

The Necessity and Feasibility of Implanting Professional Expansion Courses

—Taking the Talent Cultivation of Art and Design Disciplines in Colleges as an Example

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Abstract: In the course of the 14th Five-Year Plan, the Ministry of Education highlights in the work plan of 2021 that we should promote the quality and innovative development of higher education, which will facilitate the continuous improvement of high-quality development system of higher education and the cultivation quality of urgently-needed talents, the effective optimization of the disciplines and specialties structure of higher institutions, the increase of the high-quality resources supply for higher education, the further advancement of “double first-class” initiative and expanding employment of college graduates. In respond to this, this paper focuses on the cultivation strategy of innovative and compound talents of art design discipline in higher institutions, views from the talents cultivation standard of higher institutions and social demands for talents, and analyzes the problems identified in the talents training program of art design discipline in the contemporary higher institutions in terms of the structural restrictions of the current talents training program, the psychological restraints of students themselves and the position limitations of corporate demands for talents to propose the concept of extended specialized courses and highlight the necessity of its introduction. Based on the experience of talent cultivation in contemporary art design discipline, this paper puts forward that a “person” should be regarded as an independent individual with differences in the process of talent cultivation, integrating the cultivation elements of knowledge, individual and society into an organic closed loop with mutual constraints and complements. Moreover, this paper discusses the feasibility of the introduction of extended specialized courses from the perspective of the passive input and active exploration mode of curriculum and its effective association with the corporate talent mechanism. The paper explores from the implementation approach of introducing extended specialized courses into the talents training program from aspects of curriculum connections, supervisor accountability system and graduation work, and further expounds the necessity and feasibility of extended specialized courses introduction in the talent training program of art design discipline in higher institutions.

Keywords: Art design; Talents training; Extended professional curriculum

1. Problems of Art Design Education in Contemporary Higher Institutions

1.1 Constrained “Hierarchy” and “Forms”

The traditional curriculum system structure pattern consists of “hierarchical composition”, that is, the common fundamental course, the specialized fundamental course, the specialized course, the interdisciplinary course, as well as “formal composition”, that is, the compulsory course, the elective course with limited varieties, the optional elective course. On this basis, different higher institutions in different regions will make appropriate adjustments according to their school-running concepts and characteristics. At the same time, the personnel training program which is more in line with the needs of the current society is formulated based on the educational policies of the Ministry of Education of China issued in different times, and such way is undoubtedly scientific, systematic and mobile. However, in the course of its implementation, there are still a number of problems such as the students’ lack of practical ability, the mismatching of concept and technique, the lack of dynamic development of thinking ability, the lack of adaptability of teaching mode and the lack of team cooperation ability. Especially for such a comprehensive interdisciplinary discipline as art and design, where the cutting-edge knowledge is rapidly updated, the visual requirements is constantly innovated, and the hardware carrier is iterated in an innovative manner, it is necessary to constantly optimize the

curriculum system with a view to making it better meet the needs of social enterprises in this changing and developing times.

1.2 Self-handicapping Ability

Although there is a conscious effort in higher institution education to plan the talent training path for students at the early stage of their professional learning, and even encourage students to make progress on their own with the “course map” as the blueprint, students are still treated as passive receptacles in the process of tailoring curriculum, especially elective courses, which only focuses on the existing ability of students instead of exploring their potential. The self-handicapping mentality leads to the neglect of the importance of “ability” enhancement in the process of pursuing “knowledge”, and it also ignores the exploration of possibilities in the development of one’s abilities and career planning upon the mastery of current knowledge system. Such issue of “self-handicapping” becomes overlooked in the discipline training system planning.

1.3 “Imperfection” of Talent Development

The requirements for art design positions for fresh graduates on Zhaopin.com, BOSS Zhipin.com, 58 Tongcheng.com and other mainstream recruitment websites in China can be concluded in three main aspects:

- (1) Focusing on the quality and quantity of art and design works;
- (2) Requirements for technical skills and proficiency in professional software;
- (3) Decent personality and work attitude, etc.

Meanwhile, primary technical positions concerning the employment of software and techniques like art designer, design assistant, designer, draughtsman and merchandiser, are in the majority, while positions related to creative thinking like planning, corporate image, brand promotion are less. In the professional education, higher institutions have laid excessive emphasis on enhancing students’ mastery of technology, methods and skills according to the requirements of enterprises, but neglected the cultivation of creative thinking ability and cultural ideas.

2. Feasibility of the Introduction of the Extended Specialized Course

Curriculum system aims to design the direction and the nurturing function of the courses as required by the society, with the talent training goal and the specification as the main body. There are three aspects that should be taken into consideration: first, the necessity of social needs, second, the imperfection of human development, third, the overall status of knowledge, which account for the target sources of higher education, and also the three basic sources of knowledge, the individual and society. Once the goal of the training program is set, it will determine the path and direction of the curriculum construction. The extended specialized course belongs to the third category in the professional curriculum dimension, which is distinguished from the professional compulsory course and professional elective course, and is the extension and supplement of the professional course, as well as the deep excavation of students’ personal characteristics and interests in the disciplinary training system of higher institutions.

2.1 Forming a Closed Loop of the Three Elements: Knowledge, Individual and Society

The three basic sources of the aforementioned higher education goal are knowledge, individual and society. Among them, the nature of imperfection of human development, emphasized in the basic source of “individual”, is the necessary supplement and important basis for the construction of talent training program. Students who have completed their higher education courses will meet the needs of social enterprises, however the most important factor in this loop is the individual “person”, who, even if receiving the same information, will demonstrate differentiated models of output. Therefore, in addition to the study path of the elective and compulsory course, the extended specialized course is incorporated to allow students to seek knowledge that is distinct from and can be integrated with their major while receiving input knowledge in a unified manner.

2.2 Extensive Construction of Diversified Curriculum System

Due to the high requirements and comprehensive nature of the art design discipline, the formulation of the curriculum system tends

to be diversified, which is evident in the establishment of courses such as design psychology, art design communication, design aesthetics, design behavior, etc. It indicates that many domestic higher institutions in China are aware of the close relationship between the art design discipline and other disciplines in the establishment of the training system of art design discipline. In recent years, as the new media technology continuously innovates, the carriers of art design visualization have become more and more abundant, and the combination of resources between platforms has made many emerging industries subdivided in different fields. Before scholars have had time to delve deeply into new industries, students can reach out and learn about those latest information through channels such as the Internet. How to understand those new things based on the existing cognition and the underlying logic in an effort to explore the possibility of one's development and widen the boundaries of professional knowledge, has become an important basis for the establishment of the extended specialized course.

2.3 From Passive Input to Active Exploration

“From passive input to active exploration” is one of the important goals in the talent training system of many higher institutions in China, and “the path of guiding students’ active exploration” has become a hotly debated topic in the recent innovation of training programs. In regard to the extended course, students can combine their individual characteristics with their major under the guidance of the supervisor to produce the work concerning the limited themes, such as handicrafts, food, Vlog, language expression, religious beliefs, etc., which may not seem to be related to the major, but can be integrated with professional knowledge in a theme-based manner to create works individually or jointly. The extended specialized course can contribute to the enlightenment of innovation and entrepreneurship on one hand, and is conducive to the active exploration to students’ ability and the output of comprehensive talents on the other hand.

2.4 Linkage with Enterprise Talent Mechanism

As for the enterprise’s selection process of talents, the work output in the extended specialized course will help the enterprises to gain a deep understanding of the talents, including their ability, personality, expertise, job preferences and other factors can not be seen directly from the resume or portfolio, and the category of the work can be also regarded as an important basis for selection. At the same time, students can demonstrate their targeted job search intentions based on their precise positioning of their capabilities. The establishment of extended specialized course provides an important reference in the school-enterprise cooperation concerning talent output.

3. Primary Exploration of the Method of Incorporating the Extended Specialized Course

3.1 Linkage with Specialized Compulsory Course and Elective Course

The establishment of the extended specialized course is different from the specialized compulsory course and elective course, but the effect of the course is closely related to the existence of the elective course and the compulsory course. The specialized compulsory course is designed for the cultivation of students’ individual accomplishment and common professional ability, and the specialized elective course is designed for developing students’ preference and individuality in the professional planning, while the extended specialized course aims to mine more possibilities in the development of commonality and individuality at the same time, which is more open and more independent. Therefore, the incorporation of extended specialized course in the initial stage of students’ professional education in higher institutions will contribute to nurturing students’ individual qualities and professional abilities, and exploring students’ individual capabilities and personalized needs with the assistance of the limited elective courses, which will allow students to develop a relatively holistic sense of career planning at the beginning of their professional studies.

3.2 Supervisor Accountability System and the Mode of Curriculum Teaching and Management

The extended specialized course is taught in a different way from traditional courses. In terms of the course supervisors, the pre-preparation for teaching materials and other related stuff takes up a smaller proportion of the course. Instead, the course focuses more on the exploration of individual students’ abilities, interests and personality development. At the same time, the comprehensive quality of the supervisors is required to be high, which should be embodied in their understanding of various disciplines of art design, the inclusion of new things,

sensitivity to cutting-edge information and technology, interdisciplinary knowledge reserves and good organization and coordination ability. Drawing on the flipped classroom lecture format, research, student peer evaluation, group discussion, teacher-student dialogue, thematic discussion, and inducing-mode questioning are the main methods, supplemented by the supervisor's explanation. Supervisor accountability system is adopted in the teaching and management of the course, encouraging student-teacher two-way selection and limiting the number of students enrolled in the course with a view to improving teaching quality and ensuring deeper communication between students and teachers.

In regard to students, the traditional teaching method prevents them from fully expressing their ideas in the fixed time, and makes it difficult to combine the personal characteristics with the professional field more flexibly. However, the extended specialized course finds a way out of the relatively serious atmosphere in the traditional classroom, where the methods of "round table", "impromptu group" and "free speech" are utilized for teaching to create an orderly and relaxed atmosphere. In this way, the teaching purpose of organically combining students' personal characteristics, interests and professional knowledge can be achieved.

3.3 Linkage with the Graduation Work

According to the disciplinary training program of Chinese higher institutions, the themes of graduation design/thesis are usually determined in the second semester of the third year. The incorporation of the extended specialized course can inspire students to identify the direction of their research in advance in the four-year academic study, to study the courses in a more targeted way after communicating and discussing with the supervisor, and become more aware of their research direction in the process of data collection, industry research, social practice and professional internship. The graduation design of art design discipline is unique in that it sets dual requirements for students' professional technique utilization and creative design thinking ability. The professional technique utilization can not be separated from technical research and repeated training, while creative thinking ability can be manifested by a kind of "personal consciousness" on basis of the study of various courses, which can be cultivated consciously in the extended specialized course at the early stage of graduation thesis's theme determination.

4. Conclusion

Considering the goal of continuous improvement of higher education's high quality development system and the problems confronted by the educational work, the modern art design discipline in China, after more than thirty years of development, has unveiled the necessity of incorporating the extended specialized course. Although the factors that determine the quality of personnel training involve with many aspects, the purpose of talent training still lies in broadening the boundary of students' knowledge, enriching their professional abilities and improving the quality of higher institutions' talent output. The exploration of extended specialized course is still at its initial stage, and the implementation of the relevant courses needs to be constantly improved in the changing market economy, however it is still necessary to incorporate the extended specialized course into the cultivation of art talents.

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