

# *The Enlightenment and Reference Function of American Interior Design Teaching to China*

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**Abstract**—This paper analyzes the American interior design education model and concludes that the United States pays special attention to the cultivation of students' comprehensive ability in teaching, and realizes the practical effect of teaching through a series of teaching methods. Simultaneously it has a systematic evaluation system and the evaluation standard to the student study quality evaluation. These points are particularly worthy of China's reference and learning.

**Keywords**—America; Interior design; China; reference

## I. INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the 20th century, American universities had begun to offer courses related to interior design. The first school to offer interior design courses was the New York School of Fine and Applied Art<sup>[1]</sup>. The rapid development of undergraduate education in the United States has made interior design a hot major in many universities.

In China the interior decoration department was firstly established in the Central Academy of Craft Art in 1957. The college entrance examination was resumed in 1977.

The teaching of interior design in China and America is quite different after years of development. The article will analyze the interior design teaching in the United States and hope to get reference to China.

## II. THE CURRICULUM SYSTEM OF AMERICAN INTERIOR DESIGN MAJOR

### A. Systemic curriculum in the United States

The interior design major in the United States generally focuses on design courses, supplemented by basic courses, theoretical courses, seminars, practical courses, engineering courses, etc. Let's take the four-year interior design profession as an example:

Grade 1: It mainly offers basic courses in art and design. It has courses in art foundation, Introduction to interior design, professional drawing and perspective, environmental behavior, computer-aided design, etc. Students learn and master basic design skills.

Grade 2: Courses such as interior design principles, building decoration materials, interior design history and residential space design are offered, and students are admitted to specialized courses related to interior design.

Grade 3: Based on the design studio curriculum, students improve their practical design skills through the study of the studio curriculum, supplemented by design history, indoor regulations and building regulations, to gain a deeper understanding of the practical requirements involved in interior design. And specifications;

Grade 4: Opens advanced interior design courses of studios such as commercial space and leisure space to enhance students' ability to handle more comprehensive design problems. At the same time, preparing for the graduation, the departments have specially set up preprofessional training courses such as interior design business.

### B. The curriculum system with "studio curriculum" as the core

Based on the "theory course" and the "studio course" as the core<sup>[2]</sup>, the students in the United States not only have outstanding practical hands-on design ability, but also have deep professional theoretical literacy, which can deeply understand and analyze design-related problems and then give a reasonable solution.

The studio curriculum in the United States is led by teachers. Students' groups are allowed to carry out in-depth and specific design for a practical topic from the aspects of pro-phase investigation, topic selection, problem-solving, design development, design optimization and design demonstration, so as to learn and master the relevant professional and social knowledge of a certain aspect of design.

Each studio course runs through the entire semester. The studio curriculum focuses on improving students' practical ability, fosters students' sense of innovation, and pays attention to the shaping of teamwork spirit. Students gradually become a qualified designer with innovative design consciousness, independent design ability and team cooperation through the course learning.

### C. "Interior Design Business" Pre-employment Training Course

In the teaching system of American interior design, it not only pays attention to the imparting of professional knowledge, but also attaches great importance to the connection from design to market. American universities believe that only products that stand the test of the market are good products, and designers must be good at introducing their designs to people in need. Therefore, in the interior design teaching system in the United States, there are specialized credits to teach students basic business knowledge and train their language expression ability.

Students are prepared to meet their potential employers and prepare for entry into the field of professional designers during their graduation year. This course is of great help to the expression of the completed design work. Job preparation is a necessary aspect of cultivating the literacy of the graduating designer. It is the key link between early studio teaching and social design work.

### III. THE TEACHING METHOD THAT PAYS ATTENTION TO THE CULTIVATION OF STUDENTS' COMPREHENSIVE ABILITY

#### A. Behavior-guided teaching method

The teacher is the creator of the problem in the learning process, the estimator of the learning effect, not the giver of the standard answer. The role of the teacher is similar to that of the program host, or it can be a participant in the program, which serves as a consultant and guide.

This kind of teaching method of "two-way interaction between teachers and students and expressing diversified interaction" mobilizes students' self-expression and innovation ability, which is of great significance for cultivating students' professional ability, learning methods and social practice ability.

#### B. Highlight students' initiative in classroom learning

At the beginning of a studio course, the teacher will provide the students with the requirements and outline of the course, and let the students form a design team of 3-5 people<sup>[3]</sup>.

Design the topics according to the syllabus, and make the plans. Students will divide their work according to their design tasks, collect design data and conduct surveys according to the selected topics, and analyze the information collected and researched to determine their own design direction.

Throughout the design process of the studio design, the teachers participate in the design process of each group, and only help students analyze possible problems and directions that can be developed. They will not give specific and clear answers. Students can make judgments and choices based on the teacher's suggestions and discussions between classmates, and decided the final implementation of the design scheme themselves.

#### C. Focus on practical teaching methods

To enhance creativity and practical ability, students should not only be able to express their design ideas through visual language such as sketches and drawings, but also can in-depth study of design shapes, spaces and deliberation and expression of scales by means of solid model making and material processing. This is also often the lack of Chinese students, Chinese students always think very well, but they are not good at making physical objects to reflect design.

In the design project, the American students will set up a simple model to express their ideas, so as to find the logical relationship among functional relationship, spatial scale and traffic line, and find the existing problems very directly. Later, with the deepening of the design, the model production and deliberation will be more and more deepening, and even some details of the node will be dedicated to make a large proportion

of the model for deliberation. When such a design project is completed, a complete design and construction process is deeply imprinted in the mind of the student, which plays a very good guiding role for him to carry out new design projects in the future.

Chinese students are always used to expressing design ideas on the computer, and they are not good at making objects to reflect the design. In this way, the understanding of the whole process of design is often not deepened enough.

#### D. Emphasize interdisciplinary cooperation

Interior design is a profession that is related to multiple disciplines. It must consider not only the issues related to art design, but also the issues of psychology, economics, ecology, and humanities<sup>[4]</sup>. In the specific design of the work, we must consider the issues of architectural design, as well as the knowledge of product design and landscape design.

### IV. RIGOROUS AND SYSTEMATIC EVALUATION SYSTEM

The interior design major of the School has a scientific evaluation system for the students' learning quality, which emphasis on the process of students' learning. The American school of design emphasizes the student-oriented teaching method that focuses on the cultivation of students' comprehensive ability<sup>[5]</sup>. They are eclectic and flexible in teaching. However, this does not mean that American teaching only focuses on the process and ignores the result control. The interior design major has a systematic evaluation system and strict evaluation standards for the evaluation, assessment and achievement evaluation of students' learning quality, whether it is the evaluation of students' learning process or the presentation of the final design results.

#### A. Real-time presentation

Independent learning and free discussion do not mean teachers' "laissez-faire". In fact, the process control of American classrooms is also very strict. Content including class attendance, course assignments or periodic tests at all stages, discussion performance in class, project design results or final exams will be recorded, and each class performance will be presented in real time. In order to achieve good results, it is impossible to rely on the final map, the usual performance scores often accounted for 60 percent or more.

The proportion of each individual item is clearly defined at the beginning of each course, and the student's learning situation is presented in real time on the electronic blackboard of each course according to the progress of the course. The final score is divided into stages and points. The scores of the items are accumulated.

#### B. All-around measures to ensure the quality of results

In addition to the evaluation of the instructors, the coursework will also require students to conduct mutual evaluations. In each evaluation, some students will report their works to everyone and accept questions from other students<sup>[6]</sup>. This process not only fully mobilizes the enthusiasm of every student, but also exercises the reporter's expression ability, comprehensive strain capacity and business communication ability. After that, another group of students will serve as the

reporter and also receive questions from classmates. This repetition enables students to achieve common improvement through such communication.

### *C. Integrity contract*

Not only special courses are opened related to design ethics, industry regulations and social responsibility, but also students are required to sign a "good faith contract" to ensure that there are no plagiarisms in their designs. The schoolwork detection system also will be performed to prevent fraud. At the end of each design course, students are also required to submit a systematic design work log on the project design, detailing the design learning process in detail, thus ensuring the authenticity of the creative process of its design.

## V. CONCLUSION

The United States has many years of teaching experience in interior design. Different from China's step-by-step teaching system from theoretical explanation to case teaching, it pays more attention to the cultivation of students' comprehensive quality, emphasizes the cultivation of students' compound ability to solve problems, closely connects with the market demand, cultivates students' teamwork spirit, and formulates systematic and rigorous evaluation standards, which all make the United States always show strong competitiveness in the cultivation of interior design talents. In summary, in the interior design teaching, the following points in the United States are particularly worthy of reference and learning in China.

### *A. The compound ability to solve problems is worth learning.*

In the United States, the "studio curriculum" is the core teaching method. In the cultivation of students' vocational skills, the emphasis is on the reflection of practical problems and the exploration of solutions. This is not reflected in the "skills" but in the solution. The composite ability of the problem is very worthy of China's reference.

### *B. It is worth learning from China in terms of docking market demand.*

Higher education in China pays more attention to imparting professional knowledge and skills to students, while the United States uses similar courses such as "interior design business" to make students more aware of how the profession interfaces

with the market. This is for schools and society. A bridge has been built to better cultivate students who are suitable for the market.

### *C. It is worth learning from China in cultivating teamwork.*

Interior design is a profession that is related to multiple disciplines. Cooperation between different professions is very important. At present, there is still a certain gap between China's interior design education and the United States in this respect. On the one hand, students of interior design should understand the basic common sense of other related professions. On the other hand, they should learn how to use their value in the team more effectively, instead of merely highlighting their personal value.

### *D. It is worth learning from China in the evaluation system.*

In the evaluation of each student's work, the United States uses a systematic evaluation system and rigorous evaluation criteria, thus avoiding the excessive influence of teachers' personal style preferences on students. In China, it is often the teacher who scores the work of the student according to his own experience and feelings, thus lacking objectivity and authority.

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