

The Innovations and Regulations of Specialty Catalogues and Specialty Directions of Chinese Art Discipline

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Abstract—In recent three years, according to the enrollment catalogues for postgraduate students officially issued by various universities, the specialty catalogues and specialty directions of Art Discipline have tended to be diversified. Each university has made innovations in the formulation and management of the specialty catalogues and specialty directions in line with their own situations, which fully reflects their initiative. Meanwhile, there are still some problems contributing to many reasons. Therefore, we need to further stress the importance of disciplinary norms in the process of innovations.

Keywords—*Specialty Catalogue; Specialty Direction; Innovation; Norm*

I. INTRODUCTION

Issued by the Degree Committee of the State Council and the Education Ministry, “the Document of Setting up and Managing the Disciplinary Catalogues of Degree-granting and Talent-training” has the following specific statements on the disciplinary catalogues—they are suitable for degree-granting and talent-training of students in a bachelor’s degree, a master’s degree or a doctor’s degree as well as they are used in work like disciplinary construction and education statistics and classification. The disciplinary catalogue is divided into three levels: the disciplinary category, the first-level discipline and the second-level discipline. The disciplinary category and the first-level discipline are the fundamental basis for our country examining and verifying degree authorization and managing subjects, and for degree-granting units carrying out the work of degree-granting and talent-training; the second-level discipline provides the reference for degree-granting units to implement talent-training. With a layered management, the disciplinary catalogue adopts its management mechanism that combines regulation with autonomy, relative stability with dynamic adjustment [1].

Since the reform and opening-up, China has made four revisions on the major catalogue for a doctor’s degree and a master’s degree respectively in 1983, 1990, 1997 and 2011. Accordingly, the undergraduate catalogue has also experienced four revisions in 1987, 1993, 1998 and 2012. The most significant change of the revised catalogue issued and enforced in 2012 is that a new art category is added, the disciplinary category increases from 11 to 12, the specialty category rises

from 73 to 92, while the majors decrease from 635 to 506. Zhang Daliang, Director of higher education department of the Education Ministry, feels that the most conspicuous characteristic of the Undergraduate Specialty Catalogue of Higher Institutions (2012) and The Management Regulations on the Major Plan is “One Expansion, Two Reduction and Three Strengthening”. “One Expansion” is expanding the autonomy of major plan for undergraduates in universities; “Two Reduction” is reducing the examining and approving parts and numbers of majors; “Three Strengthening” is strengthening information service and transparency, the role of experts and originations, along with the quality management of newly added majors [2].

From the changes of Art Science, although there are some comprises and discontent in this revision, it generally embodies the basic requirements between species and genus required by the subject catalogue and adapts to the basic requirements of Higher Education in the New Era. The revised catalogue reflects the basic intention of streamlining administration and delegating power and expanding self-determination, which undoubtedly brings great space for the specialty plan and discipline development of colleges and universities, enabling them to actively adapt to the needs of social development and timely adjust the direction of their specialty enrollment and talent-training objectives.

After sorting out the official catalogue of postgraduate enrollment issued by universities in the past three years, we can see that the specialty plans and specialty orientation of art disciplines in universities take on a pluralistic appearance. While fully reflecting innovation, it also presents some problems caused by many reasons. As a result, standardization is a must while blazing new trails.

II. SPECIALTY AUTONOMY IN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES BRINGS INNOVATION IN SPECIALTY CATALOGUES AND DIRECTIONS

From the available materials, the specialty catalogue and specialty orientation presented by enrollment catalogues of various colleges and universities presents two types. One is the conventional type, that is, the catalogue plans of Art Majors in colleges and universities are mostly referred to the relevant

documents issued by the Education Ministry. Although there are slight differences in the plans of specialty titles and specialty orientation of colleges and universities, most of them are basically consistent with the disciplinary catalogue, which is the mainstream, such as Tsinghua University. The other is the innovative type which is brought by the new Undergraduate Specialty Catalogue of Higher Institutions (2012) officially issued and applied by the Education Ministry in 2012. Streamlining administration and delegating power, the Education Ministry has endowed universities with corresponding autonomy. Each university has also shown great diversity in its specialty catalogue and direction plan, fully reflecting the autonomy of universities. Certainly, while ushering in new development opportunities, disciplines also face an interlacing of old and new problems, facing new challenges of sustainable development of disciplines [3].

In light of the enrollment catalogue of colleges and universities in recent years, we can see the diversification in specialty catalogues and orientations brought by the full autonomy, and the disciplinary innovation required to meet the social needs in the new era. From the present public enrollment information, Institutions of higher learning can adjust their majors and specialty orientations in accordance with the requirements of the relevant documents of the Education Ministry, both satisfying the basic requirements of the relevant regulations and being able to freely set up and adjust majors within the scope of policy, which indicates the innovative initiate and social adaptability under the existing system. As far as the basic form of innovation is concerned, there are basically two types of specialty catalogue and direction plan in colleges and universities. One is keeping pace with the times, which fully reflects the characteristics of the times and social needs. Taken some colleges and universities set up two specific research directions on human-machine scale and barrier-free design research and mobile product form design under the Design Science (Major Code 130500), which greatly keeps with the social reality needs. The other innovation is to combine with local characteristics to promote the protection and innovation of local cultural heritages. Some create the direction of traditional architecture and modern environmental art design in Southwest China under Art Design (Major Code 13508) in consistent with their own geographical characteristics which has played a positive role in inheriting and protecting the local traditional architectural design culture.

III. PROBLEMS IN THE INNOVATION OF SPECIALTY CATALOGUES AND DIRECTIONS

A. *Specialty Orientation plan and Specialty Attributes Do not Fit Well.*

Few colleges and universities set up the design specialty with the code 135108 in their different secondary colleges, because the design specialty covers a wide range, which can be understood. But the major direction under this catalogue obviously does not match the connotation of the design specialty. For example, in its design institute, dynamic image and painting research and fashion behavior research are included in this major. Not to mention whether the actual research content of the above-mentioned major belongs to the

category of design specialty or not, its title has gone far beyond the research field of design specialty. Taken this university for another example. Under the design specialty of its urban design institute, there are image creation (experimental image) and image creation (film), which are totally beyond the subject attributes stipulated in the subject catalogue of the Education Ministry, and totally subordinate to the scope of drama and film and television science (Code 1303). In other universities, there are design education research under design science (Code 1305), but in its specialty direction there are cross-media image research, micro-film research, documentary creation research, photography and digital art research. This obviously confuses one with another, seriously inconsistent with the disciplinary attribute of design science.

B. *Specialty Orientation is Expanding Indefinitely, Presenting a State of "Generalization".*

The formulation of the specialty catalogue of the Ministry of Education is based on the fact that the first-level discipline is a relatively consistent collection of disciplines with common theoretical basis or research fields, and in principle it is set up according to the subject attributes. The second-level discipline is the basic unit in consisting the first-level discipline. Design science has strong inclusiveness, though, it is definitely not omnipotent. Including everything in it obviously violates the attributes of its discipline. The above-mentioned university has intelligent urban research and service design under its art design. The comprehensive content of its major title has gone far beyond the basic scope of design science. Prevalent as modern intelligent urban research and service design is, it does not mean that design can be infinitely generalized.

C. *Specialty Orientations are Subdivided Excessively, Parallel and Overlapping.*

The disciplinary category and the first-level discipline are the fundamental basis for our country examining and verifying degree authorization and managing subjects, and for degree-granting units carrying out the work of degree-granting and talent-training; the second-level discipline provides the reference for degree-granting units to implement talent-training [4]. However, in the specific implementation process, due to practical problems, few colleges have the problems of fine, parallel and overlapping subdivision in their specialty orientation plans. For instance, in the enrollment catalogue of a certain university, art design major (Code 135108) of design institute covers product design which is still divided into display art, furniture and creative products. Besides, in some colleges, their Chinese painting specialty of Fine Arts is further divided into Meticulous brushwork figure painting technique research, Chinese classical figure modeling, Ink figure& portrait painting research, and Freehand figure expression language research, etc. Obviously, this distinction is not reasonable in itself, and they overlap seriously with each other.

D. *The Titles of the Research Directions of Academic Master and Professional Master are the Same, But the Difference between Attributes is not Presented.*

Academic master focuses on scientific research, while professional master emphasizes practice and attaches more

importance to students' abilities of employment and application. The different training objectives lead to different training methods, which should be demonstrated in their enrollment catalogues. However, some universities, especially the old ones, have the same major titles and directions in their enrollment catalogues, which does not reflect the differences between them at all.

IV. REASONS FOR PROBLEMS IN THE INNOVATION OF SPECIALTY CATALOGUES AND DIRECTIONS

A. *The Contradiction Exists between the Development Needs of the Emerging Majors and the Lagging Establishment of Disciplinary Catalogues.*

"The Document of Setting up and Managing the Disciplinary Catalogues of Degree-granting and Talent-training" issued by the Education Ministry has specifically formulated that the first-level disciplines are adjusted every decade and the catalogue of the second-level disciplines is compiled every five years. The general pace can be observed from the four revisions since the reform and opening-up. With our society changing from each passing day, other than some old and mature disciplines, new major needs are constantly emerging in the rapidly developing society. Especially in the internet era, its changing speed is far from what it used to be, so the emerging majors cannot find their correspondence in the subject catalogues in time.

B. *Academic Rigor is Insufficient and the Plan of Major Orientation is too Casual.*

The main purpose of the last revision of the subject catalogue of the Ministry of Education is to carry out the reform requirements of "implementing and expanding the autonomy of running a university" and "setting up and adjusting subjects and specialties independently" put forward in the outline of educational planning [5]. Therefore, colleges and universities have gained great autonomy, which provides convenience to the establishment of the emerging majors, conducive to discipline development and specialty construction. However, owing to some subjective and objective reasons, few colleges have a certain degree of randomness, lacking scientific argumentations and realistic basis in the plans of major titles, which cannot fit the academic definition of species, genus and order in discipline plans.

C. *Academic Status is Asymmetric with the Autonomy Right.*

In terms of domestic institutions of high learning with art science, because of the objective historical reasons and the official division for the need of realistic management in the enrollment process, there are some customary modular distinctions between the universities that offer art majors, such as the Eight Great Colleges of Fine Arts, such as the 31 Art Colleges independently enroll undergraduate art students and the 13 colleges do the same with reference to the independent institutions according to the Ministry of Education, and so on. With their influence and transcendent academic status, these universities with long history and platform advantages have much greater autonomy and say than other colleges and universities, which results in few colleges and universities

having undue freedom in major plans and leading their counterparts to lack enough space for autonomy and courage for breakthroughs on account of the administrative differences in management.

D. *Specialty Plans Accord with People and Institutes and Specialty Directions are Replaced by Topics.*

There are roughly two situations in which this happens. One is that the subordinate relationship between specialty and administration in some universities is not fixed. It appears that the same specialty is repeated in different secondary colleges, and the specialty plan seems too casual. The other is to adopt a relatively simple method in the process of management due to its convenience, namely using teachers' personal research directions and research topics as major directions. One good thing of this situation is that the research scope is clear, but the macro attribute requirement as a major catalogue is ignored. At the same time, it is risky to replace specialty orientation with topics. There are still some differences between master's and doctor's stages in learning characteristics, which is not suitable for early determination of clear research directions.

V. THE CORRESPONDING NORMS SHOULD BE FOLLOWED IN INNOVATING SPECIALTY CATALOGUE AND SPECIALTY DIRECTION

Undoubtedly, it is of positive significance to innovate discipline catalogues. Colleges and universities are given more autonomy under the new directive catalogue, followed by some problem as a result of variety of discipline plans. Streamlining administration and delegating power of the Ministry of Education is for the need of the development of disciplines, but innovation is not shooting at random. Nothing can be accomplished without norms or standards. The formulation and promulgation of subject catalogues must conform to the attribute requirements of subject plans. The emergence of some new situations is objectively a mixed bag, such as the above-mentioned fine division of subjects. On one hand, it is more targeted when students take an examination. On the other hand, it comes with confusion and is hard to make decisions while taking exams unless they are students here. Nevertheless, this inbreeding in subjects is not beneficial to major construction and subject development. This certainly refers to some other problems, such as the actual problem of the allocation of enrollment indicators. And in the above passage, a certain university should have directions like micro-film research, photography and digital art research under its design education research, which typically is calling a stag a horse and seriously violates the attribute requirements of major catalogues. In the long term, the macro attribute of subject catalogue will not get the proper reflection.

In order to maintain academic rigor, colleges and universities abide by their original catalogues which are in line with the major catalogues and directions issued by the Education Ministry as possible as they can without further innovations and breakthroughs. To the newly established majors that are not on the list of the discipline catalogue of the Education Ministry, the determination of specialty titles should be strictly held in accordance with the basic requirements of the establishment of discipline catalogue with a scientific and

rigorous attitude, giving clear directions of levels like “category” and “genus”, carrying out scientific argumentations on the emerging major titles, and qualifying for the basic requirements of the Education Ministry to discipline catalogue plans. We simply sorted out the major catalogues of the top 100 American universities in USNEWS Art Rank and found that the major catalogues of American universities in their undergraduate and master stages are relatively stable and mostly correspond with the basic requirements as well as there is no similar chaos in the major catalogues of colleges and universities at home whether in professional art institutions like School of the Art Institute of Chicago and Maryland Institute college of Art or in comprehensive colleges like Harvard and Yale. Consequently, the plans of our major catalogue and major direction titles are still supposed to be in line with international practice to meet the need of internationalization.

VI. CONCLUSION

The Discipline Catalogue of Degree-granting and Talent-training in 2011 and the Undergraduate Specialty Catalogue of Higher Institutions in 2012 which are both issued by the Education Ministry expand the autonomy of undergraduate major catalogue, degree-granting and talent-training in universities, but the basic principles of discipline specialty plan should be strictly followed by universities and local functional departments in the execution This requires functional departments to play the necessary regulatory role while streamlining administration and delegating power and requires universities to deliberate and achieve academic regulations as

far as possible while setting up the relevant catalogues. Innovation meets the requirements of the times and standardization is qualified for the scientific attributes of discipline development. Only when the two complement each other will the joint efforts be made to promote the sound development of Chinese Art Discipline Construction.

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