Crossing the Border of Disciplinary Knowledge: An Analysis of the Choice of Major at the Upper Level of College in Research-Oriented Comprehensive Universities, with the Use of One Case Study Based on Student Needs in Taiwan

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Abstract

The recent trend of globalization, knowledge economy, and massive expansion have increasingly collapsed the boundaries between academic disciplines, and promoted cross-disciplinary learning and individualized choices in higher education. To meet such challenges, a number of institutions in Taiwan have recently implemented the policy of "choice of major at the upper level of college" or "declaration of major at sophomore or junior year." However, analyzing student needs and the curriculum structure of a university before launching an appropriate model is necessary. Therefore, this study analyzes various models currently implemented by 15 research-oriented comprehensive universities before exploring the student needs and the curriculum structure of a research-oriented institution (University T), and advising how this comprehensive university should implement this policy. Four models were found, as follows: choice of department within a college; choice of majors within a college; choice of majors across different colleges; and entry into an integrated program. Based on our analysis of student needs and curriculum barriers, we suggest that University T adopt the model of "choice of major across different colleges." Such findings contribute to the future implementation of the rising trend of "choice of major at the upper level of college" in Taiwan.

Keywords: choice of major at the upper level of college, undergraduate curriculum, cross-disciplinary learning, career exploration

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