



College Students' Extracurricular Reading and Talents Cultivation in China: Based on a Survey in South China University of Technology

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Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analyzed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

College students' extracurricular reading is conducive to all-round development of talents, therefore, current extracurricular reading situation of college students is worth studying. A survey on college students' extracurricular reading is conducted with 938 questionnaires distributed to randomly chosen year 1-5 college students from every colleges in South China University of Technology(SCUT). Based on survey results drawn by data statistics from 836 valid questionnaires, this paper sums up characteristics and existing problems of college students' extracurricular reading, and puts forward some suggestions. The survey finds that, although current college students are willing to do extracurricular reading, and have also strong self-learning ability, they, affected by heavy academic burdens and temptation of network, are forced to do extracurricular reading mainly in dormitory or bathroom in the evening, at night or at weekend, and their time in reading non profession-related books are less, their reading quantities are small and without a reading plan, with which students are dissatisfactory. Therefore, measures should be taken as follows in universities and colleges: further promote an awareness of the relationship between extracurricular reading and talents all-round development, timely adjust curriculum to allow students more extracurricular self-study time, appropriately guide students in making extracurricular reading plan, so as to enhance college student's extracurricular reading time, quantity and efficiency, to make extracurricular reading in better service for talents cultivation.

Keywords: China's college students; extracurricular reading; talents cultivation; survey.

1. INTRODUCTION

Francis Bacon [1], a famous English essayist, believed in his essay "Of Studies" that "Reading maketh a full man"(Bacon 49). The "full" here refers not only to richness, but also comprehensiveness. In other words, reading extensively can make a full and comprehensive person. Such a person, in modern parlance, is "the whole person". Whole-person education has been the main goal of Chinese higher education in the past three decades. At the beginning of the founding of the People's Republic of China, in response to the urgent needs of national economic construction at the time, China's higher education paid more attention to cultivation of practical scientific professionals. By the 1990s, the bias and harm of professional education had been seen by all. The field of higher education began to advocate general education for college students, with the purpose of cultivating "whole person" who not only has a solid professional foundation, but also has good humanistic literacy. So far, general education other than professional education has been implemented in Chinese universities for nearly 30 years [2]. The importance of general education in talent cultivation is self-evident. Then, what is the current situation of college students' general education other than professional learning? This paper does not directly study the situation of college students' taking general education courses outside their professional study, but by investigating the current situation of college students' extra-curricular reading, including the content, method, time and place of extracurricular reading, as well as self-evaluation, etc. to discover the situation of college students' self-general education outside their professional study, and to display the relationship between extracurricular reading and talent cultivation: extracurricular reading is an important part of whole-person education in colleges and universities, and extensive extracurricular reading can effectively promote whole-person education. In order to discover the current situation of college students' self-general education after class, the author of this paper conducts the survey by distributing questionnaire on extracurricular reading to college students of year 1 to year 5 of South China University of Technology, a research university, and collects 938 questionnaires, of which 836 are valid questionnaires, from which the characteristics and existing problems of extracurricular reading

of college students are summarized, the impact of these characteristics on talent development is analyzed and some suggestions are put forward. Reading after class may be professional study or non-professional study, this paper focus on the extracurricular reading which is unrelated to students' majors.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

There are many previous surveys on college students' extracurricular reading. The author of this paper used "students' extracurricular reading survey" as the search key words, and found 268 related articles in CNKI (i.e. China Knowledge Infrastructure, China's biggest Database of publications). These surveys were either regionally or within schools, and most of the surveys found that the current situation of college students' extracurricular reading were not satisfactory. For example, in a recent survey (2016), the investigators Zou Yuyan and Jin Yule conducted an investigation on the extracurricular reading of college students at Southwest University and found that there are some problems in the extracurricular reading of college students: "Their purpose of reading is utilitarian and single, reading content is at low-level, and reading structure is unreasonable, the number of readings is not up to the requirements, and reading time is less" [3]. Seeing the problem of college students' generally unsatisfactory extracurricular reading, most of the past researchers focus on exploring the reasons, and often emphasized the negative influence of the external environment, such as popular culture [4], consumerism culture [5], and the idea that reading is useless [6], which give birth to the entertainment, utilitarian and practical characteristics of college students' extracurricular reading. Some researchers believe that the development of new media [7,8,9,10] has a significant impact on extracurricular reading habits of college students, which has contributed to the outstanding characteristics of fragmented reading, shallow reading, and entertaining reading of college students' extracurricular reading.

This paper also analyzes the characteristics and existing problems of college students' extracurricular reading through a questionnaire survey, yet does not focus on exploring the causes of the existing problems, but consider how these existing problems will affect the

development of college students, that is, to illustrate the relationship between college students' extracurricular reading and talent cultivation, and thus prompts college administrators to pay attention to the problems and to take corresponding measures within the scope of colleges and universities to improve the situation of college students' extracurricular reading, and thus improve the quality of talent cultivation.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Sampling and Data Collection

The author of this paper organized a research team to randomly distributed extracurricular reading questionnaires to undergraduates in various colleges of South China University of Technology. The distribution place was in teaching building or classroom of each college, and it was distributed to students of each grade, that is, from year 1 to year 5 students. However, the respondents of each grade were randomly rather than purposefully selected by research team. The research team members asked respondents to do the questionnaire on the spot, and collect the questionnaire immediately after completing.

A total of 938 questionnaires were collected, of which 836 were valid questionnaires. Among the 836 valid respondents, 529 (63.28%) were male students, 307 (36.72%) were female students; number of respondents from year 1-5 is 248(29.67%), 259 (30.98%), 202 (24.16%), 117 (14.00%) and 10 (1.20%) respectively. In South China University of Technology, the proportion of male students is higher than that of female students, and there are more male respondents than female respondents participated in this survey, which is consistent with gender composition of students of South China University of Technology. The number of respondents of year 1-3 is each about 200. Since year 4 students are in their last year of school, many students have gone out to factories, companies or institutions, etc. for internships and not live on campus, so the number of year 4 respondents is 117, less than respondents from year 1-3. Schooling years of most of South China University of Technology undergraduate students are 4 years, except that students majoring in architecture, whose number is not many, need to study for 5 years, and so the number of year 5 respondents participated in the survey is not large, only 10 students.

After collecting the questionnaires, the research team excluded invalid questionnaires, and made manual statistics on the valid questionnaires to obtain statistical results.

3.2 Research Design

The questionnaire consisted of 30 questions, and asked about the respondents' personal information, extra-curricular reading habits (time, place, method, etc.), extra-curricular reading content, and factors affecting extra-curricular reading and so on, in order to figure out the extracurricular reading status of the respondents. All the questionnaires were printed out and distributed to the respondents offline by research team members. Respondents were asked to fill in the questionnaires on the spot and questionnaires were collected on the spot immediately after completing.

The research team consists of the author of this paper and some student volunteers who are themselves undergraduate students of South China University of Technology. On designing the questionnaire, the research team, first of all, considered the following two questions. First, are there any undergraduate students who never do extracurricular reading during their college life? To answer this question, the research team conducted a large number of interviews with undergraduate students, and find that every student has more or less done extracurricular reading. Suppose that there were really some who had no extracurricular reading, the research team believes that the amount would be very few and would not affect validity of this survey. Second, how to set the reading time? The research team believes that since the survey requires respondents to make a rough estimate of their reading time, rather than an exact calculation, therefore, it is reasonable to marked a period of reading time with an integer number, for example, it can be said that the reading time is more than 1 hour and less than 2 hours, or more than 2 hours and less than 3 hours. In reality, there are no students who insist that their extracurricular reading time is no more and no less, but exactly 2 hours.

After the completion of questionnaire design, the research team first conducted a trial survey in 2 general education classes with a total of 76 students from various colleges, and obtained similar findings to this survey, and then announced the results to all of the 76 students, to see if they had any suggestions. The responses

showed that the students basically agreed with the findings, believing that the findings was basically consistent with their own situation and the situation of their classmates as well. Therefore, the research team believes that the design of this questionnaire is, in general, reasonable and workable.

4. CHARACTERISTICS OF EXTRACURRICULAR READING OF COLLEGE STUDENTS

After analysis of the questionnaire results, it is found that the extracurricular reading of college students has the following characteristics.

4.1 Little Reading Time and Small Reading Amount

The survey shows that 43.06% of students spend less than 30 minutes a day on extra-curricular reading, accounting for the largest proportion, followed by 39.35% of students with an average daily extra-curricular reading time of 30-60 minutes, that is to say, 82.41% of students spend an average of no more than 60 minutes a day on extracurricular reading. Reading speed may vary from person to person, but for most people, it is difficult to read a lot in less than an hour. In fact, students also realize that their reading amount is insufficient. When asked whether they are satisfied with their current reading quantity, nearly 60% of the students said dissatisfied, and less than 10% (6.84%) said satisfied, and 25% said it was acceptable. Nearly 10% (8.97%) of the students said they were not clear, which indicated they did not have a clear understanding of their reading requirements and reading reality. It can be seen that most students have certain pursuits and requirements for their extracurricular reading, but most students have less reading time and small amount of reading, and they are not satisfied with their current reading status.

4.2 Fragmented Reading

In the survey of reading media, paper books still accounted for the largest proportion, i.e. 48.80%, but 40.43% of students chose e-books, reflecting a new feature of current extracurricular reading different from the traditional reading, that is, the proportion of students reading with e-books is increasing. When students read e-books, the preferred tool is through mobile phones, accounting for 60.89%, followed by e-readers, accounting for 13.40%. The popularity of e-books among college students is high, that is due to the developed network, and the generation,

transmission and storage of e-books are very convenient on the one hand, and on the other hand, the main tool for reading e-books --- mobile phones are owned by almost every college student and easy to use .

According to our experience of using mobile phone reading in our daily life, mobile reading behavior is often short-lived and intermittent, in other words, it has the characteristics of fragmented reading. In contemporary society, fragmented reading generally refers to incomplete and intermittent reading through mobile phones, e-books, and the Internet. As mentioned above, 40.43% of students mainly choose e-books for extracurricular reading, and 60.89% of students who read e-books prefer to use mobile phones to read. This data reflects that many college students' extracurricular reading has the characteristics of fragmented reading.

The fragmentation characteristics of college students' extracurricular reading is not only reflected in the medium and tools of their reading, but also in the time and place of their reading. In the answer to the question "When do you usually do extra-curricular reading?", 39.59% of students choose "in the evening"; while 13.16% of students choose "at weekends", 12.80% of students choose "at night"; and 11.72% of students choose "during the recess between classes". In response to "Where do you usually do your extracurricular reading?", the number of students who chose "dormitory (home)" was the largest, reaching 50.84%, followed by the library at 18.30%, and the bathroom ranked the third , at 8.61%. According to the survey results of the two questions, students tend to do extracurricular reading in the dormitory either in the evening, at night or at weekends. While dormitory is the common living area of usually four to five students in South China University of Technology, reading in dormitory will inevitably be frequently disturbed and the reading process is prone to be in intermittent situation. Reading at recess and reading in the bathroom are more typical of fragmented reading.

4.3 Extracurricular Reading Serves Professional Learning to a Certain Extent, and Students have Strong Independent Learning Ability

Among the questions about the relevance of extracurricular reading content to their major, 52.51% of students said that the books they read most outside of class had nothing to do with their

major, while 40.79% of students said that their extracurricular reading were related to or somewhat related to their major, accounting for a large proportion. This may have something to do with the second major factor in promoting students' extracurricular reading, i.e. teachers. In the answer to the question "The biggest factor that promotes your extracurricular reading is _____?", 18.06% of students chose "classmate" as the biggest factor, accounting for the biggest proportion, and "teacher" is the second biggest factor, selected by 15.07% of students. And in the answer to another survey question, 53.49% of students indicated that the extracurricular books recommended by their teacher were related to their major. It is no wonder that 40.79% of students said that the books they read the most after class were related to their major.

In addition, students have strong independent learning ability when reading professional books after class. 21.05% of students surveyed said that compared with listening to teacher's lectures in classroom, the effect of reading major-related books after class is better, while 48.44% of students said that listening to teachers in class and reading major-related books after class had almost the same effect. The two combined together account for nearly 70%, indicating that most students have a strong ability to learn independently outside the classroom.

4.4 Students having High Pursuit in Extracurricular Reading, with Recreational and Artistic Purpose as Well

The survey on the main purpose of extracurricular reading shows that 21.29% of students are for self-entertainment, but more are for increasing their knowledge (28.83%), or improving self-cultivation and cultivating sentiment (26.67%). With respect to genres of reading materials for extracurricular reading that is unrelated to professional study, the most prominent is the novel, which is chosen by 52.96% of students, followed by the comics, accounting for 11.01% of students, and poetry ranks the third, chosen by 9.66% of students. It can be seen that the interest of college students in extracurricular reading mainly lies in the pursuit of knowledge and the improvement of personal self-cultivation. Extracurricular reading is to some extent recreational (such as reading novels and comics) while maintaining a certain artistic aesthetic pursuit (such as reading poetry).

Among "Ancient Chinese Literature Classics", "Modern Chinese Literature" and "Foreign Literature Classics", 37.44% of students read modern Chinese literature most often, 28.35% read foreign literature classics the most, 9.69% read ancient Chinese literature classics the most, and the rest students choose to read none of them or other works. The survey shows that 38.04% (i.e. 28.35%+9.69%) of students are still keen on Chinese and foreign literary classics, and there is no lack of literature classics in modern Chinese literature that students read, all of which indicate that students have high reading pursuits in their after-class reading.

In addition, the scope of students' extracurricular reading also reflects a certain cultural inclusiveness and global vision. When asked which country they read the most books, the proportion of students who choose China is the highest, which is also expected. Unexpectedly, the proportion is not as high as expected, accounting for just 55.02%. That is to say, 44.98% of students chose to read foreign books, which are mainly those from the United States, Japan, and the United Kingdom, accounting for 15.67%, 14.00% and 8.13% of students respectively.

4.5 Willing to Buy Books, Extracurricular Books Collection is Small, more than Half of Students Dissatisfied with their Reading Situation

The survey shows that the most common way for 62.32% of students to obtain paper books is to buy by themselves, but 3.83% of students do not have paper books other than their majors, and 27.63% of students have less than 5 paper books other than their majors, while 39.59% of students have 5-10 books other than their majors. That is, 67.22% of students own no more than 10 paper books outside their majors. Students have the will and ability to buy extracurricular books, yet their collection of extracurricular paper books is small. Maybe it's because most of the books students buy are professional books, or because students don't have time to read extracurricular books, so they buy few extracurricular books. As mentioned above, 40.79% of students said that the books they read after class were related to or somewhat related to their majors, and only 52.51% of students said that books they read most outside of class were completely unrelated to their majors. Although students are able and willing to buy extracurricular books, 67.22% of

students own less than 10 non-professional paper books. It is conceivable that there should be many students who are not satisfied with their extracurricular reading situation. The survey results show that this is true: 48.33% of students think that their reading range is narrow, their knowledge is not broad, and their thinking is not deep, and 13.04% of students don't even know how much benefit extracurricular reading has brought to them, and 59.09% of surveyed students said they were dissatisfied with their extracurricular reading, 8.97% said they were not clear; only 6.94% were satisfied, and only a quarter (25%) said they could accept their current extracurricular reading situation.

4.6 Being Satisfied with Reading Atmosphere Around

While many students are dissatisfied with their extracurricular reading, most do not feel that the reading atmosphere around them is poor, for the survey shows that only 13.76% of students think that the reading atmosphere around them is very poor. This may indicate that although many students do not read many extracurricular books outside their majors due to lack of time or other reasons, and are therefore dissatisfied with their extracurricular reading situation, they still see that students around them do work very hard in reading and study, and so the learning atmosphere is not bad, although they may not always read extracurricular books. The survey also shows that when students read extracurricular books, the proportion of students who read seriously is not small, accounting for 41.99%, of which 22.25% read carefully and think deeply.

4.7 Only a Few has Planning for Extracurricular Reading

Among the students surveyed, only 23.33% have long-term or periodic plans for their extracurricular reading, while 76.68% have no plans, or select readings as needed, or read whatever they think of, or have no idea at all. Perhaps the main reason why vast majority of students have no plans for their extracurricular reading is that they simply do not have much spare time. In response to "average daily disposable spare time", most of students said they had less than 4 hours of spare time a day on average, accounting for 48.92%, followed by 4-6 hours, accounting for 32.89%. College life is rich and colorful, and the already less spare time is occupied by various club activities, lecture

activities, volunteer activities, physical exercise, etc., and the time allocated to extracurricular reading is even less. As mentioned above, the survey shows that 82.41% of students spend no more than 1 hour a day on average in extracurricular reading, and the fact that students have little reading time is a bottleneck restricting students' extracurricular reading planning. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, the survey showed that 40.79% of students read most books related to or somewhat related to their majors after class, therefore, it can be seen that students do not have much time for extracurricular reading. It is no wonder that there is such a high proportion of students have no plans for extracurricular reading, and it is no wonder that 48.33% of students think that their reading range is narrow, and 59.09% of students were dissatisfied with their extracurricular reading status.

5. PROBLEMS EXISTING IN COLLEGE STUDENTS' EXTRACURRICULAR READING

5.1 Students have Enthusiasm for Extracurricular Reading, But Lack of Extracurricular Reading Time

Most of the students have a positive attitude towards extracurricular reading. The main purpose of extracurricular reading is to increase knowledge, cultivate sentiment and improve self-cultivation. They have convenient access to books. E-books are within easy reach, paper books may be obtained from library or through purchase by themselves, and 62.32% of students prefer to buy books by themselves, while 25.36% of students prefer to borrow books from library. This shows that students not only have willingness to do extracurricular reading, but also have financial ability to buy extracurricular books.

However, the current status of extracurricular reading is that the extracurricular reading time of college students is generally short, and 82.41% of students spend less than 1 hour per day in extracurricular reading. This data hits a new low in the survey of college students' extracurricular reading time in recent years. In 2009, the survey of extracurricular reading of college students in 8 colleges and universities in Hunan Province, China, showed that 52.1% of students spend less than one hour per day in extracurricular reading [11] In 2013, the survey of extracurricular reading of Fudan University students (mainly liberal arts students, accounting for 71.0%)

showed that 20.7% of students spent less than one hour per day in extracurricular reading [12].

Time has changed. Although the time and objects of survey are different, the obvious data discrepancy is still worthy of attention, and such a severe reading situation is worrying. Most of the respondents in this survey are science and engineering students (57.65%) and business students (27.15%). Their professional courses are many and tightly arranged, and their professional learning tasks are heavy-loaded. They have little free time after class, and most of them use evening, night and weekend time for extracurricular reading in dormitory, and a considerable part of their spare time is devoted to reading of professional books. For these students, they are willing to do extracurricular reading, but a considerable proportion of their reading time after class is occupied by professional study.

5.2 Students have Strong Independent Learning Ability, But Lack of Extracurricular Reading Planning

The survey showed that for 69.49% of students, the effect of reading professional books outside class is almost the same as attending teachers' lectures in classroom, or even better, indicating that most students have strong independent learning ability. At the same time, for the study of professional courses, especially the study of science and engineering courses, it is not enough to rely only on teachers' classroom teaching, students also need to read relevant professional books after class to broaden their horizons and conduct more in-depth research on professional issues. The survey also showed that 53.49% of students said that after-class reading materials recommended by their teachers were related to their majors, and 40.79% of students mainly read books related to their majors after class.

However, good steel is not all used on the cutting edge. Apart from exerting their abilities in professional study, students appear to be futile in planning extracurricular reading. On the one hand, although students do not have much leisure time for extracurricular reading, most of them spend no more than one hour a day in extracurricular reading, yet on the other hand, most of students (76.68%) do not make full and reasonable use of the time, i. e. to make extracurricular reading plans to use the limited extracurricular reading time efficiently. Of course, the main reason

should be that students have too little time for extracurricular reading, therefore, extracurricular reading planning is impossible to start. Therefore, it is no wonder as the survey shows that 41.63% of the students' extracurricular readings are selected according to the actual needs at any time, and there is no way to plan.

5.3 Students have Interest and Pursuit in Extracurricular Reading, but their Spare Time is Obviously Subject to Professional Learning

The students surveyed shows a certain interest and pursuit in the choice of extracurricular reading content, for which novels and poetry rank the first and the third respectively. Chinese and foreign literature classics are the main categories of their selection. While students admire Chinese books, they are also inclusive of foreign works such as of Britain, France, the United States, Russia, and Japan, showing that college students have a certain global perspective in selection of extracurricular readings. However, the survey shows that just over half of students can really spend their spare time mainly reading books unrelated to their majors, while more than 40% of students read more books related to their majors in their spare time.

No matter the reason is due to the heavy pressure of professional study or the fact that students do not pay enough attention to reading books outside their majors, hence a high proportion of students spend their spare time mainly gaining professional knowledge, it is an indisputable fact that a relatively high proportion of students' spare time is taken up by professional studies. It is conceivable that in the long run the consequence will be that talent cultivation still focuses on professional education rather than whole-person education.

6. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

6.1 Conclusion

Through comprehensive analysis of the survey data, it can be found that college students have little spare time after class, and students can only do extracurricular reading in their rare spare time, and 40.79% of them are mainly busy reading professional books in spare time, only 52.51% of students spend their spare time mainly reading non-professional books, which shows that, generally speaking, college students not only

have less extracurricular reading time and consequently have a small amount of extracurricular reading, but also, for a considerable proportion of students who are busy mainly reading professional books in their spare time, their extracurricular reading time and amount of extracurricular readings are even less. Most students have strong self-learning ability, have the ability and willingness to carry out extracurricular reading after class, and have certain ideological and aesthetic pursuits for extracurricular reading, but they suffer from not having much time for extracurricular reading, and so it is understandable that 59.09% of students are not satisfied with their extracurricular reading status.

The survey shows that the proportion of students approving their surrounding reading atmosphere is as high as 86.24%, indicating that students are in a high learning state and created a diligent and hard-working atmosphere, but their extracurricular reading time is very little (for 82.41% of them have no more than 1 hour a day for extracurricular reading), and they can only squeeze out a little time in the evening or on weekends, doing extracurricular reading mainly in dormitory or bathroom. The main reason for the lack of extracurricular reading is not that students are not active and not hard-working, but that professional study takes up a lot of students' spare time, forcing most students to be busy all day. This kind of professional study and extracurricular reading status of college students reflects the current situation of talent cultivation in China that pays too much attention to professional education and to some extent neglects general education. In other words, although the practice of carrying out general education to cultivate the whole person in colleges and universities has been implemented for nearly 30 years in China, in reality, the talent cultivation model that attaches importance to professional education intentionally or unintentionally and ignores whole-person education still exists, and is very prominent.

As a research-oriented university, South China University of Technology is one of the earliest universities in China to carry out general education and focus on improving students' humanistic quality. It has always adhered to the goal of cultivating top-notch talents with spirits of innovation, creation, entrepreneurship and global vision, focusing on cultivating innovative and compound talents. It has long been stipulated that 10 credits of general education courses are

necessary credits for students to graduate. However, apart from taking these 10 credits, most of the students have no time to carry out self-general education through extracurricular reading in their spare time. The heavy professional learning load is a factor that can not be ignored in this situation.

Overemphasizing the strengthening of professional quality, making students invest too much time and energy into professional learning, at the expense of extracurricular reading time and the improvement of humanistic quality, such a talent cultivation model seems to be ignoring the basics. Besides, extracurricular reading is also what students are interested in. They have a wide range of hobbies. Novels and poetry, domestic and foreign, classical and modern are all their favorite reading contents, but heavy study tasks and pressure will force them to give up the rich and colorful extracurricular reading materials. In the long run, it is not conducive to the improvement of students' comprehensive quality, and it is difficult to achieve the talent cultivation goal of whole-person education.

6.2 Suggestions

As mentioned above, extracurricular reading plays an important role in the cultivation of talents in colleges and universities. For this reason, colleges and universities should take targeted measures to strengthen the role of extracurricular reading in talent cultivation according to the actual situation of universities and the specific situation of extracurricular reading. It can be found in CNKI (China Knowledge Infrastructure Database) that there have been more than 200 research articles on current situation of college students' extracurricular reading in China, which put forward many suggestions for strengthening extracurricular reading, such as, in terms of institution and organization, to give full play to the role of the school library, youth league committee, student office, student association, college, etc.; in terms of implementation means, fully exploit the function of network (Internet, campus network), reading room, activity center, etc.; in terms of implementation form, carry out activities such as lectures, reading clubs, etc.. These suggestions may be constructive to some colleges and universities to a certain extent. Specific suggestions should be based on specific survey results. This survey results show that college students are quick and eager to learn.

With regard to extracurricular reading, they have good comprehension capability and independent learning ability, and they are also actively involved in extracurricular reading. In general, most of them are satisfied with the reading atmosphere around them. However, they are not satisfied with the amount of volumes of their extracurricular reading and the level they have achieved in extracurricular reading, and so they are in a large demand for extracurricular reading. The biggest practical problem students face is the lack of extracurricular reading time. The survey shows that the biggest factors hindering students from extracurricular reading outside the classroom are professional study and web surfing. This means that, generally, students spend their out-of-class time mainly on professional study, while whenever they are free, they tend to surf the internet, which as well becomes one of the biggest factors impeding students from extracurricular reading. During the already insufficient spare time, students could read cultural books that would increase their knowledge, cultivate their sentiments and improve their self-cultivation, yet a considerable proportion of students still have to take into account their professional studies and read professional-related books. In view of this severe situation of extracurricular reading, the author of this paper puts forward the following suggestions for improvement:

6.2.1 Make administrative staff fully aware of the goal of talent cultivation and attach importance to the role of extracurricular reading in talent cultivation

It is necessary for administrative staff to fully understand the multiple aspects involved in talent cultivation, and the bias of the current situation of talent cultivation, realizing that only focusing on professional training will easily put too much professional learning pressure on students, making students pay much more attention to professional academic performance and professional research achievements. However, what colleges and universities ultimately need to cultivate are compound talents with both professionally high-quality and all-round developed. Consequently, it is not enough for students to only strengthen accumulation of professional knowledge and improvement of professional skills, adequate attention should be paid to improvement of humanistic literacy. This bias is particularly prominent in science and engineering universities and needs to be redressed more urgently. It is necessary for

administrative staff to realize that strengthening students' extracurricular reading is a breakthrough, and guide students to carry out extracurricular reading with talent cultivation goals in mind, so that extracurricular reading can fully play a role in promoting talent cultivation. Only should administrative staff realize the role of extracurricular reading in cultivating all-round development talents, can they reverse, as the first step of improvement, the current biased situation of talent cultivation through top-level design.

6.2.2 Adjust curriculum to increase students' spare time and combine some in-class learning with extracurricular reading

According to the survey, students have less spare time, and most of the time for extracurricular reading is in the evening, at night and at weekend, which is in line with the fact that science and engineering students of South China University of Technology have a jammed and heavy curriculum. In fact, the survey shows that college students have strong self-learning ability. Even if they read professional books by themselves outside of class, they can mostly achieve the same effect as attending teachers' lectures in classroom. Therefore, it is possible to trust students' independent learning ability, adjust the curriculum appropriately to give them more spare time, and set up some out-and-in combined courses, that is, students self-teach by doing out-of-class reading while teachers check and evaluate students' work in-class, so that students can conduct out-of-class professional learning and extracurricular reading accordingly and more effectively, leading to a combination of extracurricular reading with talent cultivation.

Business English major of South China University of Technology has been trying this practice since 2014 by adjusting cultivation plan to give students more spare time to carry out extracurricular reading. Take "English Reading" course for example, with in-class lessons reduced and out-of-class time increased, students are required to complete a large number of reading tasks out of class, and only inspections and assessments rather than teaching are conducted in class, which have brought good results, for with more spare time in hand, student are generally apt at handling effectively professional study and extracurricular reading out of class. Researchers such as Peng Zhan and others, after practical research, also

believe that teachers should give full play to the role of classroom guidance to encourage students to "read and find problems by themselves" outside of class, and then organize discussion and make assessment in class. They found that "many students prefer this type of class" [13], for students feel freer and more effective in doing professional study as well as extracurricular reading out of class. Guangdong Vocational College of Innovation and Technology adjusted its talent cultivation program in 2015 to combined out-of-class reading with in-class teaching, and achieved positive results [14], highlighting the role of extracurricular reading in talent cultivation.

6.2.3 Properly guide students to plan extracurricular reading

Giving students more spare time to study independently and to have greater autonomy does not mean that universities can just let go of students' extracurricular reading. The survey shows that although students have enthusiasm, interest and ability for extracurricular reading, the main factor hindering their extracurricular reading is not only professional study out of class, but also surfing the Internet. The reason why students are easily disturbed by the Internet is that, on the one hand, students lack self-control, so they are vulnerable to the temptation of Internet charm, and on the other hand, it may also be attributed to students' lack of extracurricular reading plan and thus lack stable guidance and incentive for extracurricular reading goal. Scholar Xie Jingfang once pointed out in her article, "Extracurricular Reading and the Cultivation of College Students' Quality and Ability", that "Cultivate students' enthusiasm for reading, guide students to learn to read, improve their own reading interest and management of reading, until they form their reading ability and habit, this is the most important step for students to become high-quality talents." [15] Therefore, colleges and universities should take measures to appropriately guide students to formulate reasonable extracurricular reading plans based on their personal interests and actual situations, so as to maximize the role of extracurricular reading in talent cultivation.

Reading is an important way for human beings to acquire knowledge and promote self-development. Reading is not only about individuals, but also about the future of a country and nation. The reading rate of people in a

society affects the overall level of civilization and creativity of the whole society [16]. It can be seen that reading is closely related to the development of an individual and the future and destiny of a country and a nation. For college students, extracurricular reading is an extension and supplement of in-class reading, and an essential and important part of cultivating students' all-round development. College students' reading of professional books or books related to majors after class is an extension of in-class reading and one of the effective ways to promote students' professional development, while the extracurricular reading of books unrelated to major after class is the real reading which will have an impact on students' minds and hearts, and affect the further development of their world outlook, outlook on life and values. Extracurricular reading has become an addition to the professional training of students to enhance students' cultural quality and an important factor to promote all-round development of students.

Scholar Wang Yansong once proposed in the article, "On Cultivation Objectives of Undergraduate Talents in China's First-Class Universities", that "the future talent cultivation goals of first-class universities should play down the requirements for relevant knowledge and ability in cultivation design, and return to the growth of students themselves" [17]. On April 19, 2017, at the national seminar on "Reading and Talent Cultivation" held in Changsha, Hunan Province, the participating experts and scholars agreed that "reading is the most important and effective way and means for students to improve their knowledge, develop their personality, and enrich their spirit. As far as a school is concerned, whether the reading atmosphere and students' awareness of reading is strong, and whether the reading content is reasonable is also one of the important indicators to influence and measure the level of talent cultivation of a school" [18]. It's time to pay more attention to students' extracurricular reading. The author of this paper hopes the research findings of this paper have some enlightenment for China's colleges and universities to improve the extracurricular reading situation of college students.

6.3 Limitations

This study mainly takes undergraduates from South China University of Technology as research object. The number of sample students is not large enough, and there is only

one sample university which is research-oriented and science-and-technology-focused. Therefore, its findings may be mainly applicable to Chinese universities with similar type and similar research level. However, suggestions drawn from this study could be constructive and may have implications for all Chinese universities.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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