

The “Declaration of Majors in Sophomore or Junior Year” of Undergraduate Curriculum in Taiwan — the Analysis of Transformation of Knowledge Production from Mode 1 to Mode 2

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The issues of “declaration of majors in sophomore or junior Year” and “college allocation only, no major specified in universities” have, in recent years, brought a widespread discussion and considerable concern to higher education in terms of laws and policies in Taiwan. In 2007, a string of revolutionary policy of “enrollment without major specification” was adopted by some colleges and universities. It was the first large-scale practice of “non-major specification for the first half of university courses.” Since then, more schools following this trend has become a critical issue in curriculum in Taiwan higher education and attracted research interest for further studies.

From the perspective of global discourse on knowledge, Gibbons et al. (1994) argued that the form of knowledge production had turned into Mode 2 from Mode 1 under the globalization context. Based on this, the trend of “non-major specification for the first half of university courses” conducted in Taiwan, blurring the boundaries of disciplines, can also be examined as a transformation of knowledge production from a mode of globalization into a paradigm of inter-discipline.

Four purposes have been tried in this paper. First, the curriculum practice under the inter-discipline policy is discussed from the perspective of transformation of global knowledge production. Secondly, the correlation between the policy of “non-major specification for the first half of university courses” and the production of global knowledge is analyzed. Then the meaning of transformation of knowledge production from the adoption of “non-major specification for the first half of university courses” in Taiwan is examined. Finally, the relation between the concept of knowledge behind “non-major specification for the first half of university courses” policy and Mode 2 knowledge production is explored from the professors’

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interviews.

The research method consists of interviewing and document analysis. The documents analyzed come from the disciplines which have adopted “non-major specification for the first half of university courses”. Professors from these disciplines were also interviewed.

The main findings include several facets. First, for the correlation between the policy of “non-major specification for the first half of university courses” and the production of global knowledge, the policy adopted belongs to Mode 2 knowledge production as the policy aims to cultivate students’ ability of innovation and integration of knowledge from various disciplines.

For the concept of knowledge the interviewees have with “non-major specification for the first half of university course,” five types were found. First, the students with combined knowledge become more competitive and welcomed in the workplace. Secondly, connecting theoretical knowledge with practical skills in various disciplines are strongly required. Thirdly, common knowledge in different disciplines remains and blurs the boundary among them. Furthermore, students receive more liberal arts education during the first half of undergraduate curriculum. Finally, students have to learn knowledge of other disciplines to cope with the requirement in their career. In sum, the concept of knowledge toward inter-discipline and practical learning corresponds with Mode 2 knowledge production.

Keywords: Globalization, undergraduate curriculum, non-major specification for the first half of undergraduate curriculum, Mode 1 and Mode 2 knowledge

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