

Research on the Contemporary Education of Chinese Classical Aesthetic Curriculum in Universities and Colleges

Taking the Course of "Chinese Classical Art and Aesthetics" as an Example

Qianqian Su^{1,*}

¹College of Humanities & Sciences of Northeast Normal University, Changchun, Jilin, China

*Corresponding author. Email: 45602688@qq.com

ABSTRACT

Under the national strategic concept of realizing 'the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation' and the requirements of improving college students' humanistic quality, Chinese classical aesthetic education has become an important course in general education in colleges and universities. Taking the elective course Chinese classical art and aesthetics of public education as an example, this paper attempts to explore the optimization and practice scheme of the following general education courses of Chinese Classical Aesthetic Education. In the construction dimension of general courses of aesthetic education, it is necessary to highlight the concept of 'great aesthetic education' and optimize the top-level design of courses. In the specific curriculum exploration dimension, it is required to make the teaching mode flexible, use off-line teaching combined with on-line counseling, strengthen the practical link, pay attention to the current classical aesthetic and establish assessment for learning evaluation system.

Keywords: classical aesthetics, general education, humanistic quality, innovation path

I. INTRODUCTION

In the context of consumer society and utilitarianism, contemporary college students tend to show utilitarian tendency in choosing schools, courses and careers: they pay more attention to skills than to quality, lack practical spirit, and some students blindly worship stars and Internet Celebrities, and take this career as their personal development direction. The pursuit of utilitarianism and the lack of humanistic care, yearning for quick wealth and lack of creativity, when personal needs cannot be fully met, there is a huge psychological gap. The emergence of such problems poses a challenge to the humanistic quality education in colleges and universities. In 2017, the general office of the State Council issued the opinions on the implementation of the project of inheritance and development of Chinese excellent traditional culture, which proposed: 'Integrate the excellent Chinese traditional culture into all aspects of Ideological and moral education, cultural knowledge education, art and

physical education, and social practice education. We will promote the opening of compulsory courses of Chinese excellent traditional culture in colleges and universities, and increase the content of Chinese excellent traditional culture in the specialties and courses of philosophy and social sciences and related disciplines.' [1] Under the guidance of the strategic concept of 'strengthening cultural self-confidence and realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation', as well as the requirements of improving the humanistic quality of university education, Chinese classical aesthetic education has become a part of the current general education in colleges and universities that needs to be comprehensively implemented. This paper analyzes the problems of Chinese classical aesthetic education in the current general education in colleges and universities, taking the public education elective course 'Chinese Classical Art and Aesthetics' in the College of Humanities & Sciences of Northeast Normal University as an example, tries to explore the theoretical framework and practical scheme of Chinese classical aesthetic education.

*Fund: This paper is a serial result of the subject of the 13th five-year plan of Jilin Education Science in 2018 — Study on the Implementation of Chinese Classical Aesthetics in Current General Education in Colleges and Universities (Project No.: GH181039).

II. THE CONCEPTS FOR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES TO REFORM THE CURRICULUM

According to the National College Public Art Curriculum Guidance Program issued by the Ministry of education, 'the goal of College Students' aesthetic education is to improve the ability to feel, express, appreciate and create beauty, and promote the comprehensive and harmonious development of morality, intelligence, and beauty.' [2] As an important part of general education in Humanities and Social Sciences, aesthetic education curriculum is a way to comprehensively improve students' humanistic quality and aesthetic taste. Therefore, in terms of college dimension, the general education curriculum should be guided by the concept of 'great aesthetic education', conform to the teaching objectives of general courses, reasonably integrate curriculum categories and structures, and guide teachers to adjust teaching methods.

A. *Highlighting the concept of 'great aesthetic education'*

As early as 1912, Mr. Yuanpei Cai defined 'aesthetic education' and compared it to nerve. He put forward the idea of 'Five Education' which included aesthetics education, militarism education, utilitarianism education, civic morality education and world outlook education. In college education, Mr. Cai advocated the concept of 'great aesthetic education', and considered that, music, drama, fine arts and other art subjects should be taken as the main ways to implement aesthetic education in colleges and universities, and be integrated with other disciplines such as literature, history, philosophy, science and engineering. 'He actively practiced his ideal of aesthetic education in Peking University, mainly including advocating the establishment of various associations, teaching aesthetic courses and creating an aesthetic education environment. He promoted the establishment of many art colleges and universities and laid the foundation for Chinese art education.' [3]

The general education course in College of Humanities & Sciences of Northeast Normal University is an elective course of public education for the junior students, which mainly includes humanities and social sciences courses and natural sciences courses. As of June 2020, there are 208 general education courses, including 57 aesthetic education courses, covering painting, architecture, film and television, music, dance, drama, clothing, performance and cultural creativity. There are not only teaching type courses such as introduction of historical theory and appreciation of works, but also practical type courses such as Art training and derivative production. In addition to setting up general courses of aesthetic education, the Public Aesthetic Education Office of the University regularly

holds academic forums for the popularization of art and aesthetics every semester, sets up annual art exhibitions in the Art Building and Design Building, and holds art carnivals from time to time in conjunction with the student associations. Furthermore, the Office has hosted Changchun Folk Art Fair twice in the summer of 2018 & 2019. The setting up of diversified aesthetic education courses, the edification of daily aesthetic exhibition, and the construction of open social platform... All these measures not only have practiced Mr. Cai's idea of 'great aesthetic education', but also have improved students' aesthetic feelings.

B. *Optimizing the top-level design of the course*

The role of general education course in colleges and universities is not only to expand students' knowledge, but also to improve their comprehensive quality and expand their lifelong interest horizon. Therefore, the curriculum of general education should be based on the students' own characteristics, take the curriculum concept and goal of general education as the principle, reasonably plan and integrate the curriculum categories, curriculum structure, teaching concepts and teaching methods of general courses, focus on cultivating students' rational cognitive mode and multidimensional thinking ability from the interdisciplinary perspective, and help students establish a healthy and upward world value. Therefore, it is necessary to adjust the content of the course, balance the structure of the course, and make the curriculum reflect the major problems and hot issues in the current society. According to social needs, College of Humanities & Sciences of Northeast Normal University advocates that all majors should develop courses and gradually creates ten curriculum plates in general education courses, including aesthetic education, Chinese traditional wisdom, economic law and politics, innovation and entrepreneurship, language and literature, well-being and health, sports and health, cultural tourism, home creativity and information technology. The college requires teachers to combine their own professional characteristics, personal learning and research expertise, comprehensively consider the needs of interdisciplinary students, and grasp the characteristics of 'general education' to set up courses. In terms of teachers' qualifications, full-time teachers with intermediate or above professional titles who have more than two years' teaching experience, or part-time teachers with a professional title of vice senior or above, who have deep research on the applied courses and have certain research results, can apply for public education elective courses. In order to enrich the types of courses, optimize the curriculum structure, improve the curriculum system, and form a series of core quality courses, the college has also formulated a corresponding incentive mechanism. The college also included public education elective courses into curriculum construction plan. Courses that are not up to standard in curriculum construction, teaching quality

assessment by teachers, or dissatisfied by students will be rectified or suspended.

III. THE PATHS FOR TEACHERS TO INNOVATE THE CURRICULUM

The basic goal of the general education course of aesthetics in colleges and universities is to internalize the aesthetic quality to the students. In addition to optimizing the top-level curriculum design, it is also necessary to explore the actual situation of students in teaching. Based on the teaching experience of 'Chinese Classical Art and Aesthetics' in the College of Humanities & Sciences of Northeast Normal University, the author makes continuous exploration. The course of 'Chinese Classical Art and Aesthetics' is a public elective course for the third year students of non-art majors in College of Humanities & Sciences of Northeast Normal University. The main knowledge points of the course are ancient Chinese art history. Students are required to have a clear understanding of the representative art types, artistic styles and works of writers from the primitive society of China to the late Qing Dynasty, so as to have a preliminary understanding of the development and evolution of ancient Chinese art, culture and aesthetics. The purpose of this course is to popularize students' artistic thinking through the introduction of Chinese classical art phenomena, so as to improve their aesthetic level. Through 3 years teaching experience, especially through the on-line teaching because of the novel corona virus pneumonia epidemic in 2020, the author tried to explore the following teaching paths to promote the implementation of Chinese classical aesthetics in the general education of universities.

A. Flexible teaching mode: off-line teaching + on-line tutoring

From March 2017 to December 2019, off-line teaching mode has been used in the course of 'Chinese Classical Art and Aesthetics', with two hours per week and about 110-130 students in each semester. Under the traditional teaching mode, the effect of the curriculum was not so good. Some students only kept attendance in order to get credit, while others were not satisfied with the content and difficulty of the course. Because of the novel corona virus pneumonia, all Chinese universities and colleges have used on-line teaching mode in the first semester of 2020. The number of students was significantly reduced to 42 compared with the previous years. Compared with the past, the course of this semester showed significant progresses: students' interaction was more active than before, they could think and analyze the key problems combined with the current phenomena, and could correctly use the main aesthetic elements and forms learned in the course to take photos, draw and design, as well as analyze film and television drama scene. The direct teaching effect

proved the improvement of teaching mode and teaching means in this semester.

The teaching mode and process in this semester were as follows: firstly, students introduced key knowledge points; secondly, teacher gave comprehensive explanation and instructed the key theory; thirdly, students and teacher watched popular movies and TV plays and then analyzed their cultural phenomena. Every class, a group of students was arranged to sort out the current application representation of the knowledge points of this class, while another group of students was arranged to collect the key points and the hot cultural phenomena to be analyzed in the next class. Take the teaching unit of art and aesthetics in Shang and Zhou Dynasties as an example: Firstly, teacher showed the quotation from 'the Book of Songs' in the anti-epidemic materials donated by Japan to China, and the quotation from 'the Book of Songs' in the anti-epidemic materials donated by the Chinese Embassy in Korea to Daegu City, so as to inspire students to think about the contemporary value of Chinese classical culture and aesthetics. Secondly, teacher and students watched the video clip of Wei Yan's singing Guanju and large scale ceremony activities of Chu and Qin in the TV play 'Biography of MI Yue', students discussed and summarized the cultural elements and the presentation features in the three scenes. Then the teacher corrected and summarized the discussion and introduced the key theory and knowledge of this teaching unit. Knowledge points: the emergence, use occasion and cultural significance of bronzes in the pre Qin period, and the aesthetic characteristics of the Shang Dynasty, the Western Zhou Dynasty and the Eastern Zhou period. Thirdly, the teacher 'explored the course content that students are interested in, seized the exciting points in the classroom, cleverly designed open questions, and then encourage students to answer the open questions according to their own ideas, and activated students' personalized thinking.' [4] Finally, teacher showed pictures or video clips of Shang and Zhou instruments that students were not familiar with, and students judged the general period and function of the equipment according to the cultural elements and characteristics taught in the class.

The teaching effect of this semester is remarkable, and the teaching method is worth learning when the off-line teaching is resumed. In the future off-line teaching, the students of one class will be limited to less than 50, teacher will continue to adopt the mode of group learning and discussion, and use the network for on-line guidance, and build a special learning website or platform for the transmission and sharing of materials.

B. Strengthening the practical link and paying attention to the modernization of classical aesthetics

Only when teaching is according to the time and quality can we have a definite target. In view of the popularity of aesthetic quality of general courses, as well as the students who take this course have a wide range of majors and different background knowledge levels, but they have subjective interest in the course, the author reduces the teaching difficulty and selects the knowledge and theory with contemporary value or closely related to the current social hot spots as the key points of the course. In terms of classroom teaching, the teaching objectives of each chapter are refined into theoretical objectives and practical objectives, and the practical application goals are strengthened. The main teaching mode is teacher's theoretical teaching combined with students' speeches and discussions. In addition, all members analyze and comment on the current popular documentaries, films and TV dramas such as 'National Treasure', 'If the National Treasure would Speak' and 'Qing Ping Yue', so as to strengthen students' impression and teaching effect. For example, in the unit of 'Art and Aesthetics of Shang and Zhou Dynasties', the theoretical teaching objective is to understand the aesthetic characteristics of the art features and the integration of poetry and dance through the appreciation of the key art types and works such as bronzes, the practical teaching objective is to design anti epidemic propaganda copy and poster using the cultural elements of this period. After class, 30 assignments were handed in, of which 6 (20%) were excellent, they could not only show China's anti epidemic support to other countries, but also use appropriate poster styles and literary sayings for publicity; 15 (50%) assignments were good, they could choose appropriate literary quotations as propaganda copy but lacked aesthetic feeling in the design of posters, the details can be improved if it is modified; 9(30%) assignments were up to standard, they were also in line with the theme of anti-epidemic propaganda, but need more guidance to be revised and improved. For another example, the theoretical teaching goal of the teaching unit of 'Art and Aesthetics of Yuan Dynasty' is to make students understand the main art types, painting styles and aesthetic implication of landscape painting in Yuan Dynasty, and the practical teaching objective is to enable students to imitate the characteristics of landscape painting of Yuan Dynasty. Among the 36 assignments submitted, 31 (86%) had the characteristics of combination of poetry, calligraphy, painting and printing in Yuan Dynasty. The composition and theme of 28 assignments (78%) conformed to the landscape painting layout, and 10 assignments (33%) had classical aesthetic conception while completing basic elements. Therefore, 'teachers should be problem-oriented, student-centered, so as to stimulate students' participation and interest in learning

new knowledge, and constantly improve their ability to solve problems.'[5]

C. Establishing AFL learning evaluation system with self-management mode

In the aspect of curriculum management, group learning and the auxiliary mode of horizontal evaluation among groups is adopted. Teacher set up We-chat group before class, arranged students to collect books, documents, auxiliary teaching images and other related teaching resources as well as spare parts required by the course. All students were divided into several study groups and each group contained 6 students. In each class, different groups expressed their opinions or discussed the designated issues. After class, the groups collected or supplemented the required contents of the course and completed the practical course assignments together. Members of the group should supervise and check each other. Teacher should comprehensively evaluate the usual performance according to the overall task completion of each group and the individual performance of each student.

As 'the course adopts the mixed teaching mode, which is not only limited to off-line classroom teaching, but also includes various modes such as on-line learning, extracurricular practice projects and personalized learning'[6], 'Assessment for Learning' is adopted in terms of curriculum evaluation. It is not only a way to test students' learning, but also a way to promote the success of learning as the fundamental purpose, and comprehensively investigate the students' learning enthusiasm, learning process and learning effect. This form breaks through the single traditional inspection method, truly realizes the student-centered, multidimensional teaching effect evaluation, and can greatly enhance the students' initiative learning enthusiasm. In the specific implementation, the evaluation of the course 'Chinese Classical art and Aesthetics' comprehensively investigated the students' attendance, usual performance, selected assignments and the quality of the final examination. Each link had a clear scoring basis, which fully guaranteed the fairness of the evaluation results and was recognized by the students.

IV. CONCLUSION

Under the strategic background of 'realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation', Chinese classical aesthetic education shoulders the dual mission of improving students' aesthetic quality and carrying forward Chinese traditional culture. Through the analysis of the opening policy of the general aesthetic education course in the College of Humanities of Northeast Normal University and the teaching mode of the public education elective course of 'Chinese Classical Art and Aesthetics', the author explores the

following paths to innovate Chinese classical aesthetic general course: Firstly, colleges and universities should highlight the concept of ‘great aesthetic education’ and optimize the top-level design of the course. Secondly, teachers should enliven the teaching mode, modernize the classical aesthetics and diversify evaluation system. At present, there are still many problems in the setting and teaching of related types of general education courses in China. It is necessary to continue to explore the teaching approach to realize the sustainable development of aesthetic education general course, and truly achieve the improvement of students’ quality, humanistic quality and aesthetic character.

References

- [1] Qin Changsheng, Wang Zhen. University’s aesthetic education in the inheritance of Chinese traditional art and culture [J]. *Art Evaluation*, 2017 (07): 128.
- [2] Gao Xiaoyuan. On the law of essential factors coordination in the teaching of public courses of aesthetic education in universities [J]. *Jiangsu Higher Education*, 2016(02): 113–115.
- [3] Ye Zezhou, Xiang Hui. Cai Yuanpei’s thoughts and practice of aesthetic education in colleges and universities — in memory of the 150th anniversary of Cai Yuanpei’s birth [J]. *Higher Education Forum*, 2018 (08): 119.
- [4] Liu Jian, Tu Qingsong, Zhou Jinsheng. A reform of general elective courses teaching based on student’s sanctification [J]. *Journal of Hubei University of Technology*, 2018(06): 117–120.
- [5] Zhan Shuangjuan. The application of PBL model in general education courses in colleges and universities [J]. *Higher Education Exploration*, 2018(05): 50–55.
- [6] Tao Lin. Current situation and reflection of general education curriculum in colleges and universities — Taking Nankai University as an example [J]. *Education Review*, 2018 (04): 39.