conflict impacts general education reforms in the long run.

In order to develop into globally recognized first-class universities, more and more universities in China have been initiating general education reforms during recent decades. With some attempts already made, these universities are still at the trial stage, facing common as well as distinctive challenges. Whether general education reforms achieve desirable goals depends not only on how advanced the ideas are and how much support the reforms gain from administrators, but also on the flexibility of the reform itself and the adaptability of students in the Chinese context. This book has implications of great value for general education practices in Chinese higher education, as well as rich reference materials.

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Media discourse analysis is currently gaining territory in educational policy