

# Thinking on Professional Education of Fashion Design in China

## Discussion on Education Mode of Fashion Design and Market Demand

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**Abstract**—The lack of original design due to our poor design level is the bottleneck of the international-level clothing brands and designers in our provincial and national clothing industry. Colleges and universities are cradles to cultivate fashion designers. Their teaching modes and teaching ideas directly affect the quality of designers. The paper has discussed the teaching mode of fashion design from existing curriculum system, students' ability of innovation and practice, high occupational change rate of graduates and other issues.

**Keywords**—*fashion design; market demand; education reform; innovative practice*

### I. INTRODUCTION

With the rapid development of e-commerce industry, the fashion design industry also appeared a great change in China. It has been a significant problem whether our fashion design industry can meet employment demand of tens of thousands of fashion art graduates each year. In the face of such a large number of graduates, where is our fashion design education heading next? What kinds of fashion design talents do we need? How does each school carry out fashion design teaching in line with our own characteristics? What's the role of fashion design teaching in the creative industries? It is sufficient to get us to think these problems, so the paper has discussed these problems in depth.

### II. DESCRIPTION ON PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION OF FASHION DESIGN IN CHINA

We started late in fashion design as well as relevant design education. According to related data, our first session of fashion design education began in the dyeing and weaving arts department of the former Central Academy of Arts and Crafts in 1980. It was just 30 years ago. In the short 30 years, it appeared a number of outstanding designers, such as Zhang Zhaoda, Wang Xinyuan and Wu Haiyan, Liu Yang and Guo Pei. We have made a considerable progress in our fashion design education and fashion industry, but we still have a very big development space compared with European countries. The fame of the domestic fashion designer is greatly inferior to that of some foreign designers, such as Yves Saint Laurent, Pierre Cardin, John Galliano and Alexander McQueen. A few of Chinese designers are active in the international fashion stage. We are still at a inferior

position. In short, our current fashion design level has just got rid of the reference learning and imitation of international masters.

The current situation of fashion design in China reflects our designers lack correct knowledge and understanding on characteristics of the fashion design art. All of this clearly focuses on the education of fashion design in our colleges and universities. It is our top priority for fashion design education in China to eliminate the drawbacks in fashion design education, and cultivate students to think and act from themselves to the receivers, from paper to ready-to-wear, from school to market in order to change this situation. Colleges and universities are cradles to cultivate fashion designers. Their teaching modes and teaching ideas directly affect the quality of the designers and the development of China's fashion design cause and the speed of Chinese designers going out of the country. At this stage, the fashion design education has some disadvantages in our country. Colleges and universities should build their own characteristics, cultivate cutting-edge designers that could create brands and shoulder responsibilities of China's fashion industry based on own advantages, the features of professional personnel demand and supply in fashion industry in different regions and the knowledge structure of talent demand. The education system reform of fashion design determines the future of the fashion design industry, so universities, enterprises and students should pay high attention to it. In nowadays, the fast-changing fashion design teaching field could fully draw lessons from the teaching system of western developed countries. At same time, we should pave a development way in accordance with our national situation. The following paragraphs will expound the current reform of fashion design education in China from a variety of aspects.

### III. THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE TRADITIONAL TEACHING WAY

About a decade ago, people discussed what fashion design was. Now, tens of thousands of students select the major of fashion design. It has become a hot major. This may drive the development of this industry in a short time. But, in fact, in terms of education, it may bring a lot of drawbacks. For example, it transformed from small class with only a few

students at the beginning to big class with a few dozens or more than one hundred students attending. In such situation, teachers can not take account of all the students when they are discussing and communicating in the class. Some students started to be absent-minded frequently. In response to this phenomenon, the author thinks what students need is personality rather than unity. In small class, teachers could guide all students according to their characteristics and exchange with them, thus find and solve problems easily, so students can maximize their advantages. Every student can get a strong sense of participation, especially in practice class.

In addition to above typical examples, there are many other drawbacks in the teaching method. In colleges and universities design teachers should skillfully create situations to stimulate students' curiosity, fire up students' imagination and inspire creative thinking, think outside the box and dare to be questioned by students, create atmosphere and space for students to express their emotion and imagination, and bring real cases into classroom for analysis and practice.

#### IV. THE INCREASE OF THE PRACTICE COURSES

The design curriculum setting in our colleges and universities generally tends to theoretical subjects, which always focuses on the description of design, how to design, what are the procedures and rules. We have not noticed the importance of students' actual practice. The teaching content is not much associated with the actual needs of the enterprise. The domestic colleges and universities do not make any investigation or research on social demands for fashion design education. Our school-running mode and curriculum setting and teaching content are always the same, so our students lack market awareness. They cannot collect information and make market development. Their design level only stays in primary stage. They can not transform their works into competitive products in order to meet the demands of market. Their works are strange and unpractical. Students cannot measure or predict market demands from the angle of market. Therefore, the single "teaching" mode can not help student experience and seek the development of personality deeply. Teachers should help student strength their training in design of fashion style and the change of structure, and master the core subject of fashion design.

It is the key teaching link for students majoring in fashion design to do it themselves and present their design works with real object. It is not good for students to neglect the process practice, fabric properties and the characteristics of body structure, treat art as the supreme and only emphasize drawings and dramatic effect, for it can not realize the design intention really. Therefore, it can help students to strength students' skills in the production and meet the needs of today's society by arranging a lot of practice course. In nowadays, the industrial competition is particularly fierce. Designers who can express his/her design ideas, possess creative thoughts, master production and pattern making are urgently needed by enterprises. Students need to understand that to draw design effect drawing does not mean to complete the whole design. We need to make drawing into finished product and test its effect by wearing it.

"From the consumer's point of view, the designer should consider whether the product can be sold out and how can the products enter into market fast". Colleges and universities should emphasize to cultivate students the comprehensive ability of design and making, and teach students the most important idea of serving consumers. We are not completing a piece of art work but making a product by realizing an innovative idea according to consumer demand. Therefore, teachers in colleges and universities should not follow the textbook and teach fashion ideas of international design masters to students that never live abroad and let the students look at the pictures of the international brand to research design style, imitate some popular concepts and draw a group of creative clothing and make them in a tailor shop before graduation. How can such "designers" meet the needs of innovation design for enterprises?

Only if we arrange the teaching system reasonably and scientifically, make corresponding investigation on teaching idea and curriculum setting, follow the principle of integrating professional courses into basic courses, practice courses into theory courses, and theme design into product design, and emphasize the principle of attaching equal importance to art and technology, cultivate students' creative and innovative ability, exert subjective initiative of students furthest, encourage students to participate in subject research, practice in fashion design enterprises, strengthen students' deep understanding on profound traditional culture of the Chinese nation, and guide students to combine with their modern consciousness and create fashion style with strong Chinese characteristics, can we pave a way to cultivate outstanding fashion designers in the future and change the poor situation in design ability, and shorten the unavoidable "distance" between Chinese fashion education and market demand.

#### V. STRENGTHENING THE PRACTICALITY OF COURSE CONTENT

##### A. *Costume design is not to make artwork*

Costume design has its strong artistry and is always cultivated in the mode of fine arts in the domestic universities, so the foundation of fine arts has been the key to measure candidates' professionalism. In many universities, the effect drawing of costume has become the important to valuate students' professional achievement. In fact, the foundation of a student in fine arts is not a necessary factor to become a designer in the future. For a fashion designer, describing the clothing in the language of drawing, just is a basic way of expression and a means to make your design more bright and beautiful, and it does not require the basic drawing foundation as good as that required for the students in the Academy of Fine Arts, including their drawing skills and basic training of fine arts.

Many international excellent designers do not know drawing but they still design surprising costume. Because costume drawing is only a fraction of apparel system and the main part should be the research on costume modeling and structural changes and tailoring technology. To

examine the real skills is how to reflect the design idea through the structure line of clothing and process details when treating the same creative materials. Detail and texture is the spirit of good clothing, so controlling a wide variety of materials and fabrics is clearly several hundred times better than drafting a bunch of beautiful sketches. Students should be encouraged to personally participate in the production. I always think that a masterpiece will be worked only when the designers touch their project and get compatible with it each other, during which more and more wonderful thinking will be produced, so that a work is improved in its production process.

Therefore, it brings little change for our apparel industry to train a designer with strong function of arts in the viewpoint of drawing base, and it will produce a wrong phenomenon of colorful form but poor content. Apparel companies need the comprehensive talents who master costume design and understand the process, pattern, fashion and marketing, rather than the person who only engages in idle theorizing and designs "drawing effect".

#### *B. Keeping up with the trends of the times*

The field of vision and knowledge of students determine the design basis of them. So while teaching, we should inject new blood and energy to students continuously to motivate their creative thinking to the fullest.

While in the education of many colleges and universities in our country, the choice of teaching material is relatively backward. And there is no change of textbooks of some basic courses. We all know that fashion is a restless factor and has certain periodical changes. So the inherent characteristics of fashion industry determine unending changes of the existence form as well. We can use the manifestation and clipping process of rendering techniques as an example. Nowadays, more and more patterns of manifestation of rendering techniques come into being. There is no doubt that new-style clipping techniques and three-dimensional clipping have replaced traditional techniques manifestation and clipping ways. If passing the knowledge on textbooks of the 1980s to students, how these students are cultivated in this way to adapt to the development of society?

#### *C. Paying attention to the alliance of universities and enterprises*

In order to make the works of students more marketable, and let students have a good cohesion with enterprises after graduation, schools should strive for the cooperation with enterprises actively from all kinds of aspects. Arranging students to practice in enterprises can make students at school know the talents that enterprises need and the management modes of some relevant enterprises. So they can know the striving direction for themselves. Meanwhile, schools can cultivate talents that enterprises need directly. The university-enterprise cooperation also shows in some relevant design competition sponsored by enterprises and graduation show. In this way, not only the creative enthusiasm of students can be improved, but can schools find the right designers for enterprises. At the same time, the

employment problem of students can be solved, which benefits both schools and enterprises. So at this stage, the fellowship between enterprises and costume design colleges will become irreversible mega-trends of social development.

How to put cooperation between school and enterprises into practice is a new key point. The combination of colleges and universities mostly only stays in the situation that enterprises provide some relevant chances of visiting practice and employment for students. The production, study and research cooperation mode of "mutual need of dynamic, interaction of mechanism, mutual benefit of benefit" doesn't form in its true sense. According to the actual conditions, colleges and universities can combine production, study with research, and put forward the training program of "3.5+0.5" inter-disciplinary talents according to training program of inter-disciplinary talents of cooperation between schools and enterprises. That is to say, students have to finish theoretical study and practice education in campus and complete the theoretical teaching content set by syllabus within three and a half years. On this basis, they engage in teaching practice and graduation design in relevant enterprises and institutions for half a year, and then finish their graduation thesis. For students, we hope that they can consolidate style and technology of themselves very well. The problem of meet the market requirements actually need the guide of educators and continuous information spread that media do to domestic costume industry. After doing these, encouraging those talented students to consider displaying their abilities in the kind of "white collar" of local brand companies which have gained certain economic basis and prestige can promote the development of Chinese fashion industry very effectively.

At present, many colleges and universities have set about or practice preliminary to implement some reform systems. Except for some points said before, now the cooperation in running schools between colleges and universities and the professional schools of costume design of other countries has strengthened the exchange of experience of both sides. Its successful experience is also abundant. Besides, selection system and incentive system of many competitions are in continuous improvement. Providing more chances of overseas studying and entering the enterprises to practice for prize-winners in the competition has replaced the mode of having bonus only.

## VI. CONCLUSION

When the world-renowned designers and design brands come into being in China is not only the problem of students themselves and curriculum provision, or the problem of educational concept. Compared with the history of hundred years of the costume industry development in abroad, developing from the 1980s to the present, the time of costume designing education in domestic is too short. The overall ability of costume innovation and design is not very strong. The speaking right of costume industry is in the charge of western developed country. Fortunately, this situation has been changing gradually. Some young designers trained in design education in foreign countries come back home to set up studios, looking forward to

creating brands of themselves, which inject fresh blood to our costume design industry.

This is a long road, which needs us go and experience with heavy responsibilities. Now using one sentence of “Revolution has not yet been successful and comrades still need to make great efforts.” to encourage young designers. In addition, this sentence summarizes the current situation of the modern costume design education as well.

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