



## Strengthen Students' Self-Awareness, Foster Their Creative Spirit: "Open-Type" Teaching Philosophy-Based Art Design Teaching Discussion and Practice

LIU Dongfeng<sup>[a],\*</sup>

<sup>[a]</sup>Shandong Normal University Academy of Fine Arts, China.

\*Corresponding author.

Received 16 February 2013; accepted 5 June 2013

### Abstract

The first that education should endow the students is the active participation as main part if it wants to change students and foster their creative spirit indeed. For this perspective, it is shown that the key of creative education or the immediate mission of teaching is to create subjects and activities suitable for students to participate and explore independently, and to provide students with the necessary method, conditions and environment for fostering creative spirit. In this paper, we, in combination with our own teaching practice, propose an open-type teaching mode, attempt to break restraints set up by traditional art design teaching mode, and explore a path of teaching in favor of fostering students' creative spirit and practical ability, as well as being beneficial to induce students' interests, and build their curiosity, imagination and creativity, thus to find an effective path of practically implementing goal of innovation education in design.

**Key words:** Creative spirit; Open type; Art design; Teaching method

LIU Dongfeng (2013). Strengthen Students' Self-Awareness, Foster Their Creative Spirit: "Open-Type" Teaching Philosophy-Based Art Design Teaching Discussion and Practice. *Canadian Social Science*, 9(4), 168-172. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/css/article/view/j.css.1923669720130904.2653> DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/j.css.1923669720130904.2653>.

Innovation is the soul of art design, focusing on the fostering of students' creative spirit and practical ability, and is the emphasis of current art design education reform. In recent years, the design education and teaching reform has witnessed a rapid development in China, but there are still problems urgently to be solved under the restraints of traditional education philosophy and mode, for instance,

attaching more importance to theory instead of practice; attaching more importance to knowledge lecturing instead of active exploration, etc.. Such traditional teacher-centered teaching mode ignores students' individuality, as well as the participation and active exploration of students as main part in teaching, and lacks flexibility in teaching, resulting in "shrinking" of students' thought, and making them short of consciousness of innovation and ability of exploratory learning, unfavorably adaptative to demands of the society on art design talents.

The thinking way and learning habit of each student depend on their personal life experience and individuality of thinking quality, and each student's learning habit and learning approach vary from those of others, as well as with multifarious individuality. The open-type teaching mode is the very one of considering students' individuality and relying on the nature and characteristics owned by the art design discipline, by means of necessary transformation to disadvantages existing in current classroom teaching, in order to explore an effective path in favor of fostering students' creative spirit and practical ability, building teaching environment beneficial to inspire students' interests, as well as evoking their curiosity, imagination and creativity, and practically implementing the goal of innovation education in design.

The first that education should endow the students is the active participation as main part if it wants to change students and foster their creative spirit indeed. For this perspective, it is shown that the key of creative education or the immediate mission of teaching is to create subjects and activities suitable for students to participate and explore independently, and to provide students with the necessary method, conditions and environment for fostering creative spirit. Therefore, the fundamental objective of open-type teaching is to make the teaching process really based on consideration of students' individuality and their independent exploration and learning by means of transforming the current classroom

teaching mode characterized by teacher's lecturing and student's listening, so as to promote the overall development of students' consciousness of main part, creative spirit, practical ability and various qualities.

## 1. CONNOTATION OF OPEN-TYPE TEACHING

The open-type teaching is a dynamic and open teaching mode aiming at fostering creative spirit and practical ability by taking consideration of students' individuality and self-consciousness as the premise; basing on equal, comfortable, lively and open classroom atmosphere; requiring students to actively participate and to proactively explore and practice, as well as centering on learners; and having various evaluation systems (such as the system of self-exploration, self-solution and self-evaluation, and the students-and-teacher evaluation of learning-and-teaching (STELT)) as guarantee.

With knowledge as the educational aim, and teacher's lecturing and instilling as main features, the open-type teaching has new connotations and regularities by comparison to the traditional one. First, it changes the teaching goals of passive knowledge receiving, recalling and reproducing, while emphasizes active thinking and imaging and proactive discovering and creating instead; second, it changes the teaching mode attaching more importance to know-how and skill training, while emphasizes intentional participation, main part experience, and multi-dimensional thinking development instead; third, from the perspective of overall teaching conditions, it changes the traditional, unilateral and unitary teaching approach, while emphasizes an integrated teaching process unifying knowledge and skill, theory and practice, thinking and design, and innovation and application of multiple layers instead. Therefore, open-type teaching is a new teaching mode stressing on students' participation as main part, thinking involvement, direct experience acquisition, and united concept and action, capable of promoting students' comprehensive development in all directions.

## 2. OPEN-TYPE TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

The open-type teaching mode covers the followings: to build a teaching conception of promoting development by opening, to construct a dynamic and open teaching process on basis of students' independence, participation, partialness and creativity; to establish a democratic and equal relationship between students and teachers; to set up new teaching environment suitable for students to actively participate in and to proactively learn; to reform examination and teaching evaluation, and to explore diversified evaluation systems in favor of students' long-term development, etc.. For this reason, it is necessary to build the following new educational ideas.

### 2.1 Student-Centered Idea

The open-type teaching roots in that students consciously participate in construction of teaching process, proactively explore knowledge and method, and convert independently knowledge into ability. Its specific practices lie in returning the class to students, letting each student receiving the proper development with creative spirit and practical ability fostered fully. All these can not be separated from students' active participation, and the open-type teaching is nothing in case of separating from students as main part. Hence, it is necessary to insist students as the center, fully respect each student, intensify students' self-consciousness, change roles (namely, become learning facilitator of students from traditional knowledge transmitter), pay attention to students' learning process, keep a foothold on students' active participation, and emphasize the experience of concept, method and emotions.

The student-centered idea should also find expression in that teachers respect and understand students and treat their practical activities and psychological behaviors with tolerance. In course of teaching, teachers should respect each student equally with positive emotions to inspire and guide them to dare to say, to do, to think and to explore, and attach importance to protecting the development of individuality of students, which is especially important for students of art design. Therefore, the open-type teaching is a teaching approach on basis of taking students' demands and development into consideration, and letting each student enjoying pleasure and achievements of teaching and learning, thus to stimulate students' learning interests, evoke their learning demands, advance their desire and ability for proactive exploring, and realize students' comprehensive development.

### 2.2 Idea Focusing on "Active Participation, and Exploration and Practice as Main Part"

The modern education and teaching idea and practice prove that the genuine valuable teaching in favor of fostering the ability of creative thinking should be a process of proactively exploring, continuously innovating, updating the existing cognition and experience, and constructing students' own cognitive structure basing on the teaching goal of art design and according to students' own qualifications and requirements, instead of the one of passively receiving ready-made knowledge and conclusions. For this reason, in design teaching, the design of each subject should take full consideration of students' involvement, and set up certain suspense for students to proactively explore, and trigger students' curiosity and desire to explore though setting certain problems or scenarios, such as, "What defects are found in current umbrella? How to improve?", "Which kind of beverage package is easy to sell in summer?", and other similar question design.

The open-type teaching is featured by students' proactive discovery and self-solving learning problems, including discovery learning, situated learning, experiential learning, interactive learning, and other learning methods. It is realized and finished through students' proactive operating, firsthand experience, exploration and creation against certain subjects, for instance, in the package design class, students had better go to package design companies or factories, proactively participating in practice and easily acquiring knowledge and experience in learning through practice. In a word, such teaching mode highlights self-learning, discovery learning and creative learning.

### **2.3 Construct a Dynamic and Open Teaching Process**

Teaching is a dynamic and developmental process where teachers and students jointly explore new knowledge and share achievements of cognition. The analysis either from students, teachers, teaching environment, or from inherent factors of teaching activities, shows that all of the same are changing and developing constantly. Moreover, such changing factors are what contribute important value and meanings to the development of students' subjectivity. Hence, it should be maintained by open-type teaching to construct a dynamic and changing process.

The openness of open-type teaching mainly finds expression in the entire teaching process. First, in light of certain topic goal, the questions in learning can be worked out by resorting to various methods and approaches and giving priority to students' self-exploration, self-learning and practice, with less teachers' intervention; second, teachers should endeavor to create a democratic atmosphere in favor of students' proactive participating and daring to show off themselves, as well as a independently, comfortable and pleasing innovation situation; and final, in terms of teaching space-time, the teaching should make the best of all educational opportunities to cooperate with design institutions and enterprises and exploit extensive educational resources rather than be only confined in classroom and school.

## **3. CONDITIONS OF OPEN-TYPE TEACHING**

As the open-type teaching stresses on students' conscious learning, independent learning ability and proactive participation in teaching, therefore, it poses a new challenge to teachers, teaching and conditions in the traditional sense. All of the changes of teachers' role, teaching concept, and teaching methods, and new setting of teaching evaluation provide essential conditions for open-type teaching.

### **3.1 Build up Consciousness of Innovation**

The open-type teaching itself is a result of innovation, which requires teachers to build up consciousness of

innovation, not sticking to the fixed pattern, and to continuously learn and use new thinking and view to reform our teaching of art design.

Innovation is a premise of teaching reform, and to build up consciousness of innovation, two sides should be considered: first, the teacher should build consciousness of innovation. As professional teachers, profound and excellent professional knowledge are necessary, meanwhile, they should understand and grasp the latest and cutting-edge trends of the discipline, continuously update and perfect their own structure of knowledge, making students be unconsciously influenced and enlightened by innovative thinking. Second, students should build up consciousness of innovation. Consciousness of innovation is the primary feature of innovative talents, and it is a premise to cultivate innovative talents to foster students' consciousness of worshipping and pursuing innovation. In design teaching, we can guide and foster students' consciousness of innovation via professional innovation, consciousness of problems, questions and argument, distinctive originality, etc..

### **3.2 Set Up Open-Type Teaching Environment**

In order to realize the cultivating goals of open-type teaching in course of teaching, it is necessary to proactively create a teaching environment in favor of internalization of students' consciousness of innovation and innovation ability. In teaching activities, such open-type teaching environment is reflected in the followings: first, to create interpersonal relationships beneficial to innovation and to build equal and harmonious relations between students and teachers. In activity teaching, the relations between teachers and students should fully reflect equality and harmony. The teacher acts as mentor and promoter in activities, as well as the cooperater for learning activities of students, and each student should feel respect from the teacher with regard to their dignity, rights, inspiration and positivity; second, to create language environment in favor of innovation, adjust speech way, and form tolerant and inspiring language atmosphere. The language can either stimulate students to rouse themselves or destroy their confidence and dignity, and thus the open-type teaching advocates teachers and students to adopt speech approaches reflecting democracy, equality, care and fraternity; and final, to create material environment in favor of teaching, such as props, facilities, materials, space-time environment, etc..

### **3.3 Formulate Reasonable Teaching Evaluation System**

It is an important guarantee for implementing open-type teaching to construct a teaching evaluation system combining various evaluation forms in a view of development. Evaluation should be an approach of promoting teaching rather than a simple assessment on students' homework. For a long time, we excessively use quantifiable approaches to evaluate students' homework

with visual effect of design work or impractical originality as criteria, consequently, the qualitative evaluation is neglected, and teachers act as the authority in evaluation, while students are in a passive position receiving evaluation, preventing the evaluation from effectively promoting the teaching, and often bruising students' learning initiative. For this reason, we should adopt a developmental perspective, and carry out overall evaluation on students in view of promoting their long-term development, thus changing the situation of determining performance only by virtue of several works.

In addition, the evaluation system should adopt flexible and diverse evaluation forms in accordance with conditions of each major and each class of art design, including teachers' evaluation, students' evaluation, self-evaluation, etc.. Take teachers' evaluation for example, it can be determined according to different conditions, such as executing evaluations from students' sense of participation, consciousness of innovation, consciousness of performance, sense of cooperation, etc.. In a word, evaluation is to realize the goal of promoting development by virtue of evaluation rather than to simply give marks to students on basis of their work.

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#### **4. IMPLEMENTATION METHOD OF OPEN-TYPE TEACHING**

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The open-type teaching should be experimental, instructive and frame-type, rather than a dogmatic and changeless mode. In course of implementing the teaching, we should afford students with sufficient innovation space and time, as well as adequate opportunities of practice and performance, provide them correct thinking and methods, attach importance to students' self-learning and self-exploring, highlight the teachers' "guiding" role, value the principle of adopting diverse and open teaching mode, and choose the feasible teaching method and strategy.

For a long time, enough attention is absent for teaching approach, and in fact, if the teaching approach based on lecturing and instilling is not changed, it is nothing but empty talks to foster students' creative thinking ability. From the overall perspective, as the students' quality development is multilevel and multi-sided, the teaching approach inevitably appears as various forms. In activity teaching, experiments can be executed on the following basic teaching modes:

##### **4.1 Discovery Teaching Approach**

Discovery teaching approach is one that students independently finish the process of discovering, analyzing and solving problems under guidance of teachers, and also a process to explore different and distinctive solutions for the same problem. Such method requires the following points done in teaching: first, set a design topic and plan for students to explore, for example, take "Discover shortage of life commodities" as the title, guide students to

carry out independent exploration and discovery, and collect materials, inquire knowledge, and find, analyze and solve problems at last in process of discovery. The free discovery in such process proceeds without limits and restraints, which not only greatly stimulates students' enthusiasm, but also fosters their exploratory and innovative spirit. Second, certain discovery methods should be provided to students. Before discovery, it is necessary to give theoretical guidance with regard to the range, method and tool of discovery, which can effectively prevent students from being excessively open and leading to aimlessness. In the final, it is encouraged to apply various methods to finish the discovery. Different exploring methods for the same problem reflect students' creative ability and thinking mode with personality characteristics, therefore, teachers should endeavor to promote, find by various means, and timely encourage the new and distinctive thinking modes and results of exploration in exploring activities, and show the same to all the students.

##### **4.2 Interactive Teaching Approach**

The interactive teaching refers to the interaction and interplay of various forms and natures at all levels in-between teachers and students in process of teaching. Its purpose is to promote both teachers and students, especially students' development in aspects of learning, cognition and innovation. To complete interactive teaching, we should attempt to start from two sides: first, to change roles, namely, changing the teaching mode centering on teachers, aiming at knowledge and with instilling as the method. This requires teachers not only to respect and comprehend students, but also to timely understand themselves and students, know their own knowledge capability conditions and teaching style, as well as students' cognitive structure and affective characteristics. In addition, it is necessary to value the position and role of students as main part of interaction, and exchange and discuss with students in a caring and accepting manner and with respect. Second, reasonable language and non-language means should be utilized for promoting proactive interaction. In teaching, apart from expressing and lecturing by language means, body language can also be adopted for interacting with students, such as gesture and eye contact. In fact, one favorable look, encouraging smile and affirmative tone of teachers may contribute immeasurable effects to fostering of students' confidence. The interactive teaching focuses on interaction, which emphasizes communication, so it is necessary to create an atmosphere of interaction and communication to promote the development of interaction.

##### **4.3 Experiencing Teaching Approach**

Experience is an important cognitive learning tool of human beings, and a path to acquire direct experience and knowledge. The experience not only helps students in their perceptual knowledge learning, but plays a special role in developing students' emotion, will, attitude and value. The experiencing teaching approach possesses



universal application value in art design, for example, in show design teaching, experiencing teaching method can be adopted to encourage students walk into exhibition hall and pavilions to directly perceiving every aspect of show design, and students can acquire knowledge and methods through experiencing. This is more intuitive than theoretical lecturing in classroom, and is more accessible.

The experiencing teaching should stress on the combination of knowledge mixing and acquisition of new knowledge in process of experience. In addition, teachers should fully mobilize students' series of mental functions like emotion, esthesis, thinking and attention to jointly participate in experience, so as to promote students' perceptive development in all aspects. Experience is not only a teaching method, but an important learning method, and in the art design teaching, experiments on experiencing teaching should be enhanced in accordance with different requirements of each major.

#### 4.4 Question Situational Teaching Approach

The question situational teaching method is one emphasizing the creation of question situations, stimulation of students' intellectual curiosity, and fostering of flexibility and peculiarity of students' thinking in process of teaching.

In process of teaching, students are encouraged to proactively discover related questions around the task given by teachers, and expand the question territory from point to the whole range. Students can acquire knowledge in course of proactively discovering, changing from passive acceptance to active searching, and becoming the discoverer of knowledge and questions. This method has positive meanings to stimulate learning interest and to evoke originality and inspiration.

Questioning is a mental tentacle stretching from the known to the unknown, and also the special embodiment of consciousness of innovation. In process of teaching, questions related to teaching can be set from time to time to stimulate students' intellectual curiosity and to foster flexibility of students' thinking. Another important function of question situational teaching method is to foster students' consciousness of problems. The absence of consciousness of problems influences not only the acquisition of knowledge but also the innovation of thinking. Albert Einstein has once said that "Finding the problem is more important than solving a problem." Learning requires to question, to frequently question and to be good at questioning. It is a good learning method to learn to begin thinking from questioning.

#### 4.5 Inquiry And Difficulty-Explaining Approach

Doubt is an attitude and a spirit as well. Doubting is the beginning of changing and the beginning of seeking the truth. Doubt is results of thinking, and the start of thinking. It is necessary to learn to doubt and query. The meaning of doubt lies in not taking all the existing as

changeless or absolute truth, but to doubt for purpose of attaining spiritual independence and confidence, as well as the originality in design.

We stick to the spirit of suspicion, seeking for critical recognition on existing knowledge and claims and thus forming our own particular opinions. Questions are raised with skepticism on habitual concept and method to pursue new breakthrough. The genuine meaningful approach is to query and question the notions. In design teaching, students are encouraged to question, and are stimulated to adopt critical cognition on all the existing, to change the common practice, make all design problems impossible, and become the possible from "normal" to "abnormal", thus to acquiring new design approaches.

The openness of open-type teaching determines the diversity and richness of teaching approaches, therefore, apart from the said approaches, the open-type teaching still has many special teaching methods, such as interest stimulation, investigation and study, games, etc.. All these require teachers to determine which kind of activity mode should be adopted in special classroom teaching according to characteristics and requirements and different goals and contents of each major of design. Rigidly adhering to one teaching mode will violate the goal of course, art design is a creative act, and the determination of teaching method and task itself is a kind of design, whose designer is the teacher himself.

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## CONCLUSION

Open-type teaching is an exploratory and experimental teaching method, whose implementation not only requires the guidance of certain advanced theories, but a large quantity of teaching practice for revision, summary and perfection. And crucially, the "degree" of openness should be well controlled in open-type teaching. Either excessive or insufficient openness will directly influence effects of teaching. Therefore, it is necessary to form criteria and framework of openness from a lot of specific teaching practice, realizing reasonableness and results of opening with proper opening standards.

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