13>

After undergoing a marathon journey from primary to high school and then to university, students are confronted by another dilemma: how to strike a balance between their majors and courses in other fields. A similar quandary must have perplexed educators for decades as they grappled with designing university courses. While at first glance, it may seem appealing to require students to take various courses outside their fields of study, I remain doubtful of such a proposal. If we hastily carry out the advice, it would probably jeopardize education's purpose of facilitating students' well-roundedness.

Advocates of this claim will reject my position. They argue that knowledge gained from other fields contributes to innovative approaches to understanding the majors. The blending of different methodologies from various fields exemplifies this argument. For supporting examples, we no further turn to the cooperation of linguistics and literature and the combination of math and economics. What bind these pairs are similar methodologies. By transferring a methodology from one field to another, students are able to understand the essence of both fields and this leads to the emergence of creative ideas and more profound understanding. However, not all fields relate as readily as the aforementioned pairs, so we cannot expect to apply principles from any field to another. Therefore, only when the courses share similar methodological principles can the author's recommendation come into effect.

Opposition to my argument also comes from current students' limited range of knowledge and narrow horizons. From this point of view, university students should be equipped with holistic capabilities in diverse fields so that they can better accustom themselves to diverse work in the future. In modern society, we are not surprised to encounter a professional lawyer who excels at public speaking; nor will it shock us when a mathematician assumes the role of a philosopher. An abundance of these generalists demonstrates the very advantage of mastery of comprehensive skills and expertise. Nevertheless, I argue that generalists choose to be excellent, but are not required to be. It is their insatiable desire for knowledge that drives them to excel in the new ones. Students nowadays are exceedingly short of time and universities should foster, in most circumstances, specialists rather than generalists. Consequently, while we welcome generalists, it might be more reasonable if we step back from decision requiring students to choose courses in various disciplines, and adopt an alternative policy: encourage them to take extra courses and do whatever we can to facilitate this process.

Although I maintain that encouraging course selection may function better than a mandatory requirement, some people may dispute my position. They claim that the latter overshadows the former in terms of efficiency, since sluggishness is human nature and it is only through compulsory course requirements that students will really make progress in their major fields. The beginning of every course, they argue, inevitably stumbles on questioning and even emphatic repudiation; however, such questioning and repudiation will be followed by subsequent acceptance and students will quickly absorb new knowledge. Consistent might this claim appear with the reality, I tend to say that students do not learn for the sake of learning, and instead they learn in order to past tests. Whatever form is used to test students, be it an exam, a paper submission or group work, students always tend to focus on the test itself, but no on the accumulation of knowledge. Without adjusting students' attitude towards learning, the introduction of various new courses will remain well-intentional but will inevitably result in a meaningless struggle against the exam-oriented education system.

Taking extra courses outside one’s original field goes far beyond the decision of whether or not to take them, but raises more fundamental and far-reaching issues. We may tentatively implement the issue’s recommendation, but a complete change in design of university courses requires more careful consideration.