

Investigation and Research on the Satisfaction of Undergraduate Liberal Arts Major Students in China with Their Major Courses and Its Influencing Factors under the Background of the “New Liberal Arts”

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Abstract: Major course satisfaction is not only one of the significant sources of motivation for university students' professional learning, but also a crucial factor in improving teaching quality and student learning outcomes. From the perspective of “New Liberal Arts” education background, this study investigated the satisfaction degree of liberal arts undergraduates and its influencing factors, examined the influence of curriculum, teacher teaching and interdisciplinary nature of curriculum on the satisfaction degree of liberal arts teaching, and explored the influence degree of different factors on satisfaction degree through quantitative analysis, and found out the main influencing factors. Finally, the paper puts forward some measures to improve the quality of higher education. The survey shows that under the background of “New Liberal Arts”, liberal arts undergraduates' satisfaction with professional courses is generally high, but schools and teachers still need to take different measures to improve teaching quality and continue to improve students' satisfaction with professional courses.

1. Introduction

In the process of deepening cultural exchanges and mutual learning and constructing a community of shared future for humanity, the humanities and social sciences bear significant responsibilities and missions. In recent years, the undergraduate education in humanities and social sciences at Chinese universities has undergone a major transformation, commonly referred to as “New Humanities and Social Sciences.” This transformation emphasizes interdisciplinary integration, focuses on nurturing students' comprehensive abilities and innovative thinking, and no longer emphasizes the traditional division between the humanities and the sciences. The transformation has had a significant impact on the satisfaction of undergraduate students majoring in humanities and social sciences. Building the New Humanities and Social Sciences is not only the essence of building a community of shared future for mankind but also a new way of thinking and new approach to addressing new challenges in human development. As for the requirements of the New Humanities and Social Sciences, it is “to promote the cross-integration of philosophy, social sciences, and the new technological revolution, cultivate

philosophers and social scientists of the new era, and create a radiant Chinese culture for the times and the world.” In order to accelerate the development of high-level undergraduate education in China and comprehensively improve the ability to cultivate talents, this is the mission of building the New Humanities and Social Sciences, which is an honorable and arduous task for higher education institutions, especially prestigious universities. In this larger context, researching the satisfaction of undergraduate students majoring in humanities and social sciences with their major courses and the factors influencing this satisfaction is of great significance because they directly or indirectly affect students’ academic achievements and career development.

The theory related to students' satisfaction with their major courses initially originated from research in marketing, examining the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction. In the context of higher education, university students are considered as customers receiving educational services. They compare the courses they receive with their expected outcomes, assessing whether the course services meet their developmental needs. During this process, they experience feelings of happiness due to satisfaction or disappointment due to dissatisfaction^[1]. The level of satisfaction among undergraduate students majoring in liberal arts with their specialized courses has consistently been a hot topic in higher education research. As one of the crucial sources of motivation for university students in their major studies, it also forms the basis for enabling students to maintain long-term interest and enhance their learning outcomes. Higher satisfaction levels can lead to greater loyalty, recognition, liking, and engagement among students toward the courses and the academic field^[2].

While the connotation of the construction of the “new humanities and social sciences” extends far beyond just curriculum and teaching, changes in the training model, as the educational philosophy is updated, will inevitably lead to adjustments in the curriculum system and more. Chinese higher education has been faced with challenges since it was characterized by the dual challenges of higher education and education since it was characterized by the dual challenges of education and education. and education since it was characterized by the dual challenges of education and education since it was characterized by the dual challenges of education. With the increasingly fierce competition for employment, students have higher and higher requirements for professional courses. At the same time, China’s higher education still has many problems, such as unreasonable curriculum, education quality and demand do not match. The improvement of the satisfaction degree of liberal arts undergraduates in professional courses has a positive effect on the improvement and enhancement of higher education.

This study, through the investigation of the satisfaction of undergraduate students majoring in the humanities and social sciences, aims to reflect the effectiveness of humanities and social sciences education and to understand students’ opinions and suggestions regarding the offering of major courses. This information will be used to provide feedback to the university and relevant educational authorities, offering more genuine reference data for future educational reforms and the development of the “new humanities and social sciences.” It also provides theoretical support for improving satisfaction with major course teaching and learning quality.

2. Research Design

2.1 Research Tools

This study primarily draws upon the experience of questionnaire design related to course satisfaction surveys. It combines the relevant literature review and the actual development of higher education. Furthermore, adjustments to specific questionnaire items are made based on the mentioned survey methods in the literature review, in order to tailor them to the specific context of higher education in our country.

In questionnaire design, this study follows the concept of “New Liberal Arts” education, paying

attention to details, comprehensiveness and practicality. The questionnaire consists of four parts. The first section involves the completion of basic information by the respondents, including grade, educational background, major, and four other questions. The second section serves as the core of this survey questionnaire and encompasses three primary dimensions: course arrangement, teacher's teaching, and interdisciplinary nature of the courses. Under the course arrangement dimension, there are three secondary dimensions, including class scheduling, course content, and assessment methods. The section on teacher's teaching covers course content delivery, teaching methods, teaching effectiveness, and teaching attitude, with relevant measurement criteria for each of these four aspects. This dimension's scale, based on Zheng Yingqiang and Tang Wenshan's research on a student satisfaction-based course evaluation index system, has been modified and adapted. The interdisciplinary nature of courses also includes four secondary dimensions. Following this, there are two questions addressing the aforementioned factors. The third section is a summary, including the overall satisfaction with major courses, with an additional question investigating the impact of self-competence on classroom implementation. This part employs a Likert five-point scale, where higher scores represent a higher perceived level of importance for a given factor and vice versa. The fourth section pertains to "new humanities and social sciences" and explores its influence on the studied major, the expected teaching methods, and perspectives on interdisciplinary studies in the context of the "new humanities and social sciences".

2.2 Data Collection

A total of 78 questionnaires were collected in this survey, with 61 of them considered valid, resulting in an effective rate of 87.1%. Among the collected questionnaires, data were filtered according to the research topic, and 17 questionnaires were excluded for being too brief, for being from non-humanities majors, and for having non-undergraduate qualifications. One question in the questionnaire asked, "What is your major?" to facilitate subsequent data filtering. Additionally, the questionnaire platform was configured to allow only one response per device, such as a smartphone or computer. Every question in the survey was mandatory, and respondents had to complete the entire questionnaire before they could submit it and leave. This approach aimed to filter out questionnaires with very short response times and maximize the authenticity and validity of the collected data.

Among the 61 surveyed university students, there were 25 males (41%) and 36 females (59%). In terms of academic years, there were 20 freshmen (32.8%), 32 sophomores (52.4%), 5 juniors (8.2%), and 4 seniors (6.6%).

2.3 Reliability and Validity Testing

Reliability refers to the consistency, stability, and reliability of test results. The level of reliability reflects the stability of the questionnaire. High reliability can help minimize random errors or biases in the questionnaire. In this study, internal consistency reliability testing was conducted using SPSS 21.0. It is generally considered that when Cronbach's α is ≥ 0.8 , it indicates high reliability; between 0.7 and 0.8, it suggests good reliability; between 0.6 and 0.7, it indicates acceptable reliability; and if it's less than 0.6, it suggests poor reliability. The reliability coefficient for this scale is 0.843, indicating relatively high reliability.

On this basis, an analysis of the scale's validity was conducted. Questionnaire validity refers to the effectiveness or correctness of the questionnaire's measurement results, i.e., the extent to which a questionnaire can measure the concepts or characteristics that the researcher intends to measure^[3]. In this study, content validity was used as the measurement standard. When creating the questionnaire, we referenced numerous existing questionnaires and relevant literature on this topic. The questionnaire was developed based on several dimensions of satisfaction with major courses, and the

opinions of professional teachers were sought multiple times. Before the formal survey phase, a pretest was conducted, ensuring that this questionnaire has relatively good content validity.

3. Research Results

The course is an important field for talent development, and currently, various humanities and social science disciplines have been exploring in the area of curriculum development. According to the survey, it was found that among the existing professional course teachers, the majority of them have interdisciplinary backgrounds, which is also conducive to the construction of a multidisciplinary and cross-curriculum group. In addition, in terms of the learning content of the courses, teaching based on knowledge from different disciplines received relatively high scores. Specific data can be found in Table 1.

Table 1: The current state of the interdisciplinarity of specialized courses

Factors examined	Based on other majors	Including interdisciplinary courses	Teachers possess interdisciplinary backgrounds	Based on knowledge from different disciplines
Average	4.08	4.08	4.16	4.15

Note: Full score: 5 points

3.1 Analysis of Various Factors Affecting Satisfaction with Major Courses

Table 2: Average Values of Factors Affecting Major Course Satisfaction

Curriculum	Factors examined		Average value
		Class schedule	4.03
		Learning content	4.2
		Assessment methods	4.08
Teachers' teaching	Factors examined		Average value
		Correctness	4.33
		Theory with practice	4.28
		Teaching techniques	4.34
		Teaching aid application	4.1
		Extracurricular learning	4.11
		Learning interest	4.18
		Professional skills	4.3
		Organize teaching	4.3
		To impart knowledge and educate people	4.25

Note: Full score: 5 points

Undergraduate students majoring in the humanities and social sciences have varying scores on the factors affecting satisfaction with major courses. As shown in Table 1, the mean score for course content is 4.2, for teaching artistry is 4.34, and for teachers having interdisciplinary backgrounds is 4.16. These three factors rank first in terms of their importance in affecting satisfaction factors, with teacher's teaching artistry being the top factor among all. Furthermore, as shown in Table 2, among the three major influencing factors, the average score for teachers' teaching methods is 4.25, also holding the first position. This indicates that teachers' teaching methods significantly impact the satisfaction with professional course teaching. In comparison to traditional lecture-style teaching, students prefer diverse teaching methods with strong interactivity and practicality. However, there is

no significant difference in students' satisfaction with professional courses regarding the course structure and interdisciplinary nature.

Additionally, among the three major influencing factors, the average value of the teacher's teaching method also holds the first position, as shown in Table 3. This suggests that the teacher's teaching style significantly influences satisfaction with major course teaching. However, course arrangement and the interdisciplinary nature of courses do not show significant differences in students' satisfaction with major courses.

Table 3: The average of the three major influencing factors of professional course satisfaction

Factors examined	Curriculum	Teachers 'teaching	Based on knowledge from different disciplines
Average value	4.1	4.25	4.12

Note: Full score: 5 points

3.2 The teaching methods employed by instructors and the course structure significantly influence students' satisfaction with their major courses.

When ranking the three factors that influence satisfaction, as shown in the Figure 1, teaching methods receive a score of 2.1, indicating their prominence compared to the other two factors. Teaching methods profoundly impact the creation of the classroom learning environment, student learning styles, and learning outcomes ^[4]. In the research conducted by Sasha Nicklak et al., it was found that the adoption of diverse teaching methods, including experimental teaching, increased the course satisfaction of Australian students by over 30% ^[5]. This demonstrates a pronounced positive correlation between teachers' instructional methods and the satisfaction of undergraduate students majoring in the liberal arts. According to some students' feedback, the teaching methods used by teachers are not integrated and interactive enough, lack of classroom vitality, and largely fail to stimulate students' interest. In this way, Instructors who utilize diverse teaching methods, promote active interactions, encourage student involvement, and offer practical case analyses find it easier to achieve student satisfaction. This is of paramount importance in improving the academic performance and learning motivation of undergraduate students majoring in the liberal arts.

Under the educational framework of "New Liberal Arts," the curriculum design has a beneficial influence on the satisfaction of Chinese liberal arts undergraduate students with their major courses, strengthening their comprehensive competence and interdisciplinary abilities, thereby increasing their satisfaction with major courses. The establishment of "New Liberal Arts" curriculum has a favorable effect on the satisfaction of major courses for Chinese liberal arts undergraduate students, enhancing their comprehensive literacy and interdisciplinary abilities, thereby increasing their satisfaction with major courses. It has the potential to enhance students' comprehensive literacy and interdisciplinary capabilities, enabling liberal arts undergraduate students to encounter a broader spectrum of knowledge and skills distinct from their current surroundings, thus improving their overall literacy and their ability to understand and apply professional knowledge, leading to an increase in their satisfaction with major courses. Thus, it results in an increased satisfaction among liberal arts undergraduate students with their major courses. The educational philosophy of "New Liberal Arts" prioritizes interdisciplinary integration, allowing liberal arts undergraduate students to engage with a greater variety of knowledge and skills distinct from their existing environment, ultimately boosting their overall literacy. As a result, they can better comprehend and utilize professional knowledge, resulting in higher satisfaction with major courses. It provides liberal arts undergraduate students with exposure to a broader spectrum of knowledge and skills distinct from their current environment. As a result, it raises their comprehensive literacy, enabling them to more easily understand and apply

professional knowledge. Leading to an improved satisfaction with their major courses. It's worth noting that, within the context of "New Liberal Arts," factors like faculty development and the distribution of educational resources do have a certain impact on the configuration of "New Liberal Arts" courses. Improper curriculum design will make it difficult for students to understand and master knowledge, which will directly affect students' satisfaction and grades. To solve this problem, schools can collect students' feedback regularly, improve and perfect the curriculum, reduce curriculum redundancy and improve teaching quality. At the same time, schools can also introduce advanced teaching concepts and teaching technologies to make the curriculum more innovative and attractive, and stimulate students' enthusiasm and enthusiasm for learning.

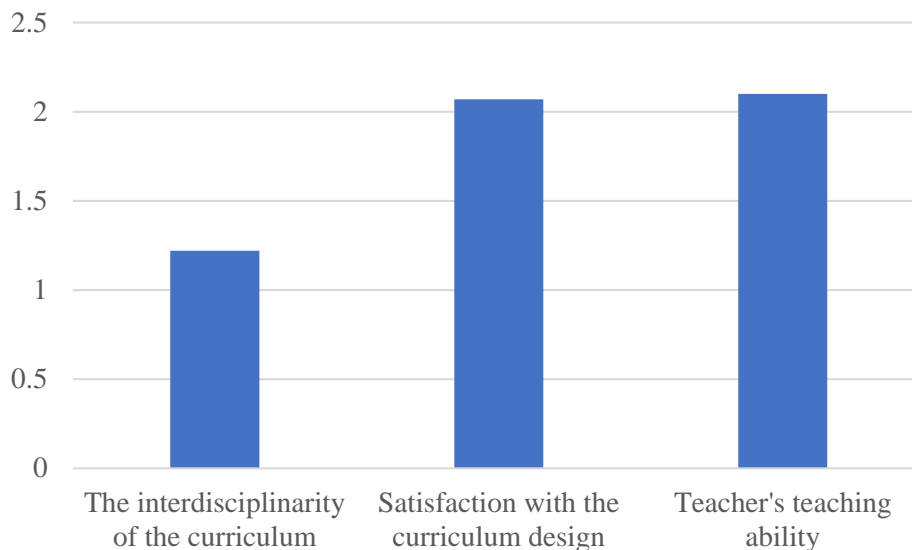


Figure 1: Average Values of the Three Major Influencing Factors on Satisfaction with Major Courses

3.3 Humanities and social science students generally hold an optimistic attitude toward the “new humanities and social sciences” and strongly advocate enhancing practical abilities

When asked about their preferred teaching methods if they choose to study interdisciplinary subjects in the “new humanities and social sciences,” 55.74% of students hope that teachers can integrate professional courses and focus on cultivating practical abilities during actual teaching. Regarding their views on interdisciplinary studies in the “new humanities and social sciences,” 44.26% of students believe that “the future is promising.” They feel that “New Liberal Arts” provides them with more opportunities and possibilities while indirectly indicating that the interdisciplinary fusion of New Liberal Arts can meet the needs of most students to meet the demands of a diverse society. The reasons behind this primarily lie in the enrichment of cross-disciplinary studies. “New Liberal Arts” encourages the cross-fertilization of different disciplines, providing liberal arts undergraduates with a broader range of learning opportunities, enabling them to better understand social and cultural phenomena. Secondly, it is digital media and social networks. Digital media and social networks provide convenient means for liberal arts undergraduates to widely disseminate and expand their viewpoints and research outcomes, increasing the possibilities for communication with peers and the public on a global scale. Last but not least, there are opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship. “New Liberal Arts” motivates students to apply the newly fused knowledge to solve real-world problems, offering them opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship, enabling them to explore new career paths in the cultural industry, social enterprises, and the media sector.

Additionally, among the important factors identified in this questionnaire that impact satisfaction, students prioritize the practicality of the courses, ranking it first. This aligns with the secondary dimension under course arrangement, where the combination of theoretical and practical aspects and the ability of core professional courses to meet industry requirements coincide. It is worth noting that humanities students maintain an optimistic perspective toward the New Humanities, while simultaneously recognizing the significance of practical skills. In this digital age, pure theoretical knowledge is no longer sufficient to meet the needs of societal development, and practical skills have become crucial. Humanities and social science students have their own thoughts and viewpoints on this new concept. Therefore, to advance the development of the “new humanities and social sciences,” it is crucial to establish an ideological consensus, understand, and accept the “new humanities and social sciences,” fostering collaboration to drive practical development.

4. Conclusion and Insights

4.1 Research Conclusion

Understanding student satisfaction allows for an effective grasp of the psychological and intellectual dynamics of modern university students, thereby facilitating more effective course instruction^[6]. In the context of the “New Liberal Arts,” this study unveils various factors that impact the satisfaction of Chinese undergraduate liberal arts students with their major courses and provides insights into improving course satisfaction. The findings of the study contribute to a better understanding of the needs of undergraduate students in liberal arts by universities and policymakers, facilitating the optimization of the educational system, enhancing their satisfaction with specialized courses, and further advancing the development of the new liberal arts education.

Based on the research into the satisfaction of undergraduate humanities and social science students with their major courses, the following conclusions are drawn: (1) The factors of course arrangement, teaching by instructors, and the interdisciplinary nature of courses significantly impact satisfaction with major course instruction, with teaching by instructors and course arrangement having particularly pronounced effects. (2) Under the backdrop of the “new humanities and social sciences,” humanities and social science students hold a relatively optimistic attitude toward interdisciplinary studies within the “new humanities and social sciences.” 3. Cultivating practical skills has a positive impact on the satisfaction of professional courses among Chinese undergraduate students in the humanities.

4.2 Insights from the Study

4.2.1 Teachers Need to Break Down Professional Barriers and Enhance Comprehensive Skills

Teachers, as one of the key agents in education, significantly influence satisfaction with major course instruction and are crucial in educational reform. In the process of advancing the development of the “new humanities and social sciences,” teachers play a pivotal role and should actively engage rather than passively observe. In the context of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary integration, teachers should possess a comprehensive set of knowledge and skills that extend beyond a narrow knowledge-based perspective. They must have the adaptability required for new curriculum demands, making them not only proficient in their respective disciplines but also capable of meeting the comprehensive needs of the new courses^[7]. Therefore, teachers, in the course of their teaching, should possess the qualities needed for nurturing multifaceted talents. They must break down the limitations imposed by single disciplines at the cognitive level, continuously reform teaching content, enhance teaching methods, and improve their adaptability to new environments. In doing so, they

contribute to the transformation and advancement of traditional humanities and social science disciplines at the intersection.

4.2.2 Curriculum Design Should Prioritize Human-Centered Approaches and Reflect Humanities Literacy

The construction of the “new humanities and social sciences” should not only focus on the cross-disciplinary integration at the knowledge level but also emphasize the value dimension of social character. Since many humanities and social science disciplines have a subtle and pervasive influence on students, guiding them directly or indirectly towards improved moral character and the development of an independent personality during the educational process, this impact is deep and enduring. Therefore, in terms of curriculum design, universities should prioritize the agency of individuals, maintain a correct value orientation, gain a deep understanding of students’ learning needs, and develop standardized, diverse, practical, and innovative teaching curricula. This approach can improve student satisfaction with courses and meet the demands of social development more effectively by providing better knowledge guidance and value standards. At the same time, the curriculum of liberal arts major should keep pace with the times, meet the needs of the social market and students’ interests. Considering the universality and diversity of liberal arts majors, students’ individual needs and diversity of choices need to be fully considered in curriculum design. For students at different levels, different types of elective courses or practical courses can be set up, so that students can better discover their interests in the learning process, so as to better exercise their professional ability.

4.2.3 Humanities Education Should Be Oriented toward Real-world Needs and Integrate Theory with Practice

In the final question of the questionnaire, the term “emphasizing practical experience” appeared most frequently among the valid responses. This indicates that enhancing the cultivation of practical skills among humanities and social science students is an urgent and sincere desire for a majority of them. Effectively strengthening every aspect of practical teaching in the humanities is the fundamental approach to enhancing the practical abilities of humanities and social science students. Therefore, accelerating the establishment and development of off-campus internship bases, improving the management of graduation internships, and organizing summer social practice activities are all crucial. Maximizing the collaborative role of extracurricular activities is especially important. Additionally, it is essential to construct a multidisciplinary collaborative training model tailored to specific practical needs. Overcoming the inertia of organizational development mechanisms and driving the deep integration of theory and practice are crucial to better addressing real-world problems and meeting practical needs.

4.3 Research gaps and prospects

Although this study has made some achievements in mining the influencing factors of liberal arts undergraduate course satisfaction, there are still some shortcomings in the actual research. In the sample selection, only 78 samples were recovered, of which 61 were valid questionnaires, the effective rate was 87.1%, which could not represent the whole province or even the whole country. Future studies could consider increasing sample size and sample coverage to obtain more accurate conclusions.

In terms of data collection, this study only uses questionnaires, and each respondent’s answers to the questions may be subjective and inaccurate. Future studies could consider alternative data collection methods, combined with objective metrics and tests to further ensure the credibility and

validity of the study.

In terms of problem exploration and solution proposal, this research method is mainly based on questionnaire survey and analysis, and there are still certain limitations for specific problems and solutions. In future research, other research methods and tools can be considered, such as in-depth interviews and case studies, to promote the in-depth development of related fields.

The future research direction should be to establish a more comprehensive and systematic liberal arts undergraduate course satisfaction survey system. At the same time, we should focus on exploring the relationship between satisfaction and employment, and further deepen the research and analysis of influencing factors. On this basis, more scientific and effective teaching improvement measures and strategies should be formulated to make more positive and creative contributions to higher education teaching reform.

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