



Comprehensive Experimental Design and Practice of General Art Courses Incorporating Traditional Chinese Crafts under the Background of Aesthetic Education

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Abstract. The Ministry of Education has put forward clear requirements for the reform and development of aesthetic education in colleges and universities in the new era, aiming to effectively cultivate and enhance students' humanistic qualities and aesthetic ideas through aesthetic education. In response to the needs of aesthetic education and ideological and political education in courses, a comprehensive experimental teaching design incorporating traditional Chinese crafts into general art courses is proposed. The experimental content includes four parts: woodworking, cloisonné enamel, cyanotype, and screen printing. This enables students to experience the beauty of materials, craftsmanship, and decoration during the production process, cultivates and improves students' aesthetic literacy, and strengthens cultural confidence. Students can experience the production techniques of multiple trades, design wire-inlaying and cyanotype patterns according to their preferences, and complete personalized works. This experimental design helps to stimulate students' learning interest and exercise their practical ability. The experimental results are highly presentable, and the teaching effect is excellent.

Keywords: Aesthetic Education in Colleges and Universities; General Art Courses; Traditional Chinese Crafts; Comprehensive Experimental Design

1 Introduction

The Outline of the National Medium and Long-Term Development Program points out that adhering to the people-oriented principle and comprehensively implementing quality-oriented education is the strategic theme of educational reform and development. The focus is on reaching out to all students, promoting their all-around development, and making efforts to enhance students' sense of social responsibility to serve the country and the people, their innovative spirit of daring to explore, and their practical ability to solve problems.[1] China's education policy is to cultivate students into individuals with all-round development in morality, intelligence, physique, aesthetics, and labor. In 2017, the Ministry of Education issued the "Opinions on Earnestly Strengthening

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Aesthetic Education in Colleges and Universities in the New Era”, putting forward clear requirements for the reform and development of aesthetic education in colleges and universities in the new era. The purpose is to effectively cultivate and improve students’ humanistic qualities and aesthetic thoughts through aesthetic education.[2] General art courses in colleges and universities are an important means of aesthetic education.[3] They can not only enhance students’ aesthetic qualities and art appreciation abilities, but also promote the all-round development of their humanistic qualities and comprehensive capabilities.

2 The Current Situation of General Art Courses in Colleges and Universities

General courses in colleges and universities are designed to cultivate students’ comprehensive qualities. These courses require breaking through the limitations of majors, training students’ abilities in various aspects, broadening their horizons, enabling their all-round development, and shaping a complete personality.[4] General art courses are an important part of general education in colleges and universities. They aim to cultivate students’ understanding, appreciation, and creative abilities in art, as well as enhance their aesthetic and cultural accomplishments through diversified teaching contents and methods.[5] The current situation of general art courses in colleges and universities is as follows:

(1) From the perspective of curriculum setting

General courses in colleges and universities include modules such as humanities and social sciences, language communication, culture and art, science and technology, economic management, innovation and entrepreneurship. Common general art elective courses are appreciation-based courses like fine arts, drama, photography, dance, and calligraphy, lacking general art practical courses. Based on the connotative requirements of high-quality development, it is imperative to increase the number of general education courses and optimize the categories of general education courses.

(2) From the perspective of teaching

General courses in colleges and universities mainly adopt the classroom-teaching model, with teachers’ lectures as the main part and students’ listening as the supplementary. As the class hours of elective courses are limited, teachers usually illustrate general concepts through specific examples. As a result, students can do little more than gain a basic understanding and appreciation. In addition, public elective courses are offered to all students in the university, and the class size is large. The implementation of teaching activities such as observation, learning, and experience is restricted.

(3) From the students’ perspective

On the one hand, college students do not attach importance to the study of public courses. Some students only take these courses to obtain the credits required for graduation, lacking learning interest and enthusiasm. On the other hand, contemporary college students have grown up in an era of highly developed networks, electronic products have become the most important part of their daily lives, and they rarely have the opportunity to make things by themselves. However, they have a high willingness to

participate in extracurricular art activities in colleges and universities.

3 Curriculum Design Integrating Traditional Chinese Crafts

Content 1: Developing practical modules for general art courses based on experiential aesthetics

Experiential aesthetics, a significant theory in aesthetics, extends to aesthetic education by emphasizing students' direct engagement with beauty in nature and society through sensory and bodily experiences, as well as indirect learning through appreciating others' artworks. This dual approach deepens students' aesthetic comprehension and cultivates their artistic sensibilities. The curriculum is designed around experiential learning, enabling students to strengthen their understanding and appreciation of art through hands-on practice and creative expression, thus comprehensively enhancing their aesthetic literacy.

Content 2: Student-centered and flexible diversified experimental teaching model

The course adheres to the overall philosophy of "student-centered and outcome-oriented". Guided by the final physical works to be produced, it divides students' learning processes into different stages, sets learning objectives, pays attention to individual differences, and forms a flexible and diversified teaching model. Under the guidance of teachers, students complete course production while also leveraging their creativity to design personalized components. This approach not only cultivates innovative thinking but also enhances practical abilities and aesthetic standards.

Content 3: Curriculum-embedded integration of knowledge and action for holistic ideological education

Rooted in China's profound traditional culture and diverse artistic heritage, the course employs project-based learning to guide students in creating ideologically meaningful artworks under faculty supervision. Taking gold-wire colored sand painting as an exemplar: students need to understand traditional techniques and design patterns, thereby physically engaging with cultural legacy. The production process demands meditative concentration and steady craftsmanship, embodying the ideological objective of nurturing artisan spirit.

Table 1. Course Content Planning

Product	Component	Content	Technique
Desk Calendar	Calendar Base	Base	Woodworking Craft
		Base Decoration	Cloisonné Enameling Craft
	Calendar	Background Pattern	Cyanotype Printing Craft
		Numbers	Screen-printing Craft

Taking the general art course "The Beauty of Handmade" as an example, we propose integrating traditional Chinese crafts into teaching to create an experiential general art course. This enables students to cultivate creative thinking, relieve academic pressure, and improve mental health during the aesthetic experience. The course results in a desktop calendar, and the production process consists of four parts: woodworking

craftsmanship, cloisonné enameling craftsmanship, cyanotype printing process, and screen-printing process, as shown in Table 1.

3.1 Woodworking Experiment

Throughout the long history, wooden artworks have enriched people's lives. From large pavilions, terraces, and towers to small tables, chairs, boxes, and cages, the woodworking techniques inherit not only skills but also culture. Wood is the most approachable material. People have a sincere love for wood. Transforming raw wood into exquisite wooden works requires not only the manual dexterity of the workers but also the integration of their thoughts. Many people are willing to try making wooden utensils by themselves precisely to obtain this wonderful experience of the unity of mind and hand.

In modern woodworking operations, manual work still plays a major part, including complex actions such as marking, cutting, planing, mortising, and sanding. Machinery can reduce the intensity of labor, but it cannot replace human hands. Through hands and tools, human ideas act on the surface of materials. In this process, materials, tools, hands, and the mind are all mutually engaged, bringing the original concept in the mind to reality. This is the charm of woodworking.

3.2 The Gold-wire and Colored-sand Painting Experiment

Cloisonné, also known as copper-bodied cloisonné enamel, has long been renowned as the essence of Eastern art. In 2006, it was included in the “First Batch of National Intangible Cultural Heritage List”. The manufacturing process of cloisonné enamel is a composite technique integrating multiple crafts, mainly including design, body-making, wire-inlaying, enamel-filling, firing, polishing, and gilding. The process is cumbersome and complex.

With the continuous development of China's cultural market, a new style has emerged based on cloisonné enamel - the gold-wire colored-sand painting. The gold-wire colored-sand painting is an innovative planar painting of cloisonné enamel. It draws on the techniques of wire-inlaying and enamel-filling in the traditional cloisonné enamel process. However, compared with the manufacturing process of cloisonné enamel, it doesn't require embryo-making, firing, or polishing. Many procedures are thus omitted, making the operation more convenient.

3.3 Cyanotype Experiment

The cyanotype process is a classical photography technique. It uses contact printing and is exposed to ultraviolet light sources. It has a history of over a hundred years.

The cyanotype process is simple to operate, low-cost, and features unique artistic effects. During the production process, users can freely choose various methods. They can print projection films or, based on their imagination, select objects with different textures, shapes, and transparencies for creation, such as plants, animal feathers, etc. As long as there are blocked and unblocked areas on the photosensitive fabric, the outline of the object with a strong contrast can be presented. The works produced in this

way best reflect the documentary nature of the cyanotype photography process, and at the same time, they also have a surreal and magical effect. The vivid and diverse cyanotype images, whether abstract or figurative, deep or light, delicate or rough, are a perfect combination of chemistry and art. They present an artistic effect that is both ancient and fashionable, and have strong interest and aesthetic value.

3.4 Screen Printing Experiment

The screen-printing process in China gradually evolved from the perforated plate. It originated from the tie-dyeing printing process during the Qin and Han dynasties in China and has a development history of more than 2,000 years. Screen printing refers to using a silk screen as the base material and applying the photosensitive plate-making technology to produce a silk-screen printing plate with graphics and texts. During printing, the ink passes through the mesh holes of the printing plate and is transferred onto the printing substrate.

The advantages of screen-printing lie in its simple operation. Experiments can be completed manually or semi-automatically. The costs of equipment and experimental consumables are low. Moreover, screen printing has good adaptability to the printing substrate. Students can print their design works on various materials such as paper, fabric, wood, ceramics, etc., which helps students understand the entire process of plate-making and printing.

4 Experimental Implementation and Assessment Evaluation

4.1 Experimental Implementation and Guidance

In the course, the teacher explains the experimental content and procedures to the students in detail. The students can search for information, conceive patterns according to their own preferences and prepare materials. Students will form groups of ten people each freely. A WeChat group is set up to announce the experimental time and location for each stage of every group.

Each time the experiment arranges two different experimental tasks, and each task is equipped with two instructors. The experimental teaching will be carried out at the same time but in different locations. The instructors will give detailed explanations according to the experimental process, emphasize the precautions, demonstrate in person, and continuously monitor the operations of each link to solve the problems that arise during the experiment. After the experiment is completed, excellent works with unique thinking will be shared in a timely manner for everyone to learn from and refer to, so as to deepen the students' experience and improve their aesthetic qualities.

4.2 Assessment and Evaluation

This comprehensive experiment focuses mainly on the physical results produced by

students at the end, and also takes into account aspects such as their participation throughout the experimental process, and their operation of equipment and tools. Students are required to participate in all experimental procedures. The production of the wooden base will be evaluated in terms of cutting and shaping, surface roughness, wire-inlaying techniques, color matching, and overall effect. The production of the paper calendar will be evaluated based on the concept of the cyanotype pattern, page layout, and printing effect. Course instructors will jointly score and provide a comprehensive evaluation result.

5 Conclusions

The curriculum design integrating traditional Chinese crafts aligns with the national aesthetic education policy. The teaching team is familiar with the production techniques of the curriculum products. The experimental process is clear, and the heuristic teaching method is adopted to encourage students to think actively. The curriculum content is both innovative and practical. The roles of teachers and students have changed. Teachers have transformed from pure theoretical lecturers to organizers and guides, providing guidance based on the design and production situations of students at various stages. Students have changed from passive recipients to active practitioners. They take the initiative to consult relevant materials, design patterns according to their personal preferences, and strive for perfection in the production process to achieve better results.

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