

Integrated Learning and Discipline Reform of Art and Design in Local Universities under the Background of Rural Revitalization

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Abstract. Aiming to train Art and Design talents who can serve the local economic and social development, this paper analyzes the opportunities and challenges faced by local universities under the background of the rural revitalization and explores the concept of integrated learning and discipline reform measures based on industry-education integration, hereby providing a reference for the education and teaching reform of local universities as well as assistance for the rural revitalization.

1. Introduction

To implement the rural revitalization strategy proposed by the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China and to achieve the goals of “prosperous industries, livable ecology, civilized rural customs, effective governance, and prosperous life” in rural areas [1], local governments have been vigorously promoting village environment and constructing beautiful villages, which produces a large number of design projects and jobs for Art and Design-related practitioners. Due to the lack of design resources and professionals in most towns and villages in China, the governments or project parties will face two choices. One is to seek help from well-known design agencies in big cities. Agencies in big cities indeed have better design resources, but this choice also has its drawbacks. Since large design agencies have heavy tasks, they will concentrate on large-scale projects. For small and medium-sized projects in villages and towns, they can either do it at will or simply copy models from large cities; At the same time, due to the vast geographical distance, the designers are unable to understand the local cultures deeply, so although the design results meet the aesthetic standards in the general sense, their copies are far from satisfying. This problem has become particularly striking in the process of urbanization in China recently [2]. The second choice is to seek help from local universities and local design companies. Compared with large cities, local design companies have unique geographical and emotional advantages, making it easier to explore local cultures and avoiding copying urban models. At the same time, compared with design companies, local universities are more likely to form a mutually beneficial or win-win situation with the local government. On the one hand, local governments provide practice opportunities and jobs for university students. On the other hand, universities can also flexibly modify their talent training modes to meet the needs of economic construction. Therefore, the intellectual resources and design strengths of local universities will face great opportunities and challenges under the background of rural revitalization.

As mentioned earlier, local universities have gained geographical and emotional advantages, however, there is still a big gap between the competence of the students and the need of the market. Therefore, it is imperative to reform the talents training modes of Art and Design in local universities. With definite object and proper remedies, the local universities can more effectively meet the market demand in the new era. In fact, as early as 2014, the Ministry of Education has put forward the idea of transforming local undergraduate universities into applied technology universities. Since then, local universities have established the overall goal of “training applied talents for local economic and social development” [3]. Art and Design, as a highly applicable discipline, has naturally become the vanguard of this reform. At present, with the idea of

“integration of industry and education, and university-enterprise cooperation”, the education and teaching reform of Art and Design in local universities, which mainly focuses on “Implementation Conditions of the Reform” (He Xufeng, 2016) and “Implementation Paths of the Reform” (Lv Haizhou, 2017) [4], neglects how the integration of industry and education supports integrated learning, how to promote discipline reform, and especially transforms the teaching content in discipline system into the teaching projects in practice system, which has not attracted the attention of scholars.

To meet the strategic needs of rural revitalization in the new era, the reform of the talent training modes for Art and Design discipline in local universities needs to be reviewed and studied from two aspects: integrated learning and discipline reform based on the integration of industry and education. To foster application-oriented talents, we will build application-oriented talent training modes based on the integration of industry and education.

2. Integrated Learning Based on the Integration of Industry and Education

2.1. The Concept of Integrated Learning

The integration of industry and education is to combine industry and education to achieve their respective goals. For industry, it is to improve economic efficiency, and for education, it is to improve the teaching quality. In the process of integration, both the economic benefits of industry and talent training of the university are achieved by the docking of talents supply and demand, and effective integration is to achieve mutual benefit and win-win in the docking process [5].

Although the model of integration of industry and education has been vigorously promoted and supported all over the country, in the process of practice it meets with many problems, which are mainly manifested in the following two aspects. First, the cooperation and communication mechanism between the enterprise and the university does not work smoothly due to the lack of voice for the enterprises in the cooperation since most of the daily business activities of most enterprises are not closely related to teaching and couldn't deeply participate in discipline construction, talent training plan, curriculum design, and other educational activities. Secondly, the interest balance mechanism is not perfect because the profit demands of the enterprise cannot be satisfied. In the process of university-enterprise cooperation, usually, the university pays little while getting great benefits because the university is only responsible for routine teaching and management and does not need to bear additional costs for university-enterprise cooperation. What's more, university-enterprise collaborative education improves the teaching quality and enriches educational resources. On the contrary, enterprises invest more but their expected benefits are not certain. University-enterprise cooperation requires enterprises to bear higher costs including explicit inputs such as the field, equipment, materials, and wages, as well as loss of apprentices, market risks, etc., so the cost of enterprises is relatively high and the benefits are relatively low [6]. All in all, due to the uneven power structure of the two sides, the enterprises have insufficient motivation to participate in the cooperation, which severely restricts the in-depth development of industry-education integration. The main reason for this dilemma lies in the serious lag of talent training modes of the university.

The integrated learning starts with the reform of the talent training modes. The university actively participates in the market and assumes responsibilities. Through project-based teaching, integrated learning connects the teaching content with the enterprise projects and integrates the “disciplines, majors, and curriculum” in the teaching system into “design, manufacturing, and marketing” in the industrial chain [7].

2.2. Implementation of Integrated Learning

The key to integrating learning lies in the university initiatively reform the talent training modes, to join in and adapt to the market through project-based teaching. Taking the Art and Design discipline as an example, the implementation of project-based teaching can be carried out in three steps.

The first step is to actively participate in local design and regional brand design to create outstanding works and series of achievements, and then expand the influence of works by holding exhibitions and participating in competitions. Take Sichuan University of Arts and Sciences as an example, in recent years, the School of Fine Arts has been committed to local design and regional brand design. The graduation exhibitions of some related majors are good examples, such as Dazhou Steel Company's old site renovation design themed with the relocation of the company, Haoyixin wholesale market old site renovation design themed with its fire incident, and regional brand designs centered on local traditional cultures such as Shiqiao Fire Dragon in Shiqiao town, Dazhou city, Liu Family's Bamboo Weaving in Quxian county, Dazhou city, Bashan Quexue Tea in Dazhou city, etc... Although these projects are not supported by the government and Party A in advance, we have always emphasized taking the initiative to participate in the market and present excellent works to the public. After years of hard work and accumulation, considerable excellent works have been displayed in professional exhibitions and won professional awards. For example, the Shiqiao Fire Dragon brand design has won the first National Rural Revitalization Innovation and Entrepreneurship Creative Contest, which has prepared our works to get into the market.

The second step is to undertake actual design projects and expand the one-sided and targeted project results into systematic teaching content. Professional teachers will use the actual design projects that have been completed or are undertaking as topics to carry out professional design courses. The content of the lectures is entirely based on the design topics, not limited to the theoretical scope of a specific course, nor limited to the specific forms of project. More possibilities and feasibility will be discussed in the course lecturing, to form a systematic course content based on the design projects.

The third step is to build a relatively fixed teaching group and student project group through the practice of multiple local brands and actual projects, and the growing groups will lead the optimization of teaching and practice. The construction of the teaching group is based on teacher's practical competence and their cooperation regardless of their majors. The construction of the student project group is based on their competence and the way of distribution according to work, not considering their majors and grades.

3. Discipline Reform Based on the Integration of Industry and Education

3.1. Purpose of Discipline Reform

It is the talent training mode that restricts the integration of industry and education. As an effective means, integrated learning can not only promote the integration but also implement the reform of education and teaching mode, thus modifying the talent training modes of the Art and Design discipline.

At present, most local universities adopt a fixed major division and a three-stage curriculum system for Art and Design discipline. Majors can be roughly divided into Product Design, Environmental Design, Visual Communication design, and Clothing Design. Each major is taught independently and adopts a three-stage teaching mode including general education courses, discipline basic courses, and design courses. For this kind of training mechanism it is difficult to carry out interdisciplinary training among students of different majors [8]. However, as mentioned above, the market demands for diverse and interdisciplinary Art and Design talents under the background of the rural revitalization, therefore, in the teaching process universities have to stress on the research and practice of regional characteristic cultures, the interpretation and application of local traditional rural cultures, and the inheritance and innovation of excellent rural historical cultures, training students' practical ability in local project design and regional brand design. So the ultimate goal of Art and Design discipline reform based on the integration of industry and education is to cultivate qualified interdisciplinary design talents for the market in the new era of rural revitalization.

3.2. Measures for Discipline Reform

1) Weaken discipline attributes, strengthen the construction of regional characteristic cultural courses, and highlight application ability training.

Due to the similar modes of Art and Design major in various local universities, and the general lack of regional characteristics, our reform measures are to weaken the discipline attributes and strengthen the regional characteristic cultural courses. Taking Sichuan University of Arts and Sciences as an example, the transformation of the Art and Design is rooted in the eastern Sichuan. The curriculum focuses on the research and practice of regional characteristic cultures such as “Ba culture”, and emphasizes the traditional rural cultures such as “Eastern Sichuan Folk Culture”, “Eastern Sichuan Folk House Culture” and inherits and innovates excellent historical cultures such as the “Dazhou Red Culture”. The transformation will change the current teaching content based on the urban construction, which disconnects urban and rural construction, improve students’ professional qualities, guide and broaden the employment channels for students, and meet the demand for Art and Design talents in local economic and social construction under the background of rural revitalization.

2) Emphasize teamwork, stress on interdisciplinary competence, and select course autonomously.

Project-based teaching is to break the traditional teaching approach: one course, one textbook, one teacher, and one teaching method. In the project-based teaching, the design project is used as the carrier to build a teachers’ group and students’ group respectively. The teaching job is undertaken by teachers jointly, while the project is coordinated by the students together. And teamwork must be emphasized in both teaching and learning. Project-based teaching emphasizes cultivation of interdisciplinary competence of team members based on teamwork, puts aside the prejudice of majors and subjects, and broadens horizons and professional capabilities. After organizing distinctive teacher teams and project teams, the autonomous course selection allows students to freely choose courses in different project groups. On the one hand, students can choose courses according to their interests, abilities, and expertise. On the other hand, it provides more possibilities for students’ professional abilities foster and employment prospects.

Taking Sichuan University of Arts and Sciences as an example, we transformed the traditional Landscape Design course into project teams such as “Ba Cultural Theme Park Design”. The teaching staff is composed of members from the Ba Culture Research Institute and the School of Fine Arts. They combine “Ba culture” with the application of “park design” to promote the “Ba culture”. This course is open not only to the students who majored in Environmental Design but also to all students who are interested in this project in this university.

4. Conclusion

In the context of China’s rural revitalization, Art and Design talents in local universities will face both market opportunities and challenges. To seize this opportunity, the reform of the talent training modes is imperative. Guided by “integration of industry and education, university-enterprise cooperation”, this article proposes two measures: integrated learning and discipline reform of Art and Design, to solve the problems in the development of integration of industry and education in local universities, improve students’ professional qualities, broaden the employment channels for students and meet the demand for Art and Design talents in local economic and social construction under the background of rural revitalization.

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