

Initial Construction of “Visual Schema Language” Curriculum System

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Abstract. A research and analysis is made on the curriculum system of “Visual Schema Language”. This paper elaborates on the three aspects of the brief introduction to the concept of Visual Schema Language, the historical background of the concept, and the significance and method of the construction of the curriculum system. The main viewpoint lies in the construction of the common basis for visual arts and design majors - “Fundamentals of Visual Schema Language”.

The late start and weak faculty resources of Chinese arts and design education in local colleges and universities have led to a serious problem of “basic teaching”. For the purpose of reinforcing students’ basic abilities, it is necessary to build a curriculum teaching system and diversified teaching methods rather than idiosyncratic views. The basic curriculum teaching system should also be a basic clue from two dimensions to three dimensions and even multiple dimensions.

Brief Introduction to the Concept of Visual Schema Language

Different from the domestic cultural context, the concepts of Western art have undergone many changes such as “Art, Fine Art, Plastic Art, Visual Art and Idea Art”. Among them, “Visual Schema” has always been the main presentation way for artistic or design works, and it is closely related to the unique cultural context, values, and technological level.

The prototype of “visual language” is embodied in the first symbolization of visual language and the formation of the curriculum system by Bauhaus College in Germany (founded in 1919). At that time, the representative of modernist pioneer concurrently held the position of teacher of School of Design. Eaton, its major teacher, pioneered the “basic course” (founder of modern design basics); Kandinsky, another major teacher, systematically expressed his visual theory and concept, emphasized the objective analysis of form and color, and focused on the relationship between point, line and panel. This concept was introduced in the 1980s as basic curriculum content for design majors by domestic design majors.

In the middle and late stages of the last century, on the basis of rigorous experiments, Rudolf Arnheim, Professor of Art Psychology at Harvard University, combined psychology with artistic phenomena, conducted an in-depth analysis of the relationship between art form and visual perception, and scientifically proved the powerful visual function, thus laying a scientific foundation for the western modern visual arts theory. Gombrich, another famous professor of aesthetics and art psychology, combined with knowledge from several different fields, such as combination of psychology, philosophy and graphics, as well as the combination of painting and art education and art history, in order to enable them to become an organic and integral whole. Therefore, the research on “visual”-based art disciplines started to take off.

According to the above examinations, foreign countries began their prototype of “visual language” 100 years ago, and they are now in the development of a diversified concept.

In 2011, arts became a separate discipline for the first time in China’s colleges and universities. In its primary disciplines of fine arts and design, the majors including drama, film and television art design, animation, fine arts, painting, sculpture, photography, environmental design, product design, clothing and apparel design, and public art are inseparable from “Visual Schema”.

Due to China’s special cultural context, related research is embodied in fragmented painting skills, theoretical monographs, essays, and specific professional courses, so it can be organized and improved. For example, there is still a lack of cross-disciplinary applications and theoretical studies between fine arts and design science. After the deficiency is filled in, a new curriculum system of

“Visual Schema Language” can be formed. Besides, due to its wide application, professional commonality and continuity, it can develop into a new discipline.

Compared to “Visual Language”, Visual Schema Language is a more subdivided concept. From the perspective of cultural context, it is included and is different from foreign studies (for example, the traditional domestic schema has unique smart opening function and cultural characteristics).

From 2014 to 2017, the Basic Course Department of the School of Fine Arts at Hubei Engineering University conducted a preliminary study and completed the provincial teaching research project - *Research on the Teaching Reform of the Interworking Skills of Basic Teaching System in Fine Arts and Design Universities*. This achievement won the second prize for school-level teaching achievement. In this project, some basic courses had been optimized, basic course materials had been written, and the online work of an online course had been completed, laying a foundation for the preliminary research of this topic.

Analysis on Historical Background of the Concept “Visual Schema Language”

The history of Chinese art before the 20th century reflects the development of the traditional concept of “Visual Schema Language”. Its source can be traced back to the original ornamentation and rock painting; the generation of hieroglyphs enriched the meaning of the figure; the separation of “schema and Chinese characters” made paintings a special art form; later, the space of art forms was expanded to various aspects and reflected in a multidimensional form. This content constitutes an important part of the Visual Schema Language, but the application-related contents must be refined.

Since the 20th century, the development of the concept of painting and design teaching in domestic arts can be deemed as the development of the modern concept of “Visual Schema Language”. For example, Lin Fengmian and Xu Beihong, who returned in France in the 20th century, took the lead in modern art education and enriched the contents of traditional visual schema language. Afterwards, they experienced the Suzhou-style teaching system, the Western concept of “constitution and expression”, “visual arts”, “conceptual art”, “postmodernist art” and other diversified influences. So far, the teaching philosophy of art and design has begun to be integrated. With the current “transition” requirements, it is thus urgent to handle the problem of “self-positioning” of colleges and universities in line with local conditions.

(I) Brief Description of Representative Achievements:

In *Collected Papers for Visual Arts Educational International Forum in Hubei Institute of Fine Arts*, 38 papers that could reflect the latest research results at home and abroad are included, providing valuable information on current status of visual arts education development in various domestic and foreign art colleges. Major colleges and universities are exploring the basis for building consensus, with different focuses ranging from “fundamentals of visual arts”, “modeling basis” and “design basis”. among them, the main disputes lie in the common basis between fine arts and design.

(II) The specific results related to the project are mainly reflected in the concept of relevant textbooks in colleges and various universities, such as *Fundamentals of 2D and 3D Design (2006)*, *Fundamentals of Design Sketch* (Wang Xueqing & [Korea] Zheng Meijing, Professor of China Academy of Art, 2015) - this series of works presents the author’s combination of his teaching experience in French art universities for more than 10 years and the development status of related disciplines in China, and multidimensional teaching philosophy has promoted project research; *Report on Modeling Basic Course Construction of School of Design of China Academy of Art* (Zhou Zhiyu, Professor of China Academy of Art, 2006, the report originates from its website) - the report mainly analyzes the significance of modeling and training methods, and brings deeper research significance to the project; *Visual Schema* (Cao Fang & Qiao Shuang, Professor of Nanjing University of the Arts, 2008) - the book elaborates on the different styles of “schema” in visual expression from the perspective of “language” or “grammar”, and the concept and theoretical framework of this project’s “Visual Schema Language” is based on this book; *Design Sketch* (Lin Jiayang, Professor of Tongji University, 2006) - the author emphasizes the transformation of basic

applications and expands the concept and application of traditional languages, and this project will cite it for use; *From Sketch to Design* (Wang Zhongyi & Xu Jiang, Professor of China Academy of Art, 2002) - the book emphasizes the construction of the basic qualities and capabilities of the design, and the concepts will be used as a reference for project research.

Significance and Method of the Construction of “Visual Schema Language” Curriculum System

(I) Significance of the Construction of “Visual Schema Language” Curriculum System

First of all, this project is a study of new ideas of related disciplines in applied colleges and universities with Chinese characteristics, which is of innovative and pioneering significance. For example, it theoretically classifies and categorizes the original visual arts-based curriculum, and constructs a new academic concept of “Visual Schema Language”, a curriculum system and a disciplinary system. “Visual Schema Language” is a new academic concept and a new curriculum teaching concept. With the deepening of research, “Visual Schema Language” may develop into a new discipline in art. Therefore, this research will fill the gap between the basic theories and the discipline construction that are still missing between fine arts and design studies in domestic colleges and universities.

Secondly, the project research is closely integrated with the “transition” of applied colleges and universities, the 2018 talent training program of the institutions, and the application of the curriculum system construction, and it will conduct comparative research with related institutions. Therefore, this project is characterized by far-reaching effects, wide benefit range and realistic, targeted and time-efficiency significance.

This project research will combine curriculum teaching with application, humanity, creativity and theoretical factors to build a new curriculum system for training programs. Therefore, this project completely fits with the requirements of talented people in applied colleges and universities to cultivate talents with “thick foundation, wide caliber, focusing on application and strong ability”.

This project is also the basis for constructing an innovative and applied talent model, such as the model of “Visual Schema Language as the basis + characteristic major direction”. The characteristic majors can be the specific major direction in the original fine arts and design, and it can also be a multi-major discipline such as pedagogy, literature and architecture.

Furthermore, with the in-depth study of this project, the research contents will be infiltrated into cross-discipline, multi-dimensional application practice, local cultural development and other fields. This project is of wide caliber and sustainable development.

This project study corresponds to the problems of “application, transformation and development”. From the problem identification to problem solving, the research has demonstrated innovation and application in all aspects. The teaching resources will be simplified and the discipline system will be optimized. Therefore, it fully reflects the practical application value of project research, so it is a sustainable education and research strategy for training applied high-quality talents.

(II) Method of the Construction of “Visual Schema Language” Curriculum System

First of all, the author holds that “Visual Schema Language” is the basis of visual arts and design major. The difference between the concept of “Painting Basics and Fundamentals of Visual Schema Language” relates to different cultivation directions and methods. Therefore, the application content of Visual Schema Language must be first abstracted to form a new curriculum system. This project research will compare the text with music, propose the structural system of elements such as semantic meaning, morpheme, color, linguistic material and grammar, and incorporate the basic courses of the original art and design major’s basic courses into the visual schema language system for interdisciplinary study. As a result, a new general knowledge curriculum system will be set up.

Secondly, the project will propose a new perspective on the construction of the “Visual Schema Language” applied discipline system from the perspective of a broader and more specialized applied language (including the connotation and skills of language). In domestic applied colleges and universities, talents with “thick foundation, wide caliber, focusing on application and firm ability” are the training targets. Therefore, the present and future education on art and design may

not be confined to visual arts, but may be combined with other disciplines to form a comprehensive discipline and eventually form a comprehensive application-oriented innovative discipline.

Thirdly, the project research will learn about the domestic excellent concepts and teaching structure settings through visits, inspections and collection of documents, examine representative teaching models and subject settings of similar institutions, and make a comparative study of the project.

In addition, this project research mainly adopts the action research method, including the five processes of plan - action - examination - practice - summary. First of all, the author collects data for preliminary research, finds relevant theories and documents for solving problems, organizes personnel to conduct joint discussions, listens to opinions from all parties, and draws up plans; after that, the author divides labor and cooperate to enter concrete sub-projects for division of labor; afterwards, the author examines the teaching models and subject settings of representative institutions of the same kind and conducts a comparative study; finally, the author further confirms the research contents and conducts a practical study.

Finally, the project research will comprehensively complete the research contents through the course teaching practice, writing papers, monographs and teaching materials.

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