

Innovation and Practice of the “Fashion Design + Communication” Curriculum System: A Case Study of the School of Fashion Art, Hubei Institute of Fine Arts

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Abstract:

In the digital media era, the fashion industry has witnessed a surging demand for interdisciplinary talents with both design capabilities and communication literacy, while the traditional curriculum system of fashion design majors is faced with such problems as weak curriculum relevance and the disconnection between teaching and industry. Taking the majors of Fashion Design and Engineering, as well as Fashion Performance and Design in the School of Fashion Art of Hubei Institute of Fine Arts as the research objects of reform, this paper constructs a “Fashion Design + Communication” curriculum system. Through optimizing curriculum settings, innovating teaching modes, deepening school-enterprise cooperation, and strengthening the construction of teaching staff, the in-depth integration of design education and communication education is realized. Practice has shown that this system effectively improves students’ comprehensive practical ability and employment competitiveness, forms a replicable and promotable talent training mode for fashion majors, and provides practical references for the teaching reform of fashion design majors in colleges and universities.

Keywords:

Fashion Design, Fashion Communication, Curriculum System, Teaching Reform, School-Enterprise Cooperation

1. Introduction

With the rapid development of digital technology and the comprehensive popularization of social media, the forms and contents of communication in the fashion industry have undergone fundamental changes. The channels for consumers to obtain fashion information and the ways for brands to disseminate fashion content both present diversified characteristics. Against this background, the fashion industry no longer simply demands professional talents with single design skills, but has an

urgent need for high-end interdisciplinary talents with fashion design capabilities, digital communication literacy and market insight.

As the birthplace of fashion art education in Central China, the School of Fashion Art of Hubei Institute of Fine Arts has its major of Fashion Design and Engineering listed as one of the first national first-class major construction sites. Faced with the transformation of talent demand in the industry, based on its own teaching accumulation and practical experience in social services, the school has carried out reforms on the courses of the sophomores, juniors and seniors majoring in Fashion Design and Engineering and Fashion Performance and Design, broken the professional barriers between design and communication, and constructed an integrated "Fashion Design + Communication" curriculum system. With the core goal of cultivating interdisciplinary talents with "acute fashion perception, solid professional skills and innovative practical ability", the school has formed a set of teaching modes for fashion majors adapted to the digital media era through two years of practical exploration. Students' learning achievements and employment rate have been significantly improved, providing a practical sample for the teaching reform of fashion design majors in colleges and universities.

2. Background and Existing Problems of the Reform of the "Fashion Design + Communication" Curriculum System

2.1. Reform Background

The digital transformation of the fashion industry has promoted the upgrading of talent demand in the industry. On the one hand, brands require designers to carry out design creation in combination with communication scenarios, so that design works conform to the laws of new media communication; on the other hand, practitioners in fashion communication need to have a basic understanding of fashion design, and be able to accurately interpret the connotation of design and carry out professional communication. This integrated demand of "Design + Communication" puts forward new requirements for the talent training system of fashion design majors in colleges and universities.

At the same time, the state has put forward the guiding principles of "fostering virtue through education, integrating industry and education, and combining knowledge with practice" for talent training in higher education, requiring colleges and universities to closely align with industrial needs, deepen teaching reform, and cultivate application-oriented and interdisciplinary talents adapted to industrial development. Relying on the Fashion Art Research Center, a key research base for humanities and social sciences in general colleges and universities of Hubei Province, the School of Fashion Art of Hubei Institute of Fine Arts has integrated the advantageous teaching resources of the majors of Fashion Design and Engineering and Fashion Performance and Design, and launched the reform of the "Fashion Design + Communication" curriculum system in line with the trend. It aims to realize the accurate connection between talent training and industrial needs through curriculum integration and teaching innovation.

2.2. Existing Problems

The previous curriculum system of fashion design majors in the school has gradually shown inadaptability to the industrial development in the digital media era, and the core problems are mainly reflected in three aspects:

Core Problems	Specific Manifestations
Weak curriculum relevance	Design and communication courses are independent of each other without effective connection, and students cannot form a complete thinking system of "design creation - content communication - market feedback"
Asymmetric industry-education information	Overemphasis on traditional design skills and theories, lack of content in line with the industry such as new media communication and social marketing, and absence of the cultivation of digital communication capabilities
Disconnection between teaching and practice	Focusing on on-campus theoretical teaching and practical training, insufficient in-depth school-enterprise cooperation, students lack practical experience in real projects, and there is a gap between their abilities and post requirements

The above problems make it difficult for the trained students to meet the demand for interdisciplinary talents in the fashion industry in the digital media era, which has become the core starting point of this curriculum system reform.

3. Reform Paths and Core Principles of the “Fashion Design + Communication” Curriculum System

3.1. Five Major Reform Paths

To solve the pain points of the traditional curriculum system, the School of Fashion Art of Hubei Institute of Fine Arts has established five core reform paths to provide direction guidance for the construction of the curriculum system:

(1) Establish a scientific teaching evaluation system: Dynamically optimize teaching plans and methods through regular teaching evaluation, feedback from industry experts and tracking of students' learning effects, so as to ensure the synchronization of teaching quality and industrial needs.

(2) Deepen cooperation with the fashion industry: Accurately grasp the development trend of the industry and the standards of talent demand through establishing practice and training bases, visiting enterprises to expand employment channels, and following up with graduates, and jointly formulate talent training programs with enterprises.

(3) Strengthen the construction of teaching staff: Introduce double-qualified teachers with practical experience in the fashion industry, strengthen the cultivation of digital communication skills and practical teaching abilities of existing teachers, and build an interdisciplinary teaching team of “Design + Communication”.

(4) Promote digital teaching reform: Make full use of digital tools and network resources to build a blended online and offline teaching mode, and improve teaching efficiency and students' autonomous learning ability.

(5) Realize the integration of curriculum and practice: Align the content of classroom teaching with the needs of real market cases, break the barriers between on-campus teaching and off-campus practice, and enable students to transform knowledge and skills in real projects.

3.2. Core Construction Principles

Under the guidance of the reform paths, the school has established four major principles of “integration, practicality, progression and professionalization”, which run through the entire process of curriculum system construction.

Integration: Break the professional barriers between design and communication, realize the integration of content and teaching methods of design and communication courses, and cultivate students’ integrated thinking.

Practicality: Take real industrial projects as the teaching carrier, strengthen the practical teaching links, and enable students to master the core skills of design and communication in practice.

Progression: According to the professional foundation of sophomores, juniors and seniors, design progressive curriculum content from basic theories to comprehensive practice and from on-campus practical training to off-campus projects.

Professionalization: Align with the post ability requirements of the fashion industry, integrate the cultivation of professional literacy into curriculum teaching, and improve students’ employment competitiveness and post adaptability.

4. Practical Measures of the “Fashion Design + Communication” Curriculum System

Based on the four major principles, the School of Fashion Art of Hubei Institute of Fine Arts has formulated a series of specific practical measures from five dimensions: curriculum setting, teaching methods, teaching staff construction, teaching resources and school-enterprise cooperation, and built a complete integrated “Fashion Design + Communication” curriculum system.

4.1. Optimize Curriculum Settings and Build an Integrated “Theory + Practice” Curriculum System

Combined with the development trend of the fashion industry and the training objectives of professional talents, the school, in conjunction with the Fashion Art Research Center, has comprehensively optimized the original curriculum system and built a three-tier curriculum system of “basic theoretical layer, core skill layer and comprehensive practical layer”. The curriculum settings, teaching contents and training objectives of each tier are shown in the table below. The curriculum system focuses on the connection and progression between tiers, covers sophomores to seniors, and realizes phased training.

Curriculum Tiers	Core Courses	Teaching Contents	Training Objectives	Corresponding Grades
Basic Theoretical Layer	Fashion Communication Introduction, New Media Communication Theory, Fashion Structure Design, Fashion Illustration	Basic theories of traditional design, theories of fashion communication and new media communication	Master the basic knowledge points of design and communication, and establish integrated cognition	Sophomore
Core Skill Layer	Fashion Content Creation, Social	Integrated teaching of	Cultivate the core professional	Junior

	Media Marketing, Fashion Brand Communication, Fashion Photography	digital communication skills and fashion design skills	abilities of combining design and communication	
Comprehensive Practical Layer	Fashion Exhibition Design, Fashion Event Directing, Fashion Brand Planning	Project-oriented full-process practical teaching	Realize the comprehensive operation from design creation to communication and promotion	Senior

4.2. Innovate Teaching Methods and Create a Diversified “Online + Offline” Teaching Mode

To adapt to the teaching needs of the digital media era, the school has broken the traditional teaching mode of “focusing on classroom teaching”, and built a diversified teaching method combining blended online and offline teaching, project-oriented teaching and case analysis teaching, so as to stimulate students’ learning initiative and innovative thinking.

Teaching Methods	Core Implementation Methods	Teaching Effects
Blended online and offline	Conduct theoretical learning through online resource libraries, and carry out practical training, discussions and project guidance in offline classrooms	Realize "learning theories online and practicing skills offline", and improve teaching efficiency and learning pertinence
Project-oriented	Introduce real industrial projects such as Wuhan Fashion Week and Wuhan Fashion Art Season, and complete the full-process tasks in groups	Cultivate students' team cooperation ability, project operation ability and problem-solving ability
Case analysis	Select communication cases of well-known domestic and foreign fashion brands, and deeply interpret the communication logic combined with design knowledge	Improve students' market insight ability, case application ability and innovative thinking

4.3. Strengthen the Construction of Teaching Staff and Build an Interdisciplinary “Design + Communication” Teaching Team

The teaching staff is the core support for the reform of the curriculum system. The school has built an interdisciplinary teaching team with both design professional capabilities and communication practical experience from three aspects: “introduction, cultivation and integration”. First, introduce double-qualified teachers with practical experience in fashion brand communication, new media operation, fashion event planning and other industries to supplement the communication professional capabilities of the teaching team. Second, organize design professional teachers to participate in professional training on new media communication, digital marketing and other fields, and encourage teachers to participate in the practice of industrial projects to improve their communication teaching ability. Third, implement the joint teaching mode of “design teachers + communication teachers”, in which teachers from both sides jointly guide students’ projects in comprehensive practical courses to realize the complementary advantages of teaching abilities.

4.4. Integrate Teaching Resources and Improve the “Hardware + Software” Teaching Guarantee System

Centering on the teaching needs of “Fashion Design + Communication”, the school has integrated on-campus and off-campus teaching resources and built a three-dimensional teaching guarantee system of “professional hardware facilities + high-quality network resources + industrial practice resources”.

Resource Dimensions	Specific Configuration	Core Service Contents
Professional hardware facilities	Professional photography studios, clothing prop rooms, digital media production rooms	Meet the practical teaching needs of fashion photography, short video production, live broadcast planning, etc.
High-quality network resources	Cutting-edge information of the fashion industry, tutorials of new media tools, resource library of fashion brand cases	Provide students with a platform for autonomous learning, case reference and skill development
Industrial practice resources	Fashion Art Research Center, Organizing Committee of Wuhan Fashion Week, cooperative resources of well-known fashion brands	Provide students with high-quality channels for industrial practice, competition participation and project cooperation

4.5. Deepen School-Enterprise Cooperation and Build an “Industry-Education Integration” Practical Teaching System

With the goal of “integrating industry and education and combining knowledge with practice”, the school has established in-depth cooperative relations with fashion enterprises and media institutions, and built an integrated school-enterprise cooperation system of “practice and training bases + school-enterprise joint projects + employment connection”, realizing the in-depth integration of teaching and industry.

Cooperation Modules	Core Implementation Contents	Practical Value
Practice and training bases	Co-build university-level practice and training bases with enterprises such as Hubei Hongyihao Garment Co., Ltd.	Provide students with regular opportunities for enterprise practice and post training, and make them familiar with the industrial work process
School-enterprise joint projects	Teachers and students teams participate in the communication planning and implementation of activities such as Wuhan Fashion Week and Wuhan Fashion Art Season in the whole process	Combine classroom teaching with the implementation of real industrial projects in depth, and realize the transformation of knowledge and skills
Accurate employment connection	Build a school-enterprise employment connection platform through visiting enterprises to expand employment channels, enterprise lectures and graduate recommendation	Make students' practical abilities directly align with the post requirements of enterprises, and improve the employment matching degree and employment rate

In addition, the school attaches importance to the cultivation of students' comprehensive quality, integrating team cooperation ability, communication ability and innovative thinking ability into curriculum teaching and project practice, so as to cultivate interdisciplinary and professional talents adapted to industrial development.

5. Practical Effects of the Reform of the “Fashion Design + Communication” Curriculum System

After two years of teaching reform and practice, the “Fashion Design + Communication” curriculum system of the School of Fashion Art of Hubei Institute of Fine Arts has achieved remarkable practical effects, forming a complete achievement system from four dimensions: scientific research achievements, practical achievements, teaching achievements and talent training, which effectively verifies the scientificity and feasibility of the curriculum system.

5.1. Abundant Scientific Research Achievements Providing Theoretical Support for Teaching Reform

Taking the curriculum system reform as an opportunity, the school has carried out a series of scientific research on fashion design and fashion communication, and formed a number of high-level scientific research projects and academic paper achievements. Led by Teacher Zhang Guodong, the team has presided over and completed more than 10 projects of various types such as the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Project of the Hubei Provincial Department of Education and the University-level Teaching Research Project of Hubei Institute of Fine Arts, presided over and completed 1 major tender project of the Key Research Base for Humanities and Social Sciences in Colleges and Universities of Hubei Province Research on Fashion Communication and Aesthetics, and presided over 1 provincial undergraduate teaching reform project Research on the Construction of Fashion Communication Curriculum System in the New Media Era; the team has published 12 academic papers such as Research on Digital Media Communication Modes of Wearable Art Brands and Research on Communication Strategies of Art Brands in the New Media Era in journals such as Art Appreciation, Artist and international journals, many of which are Chinese-English bilingual papers, providing a solid theoretical support for the construction and optimization of the “Fashion Design + Communication” curriculum system.

5.2. Remarkable Practical Achievements Enhancing the School's Industrial Influence

The school has deeply integrated the curriculum system reform with the practice of social services, created a series of practical achievements with industrial influence, and become an important practical platform for fashion design and communication in Central China. For example, the WeChat official account of Hubei IFA Fashion Art Research Center built by the school was awarded the Top 10 Mobile Official Accounts of Hubei Province, and its original fashion illustrations of the Twenty-Four Solar Terms were featured in a special report by China Daily, becoming a classic case of fashion culture communication; the school planned and built Wuhan Fashion Art Season, a city fashion culture card of Wuhan, which has become a well-known comprehensive display and practical platform for fashion art in China; teachers and students teams were invited to participate in the communication planning and implementation of Wuhan Fashion Week, becoming the core cooperative team of Wuhan Fashion Week; the school was selected into the first batch of the “Double Hundred Plan” of the university, stationed in Hubei Hongyihao Garment Co., Ltd. to carry out the Research on the Application of Digital Fashion Design and Communication, and represented the university to participate in the 2023 “Light of Wisdom” Hubei Experts’ Innovation and Entrepreneurship Achievement

Transformation Conference and completed the signing of enterprise projects; more than 30 teachers and students in the team won the Fashion Communication Award issued by the Hubei Federation of Literary and Art Circles and the Hubei Artists Association in the practice of Wuhan Fashion Art Season, becoming an industry-recognized fashion communication practice team.

5.3. Outstanding Teaching Achievements Forming High-Quality Courses and Teaching Modes

The curriculum system reform has promoted the overall improvement of the teaching quality of the school, formed a number of provincial and university-level high-quality courses, and the teaching achievements have been recognized by the government and the industry. The team's achievement *Cultivating People with Aesthetics and Talents with Art - Research and Practice on the Talent Training of Fashion Design and Engineering* won the third prize of the Teaching Achievement Award of Colleges and Universities in Hubei Province; the course *Fashion Art and Brand Communication* won the Excellent Award of the 8th Young Teachers' Teaching Competition in Hubei Province, and *Fashion Exhibition Design* was approved as a first-class social practice course in Hubei Province; courses such as *Fashion Art and Contemporary Art History*, *Fashion Brand Planning* and *Fashion Communication and Promotion* were rated as university-level ideological and political demonstration courses and university-level "Golden Courses", forming an integrated teaching mode of "major + ideological and political education"; the practice and training base of Hubei Hongyihao Garment Co., Ltd. co-built by the school and the enterprise was approved for the construction of the university-level practice and training base of Hubei Institute of Fine Arts, becoming a model of industry-education integration.

5.4. Remarkable Effects in Talent Training Improving Students' Comprehensive Ability and Employment Competitiveness

The core effect of the curriculum system reform is reflected in the significant improvement of students' comprehensive practical ability and employment competitiveness. Students have achieved fruitful results in competitions: under the guidance of teachers, students have won many awards such as the gold award and bronze award in the Wuhan College Students Fashion Design Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition, and the works of the 2022 undergraduate students were selected into the Tour Exhibition of New Era Students' Works of the Eight Major Academy of Fine Arts on CCTV-3, demonstrating students' design and innovation abilities; students have outstanding practical abilities: the students' works of the course *Fashion Photography* have been successfully applied to the commercial advertising shooting of fashion media such as *Selin*, *GMARO Magazine* and *Harper's Bazaar*, realizing the direct connection between classroom practice and commercial application; students have significantly improved their new media operation abilities: the Douyin and Xiaohongshu fashion self-media accounts independently operated by the 2022 students majoring in Fashion Performance have achieved communication effects of 32,000 fans with 1.05 million single video views and 19,000 fans with more than 100,000 single video views respectively, which is a direct embodiment of students' new media communication abilities; employment competitiveness has been greatly improved: the employment rate of students has increased significantly after the reform, many students have successfully entered well-known fashion brand

companies and fashion media institutions, and their comprehensive abilities of both design and communication have been highly recognized by employers. In addition, the practical achievements of the school's "Fashion Design + Communication" have been reported by dozens of mainstream media such as People's Network, CGTN Online, Learning Power, China Daily and Hubei Daily, forming a wide social influence.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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