

General Education Reform in Foreign Studies Universities under Globalization: A Comparative Perspective from China and South Korea

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Abstract: Against the backdrop of higher education internationalisation, general education reform has become a crucial pathway for enhancing students' comprehensive competencies and global employability. This study focuses on Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU) and Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (HUFS), examining their general education reform from a comparative education perspective. Drawing on literature analysis and case comparison, the research systematically investigates the institutional context, curriculum structure, and implementation approaches of both universities' general education programs. It analyses similarities and differences across dimensions such as course offerings, interdisciplinary integration, teaching and assessment mechanisms, and international orientation. Findings indicate that BFSU emphasises the foundational role of general education within the undergraduate curriculum, fostering both language proficiency and broader competencies, whereas HUFS highlights practical engagement and international projects to cultivate global leadership and intercultural skills. Despite their differing emphases, both reform pathways reflect a shared trend of shifting general education from a knowledge-supplement model to a competency-oriented approach. The results provide comparative insights and practical implications for advancing the internationalisation of general education in foreign language universities.

Keywords: General Education; Internationalisation Reform; Beijing Foreign Studies University; Hankuk University of Foreign Studies; Comparative Education; Intercultural Competence

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1.Introduction

In the context of higher education internationalisation, general education reform has become a critical pathway for foreign language universities to enhance students' comprehensive competencies and global competence. In such institutions, general education serves as an essential means for cultivating students' intercultural communication skills and global perspectives, increasingly emerging as a key component of education systems worldwide ^[1]. According to UNESCO ^[2], the objectives of modern foreign language education have shifted from mere language proficiency to fostering students' intercultural adaptability and global citizenship. This shift is manifested in three primary aspects: (1) linguistic diversity: globalization demands multilingual talents to meet the needs of multinational corporations, international organizations, and other multilateral contexts ^[3]; (2) intercultural communication skills: international engagement requires not only language

proficiency but also an understanding of different cultural norms, values, and communication patterns^[4]; and (3) technology-supported language learning: modern language instruction increasingly integrates digital technologies, such as online courses and AI-assisted language tools, to enhance teaching efficiency^[5]. These developments indicate that general education extends beyond disciplinary knowledge expansion to emphasise critical thinking, interdisciplinary integration, and the cultivation of global citizenship^[6]. As education systems worldwide increasingly converge, the implementation of general education reflects distinctive characteristics shaped by local cultural and educational traditions^[7].

Within this context, China and Korea, as representative countries in Asia, offer valuable comparative insights into general education reform in foreign language universities. Since their establishment, Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU) and Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (HUFS) have continuously advanced reform practices regarding the positioning and function of general education in undergraduate talent development, aiming to cultivate high-quality graduates with international perspectives and intercultural understanding. Although both universities have made notable progress in promoting internationalisation of education and developing general education, they exhibit different orientations in reform pathways, institutional arrangements, and curriculum implementation, reflecting the distinct educational systems and cultural contexts in which they operate. Existing research remains limited: on one hand, discussions often remain at the level of course descriptions and theoretical analysis, lacking systematic cross-national comparison; on the other hand, the intrinsic relationship between intercultural competence and internationalised literacy, as well as the mechanisms by which general education promotes students' global competence, remains underexplored.

Against this backdrop, this study examines BFSU and HUFS as cases to systematically analyse how general education curricula and practices influence students' intercultural competence and internationalised literacy, aiming to enrich comparative research on general education and provide insights for higher education reform. From a comparative education perspective, this research systematically compares the institutional context, curriculum structure, and implementation approaches of general education reform at the two universities, with a focus on differences and similarities in internationalised orientation and competency development goals. Employing cross-cultural comparison and case analysis, the study integrates longitudinal historical review with horizontal institutional comparison, addressing key dimensions such as curriculum design and content, interdisciplinary integration, teaching and assessment mechanisms, and the role of general education in cultivating students' global perspectives and intercultural competence. Through comparison of representative reform initiatives and practical cases, the study aims to reveal common trends and differentiated pathways in general education reform under different institutional and cultural contexts, providing a reference for advancing the internationalisation of general education in foreign language universities.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Foundations of General Education

General education constitutes a fundamental component of higher education, aiming to foster students' holistic development, including critical thinking, interdisciplinary competence, and global perspectives. Boyer^[8] was among the first to systematically argue that general education should occupy a central position in university education, with its fundamental task being to equip students with the ability to solve complex problems while understanding diverse cultural contexts. Taylor^[9] further proposed that, with the deepening of globalisation, the objectives of general education have gradually shifted toward cultivating global citizens, emphasising not only the expansion of knowledge but also students' ability to communicate effectively and collaborate across cultural boundaries. More recently, Nussbaum^[10,11] highlighted the significance of general education in fostering global citizenship, arguing that students require not only academic knowledge but also social responsibility and moral imagination. Barnett^[12] introduced the concept of the "Ecological University," emphasising the role of general education in nurturing social and environmental responsibility. Circles^[13] further suggested that intercultural competence constitutes a key outcome of general education, particularly in an era of accelerated globalisation, where such skills are essential for students' future engagement in international work environments.

2.2 Theoretical Framework of Education Internationalisation

The theoretical framework of education internationalisation examines the transformation and development of education

systems in the context of globalisation. Globalisation is a primary driver of internationalisation of education, aligning educational content, teaching methods, and learning environments with global demands to cultivate students with intercultural understanding and international competitiveness ^[14]. Within this framework, intercultural education theory emphasises the multicultural dimension of education, advocating for fostering students' understanding and recognition of different cultures to enhance their intercultural communication skills ^[15]. Curriculum reform plays a pivotal role in internationalising education, requiring the integration of global perspectives into course content and the design of interdisciplinary learning modules that address global issues ^[16]. Moreover, the advancement of internationalisation depends on international cooperation and policy interactions, such as transnational study programs and academic collaborations, which facilitate global knowledge sharing ^[16]. Global citizenship education further emphasises students' sense of global responsibility, suggesting that education should cultivate not only knowledge but also social responsibility and ethical awareness ^[17,18]. Technological development, particularly in information technology, has provided new platforms for international education; online learning and virtual classrooms have overcome traditional geographical and temporal constraints, enabling global sharing of educational resources ^[19]. The theory of cultural adaptability in education posits that internationalisation efforts should respect national cultural differences, adjusting content and methods to better meet local needs ^[20]. Overall, the theoretical framework of education internationalisation emphasises connectivity and resource sharing under globalisation while integrating intercultural understanding, curriculum reform, international collaboration, and technology application to cultivate globally competent citizens.

2.3 Comparative Analysis of Educational Reform in Chinese and Korean Foreign Language Universities

From a longitudinal perspective, Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU), as a leading foreign language university in China, has undergone a transition in general education from a focus on single-language instruction to a diversified and internationalised approach. Recent reforms have emphasised interdisciplinary integration in curriculum design, cultivated cultural literacy and critical thinking, and actively incorporated international course resources, promoting bilingual education and international collaborative programs ^[21-23]. In contrast, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (HUFS) in Korea places greater emphasis on integrating language learning with cultural knowledge. By combining language instruction with Korean culture, social sciences, and natural sciences, HUFS seeks to enhance students' linguistic proficiency and cultural understanding ^[24].

From a horizontal comparative perspective, notable differences exist between Chinese and Korean models of general education. Chinese universities' reforms are more influenced by Western educational philosophies, emphasising curriculum openness and diversity and focusing on cultivating students' comprehensive competencies and innovation capacity ^[25,26]. Korean universities, on the other hand, tend to promote general education through the "college system" reform, yet this approach faces practical challenges, such as insufficient credits for general education courses and uneven resource allocation ^[27,28]. Moreover, Korean institutions face challenges related to cultural identity and academic recognition in the internationalisation process, necessitating further development of students' intercultural communication abilities ^[29].

In terms of practical implementation, BFSU has advanced curriculum internationalisation and pedagogical innovation through cooperative programs with overseas universities and the integration of high-quality international educational resources. HUFS, in contrast, has promoted internationalisation by strengthening both global and regional partnerships ^[30]. BFSU emphasises internationalised course content and interdisciplinary integration, whereas HUFS prioritises the combination of language and culture. Both institutions, however, face challenges regarding resource allocation, faculty development, and cultural identity, underscoring the need for further optimisation to enhance the quality and effectiveness of general education ^[31].

3. Research Methods

This study primarily adopts literature review and case analysis methods, aiming to systematically synthesise relevant research while examining practical reform cases at Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU) and Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (HUFS) to analyse the pathways, strategies, and outcomes of general education reform at both institutions.

First, an extensive literature review was conducted to identify recent research on general education, internationalisation of

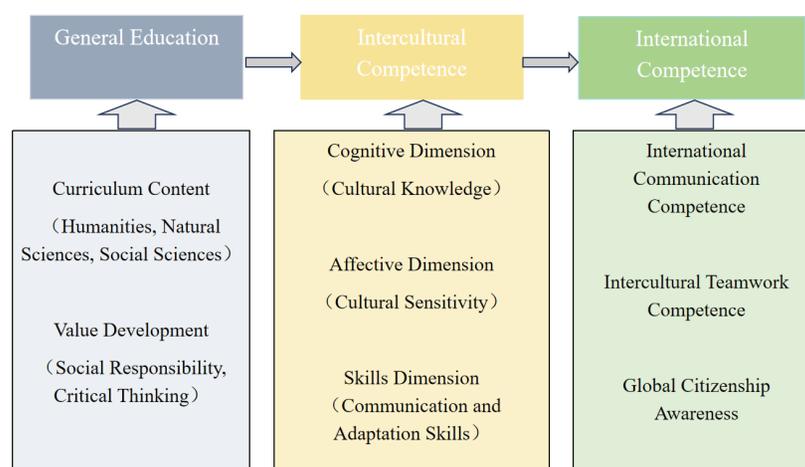
education, and comparative education. The review focused on three key areas: (1) the internationalization and development trends of general education, exploring its implementation pathways within the context of globalized higher education; (2) the impact and implementation of education internationalization, particularly regarding curriculum design, teaching methods, and intercultural communication practices; and (3) general education reform at Chinese and Korean foreign language universities, summarizing successes and challenges in promoting general education reform, with particular attention to innovative initiatives integrating internationalization and general education.

The study then concentrates on the reform practices of BFSU and HUFU, particularly the specific measures related to general education. This analysis was conducted through three main approaches: (1) education policy and document analysis, examining reform policies and related documents issued by the two universities to identify core principles, objectives, and implementation strategies; (2) curriculum analysis, comparing general education curricula at both universities to explore course content, teaching methods, and integration of international elements, with particular attention to how courses foster global perspectives, interdisciplinary integration, and critical thinking; and (3) teaching case analysis, using specific instructional cases to evaluate how the universities implement interdisciplinary teaching and globalized courses, assessing the effectiveness of these reforms in enhancing students' global awareness and intercultural competence.

The study primarily employs qualitative analysis, using comparative methods to conduct an in-depth comparison of the two universities' educational reforms. Analysis of curriculum design, policy documents, and teaching cases reveals similarities and differences in general education reform, evaluates reform outcomes, and explores their influence on students' comprehensive competencies and global perspectives. This provides a concrete reference for cross-national comparisons of general education models and helps illuminate the potential contribution of general education to students' internationalised literacy.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the framework presents the logical relationship between general education, intercultural competence, and internationalised literacy. In this framework, general education serves as the core focus, and differences in curriculum design, educational philosophy, and instructional practice may influence the development of students' intercultural competence. Intercultural competence, in turn, reflects students' ability to understand, communicate, and adapt within multicultural contexts, which constitutes a key component of internationalised literacy.

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework



4. Historical Development and Policy Evolution of Educational Reform at the Two Universities

4.1 Longitudinal and Cross-National Comparison of Reforms

General education in both China and Korea started relatively late. In China, higher education was historically influenced by the Soviet specialised talent training model, with professional education dominating the system for a long time^[32]. In recent years, driven by globalisation and the development of the knowledge economy, Chinese universities have gradually emphasised general education, drawing on international experiences to progressively establish and reform general education

curricula ^[25,33]. However, due to its late development, general education in China remains in an exploratory stage, with challenges such as unreasonable curriculum design and an overly instrumental focus.

In contrast, Korea’s development followed a trajectory from emphasising professional education to gradually recognising the importance of general education ^[34]. Between 1945 and 2009, Korean universities generally adopted a “professional-oriented, general education-light” model, resulting in the relatively low status of general education ^[27]. Around 2010, both the Korean government and universities began to pay greater attention to general education, establishing multiple organisations to promote its development. Although some progress has been made, challenges such as insufficient resources and unstable faculty remain ^[27].

The historical development of general education at the two universities is summarised in Tables 1 and 2:

Table 1. Development of General Education at Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU)

Year	Stage	Main Content
1940s – early 1980s	Initial Stage	BFSU initially focused on language instruction, with limited comprehensive general education. At this stage, foreign language education primarily emphasized language skills and translation practice.
1980s – late 1990s	Transition Stage	With the advancement of globalization, BFSU gradually introduced more systematic general education concepts, attempting to expand students’ cultural literacy and interdisciplinary knowledge. During this period, the university began offering non-language courses such as literature, history, and philosophy.
Early 21st century – present	Deepening Stage	In the early 21st century, general education became a key component of BFSU’s educational reform. The university implemented holistic education, focusing on cultivating well-rounded talents with a global perspective. Emphasizing intercultural understanding and critical thinking, BFSU introduced more interdisciplinary and cross-cultural courses to address the challenges of internationalization and diversity.

Source: Beijing Foreign Studies University official website: <https://www.bfsu.edu.cn>

Table 2. Development of General Education at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (HUFS)

Year	Stage	Main Content
1950s – late 1980s	Initial Stage	In its early years, HUFS primarily focused on foreign language instruction. Particularly during post-war reconstruction and Korea’s modernization process, foreign language education was considered a national strategic priority. Early attention to general education was limited, with an emphasis on language and cultural instruction.
Late 1990s – early 21st century	Transition Stage	In the late 1990s, with the rise of education globalization and information technology, HUFS increasingly recognized the need to cultivate students’ comprehensive competencies and began incorporating general education courses. Reforms during this period introduced courses in literature, sociology, economics, and other fields, expanding interdisciplinary learning opportunities.
Early 21st century – present	Deepening Stage	In the 21st century, HUFS strengthened its internationalized orientation and gradually developed a general education system centered on “global perspectives” and “intercultural competence.” This system emphasizes the cultivation of students’ critical thinking, innovation, and cross-cultural understanding.

Source: Hankuk University of Foreign Studies official website: <https://www.hufs.ac.kr/hufs/index.do#section1>

Although the development of general education at Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU) and Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (HUFS) exhibits similar staged characteristics, each institution demonstrates distinct emphases and internationalisation pathways. BFSU initially focused on language skill training during the early stage, gradually integrating courses on cultural literacy in the transitional stage, and, in the deepening stage, prioritised globalisation and holistic education, highlighting the cultivation of critical thinking and intercultural competence. HUFS, starting from post-war language education, reinforced students’ multidisciplinary knowledge through reforms to the general education curriculum. In the deepening stage, it developed an education system oriented toward “global perspectives” and “intercultural competence,” further aligning with internationalisation demands. The evolution of both universities illustrates the progression of general

education from foundational language instruction to the cultivation of global competence.

This study examines the reform measures and main outcomes of general education at the two universities across five dimensions: curriculum design and structural adjustments, introduction of core general education courses, innovations in teaching methods, reforms in assessment systems, and the cultivation of international perspectives, as summarised in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 4. Reform Measures and Main Outcomes of General Education at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (HUFS)

No.	Key Measures	Main Outcomes
1	Curriculum Design and Structural Adjustment	HUFS optimized and adjusted its general education curriculum to meet the diverse needs of students. By integrating general education with professional programs, the university constructed a coherent undergraduate curriculum system and added interdisciplinary courses to enhance students' comprehensive competencies ^[35] . In addition, HUFS emphasized the richness and diversity of course content to cater to varied student learning needs ^[36] .
2	Introduction of Core General Education Courses	To improve students' overall competencies, HUFS introduced core general education courses. These courses include not only language learning but also multidisciplinary knowledge covering Korean culture, humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences, aiming to enhance student engagement and interactivity ^[37] . Through this interdisciplinary teaching model, students can better understand and apply knowledge, thereby enhancing their overall abilities.
3	Innovation in Teaching Methods	HUFS innovated its teaching methods by adopting diverse approaches to stimulate student interest and initiative. For example, the university implemented flipped classrooms, "deep-dish" courses, and co-teaching models ^[38] . These approaches encourage active participation in discussions and practical activities, improving learning outcomes. Additionally, the university emphasized the transformation of teachers' roles, encouraging more flexible and varied instructional methods ^[39] .
4	Reform of Assessment System	HUFS conducted comprehensive reforms of its assessment system. A scientific and rational evaluation framework was established to assess students' overall competencies ^[40] . This system not only considers academic performance but also evaluates innovation, critical thinking, and ethical leadership ^[41] . This approach allows the university to gain a comprehensive understanding of student development and provide personalized guidance and support.
5	Cultivation of International Perspectives	HUFS places strong emphasis on developing students' international outlook. The university provides abundant international learning opportunities through study abroad programs and recruitment of foreign faculty ^[21] . Students are also encouraged to participate in international internships and volunteer activities, enhancing their intercultural communication skills and global competitiveness ^[42] .

Source: Beijing Foreign Studies University official website and other scholarly research

Table 3. Reform Measures and Main Outcomes of General Education at Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU)

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Source: Hankuk University of Foreign Studies official website and other scholarly research

The practices of Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU) and Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (HUFS) in general education reform reflect the differences between their respective cultural and educational models. BFSU, guided by the philosophy of holistic education, has gradually expanded from language skill development to interdisciplinary and globalised courses. By introducing core courses and strengthening international programs, the university seeks to enhance students' global competencies. In contrast, HUFS, originating from post-war language education, emphasises curriculum diversity and instructional innovation, including flipped classrooms, interdisciplinary integration, and international exchange programs, gradually forming a general education model centred on global perspectives and intercultural competence. Both universities share a focus on responding to globalisation and fostering critical thinking; however, their implementation pathways and policy designs differ significantly, reflecting their respective educational traditions and national strategic priorities. In recent years, both institutions have introduced new initiatives to deepen general education reform and internationalisation practices. BFSU has organised a series of general education cultural festivals and expanded course offerings through resource-sharing mechanisms with leading domestic universities, further stimulating student engagement and the development of global perspectives. Meanwhile, HUFS has implemented a flexible "post-major selection" system in undergraduate admissions to strengthen interdisciplinary learning and global competitiveness, representing an institutional adjustment that allows its general education system to better respond to internationalisation challenges.

4.2 Influence of Western Educational Philosophies on General Education at Chinese and Korean Foreign Studies Universities

Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU), as one of China's leading foreign language universities, has conducted extensive exploration and practice in general education, including curriculum design, teaching methodologies, and faculty development ^[43]. In recent years, the university has incorporated instructional theories such as outcome-based education to enhance students' comprehensive competencies and innovative abilities ^[44]. Moreover, BFSU has emphasised both the preservation and innovation of its foreign language teaching, using practical teaching systems and volunteer service initiatives to improve educational quality ^[42].

In South Korea, higher education has also actively pursued internationalisation reforms in recent years to enhance competitiveness in the global education market. Reforms in general education at Korean universities have primarily focused on curriculum design and the cultivation of intercultural communication skills ^[29]. Research by the Korea Foundation for the Study of Development (KFSD) indicates that top Korean universities emphasise fostering students' global perspectives and intercultural competence within their general education programs ^[44]. However, challenges remain, such as insufficient attention within academic departments to social and cultural discussions ^[29].

In general, the influence of Western educational philosophies on general education reforms at Chinese and Korean foreign studies universities can be summarised in several key areas, as presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Influence of Western Educational Philosophies on General Education at Chinese and Korean Foreign Studies Universities

No.	Key Aspects	Main Content
1	Curriculum Design and Optimization	Western general education emphasizes interdisciplinary knowledge integration and the cultivation of humanistic literacy. In the reforms of general education, Chinese and Korean universities have increasingly focused on constructing coherent curriculum systems, introducing more interdisciplinary courses, and integrating humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences ^[46,47] .
2	Innovation in Teaching Methods	Western educational philosophies highlight student-centered teaching and active learning. Chinese and Korean universities have attempted to adopt more diversified teaching approaches, such as project-based learning and collaborative learning, to foster critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and student engagement ^[48] .
3	Reform of Assessment Methods	Western education emphasizes formative assessment and self-reflection. Chinese and Korean universities have introduced diversified assessment methods, including project assessments and peer evaluations, to more comprehensively reflect students' learning outcomes and competence development ^[49] .
4	Campus Culture Development	Western general education values campus diversity and inclusiveness. In response, Chinese and Korean universities have sought to create an open and inclusive campus culture, encouraging student participation in multicultural activities and promoting interaction and understanding among students from diverse backgrounds ^[49] .
5	Transformation of Educational Goals	Western general education emphasizes cultivating talents with global perspectives and lifelong learning abilities. Chinese and Korean universities have increasingly prioritized the development of students' international outlook, intercultural communication skills, and lifelong learning attitudes and capabilities.

Under the influence of globalisation and Western educational philosophies, the general education reforms at Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU) and Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (HUFS) exhibit both commonalities and differences. Both universities emphasise curriculum optimisation, interdisciplinary integration, and the cultivation of students' global competencies. However, BFSU, building on its language education tradition, highlights experiential learning and volunteer service to strengthen students' intercultural communication skills. In contrast, HUFS focuses more on multicultural exchange, emphasising interdisciplinary course offerings and internationalised educational pathways. These reform initiatives demonstrate how both universities implement localised practices and innovative strategies in the internationalisation of general education.

5. Comparison and Analysis of General Education Models at the Two Universities

5.1 Comparison of General Education Models

Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU) and Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (HUFS) each demonstrate distinctive features in their general education models. This study compares the two universities in terms of curriculum design, educational philosophy, and adaptation to globalisation, highlighting the different priorities and strategies they employ in implementing general education, as summarised in Table 6.

Table 6. Comparison of General Education Models at Beijing Foreign Studies University and Hankuk University of Foreign Studies

Dimension	Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU)	Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (HUFS)
Curriculum Design	BFSU's general education curriculum emphasizes the humanities and skill development for foreign language students. In recent years, the university has gradually strengthened the implementation of general education courses, though challenges remain, such as unclear course objectives and suboptimal course arrangements ^[59] . The curriculum includes a wide range of humanities and social sciences courses aimed at enhancing students' overall competence and intercultural communication skills. Additionally, BFSU has optimized the curriculum structure by introducing core general education courses ^[37] .	HUFS's general education curriculum is organized into three tiers: core general education (including critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and problem-solving skills), professional skills, and contextual skills ^[52] . This tiered structure emphasizes the cultivation of critical thinking and practical application, integrates Korea-specific cultural and social contexts, and highlights global perspectives and intercultural communication abilities.

Dimension	Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU)	Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (HUFS)
Educational Philosophy	BFSU's general education philosophy emphasizes the integration of general and specialized education ("general-special integration"), aiming to broaden students' knowledge, enhance their humanistic literacy, and cultivate social responsibility ^[42] . However, due to historical and cultural factors, challenges such as unclear course objectives and limited teaching methods remain ^[51] .	HUFS places stronger emphasis on fostering "global citizenship." Its philosophy not only focuses on academic competence but also prioritizes students' global perspectives and social responsibility ^[47] . The curriculum is designed to cultivate critical thinking and intercultural communication skills to meet the demands of globalization ^[52] .
Adaptation to Globalization	In the context of globalization, both BFSU and HUFS recognize the importance of general education. BFSU attempts to enhance students' global perspectives and intercultural communication skills by expanding foreign language-related elective courses ^[51] . However, limitations in course design and teaching methods mean that its adaptability to globalization still requires improvement.	HUFS better addresses globalization through its distinctive curriculum design and teaching approaches. The curriculum integrates critical thinking, problem-solving, global awareness, and self-management skills ^[52] . This comprehensive design equips students to respond more effectively to the challenges posed by globalization.

Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU) and Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (HUFS) each demonstrate strengths in their general education models. BFSU emphasises broadening students' knowledge and enhancing their humanistic literacy through general education, though further optimisation of curriculum design and teaching methods is needed. HUFS, on the other hand, leverages a tiered curriculum structure and the cultivation of global citizenship to more effectively meet the demands of globalisation. The experiences of both universities indicate that the successful implementation of general education requires alignment with the institution's cultural context and educational objectives, as well as continuous refinement of curriculum design and pedagogical approaches to cultivate students with global perspectives and well-rounded competencies.

5.2 Analysis of the General Education Models at BFSU and HUFS

In recent years, Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU) has implemented a series of innovative reforms in general education, demonstrating both systematic planning and forward-looking practices. The establishment of the BFSU College provided an experimental platform for undergraduate education reform, positioning itself as a "special zone for undergraduate education reform," which breaks down departmental and disciplinary barriers and integrates general education, foreign language instruction, and professional education to cultivate multidisciplinary, internationalised talents^[53]. Moreover, through a general education course-sharing mechanism with Tsinghua University and Peking University, students can select courses across institutions, thereby enriching academic resources, strengthening inter-university cooperation, and enhancing the quality of undergraduate teaching^[54]. In 2022, BFSU established a General Education Expert Committee to ensure scientific and sustainable curriculum development, promoting innovation in undergraduate training and enhancing students' comprehensive competencies^[55]. Additionally, the inaugural General Education Cultural Festival further deepened students' experiential learning, cultivating cross-cultural understanding and social responsibility^[56]. These measures incorporate the essence of Western educational philosophies, including holistic education and multicultural integration, combining language learning, interdisciplinary courses, and practical projects to strengthen cross-cultural understanding, problem-solving, and civic engagement, reflecting the goal of cultivating global competence.

Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (HUFS) demonstrates a combination of diversity and practicality in its general education reforms. The College of Chinese Studies integrates language teaching with general education, emphasising cross-cultural communication and embedding language learning within cultural understanding^[29]. HUFS has also introduced Global Leadership courses, such as "Global Perspectives and Leadership" and "Cross-cultural Communication and Leadership," combining theoretical instruction with practical projects to develop students' global awareness and leadership skills^[57]. Interdisciplinary research projects further integrate knowledge from economics, culture, and other fields, enhancing students' capacity to analyse complex international issues innovatively^[57]. Collaboration with international organisations and

multinational enterprises through internships and volunteer programs provides authentic cross-cultural practice opportunities, reinforcing social responsibility and global competitiveness^[57]. By integrating general education with language instruction, interdisciplinary research, and international practice, HUFS has constructed a practice-oriented, multicultural general education model. These initiatives create authentic cross-cultural learning contexts that enhance language proficiency while systematically developing problem-solving skills, cultural reflection, and social responsibility, effectively supporting the university's internationalisation goals in general education.

Both BFSU and HUFS have implemented measures such as multilingual education, interdisciplinary courses, core general education courses, and international exchange and internship programs. These reforms not only enhance students' language proficiency and professional competence but also strengthen global awareness, cross-cultural communication skills, and critical thinking, providing robust support for the internationalised development of general education at both universities.

6. Discussion and Recommendations

6.1 Discussion

This study finds that Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU) and Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (HUFS) share commonalities in their general education reforms, particularly in their adoption of globalised educational concepts and localisation of implementation practices. Both universities prioritise cultivating students' cross-cultural competencies and global perspectives, aligning with current trends in internationalised higher education. However, the specific reform pathways reflect their distinct educational contexts and societal needs. BFSU emphasises interdisciplinary integration and domestic resource sharing, whereas HUFS places greater focus on international collaboration and practical skill development. These differences provide diverse case examples for internationalisation in higher education reform.

The study has several limitations. It primarily focuses on institutional policies and reform practices, without in-depth investigation of the long-term outcomes. Additionally, the student perspective is underexplored, leaving the impact of general education on learning experiences and career development only partially assessed. Nevertheless, the comparative analysis of general education reforms at BFSU and HUFS offers theoretical insights and practical guidance for universities seeking to enhance internationalisation and talent development, while calling for policymakers and scholars to further examine reform effectiveness and multiple pathways in global higher education development.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following policy recommendations aim to further advance general education reform, enhance internationalisation, and cultivate high-level, multidisciplinary talents aligned with national strategic needs:

6.2.1 Strengthen Interdisciplinary Integration in Curriculum

Universities should continue to optimise general education curriculum structures, promoting deep integration of humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. Introducing diverse interdisciplinary courses can foster students' analytical skills and innovative thinking. Collaboration with other disciplines and the inclusion of courses addressing social responsibility and sustainable development are encouraged.

6.2.2 Promote International Collaboration and Resource Sharing

Universities should actively pursue international cooperation and establish exchange and collaborative programs with leading domestic and foreign institutions. Sharing and mutual selection of general education courses, as exemplified by BFSU's course-sharing projects with Tsinghua University and Peking University, provides a model to expand access to international courses and improve educational quality.

6.2.3 Optimise Teaching Methods and Assessment Systems

Innovative teaching approaches, such as project-based learning (PBL), case studies, and flipped classrooms, should be promoted to enhance students' practical abilities and critical thinking. Assessment systems should adopt diversified indicators, evaluating not only academic performance but also participation, collaboration, and innovation outcomes. HUFS's Global Leadership courses and interdisciplinary research projects provide valuable examples in this regard.

6.2.4 Strengthen Faculty Development

Universities should emphasise professional development for general education faculty through training programs,

international exchanges, and collaborative research to enhance interdisciplinary teaching skills and global perspectives. The establishment of BFSU's General Education Expert Committee and HUFS's teaching innovation projects demonstrates the importance of faculty development in sustaining reform.

6.2.5 Foster a Diverse and Inclusive Campus Culture

Universities should cultivate an open and inclusive campus environment, encouraging participation in multicultural activities and international exchange programs to promote interaction and understanding among students from diverse cultural backgrounds. BFSU's General Education Cultural Festival and HUFS's international internships and volunteer programs effectively enhance students' cross-cultural literacy and social responsibility.

6.2.6 Policy Support and Continuous Improvement

Government agencies and universities should formulate clear policies for general education development, providing necessary resources and policy guarantees to ensure sustainable reform. Establishing feedback mechanisms to periodically evaluate reform outcomes and adjust strategies is crucial to aligning general education practices with international standards. By further deepening general education reforms, BFSU and HUFS can enhance educational internationalisation and cultivate high-quality talents with global competitiveness and cross-cultural competencies. These initiatives not only benefit the universities themselves but also provide valuable experiences and references for higher education reform in China, South Korea, and globally.

7. Conclusion

This study conducted an in-depth comparative analysis of general education reforms at Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU) and Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (HUFS), revealing both commonalities and differences in how the two universities respond to globalisation, enhance internationalisation, and cultivate multidisciplinary talents. The findings indicate that both institutions actively incorporate Western educational concepts, emphasising interdisciplinary knowledge integration, global perspective development, and cross-cultural communication skills. However, significant differences exist in their specific implementation pathways and priority areas, reflecting each university's unique educational traditions and national strategic priorities.

BFSU's general education reforms focus on integrating language instruction with general education courses. Through the establishment of BFSU College, the course-sharing mechanism with top domestic universities, the creation of a General Education Expert Committee, and the organisation of a General Education Cultural Festival, the university has systematically advanced its general education agenda. These initiatives not only optimise curriculum structures and enhance students' overall competencies but also expand their knowledge horizons through international cooperation, strengthening cross-cultural understanding and critical thinking abilities.

In contrast, HUFS places greater emphasis on practice-oriented learning and multicultural integration. Its reforms, including the general education initiatives within the Chinese Language Institute, the establishment of Global Leadership courses, interdisciplinary research projects, and international internships and volunteer programs, have effectively cultivated students' global perspectives and leadership capacities. These measures not only enhance cross-cultural communication and innovative thinking but also foster social responsibility and global competitiveness through hands-on experiences.

Despite differences in specific measures, both universities demonstrate effective integration and localisation of Western holistic education principles, contributing to comprehensive improvements in students' competencies. The experiences of BFSU and HUFS highlight the significant role of general education reform in enhancing higher education quality and fostering internationally competent graduates, providing valuable insights for other foreign language universities seeking to advance their own general education programs.

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Conflict of Interests

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