

Research on Teaching Design Module in International Cooperative Institute in China

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ABSTRACT

Taking the "Collaboration Practice" module in Birmingham Institute of Fashion and Creative Arts in Wuhan Textile University in China as an example, this paper discusses the need of updating educational content of teaching design module in international cooperative Institute based on the characteristics of schools, majors and students. Localizing teaching content, methods, evaluation, etc. to the high-quality western module resources should be taken into consideration to improve teaching quality and international cooperation.

Keywords: *international cooperative institute, design module, collaborative practice, teaching.*

1. INTRODUCTION

International cooperative education is one of the essential ways to communicate for better innovative development between universities around the world nowadays. According to WTO, it is a brand-new field and an important part of international trade services which has developed rapidly in the global economic integration. International cooperative education is different from other trades. In particular, the quality of educational service products is not easy to control, which involves factors such as teaching content, language difference and students needs etc. Based on the real situation of schools, majors and students, the sustained development of International cooperative education institute requires lots of efforts on teaching reform.

2. THE INSTITUTE & THE MODULE

Birmingham institute of Fashion and Creative Art (BIFCA) is an international cooperative education institute jointly organized by Wuhan Textile University in China and Birmingham City University in the United Kingdom. It has three undergraduate majors in visual communication, Landscape and Digital Media Art. The college introduces the contemporary design education system and teaching resources of Birmingham City University to cultivate high-quality artistic talents with international perspectives using bilingual teaching in Chinese and English.

"Collaborative practice" is a professional required module for the upper grades of visual communication, which is comprehensive and practical. The theoretical part of this module is based on the review and synthesis of the fundamental design knowledge learned in the early stage, and the practical part is based on the real investigation in the field research to complete design works.

3. TEACHING PROCESS

3.1 Teaching Concepts Update

Teaching concepts and learning concepts are the premise and foundation of all teaching reforms and innovations. "Collaborative Practice" module mainly follows modern pedagogy and psychology theories such as constructivism, subjectivity, learning by doing and learning pyramid theory. The curriculum emphasizes the combination of theoretical teaching and practical teaching. It integrates teaching concepts and experience of Chinese and British teaching resources, which could help to carry out teaching reform and innovation efficiently.

Different from the traditional lecture-based teaching, teachers focus on student-centered teaching process in Collaborative Practice. Based on students' interests, learning ability and personality, etc., teachers guide students to participate the class actively and encourage students to discover their own specialties and advantages

through practice to improve their professional knowledge and skills.

3.2 Teaching Content Reform

The special value of international cooperative institute is the introduction of international high-quality educational resources. The internationalization of modules is not a unilateral input of foreign modules. It must under the consideration of the real situation and demands of China[1]. BIFCA has made localized improvement and reshaped the teaching content of the modules introduced by Birmingham City University, which can reflected the construction of teaching content, the refinement of the syllabus and the adjustment of the curriculum structure.

Based on the curriculum, teachers of BIFCA set up a teaching team. The teaching team of " Collaborative Practice " module had four teachers , who participated in lectures and tutorials. One Chinese teachers and one British hired teachers from Visual communication, one Chinese teachers and one British hired teachers from Landscape. Taking advantages of professional expertise of two majors, there were joint teaching on design theories, cases and practical discussion for the module focusing on the integrity, cohesion and modularity. In addition, the teaching team applied the knowledge of educational psychology to the teaching process based on the individual difference for better learning effects of the students.

In "Collaborative Practice", Students need to show evidence of research, sketches, creativity, experimentation through advanced design techniques while collaborating with at least one other person to produce collaborative outcomes along with individual outcomes. The final score will be given based on four learning outcomes: research & audiences, creative thinking & communication, technical skills & production and collaborative & enterprise.

The reform of teaching content is mainly reflected in the following parts:

- Change text in design works from pure English to the combination of Chinese and English;
- Introduce new visual language in the new media context;
- Add local-related content such as the social and economic development;
- Adjust the field research site from Birmingham UK to Wuhan China;
- Combine design theories with practice together.

3.3 Teaching Methods Exploration

The class was designed of two parts. One was theoretical part which consist of project-based learning teaching method, small class discussion, one-to-one seminar, group cooperation; the other was about practical part which mainly include project practice, design workshop and design reflection.

In the teaching process, teachers published student-centered and task-driven works to let students figure out the design questions and answers by themselves through individual/group research and group discussion.

Here is a specific introduction to the project practice method. The project practice teaching method was largely based on the students, forming a teaching and learning community, including teaching teams and student groups. There was a cooperative relationship between teachers and students. It did not emphasize competition and optimization, but development together.

The project topics were students' own choices based on their observation from the real environment. Student investigation and design included the construction of latest and previous knowledge. students were responsible for completing design works and self-study management to develop deeper understanding of the study.

The theme of this module was "Mapping of Optics Valley" exploring the story behind the social and economic development and changes of Optics Valley area in Wuhan through the perspective of visual communication. Taking James Corner's mapping techniques: drift, layering, game-board and rhizome as the thematic support[2], this module required students investigate and find the target subject independently, complete design works and hold a themed exhibition according to their research. The project teaching method consisted of assigning tasks, collecting data, in-depth research, discussion, design, exhibition, reflection.

1. Group pairing and assign tasks According to students characteristics and learning ability, teachers grouped the students into 4-5 person.

2. Information research Students started to collect relevant information through image and video collection, questionnaire surveys etc. It was important for students to actively explore and think about their design tasks.

3. Field research Each group selected 15 design targets which attracted their interest through the field research around Optics Valley. It could be a person, a group, a place, an object or extended from the entire environment (including human behavior, interaction, movement, dynamics, atmosphere, venue, taste, color etc.). The whole observation process was to obtain every information about the target at different time periods or with other people/environment, which was unguided and no pre-set. The existing elements in the built environment

might provide unexpected opportunities[3]. If needed, students could inquiry interviews after tracking their targets.

4. Discussion and analysis Students collected, recorded and organized all the findings of group members through videos, sounds, pictures, sketches, notes, etc., and started to narrow the research objects, from 15 to 1 target through group discussions.

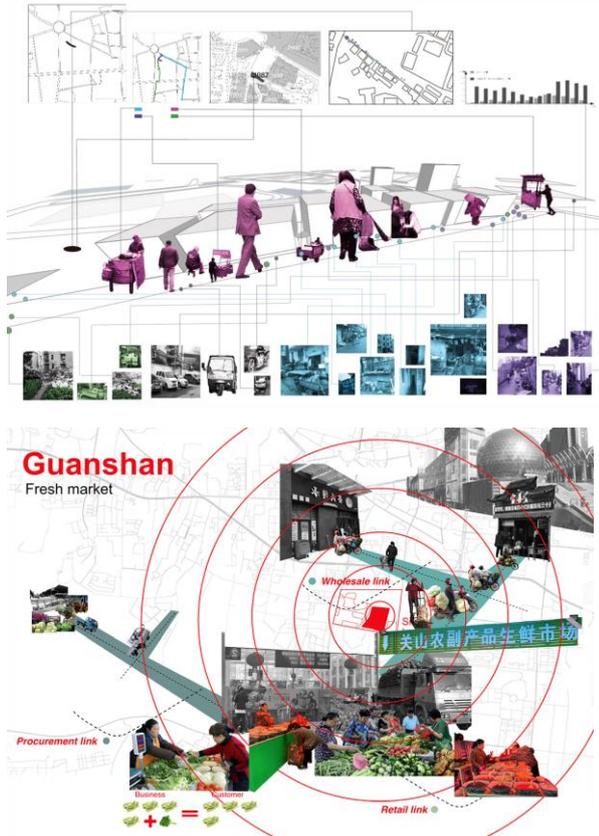


Figure 1 Students collected and organized their findings around Optics Valley area.

5. Extract and design Students analysed and extracted from the observation and mapped a new visual system to explain the activities around the target. Teachers supervised students to complete the visual editing narrative by choosing the appropriate media and technology[4].

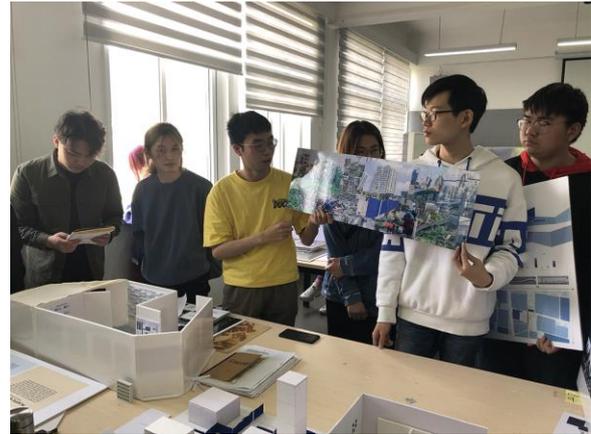


Figure 2 Students were presenting and critiquing their group works together.

6. Exhibition Teachers and students worked together to select the most representative collaborative design works among the all and held an exhibition to display the works at K11 Art Village in Wuhan. Combining with knowledge of design psychology, students applied the psychological impact of graphics, colors, materials, and space on the audience to bring their field site back to live. The exhibition lasted for one and a half months. Students were required to collect, sorted and analyzed the feedback of the exhibition. In the end, students completed and handed in the reflection report.





Figure 3 Students were setting up the exhibition.



Figure 4 The “Mapping of Optics Valley” exhibition entrance and introduction.



Figure 5 Exhibition images.

3.4 Innovative Teaching Evaluation

In the "Collaborative Practice", teachers used Birmingham City University's quality control and evaluation system to achieve a better transition from result-oriented evaluation to process-oriented and capacity development evaluation.

The assessment evaluation was broken down into several parts, such as project proposal, market research reports, design sketches, design processes, final works and exhibitions. It focused on breaking through the traditional teaching model that emphasized on final design works only, but attached great importance to project participation, contribution, design process (with sketchbooks), final design works and reflection reports.

Teachers also focused on the evaluation of students' individual development. For example, they needed to fill in English feedback form for each student, including research audiences, creative achievement, technical skills, learning attitude, etc. Teachers spent two weeks or more to complete a more accurate personalized evaluation. Teaching evaluation was a good starting point. It played an important role in stimulating and guiding students learning motivation.

4. DISCUSSION

Student development is the standard for testing the effectiveness of all teaching reforms. The effectiveness of teaching reform of the "Collaborative Practice" module is embodied in the development of students' learning theory, professional skills, learning methods, practical ability and comprehensive quality.

1) Strengthen the value of practice Students went out of the campus to investigate the field research in designated areas. They had obtained the joy of success through design practice, which greatly mobilized students' enthusiasm for learning at this stage, and students paid more attention to practice in mind.

2) Expand professional skills This module reflected the integration of professional skills into practice, enriched the content of the module itself and was closely integrated with social needs providing multi-dimensional research and design application. Students expressed that they loved their majors more than before and their professional skills had been expanded.

3) Change the way of learning Students spent a lot of time collecting information and thinking after class and actively communicated with teachers and classmates. Students all expressed their love and enjoyment of the process of participation. The students' self-learning consciousness had been strengthened.

4) Cultivate collaboration spirit A group of students got together for better in-depth field investigations, group discussions and joint design for many times, which had

practice students' cooperative learning, language expression and communication skills.

5) Improve social ability Students found design topics from their living surroundings, which they had to understand and integrated into. Through in-depth market research, exhibition venue negotiations, contract payment, guest invitations, etc., students broadened their horizons and earned early experience from the real world. The students' social ability had been improved, which had laid a good foundation for employment and entrepreneurship.

5. CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 has an unpredictable impact on studying abroad recently. International cooperative institute in China gradually shows its potential and advantages. Zhiwen Chen believes that "China has reached the top of the mountain to study abroad, and international education without going abroad will become a long-term hit"[5]. International cooperative institute has its advantages in culture, prices, disciplines and markets, which shows a diversified, rapid and competitive ongoing trend. It has ushered in a period of promising opportunities, which bears the expectations of more society and students.

Curriculum teaching is always an important part in universities. So it is with international cooperative institute. This article takes the "Collaborative Practice" module of Birmingham Institute of Fashion and Creative Arts of Wuhan Textile University as an example to introduce the content, methods, and evaluation of teaching reforms in design professional modules at international cooperative institute. It has already achieved good results which has the significance of teaching exploration and practical demonstration and can effectively promote the quality improvement of international cooperative institute.

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