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Exploring the Teaching Reform of Journalism and Communication Theory Courses in the Context of New Liberal Arts

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Abstract: The concept of “New Liberal Arts” originated from the rethinking of the problems of over-detailed division of traditional disciplines and the disconnection between theory and practice. It highlights the interdisciplinary characteristics and the cultivation of humanistic qualities and creativity, aiming at cultivating compound talents with broader vision and stronger humanistic qualities. From the perspective of journalism and communication, this means breaking down the traditional barrier and knowledge between different disciplines such as journalism, communication, sociology, psychology and so on, in order to better cope with the information communication problems in the information age. With the rapid development of China’s information industry, the traditional teaching mode of journalism and communication has been unable to adapt to the needs of specialised talents under the new situation. At present, the biggest challenge facing journalism and communication is the rapid change of media technology and the slow pace of talent training.

Keywords: New liberal arts background; Journalism and communication; Theory course teaching; Reform exploration

Introduction

The concept of new liberal arts emphasises interdisciplinary intersection, focuses on the cultivation of innovation ability and the improvement of overall humanistic quality, which provides new opportunities and challenges for the development of journalism and communication disciplines. In the context of the new liberal arts, it is necessary to break through the traditional disciplinary boundaries and integrate knowledge from humanities, social sciences, science and technology into the curriculum, so as to cultivate communication talents with a broad vision and humanistic qualities. At the same time, the new liberal arts also require more emphasis on practicality and innovation in the media. In the teaching process, teachers can design more situations according to the actual situation, so that students can understand the theories they have learnt and apply what they have learnt in practice. At the same time, through the cooperation with new media enterprises, enterprise practice activities are carried out to help students feel and master advanced information technology and strategies in enterprise practice, so as to enhance their competitiveness in the industry.

1. The current situation of the teaching of theory courses in journalism and communications

1.1 The limitations of traditional teaching mode

Under the background of new liberal arts, it has become imperative to reform the journalism communication course. The traditional way of education has the problems of focusing on knowledge transfer, light on practice, light on innovation and so on. Such a “filler” teaching method may result in a disconnect between what is learnt in the classroom and what is needed in the real society. For example, under the traditional teaching method, the teacher is the centre of the classroom, while students are passive recipients of knowledge. This one-way transfer of knowledge restricts students' ability to think critically and learn for themselves. In addition, the traditional evaluation system puts too much emphasis on the final exam or thesis, and this “one-size-fits-all” evaluation method tends to make students pay too much attention to short-term memory and neglect long-term understanding and application ability. This phenomenon is especially prominent in the field of journalism and communication, and many students tend to forget the theoretical knowledge they have learnt after the examination and fail to apply it to real life. In the context of the new liberal arts, reforming the teaching of journalism and communication, breaking down the barriers between theory and practice, and constructing a diversified and comprehensive evaluation mechanism are the major issues in the current reform of journalism and communication teaching in China.

1.2 Problems in current teaching

At present, there are still many problems in the teaching of journalism and communication in China. On the one hand, the traditional

teaching method pays too much attention to the teaching of theory and ignores practical operation, resulting in a disconnect between what students learn and what they actually do. On the other hand, the updating of educational content can not keep up with the ever-changing media environment, and new media, big data and other emerging disciplines account for a low proportion of the curriculum, resulting in students being faced with obsolete knowledge after graduation. In addition, the evaluation system puts too much emphasis on the final exam, neglecting the development of students' key abilities such as critical thinking and creativity. For this reason, it is necessary to break the traditional teaching mode and build a talent training mode that is compatible with it and meets the development requirements of the times.

2. Necessity and objectives of pedagogical reform

2.1 Adapt to the needs of social change

Under the background of the new liberal arts, the urgency of reforming the theory of news communication is becoming more and more prominent. In the rapid development of the information society today, the media ecology is also undergoing great changes, just as the emergence of social media has had a revolutionary impact on the dissemination of information. Therefore, journalism and communication education should keep pace with the times in order to cultivate new people with new media skills and intercultural communication skills.

2.2 Enhance students' core competence

Cultivating students' core competence is an important direction for the teaching reform of journalism and communication majors in the context of new liberal arts. This requires breaking the traditional teaching mode and focusing on the cultivation of students' abilities such as creative thinking, critical analysis and cross-cultural communication. For example, more real-life news examples can be introduced so that students can improve their problem-solving ability in analytical exercises. Through comparative study with international news, an international perspective and local adaptability can be cultivated. In addition, in teaching, teachers should play the role of a "guide" to motivate students to learn independently, enhance their information-gathering ability and strengthen their own learning motivation.

2.3 The goal of building a new teaching mode

Constructing a new classroom teaching mode aims to fully explore students' potential and promote their creative thinking and hands-on ability. First of all, it is necessary to break the traditional mode of knowledge transfer, link the theory to practice, and let the theory be mastered quickly in practice, such as setting up a mock press conference or media planning project, so that students can experience the whole process of news dissemination. Secondly, in the rapid development of new media, the content of the curriculum should also keep pace with the times, covering not only the knowledge of traditional media, but also the use of new media skills, so that students can adapt to different media environments. Finally, by comparing and analysing news and communication cases in different countries, students can be more international and local, and enhance their adaptability in the global context.

3. Reform of Teaching Methods

3.1 Explore the case teaching method

The study of case teaching method is particularly important in the reform of journalism and communication theory courses. Case teaching method is a kind of teaching method that uses real cases as a carrier to make students actively participate, analyse and solve problems. For example, teachers can select some hot news from short videos, such as the diffusion effect of short videos, so that students can understand and use relevant theoretical knowledge to analyse problems in real life. On this basis, by using SWOT, PESTLE and other methods, students are trained to think critically and solve problems creatively. It reflects the need for interdisciplinary and practical talent training in the new liberal arts era, helps students better adapt to the needs of society, and improves their competitiveness in the workplace.

3.2 Adopting flipped classroom mode

The flipped classroom teaching mode is an important part of the teaching reform of journalism and communication. The core idea of the flipped classroom is to combine the traditional classroom courses and after-class self-study, so that students can learn the basic knowledge independently by watching teaching videos and other materials before class, and carry out in-depth discussions, case analyses and practical operations in class. The model emphasises active student participation and in-depth learning, which is conducive to improving classroom interaction and teaching effectiveness. For example, teachers can design a series of short videos based on news communication theory. After watching the videos, students can think ahead and participate in group discussions. This can not only ensure that students master the theoretical knowledge, but also cultivate their ability to analyse problems. At the same time, the role of the teacher in classroom teaching has changed, from a mere knowledge intermediary to a guide who promotes effective interaction between teachers and students and improves the quality of teaching.

3.3 Introducing project-driven teaching

Project-driven teaching is an innovative teaching strategy and an important part of the reform of the theory courses of journalism and

communication in China. Project-driven teaching refers to the research of topics, so that students can master theoretical knowledge and apply it to practical work while solving practical problems, thus cultivating their hands-on ability and creative thinking ability. For example, teachers can design projects such as simulated press conferences, media planning or social communication effect research, and then let students work in groups. This can not only exercise students' teamwork ability, but also combine theory and practice. In addition, teachers can also refer to the creative education concepts of Silicon Valley, so that students can boldly go ahead without fear of failure, and improve the quality of the curriculum in a continuous manner, thus achieving the purpose of in-depth learning and self-improvement.

4. Reconstruction of teaching evaluation system

4.1 The combination of process evaluation and result evaluation

In the teaching reform of journalism and communication class, the combination of process evaluation and result evaluation should be emphasised. Process evaluation refers to the continuous tracking and feedback of students' learning process, such as the degree of participation in the classroom, the results of group discussions and the degree of completion of homework. This gives a real-time picture of how well students are learning and how well they understand. Evaluation of student performance focuses on the mastery and application of knowledge, such as final quizzes, course design, and practical exercises. The combination of the two provides a more comprehensive assessment of students' academic progress and ability development, and avoids the one-sidedness of relying solely on the results of final examinations.

4.2 Attaching importance to the evaluation of ability and quality

Attaching importance to the evaluation of ability and quality is an important part of the teaching reform of journalism and communication. In teaching evaluation, teachers generally pay attention to students' theoretical knowledge and neglect the cultivation of students' practical hands-on ability, critical thinking and intercultural communication ability. For example, a simulated press conference or media planning project can be introduced to let students test their professional skills through practical operation. At the same time, the evaluation should include the assessment of students' team spirit, creative thinking ability, and ethics to ensure that students can adapt to the changing and rapid media environment.

4.3 Optimisation of evaluation by using information technology

It is a very necessary task to make use of modern technology to optimise the teaching of journalism and communication. The traditional evaluation methods tend to put too much attention on the final examination or thesis and neglect the actual development and practical ability of students. Through the introduction of information technology, such as Learning Management System (LMS) and web-based assessment, students are provided with timely feedback and evaluation. In addition, interactive online quizzes can be conducted on the theoretical knowledge acquired by students. Such an evaluation method can enhance the fun of the evaluation and better imitate the real work scenario to improve the effectiveness of the evaluation. On this basis, information technology is used to combine formative and summative evaluation. Teachers can regularly assign some online tests or homework to let students know the problems they encounter in learning and give them targeted guidance. And the comprehensive project or big assignment at the end of the term, combined with the formative assessment data in the early stage, can evaluate students' learning performance more fairly and comprehensively.

5. Challenges and Countermeasures of Reform Practice

5.1 Difficulties and Problems in Practice

In the teaching reform of journalism and communication theory courses, the difficulty of integrating and updating teaching materials has been encountered. The new liberal arts require teachers to integrate theoretical knowledge with the rapidly developing new media technology, while the current teaching materials and teaching resources often lag behind the industrial development and cannot reflect the new theoretical trends and practical cases in time. In addition, teachers have insufficient knowledge and practical experience in interdisciplinary aspects and cannot well integrate theory and practice, thus restricting the improvement of students' creative thinking and problem-solving ability.

5.2 Developing targeted solution strategies

In the reform of journalism and communication theory teaching, it is crucial to develop targeted solutions. First of all, in order to overcome the limitations of traditional education methods, more diversified education methods can be adopted, such as blended learning that combines online and offline, in order to enhance students' autonomy. For example, reference can be made to the teaching mode of Harvard University, and some actual news events can be selected as cases to be analysed and explored, so as to help students better grasp the theoretical knowledge. At the same time, teachers should also constantly update the teaching materials to ensure that the content of the courses taught follows the trend of industrial development, and to cultivate students' creative thinking and problem-solving abilities.

6. Conclusion

In summary, higher education plays an important role in supporting, guiding and guaranteeing in promoting the implementation of national strategies. Higher education is the key discipline of humanities and social sciences in China, and the quality of its education and talents is directly related to our country's right to speak in the international arena, as well as the implementation of major national strategies. In the document jointly issued by the Ministry of Education and other departments on the cultivation of excellent journalism talents, "omni-media" is mentioned in the first place. Talents of "all-media" need to have strong theoretical foundation and strong logical reasoning ability, and the theory courses of colleges and universities have an important position that cannot be replaced by other disciplines in this process. Theory is produced from practice and is used to guide practice. Outcome orientation is an important part of the teaching reform of journalism and communication courses. Students who have a clear understanding of the origin, development and current status of the theory will be more willing to apply it to practical work. This plays a very important role in cultivating journalism and communication professionals with strong hands-on ability and strong innovation ability.

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