

Discussion on Teaching Reform of Visual Communication Specialty in Higher Vocational Colleges

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Abstract—Through the field surveys and interviews regarding the student resources, course setting, professional course teaching and students' practical operating of the visual communication specialty in five higher vocational colleges in Shaanxi Province, such problems as students' foundation are generally weak, the basic theory hours are heavy, the orientation of professional courses is in disorder and the practice teaching condition is poor are discovered. The course reform thoughts of strengthening training hours, highlighting the cultivation of students' practice ability, implementing training studio teaching and school-enterprise cooperation teaching and meeting students' course selection need are proposed against the existing problems in combination with the survey results from the survey of Shanghai Art and Sign Academy, Zhejiang Vocational Academy of Art, Suzhou Arts and Crafts Academy and Sichuan Vocational College of Art with better school-running effect, and in combination with the actual situation of various higher vocational colleges in our province, so as to provide the valuable reference for the high vocational colleges in our province to cultivate those applied talents who can adapt to the modern social demand.

Keywords—visual communication; course; studio; practice ability

I. INTRODUCTION

With the development of the society and the improving of people living standard, the industries such as the advertising cultural communication company, convention and exhibition center, film transmission and production, stage performances as well as press and publishing have an increasing demand for visual communication specialty talents. Visual communication specialty is generated and developed fast under the background of the social and economic booming development, constantly improvement of people's living standards and cultural demand, the party and the state's high attention on national cultural living standard. According to incomplete statistics, as of 2014, 284 colleges and universities in our country have set up visual communication specialty, and as of 2015, 637 colleges and universities in our country have set up visual communication specialty. Just in one year, the visual communication specialty has developed very fast in terms of quantity. Obviously, people have great hope toward this emerging specialty [1].

There are some problems if we see from the employment situation of the students graduated from visual communication specialty of higher vocational colleges, for instance, the cultivation objective of visual communication in high vocational colleges does not meet the market demand, and the students cultivated have poor practice ability, which cannot keep up with social development's need for visual communication talents, resulting in difficult employment of the graduates of visual communication specialty, etc., and all these conditions have seriously restricted the development of current visual communication specialty. Various enterprises and units need those visual communication specialty talents with certain practical experience, thus the enterprise does not need to spend expensive training costs, and those talents can bring immeasurable benefits to the enterprises [2]. Course teaching is a vital link in the process of talent cultivation, which directly decides the quality of talent. Therefore, explore the problems exist in course teaching of visual communication specialty in higher vocational colleges and the scientific and reasonable reform measures deeply, will be conducive for providing powerful theoretical basis for reasonable structure construction, and the cultivation of high-quality, applied visual communication talents with innovation ability and personality.

II. CURRENT TEACHING SITUATION AND PROBLEMS EXIST IN VISUAL COMMUNICATION SPECIALTY

It is discovered that many problems exist in the teaching process of visual communication specialty in higher vocational colleges through questionnaire survey and field interview on the conditions of students resources, course setting, students' practical operation, teaching facilities and faculties in five of the twelve higher vocational colleges that have visual communication specialty in Shaanxi province, including Shaanxi Artistic Vocational College, Shaanxi Youth Vocational College, Shaanxi Vocational & Technical College, Xi'an Haitang Vocational College and Baoji Vocational Technology College.

A. Students' Foundation Is Generally Poor

The students specialized in visual communication in higher vocational colleges generally have uneven academic foundation and artistic foundation. Currently, the student resources of visual communication specialty in vocational

colleges in our province are diversified. Part of the students are recruited through the provincial artistic unified examination, however, those students generally have poor academic foundation, although they have certain artistic foundation; another part of the students are recruited through the national entrance examination, this part of students have relatively poor professional foundation, as they haven't studied the fine arts previously, including both the students of arts and students of science while they are in high school. The uneven knowledge foundation of those students has brought great difficulties to both the academic course teaching and professional course teaching. Relative to the undergraduates of same specialty, the students of higher vocational colleges still have certain gap in terms of learning consciousness, thinking ideas, artistic talent, and operating ability. Therefore, the teaching method that may acquire good teaching effect is a new topic worthy studying for the teachers of higher vocational colleges.

B. Theory Courses Are Heavy

At present, the higher vocational colleges generally last for three years, which is shorter than that of undergraduate colleges. So far, the course setting of both the professional basic theory course and the public theory course of visual communication specialty in higher vocational colleges are extremely similar with that of undergraduate colleges, and from the perspective of the whole cultivating scheme, the theory class hours account for half of the total hours. The theory courses of visual communication specialty in higher vocational colleges are diversified, thus the hours have to be decreased to complete the professional basic courses. The teaching effect is conceivable requiring the students to master the knowledge within dozens of hours which is one semester or even a year for the undergraduates. As a result, we should start from the learning laws of the basic courses of visual communication specialty, and arrange the basic courses according to the characteristics and educational system of students of higher vocational colleges, simplify the course categories and contents, thus to lay a solid foundation for the students' learning of professional courses step by step and form the easy to difficult ones.

C. Professional Course Orientation Is in Disorder

Now, the category and direction of visual communication specialty in higher vocational colleges is in disorder, including more than ten categories such as photograph specialty, product design specialty, advertising specialty, commercial illustration specialty, cartoon specialty, plane specialty, new media specialty and printing technology specialty, and each category has different professional orientation. From the perspective of the professional basic courses that have been set in various colleges, the teaching contents are aimed at the specialty of visual communication, rather than a specific professional orientation, revealing that the teaching content is less targeted. As for professional teaching, the professional course emphasis shall be different for different professional orientation. However, there exist great distance between the educational resources such as software facilities and teaching facilities of higher vocational colleges and that of the same specialty of the undergraduate colleges, yet the professional orientation setting has no difference with that of undergraduate colleges.

Following the course setting of similar specialty of undergraduate colleges will undoubtedly reduce the teaching quality of professional courses of the higher vocational colleges.

D. Practical Teaching Condition Is Poor

The practice teaching condition is an important basic condition for higher vocational colleges to cultivate visual communication talents. The teaching staff are essential for higher vocational colleges to carry out practice teaching, and according to the characteristics of visual communication specialty, the visual communication specialty teachers must have a high level of professional skills and extensive professional knowledge, and be able to research and study in the front line of the enterprise relating to this specialty regularly, and master the development trend of the enterprise and industry as well as the accurate information about market demand for the talents of this specialty, to keep pace with the times and always stand in the forefront of professional fields. Through investigation, we know that at present only a small number of teachers in higher vocational colleges meet the requirements of visual communication specialty, most of the teachers are "transformed" from similar specialties such as fine arts and design, having few opportunities to study further and research, and knowing little about the demands of enterprises and industries for talents, which condition is inadaptable to the rapid development of visual communication specialty, and has restricted the professional development of students specialized in visual communication in higher vocational colleges to some extent. Another important aspect for carrying out practice teaching is the teaching facilities. It can be seen from the results of field investigation that, currently, teaching facilities of higher vocational colleges cannot satisfy the needs of practice teaching of visual communication specialty. Teachers have to turn to impart the theoretical knowledge due to the lack of practice teaching conditions, and students cannot get practice very well, resulting in great impact on teaching effect, and this also objectively led to poor operation ability of the students specialized in visual communication in higher vocational colleges.

III. THOUGHT OF TEACHING REFORM

The following reform ideas are proposed in combination with the actual condition of various higher vocational colleges in our province against the problems exist in teaching process of visual communication specialty of higher vocational colleges, though field investigation and research of the colleges with similar specialty and better school-running effect, such as Shanghai Art & Design Academy, Zhejiang Vocational Academy of Art, Suzhou Arts & Crafts Academy and Sichuan Vocational College of Art.

A. Increase the Proportion of Training Hours, and Highlight the Students' Practical Ability Cultivation

Reasonably adjust the proportion of professional theory course hours and professional practice course hours by optimizing the course system setting, develop the teaching objectives that meet the development demand of professional course system in different stages, dare to break down barriers

between courses, strengthen the relationship between similar courses, to form mutual complement between different courses to make the course content more practical. As for teaching arrangement, theory teaching hours shall be reduced as far as possible, increase the proportion of training hours and enrich its connotation, which is easy to improve students' practical ability, and provide sufficient time and favorable conditions for improving students' practical ability. As for teaching methods, adopt the methods that are conducive to enhance students' operation ability, such as discussion, case, inspiration and exploration, to cultivate students' consciousness and ability to actively participate in practical operation, and enable students' practical ability to leap to a new level through their unceasingly participation in practice teaching activities. Actively carry out the second classroom activity with practical operation content as the core, and enable them to obtain the innovative credits which can replace the credits of relevant optional course through the methods with practice as guidance such as various competitions, extracurricular scientific and technological activities, scientific research, inventions, and social practice and so on. Encourage and organize students to participate in various domestic and foreign related competitions, and the school shall also held the skills competition at school-level, to provide students with the chance to exchange skills and the good platform to show their practice ability. Thus students' practice ability will be enhanced greatly in the process of actual competition and mutual communication.

B. Implement the Teaching Mode With Campus Training Workshop as the Core Supplemented by Off-campus School-enterprise Cooperation

Create the complete teaching environment through training workshop, which is not a training workshop with just some static objects or some teaching easels, but one in real sense. The classroom design, configuration of teaching tools shall be highly consistent with the teaching outline, teaching plan and teaching content, the functional design of training workshop shall also be relatively complete, and it shall be a comprehensive working and teaching environment integrating theory teaching area, practical operation area, storage area of teaching tools and materials, works display area and multimedia report area [3]. Every link from basic formation to completion of the product can be completed in the training workshop smoothly. By training workshop teaching, students can use the good teaching conditions conveniently, feel the good working atmosphere and vocational status they will be engaged in, what is more important is the expansion and connection from theoretical knowledge learning to practical application has been realized, which has greatly improved students' comprehensive professional application ability. Training workshop gives priority to practical training and is the main mode for cultivation of students' operation ability and innovation ability. School-enterprise cooperation teaching refers to that school and enterprise establish the training cooperation relation jointly, and dispatch those students with certain theoretical basis to the corporate for training or in-post practice. On the one hand, students' theoretical knowledge and creativity can be widely used in the companies and enterprises, which has not only improved students' practical ability and

communication skills, but also made students understand the companies and enterprises more comprehensively, and learn about what kind of talents are needed by the companies and enterprises, facilitating students to work hard toward a certain direction in subsequent learning. The school-enterprise cooperation teaching, on the other hand, will be win-win for enterprises that control large amount of social resources and the colleges that control large quantity of talent resources. Schools have improved the software and hardware teaching environment, and saved a large amount of money through the enterprises; and enterprises have solved the difficulties technology and talents through schools. School-enterprise cooperation is undoubtedly an innovative teaching thought, but it cannot be regarded as the main teaching means to improve students' practice ability, as the operating purpose of enterprise is essentially different from the training goal of school.

C. Reflect the Principle of People-oriented to Meet the Needs of Students' Course Selection

Establish the practice segments of the categories of quality, experiment, practice, design and innovation through updating the practice program, and establish the practice teaching modules of basic practice level, improving practice level and comprehensive innovative practice level through the construction of on-campus training workshop and off-campus practice base, to conduct the targeted teaching according to students' different basis and ability; set up the on-campus teaching module, off-campus practice teaching and after school free practice module, enable students to choose according to their different interests and hobbies. Each practice link or practice level and practice module shall be charged by a teacher with high professional quality, and each student will select the course within the whole school according to their own interests, hobbies, special skills, level and employment intention, thus the course selection demands of students with different levels will be satisfied, and the progressive course from basic knowledge learning to skill application to the cultivation of innovation ability will also be realized, and gradually the students' professional skills and innovation ability will be improved. Hence, the basic practice knowledge is imparted, students' practice operation ability is improved, and the organic combination of in-class and after-class, teaching and practice as well as school and society is realized [4]. Under the premise of meeting basic teaching goal, as for the graduation design, students' personalized needs shall be satisfied, and select the design subject reasonably according to the students' different ability levels and employment orientation; implement college students' innovative undertaking plan, allow excellent students to start graduation design and go to graduation practice in advance, to realize the people-oriented education mode.

IV. CONCLUSION

The teaching reform of visual communication specialty courses in higher vocational colleges is a systematic engineering, and many aspects are worth to explore and practice. Only by constantly exploring and practice can the students' connotation be enriched and can their practice ability be improved constantly. In visual communication specialty

course teaching, we shall review the syllabus and adjust the training hours according to the characteristics of college students and the actual situation of higher vocational colleges, change the traditional education concept taking advantage of running school jointly. Establish the "people-oriented" teaching model, pay attention to professional practice teaching in combination with social demand and by virtue of diversified teaching methods, to cultivate students' innovation ability, and to truly realize the significance of professional course reform of visual communication specialty, and cultivate more applied visual communication specialty talents with strong practical ability and innovation ability.

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