

Integration of Competition and Course: The Application of "Competition-Driven Teaching" in Higher Education for Design Majors

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Abstract

Advancing the synergistic innovation of industry, academia, and research and actively participating in the implementation of the innovation-driven development strategy, this paper focuses on the cultivation of innovative, composite, and applied talents. It analyzes the necessity and feasibility of integrating competition into education ("competition-driven teaching") in higher education for design majors, promoting interdisciplinary comprehensive ability training for students, effectively integrating teaching resources, helping students understand market demands within the course, and strengthening professional teaching practice. This integration extends the art education classroom to competition practice, drives the synergistic development of "industry-academia-research-application," strengthens the training of applied talents in universities, and promotes the systematic and market-oriented development of design education.

Keywords

Integration of competition and course; Competition-driven teaching; Higher education; design; Talent training.

1. The Requirement of Integrating Theory and Practice in Higher Education Design Majors

China places great emphasis on educational development and implements a strategy of revitalizing the country through science and education. Against the backdrop of university education reform, how to cultivate application-oriented talents that meet societal needs is a current issue facing universities. Subject competitions have emerged in this context[1]. The design discipline is a highly comprehensive interdisciplinary subject. Compared to pure art disciplines that focus primarily on cultivating expressive abilities, design emphasizes the cultivation of applied abilities and has distinct practical characteristics[2]. In the current educational environment, the combination of theory and practice has become one of the core elements of higher education in design. By integrating theory and practice, students can better understand and apply knowledge learned to enhance their problem-solving abilities.

2. Insufficient Integration of Theory and Practice in Traditional Education for Design Disciplines

With the continuous development of higher education, the demand for highly skilled and high-quality professionals is increasing. How to cultivate high-quality professionals is a question every university educator should consider. Advertising design and production is a practical art course that uses artistic thinking to enhance the artistic presentation of products, with strong characteristics of innovation, application, and practicality. Meanwhile, advertising design is closely connected to the development of the social market. Traditional theoretical teaching has certain gaps compared to the constantly updating industry forefront, especially with the

development of digital advertising. Students have few opportunities to participate in social design practice projects, and traditional courses are mostly simulated social topics, leading to narrow design thinking, low student enthusiasm, lack of critical thinking, and design capabilities. Traditional classroom teaching focuses on the learning of theoretical knowledge, with students experiencing gaps in practical design and a one-sided understanding of materials, making it difficult to reflect the cultural aspects of design materials. College students' understanding of theoretical knowledge is too one-sided; even if they can recite theory fluently, they are at a loss when it comes to practical operations. This disconnection in design practice has long existed. Under various backgrounds, most students find it difficult to achieve systematic design, and although some delve deep into subject design and research, they also find it difficult to meet design requirements. Improving design practice is a systematic process that includes researching cultural backgrounds, objectively analyzing advertising markets, and comprehensively analyzing clients' work statuses and lifestyles. Advertising aims to optimize information delivery and product advantages, with a strong commercial nature, completely different from simple school life. Therefore, students lack design enthusiasm. To promote the integration of industry, academia, and research, and strengthen the practical requirements of students, professional competitions are added to the course, transforming simulated design creation into real social challenges, igniting students' combat spirit and creative enthusiasm, and promoting their understanding of market requirements and industry development.

Professional competition combined with traditional classroom teaching is inevitably a win-win teaching model. The system of college design courses is mostly dominated by the impartation of theoretical knowledge, and this training model is relatively complete with a wide coverage of knowledge content. Design professional competitions are often initiated by design associations or educational authorities, with professional authority. Competition-driven courses not only provide students with direct contact with design tasks in the economic market but also serve as an opportunity for university design teachers to enhance their professional literacy. Professional design competitions are the connection points between theory and practical work, as well as a bridge for college students transitioning from theoretical thinking in school to the commercial society. The course system is closely connected to actual market needs, using design projects and competitions as a basis, allowing students to digest the theoretical knowledge and skills learned through participation in project development, practice, and analysis, meeting the realistic needs of talent training.

3. The Promotional Effect of "Competition-Integrated Teaching" on Design Professional Course Teaching

In art design classroom teaching, practicality has always been emphasized, with the aim of cultivating application-oriented talents that meet societal needs. Integrating professional subject competitions with classroom teaching is one of the recognized practical teaching models[3]. "Competition-driven teaching, teaching-driven competition, competition-driven learning" is a systematic development that helps students understand market demands within the course, strengthen professional teaching practice, and extend the art education classroom to competition practice, driving the synergistic development of "industry-academia-research-application." The mutual transformation from classroom teaching platforms to practice platforms steps out of traditional environmental design classroom practice teaching models. Using competition as a practice channel expands the application scope of classroom teaching, forming an "internal-external interactive" pattern where practice and teaching dissolve into each other. Multi-angle design thinking enhances professional awareness and creative thinking, encouraging and boosting students' professional confidence. By using design competitions as a carrier, guiding students to pay attention to competition information and social hot issues, for

example, the "First Chongqing Copyright Cup," with various design propositions covering "environmental protection," "dual-city economy," "copyright law," etc., involving broad areas and strong coverage, inspires students' interest in topics and thinking abilities. Using propositions as a basis for brainstorming, students dissect topics from multiple points and perspectives, review related literature and regulations, strengthen logical thinking, and consolidate independent innovation capabilities, further enhancing students' design appreciation abilities.

Design competitions are an effective way to stimulate students' creativity and learning enthusiasm. Through these competitions, students can gain a deeper understanding of Chinese traditional culture and apply this knowledge in practice. It is well-known that Chinese folk culture emphasizes that "every picture has a meaning, and every meaning is auspicious," yet the cultural aspect of design is often overlooked by students. Advertising design primarily uses graphic elements to convey information through visual representation. The concept of advertising design is relatively broad, encompassing multiple aspects such as color theory in design, semiotics, aesthetics of design forms, and design economics. In the creative process of advertising design, graphic elements aim to represent "cultural" symbolic information. For instance, the "butterfly" pattern in traditional culture conveys the meaning of "blessings," while the "lotus flower," beyond symbolizing purity and sanctity and being the "flower of teaching" in Buddhism, also represents "many children and grandchildren" in traditional culture through the symbol of the "lotus seed pod."

Professional competition combined with professional course teaching fully plays the role of students, with classroom theoretical knowledge aiding students in understanding and recognizing professional concepts, such as the definition of advertising design, the development and basic laws of advertising, and the artistic expression of advertising design in different periods. Design competitions help transform theory into practical action; in this transformation process, real propositions are turned into practice-oriented classrooms, shifting students from passive reception to active engagement, truly participating in project development, analysis, and re-creation, expanding students' learning opportunities.

Design practice is a group activity, including various stages such as market analysis, data analysis, product positioning, and brand image design, which is a job that can only be completed through mutual cooperation. In school practice, most students are accustomed to individual assignments; embedding competitions into courses helps classmates cooperate to complete tasks, strengthening the team spirit and cultivating professional work awareness. With the development of the internet, online references and offline on-site exchanges, various teaching methods are linked together, diversifying teaching. By working together with classmates, students learn effective communication and collaboration skills within the team, which are significant for their future work and life. In the "competition-integrated teaching" model, teachers need to cleverly design competition projects to blend them with course content, not only stimulating students' learning enthusiasm but also achieving teaching goals.

"Competition-driven teaching" poses higher demands on professional teachers in course teaching to ensure the effectiveness of the teaching process and the comprehensive cultivation of students' overall qualities. Teachers need to possess the capability to design innovative and practical competition projects. This includes defining the competition's theme and objectives, ensuring that the competition project aligns with the core knowledge and practice of the design profession. Before the course begins, the preparation stage requires extensive searches for competition information related to the profession, including whether design competition topics meet the professional development direction of students; whether design competitions align with the professional evaluation standards of school students; whether design competition ideas conform to party development guidelines and education; whether design competitions match the stage of life perspectives, value perspectives, and worldviews of students; whether

competition content is appropriate for the professional progress of the current grade of students; whether competition timing matches with course teaching; whether the level of design competitions can aid in improving students; and also considering whether students can master and complete the software requirements for design competition presentations, the various forms of student creations in design competitions, and other multifaceted and multi-angled evaluations and considerations.

Design emphasizes innovation and creativity, breaking traditional boundaries through aesthetic viewpoints and creative ideas to pursue uniqueness and beauty. Artistic design focuses on the appearance, form, and artistic elements of works, emphasizing aesthetics and sensory experience. It highlights the functionality and performance of products or systems, stressing practical use and engineering feasibility. Design competitions require not only the design work itself but also the ability to articulate design concepts and organize language. Throughout the creative process, these competitions can guide students in understanding the design industry, enhance their competitive awareness, help them evaluate their professional skills, and strengthen their design consciousness while correctly identifying their own deficiencies and gaps. They set clear learning objectives, stimulate learning and research potential, and encourage and enhance students' professional confidence. Competitions often require students to apply their knowledge to solve real problems, prompting them to apply theoretical knowledge in practice. Through practical competition projects, students can more easily understand and remember knowledge points, forming a deeper understanding of the knowledge. Design competitions can involve knowledge, skills, team collaboration, and more. This helps cultivate students' comprehensive qualities and improve their overall abilities, including innovative thinking and problem-solving skills.

Education prospers a country, and a strong education system strengthens a country. The superiority and significance of "competition-driven teaching" in higher education for design majors align with the important requirements of universities to "focus on cultivating innovative, composite, and applied talents." This teaching method combines competition elements and course teaching, providing students with a richer and more practical learning experience. By highlighting practice through design competition projects, students can apply theoretical knowledge to practical design. This helps cultivate students' ability to solve practical problems and enhances their adaptability in actual work.

"Competition-driven teaching" in design professional education shows its superiority and importance as it combines theory and practice, improves the quality and time efficiency of teaching, stimulates students' interest in learning, strengthens emotional connections between teachers and students, enhances team collaboration and communication skills, and lays a solid foundation for students' career development. Whether universities can cultivate a large number of talents who are knowledgeable about modern needs, understand international rules, have strategic vision, and dare to open new territories relates to the quality, level, and effectiveness of strong country building.

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