Research on the Teaching Methods Reform in Visual Communication Design Major in Higher Education Institutions Against the Background of "Internet +"

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Abstract—The promotion of "Internet +" is going to change the state of our life and affect our ways of living. It is going to break the barriers of space and time in teaching, and bring about various reforms in teaching modes and methods. Therefore, we shall make full use of this effective platform, sort, restructure and integrate the teaching information, and thus set up an informationalized platform supporting teaching reform.

Keywords—Internet+; teaching modes; teaching methods; blended cultivation mode; design projects component;

I. INTRODUCTION

Pemier Wen Jiabao first proposed "Internet +" program in his government work report at the third session of the 12th National People's Congress on March 5, 2015. Literally, the Internet can be understood as a major media, and "+" is a joining symbol. Whichever industry is connected, it is linked with the Internet, and the more industries are involved, the more effects will be produced. The era of "Internet +" is remodeling the new information technology into a new form with the internet of things, cloud computing, social computing and Big Data, etc. And it is going to further facilitate Innovation 2.0, featuring innovation of users, opening-up, the mass and cooperation, which is taking the lead in the "New Normal" of innovation promoting development.

The promotion of "Internet +" is going to change the state of our life and affect our ways of living. It is going to break the barriers of space and time of teaching, and bring about various reforms in teaching modes and methods. Therefore, we shall make full use of this effective platform, and sort, restructure and integrate the teaching information, and thus set up an informationalized platform supporting teaching reform.

II. THE CURRENT TEACHING SITUATION OF VISUAL COMMUNICATION DESIGN MAJOR IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

A. Traditional methods render the teaching of various professional courses disjointed and lack of consistency.

While preparing for each lecture, the teachers only attach importance to the theoretical parts of what they teach. And without communicating with their peers or arranging teaching contents together, the teachers conduct teaching in their own respective ways. While the students finish one course after another, without knowing the connection between courses, and thus cannot maintain the consistency of designing inspirations.

B. Traditional teaching methods lay too much emphasis on the design result of students and neglect the process.

After teaching theoretical knowledge and assigning designing tasks, teachers start to wait for designing results (design works), and decide on the scores of students by their works, while the long designing process is usually overlooked, which results in students' impatience for success and scraping irrelevant elements together, and makes it impossible to produce outstanding design works.

C. The design projects are disconnected with the real needs of society, and the design works are confined to class,without being applied to reality.

The design projects selected by teachers are usually virtual ones or open ones, which lack relevant procedure of practical design and development, and result in severe disconnection between theory learning in class and practice in society, since the practice activity without visual creation being its purpose cannot motivate students in learning.

D. The presentation of design results (design works) is restrained by space and time, and visual elements cannot fully convey or create visual information.

The presentation of design works from different institutions is dispersed, and with the restriction of time and space, students cannot appreciate the design works of their counterparts in other higher education institutions, and thus there lacks the kind of learning mainly based on visual communication competence.

III. VISUAL COMMUNICATION DESIGN AND THE INTERNET

Visual communication design refers to the design in which the designer conveys different kinds of information to recipients with two-dimensional visual symbols – words, illustrative pictures and signs. The main function of visual communication design is spreading and promoting [1]. Since the presentation and promotion of all design works need support by media, the Internet, being a global network, is the carrier of public information and has become the most effective communication media for visual communication design.

The Internet is a network joining computers communicating by way of shared language, which is an international computer network consisting of wide webs, local webs and single computers in accordance with certain communication protocol[2]. As long as a design work intends to be effectively shown on the Internet, it is necessary to conduct digital computation of visual elements (shapes, words, colors, etc.) and then it can be presented to the mass audience through computer network.

The media environment of the Internet has promoted visual communication to the stage of digital art design, and it has reappeared in the field of art design with a brand new outfit, and has become a new form of media art combining fine art and computer science technology. Seeing from the many titles and scientific content of digital design among the international academic circle and educational field, digital media art mainly involves the design of visual art, people-computer interface, information spread, multi-media, digital network, animation, advertising, games, virtual environment, virtual products, etc. As it was said by Roy Ascot, a forerunner of new media art, "the most distinctive trait of new media art is its consistency and interactivity," new media art brings visual communication design into a new normal of interaction with multi-media, with the interaction and combination of images, sounds, bearings, faculty stimuli, virtual reality, etc., making visual communication design far exceed the scope of traditional design [3] [4] [5].

IV. COUNTERMEASURES FOR TEACHING METHOD REFORM OF VISUAL COMMUNICATION DESIGN MAJOR PROMOTED BY "INTERNET +".

A. We shall appropriately revise the cultivation scheme, rearrange the order of courses for different majors, figure out the teaching hours for each course, allocate for the tasks of each stage within the same course, and orient for the learning target of each stage.

We shall prepare for lectures with members on the same teaching team, work out unified teaching plans and design tasks, so as to ensure the uniformity with theoretical teaching. We shall keep the consistency in teaching among different teachers, in order to make sure teachers are clear about the main targets, prepare for theoretical guidance as well as extension for students before they teach a new lesson. Besides, the closed state of teaching shall be broken, and a new state of communicating, interacting and mutual utilizing shall be formed.

B. Effectively implementing blended cultivation mode

The development of the Internet has broken the limitation of time and space of traditional teaching modes, and various forms of teaching including face-to-face teaching, online course, video tutoring, etc. This media of the Internet can be used to conduct blended cultivation. Face-to-face teaching can be adopted in class, with the teaching mode of combining PPT presentation and theoretical knowledge imparting. We shall stress on the visual design of PPT course wares, since they not only affect the efficacy of page information delivery, but also influence the levels of students' appreciation and design. While making PPT course wares, teachers shall make enough consideration about their intermediate effects and influence, following structured thinking pattern and conceptual expression, as well as emphasizing the rules for visual presentation. Only by combining the nice-looking page, clear logic in structure, and brief and direct expression, can we help students closely follow the design ideas of teachers and absorb professional knowledge through the process.

The way of online learning can lead students to set forth from the same design assignment, deliberate over design plan within their own teams, express ideas and opinions, analyze their plans for design, share their experience and results, and summarize and exchange their points, which can facilitate a free learning atmosphere, and thus promote their learning ability.

The way of practice instruction lays emphasis on the assisting function of teachers. After assigning design tasks, the major responsibility for teachers is to be students' helpful assistants, helping them solve problems they encounter in the process of designing, rather than dictating. Therefore, the roles of teachers and students are in accordance with each other during this procedure.

Blended cultivation mode combines the advantages of traditional learning ways and online learning, i.e., it is supposed to reflect the leading effects of teachers' guiding, inspiring and monitoring functions as well as the initiative, positivity, and creativity of students being the main body, which indicates how online and offline learning is combined [6].

C. The exploration of practice teaching mode of "Internet + design = designing store at Taobao and designing business on Wechat"

In the practice teaching of visual communication major, teaching method of project design was adopted. The teaching cases of practical application help students understand the procedures, expression, principles of design, and train students' ability to accomplish design tasks.

We launched a training project "Internet + design" with the goal of innovation and entrepreneurship (Figure 1). Wang Zihao and Yang Hongju, two students of Academy of Fine Arts, Changchun University, are the people in charge of their project. Upon deliberate consideration, they decided on the name of Youzhong Youth Design Flagship Store at Taobao. They founded a design team by calling on members from various majors such as visual communication, animation, and

environment design and designated clearly about their own design tasks. Being competent in designing, Wang Zihao is in charge of designing the web page and designing for clients. While there are big orders, Yang is in charge of making an overall designing plan, and other team members assist him in doing photographing. Being capable in publicity, Yang Hongju takes the responsibility of promoting their website. In order to improve the publicity of their store, he initiated an activity for users to scan the barcode of their store, save the store as connection and win presents. He also made X-shape display rack to show their service and called on students of the academy to save their web page, etc., which ranked their store the top among its counterparts and greatly attracted attention from the public.
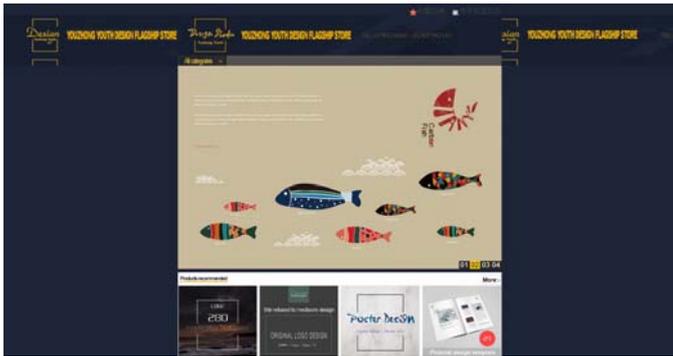

Fig. 1.   Youzhong Youth Design Flagship Store

Due to the joint effort of all the team members, the store has been receiving orders since it was set up, and has profited from them. Throughout the project, the teachers are playing the role of assistants. Rather than dictating design projects, they help the students solve the problems they come across in practice. Since the training projects realized students' ideas, the students are much encouraged and confident in their studies. In order to smoothly carry out the projects, many students took the initiative to learn relevant professional knowledge, which shows the improvement of their self-study ability. The students realized their own ideals while helping others, promoted their innovation competence, won recognition and employment opportunities from the society.

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