Research Paper

Integrating Regional Cultural Characteristics into Art and Design Education in a Normal University in Henan, China

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Abstract: Regional culture is a comprehensive embodiment of the geographical environment, living forms, historical inheritance, and humanistic spirit of a region, and is a valuable resource for the region’s sustainable development. The current regional culture-related curriculum of art and design courses in many local colleges and universities is monotonous, and the concept of talent training is outdated. Thus, it is time to carry out a reform of this curriculum based on the regional culture characteristics. Using a normal university in Henan Province as an example, this paper discusses how to effectively integrate the regional culture into the curriculum model reform. Data were collected from 533 undergraduate design students and used to examine the following issues: (i) Analysing the integration of the art and design curriculum with the regional culture, (ii) Proposing a comprehensive teaching model for the integrated art and design curriculum.

Keywords: Regional culture, art and design education, university, teaching mode, integration


Introduction

Kaasa (2020) stated that a more detailed regional division of many countries (more and smaller regions) can highlight larger differences, although this cannot be taken as a rigid rule. Regions vary across cultural dimensions, making the grouping of regions difficult. Thus, studying regional cultural differences within countries is important. Li (2021) pointed out that since the art and design courses of local colleges and
universities started late and developed rapidly, most of them display a great gap in various aspects compared to the art and design courses of central and provincial colleges and universities.

Today, with the rapid development of Jinan, the capital of eastern China’s Shandong province, this city requires more well-equipped art and design talents to build it. You (2022) agreed with Li (2021) that in the social development of any city, regional culture in art and design has an important role to play. While China has a rich and diversified regional culture, it cannot be effectively integrated into the art and design work and the inheritance and innovation of traditional regional culture does not take place smoothly. Only on the basis of developing local art and design work with cultural characteristics, and by fully absorbing and introducing foreign cultural design concepts, can we promote the inheritance and innovation of regional cultural characteristics. Xie (2023) who had a similar view, also asserted that it is necessary to highlight this emphasis with art and design education professionals, reasonably plan the knowledge system, modify the teaching mode, realise the organic integration of regional culture in art and design, effectively inherit regional culture, and further develop art and design education in China.

The integration of regional culture in the art and design curriculum of universities can carry forward its inheritance, and make people pay more attention to its teaching mode in colleges and universities. Xie (2020) contended that with the continuous development of the social economy, reasonable use of regional culture in art and design not only enriches the connotation of environmental art and design culture, but also can make them more cultural. Therefore, innovative art and design works as well as effective integration of regional culture can promote the sustainable development of Chinese art design and promote the fine culture of our country. Pu (2022) agreed with the solution. Colleges and universities can fully absorb a variety of local culture and art forms with an open mind, using the local resource advantage to develop high-quality and effective local course teaching modes. This in turn, transforms the regional culture into a conscious behaviour, and substantially enhance the characteristics and potential of local art and design professionals to make their own contribution to the local social and economic development.

**Literature Review**

Rosner (2019) posited that as a research field of higher education, the art and design curriculum is a relatively new invention, which first made its appearance in the development of medieval universities and was solidified as an educational practice in the late 19th century. It was not until the advent of the German Bauhaus (German art school) that design education became the main content of university courses around the world. At present, design education is undergoing major changes. Due to the continuous improvement of living standards and aesthetic levels, more and more
people have begun to pay more attention to the teaching mode of art and design education that has been integrated with regional culture in colleges and universities. The process of integrating the elements of regional culture into the teaching mode of art and design in colleges and universities will highlight the elements of the regional culture accordingly. In this context, by analysing the art and design course teaching mode and the integration of the regional culture in a normal university in Henan province, this can activate the discourse on regional culture in the society and support its innovation and inheritance.

Tian (2020) stated that after a long period of development, regional culture would have gained rich connotations. People in different regions have different living customs and environments and the regional culture presents unique regional characteristics, which is an important part of the Chinese traditional culture. The application of regional culture in the art and design courses can attract people’s attention to the regional culture and support the preservation of the traditional culture. Similarly, Zhang (2021) proposed that in art and design, it is necessary to comprehensively consider the integrity, diversity, humanism, artistic and scientific content of the design, and these factors can be reflected in the regional culture. Therefore, if regional culture can be integrated into the art and design courses effectively, it can guide students in creating profound design theories and embody the regional culture in their professional work.

Sasaki (2020) noted that cultural research in international businesses focuses on the analysis at the national level and is criticised for its limited efforts in conceptualising and measuring a richer, more dynamic, and multi-level culture. Drawing on the economic geography literature, we propose a new perspective with domestic regional culture as the unit of analysis. Zhang (2021) pointed out that with the rapid growth of industrialisation and globalisation, we should examine the connection between regional culture and art and design, put forward how art and design can be combined with regional culture, and design a modern teaching mode to teach art and design with regional characteristics.

In a related manner, Tao (2019) claimed that the clever combination of regional culture and the teaching mode of art and design enables the regional culture to be protected, developed and preserved. Through the combination of theoretical analysis and practice, we further explore the internal connection between regional culture and art and design teaching mode as well as identify potential innovation in its inheritance and development in order to accurately grasp the future outlook of art and design education using regional culture.

Based on the literature and research gaps discussed above, the study aims to examine the teaching mode of the art and design curriculum integrated with the regional culture of Henan province. Therefore, the study sets out on the following objectives:
RO1: Analyse regional culture and the teaching mode of the art and design curriculum in a normal university in Henan province.
RO2: Examine how regional culture can be integrated with the teaching mode of the art and design curriculum of a normal university in Henan province.

Methodology
This study analysed the necessity and feasibility of incorporating the regional culture into university art and design teaching mode. The study sample was 106 undergraduates majoring in design from a normal university in Henan Province, China. The questionnaire used for the study was adopted from Professor Xu Fang from the School of Fine Arts of Guang Xi Normal University (2020). The data analysis was conducted using SPSS and was subjected to validity and reliability tests as well.

Table 1. Distribution of questionnaires to study sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1st year</th>
<th>2nd year</th>
<th>3rd year</th>
<th>4th year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of questionnaires distributed</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of questionnaires returned (± 20%)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Study questionnaire

1. Design college undergraduates are generally aware of what the regional culture contains.
2. There are many ways to learn about the regional culture.
3. The main way to understand the regional culture in Henan province is through related courses offered by colleges and universities.
4. College students are generally very interested in the regional culture.
5. College students in Henan Province generally have the consciousness of learning the regional culture.
6. Regional culture-related knowledge can be reflected in the professional curriculum.
7. It is very important to raise the students’ awareness of the regional culture.
8. The courses offered by the school contain elements related to regional culture.
9. The school offers a few courses related to regional culture.
10. The type of teaching mode of the current learning course is only one type.
11. College students hope to learn more regional culture-related courses.
12. Regional cultural integration plays an important role in the teaching mode of art and design courses in colleges and universities.
Regional cultural integration is of great significance to enriching the teaching mode in colleges and universities.

Integrating regional culture into the teaching mode of art and design helps students to better design their works to embody regional characteristics.

It is of great significance to analyse and propose the teaching mode for the integration of regional culture and art and design education in universities.

In order to better analyse and propose the integration of regional culture into the teaching mode of art and design in universities, the researchers used some theories as the basis of the study. These theories included the constructivism learning theory as well as the theory of “zone of proximal development” (Vygotsky, 1930) in constructivism (Table 3).

Guo (2020) pointed out that on the basis of the original hierarchical teaching method, according to the “zone of proximal development”, the multi-round rolling hierarchical teaching mode is implemented. Proceeding from the actual situation of students at all levels and taking into account the current overall level and potential level, short-term development goals for students can be formulated such as mobilising their potential, as well as supervising and urging them to make continuous efforts in recent development fields to achieve the overall teaching level. Based on this, the stratified teaching model plays a role.

Luo (2022) proposed that knowledge should not be “taught” to students by teachers, but should be actively constructed by students according to their own existing experience and cognition. According to the theory of “zone of proximal development”, teaching should not only repeat the work at the current development level, but also be advanced to pay attention to students’ “zone of proximal development” to further guide their development.

“Zone of proximal development” is the core of Vygotsky’s sociocultural and historical theory. Interpreting the theory of the “recent development zone” from the perspective of hermeneutics is meaningful to the establishment of educational psychology and philosophy. Interpreting the theory from the perspective of hermeneutics means the educator realises individual growth and develops the process of psychological function across the recent development area through various ways, set in a specific social and cultural history environment. This process is under the influence of a variety of factors, where a variety of psychological tools are gradually mastered and form part of the hermeneutic ideas as the medium, in their own present. Based on this theory, we should attach importance to studying the integration of university art and design education and regional culture.
Results and Discussion

In testing the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, the Cronbach $\alpha$ coefficient value derived was 0.927, establishing that the questionnaire can be reliably used (Table 3).

Table 3. Cronbach's $\alpha$ coefficient test results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cronbach's $\alpha$ coefficient</th>
<th>Normalised Cronbach's $\alpha$ coefficient</th>
<th>Number of terms</th>
<th>Sample number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.927</td>
<td>0.942</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Response proportion for questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO.</th>
<th>Very agreeable</th>
<th>Agreeable</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 1</td>
<td>49.06%</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td>77.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 2</td>
<td>58.49%</td>
<td>33.96%</td>
<td>92.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 3</td>
<td>49.06%</td>
<td>37.74%</td>
<td>86.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 4</td>
<td>46.23%</td>
<td>35.85%</td>
<td>82.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 5</td>
<td>43.4%</td>
<td>41.51%</td>
<td>84.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 6</td>
<td>50.94%</td>
<td>41.51%</td>
<td>92.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 7</td>
<td>53.77%</td>
<td>37.74%</td>
<td>91.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 8</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>37.74%</td>
<td>87.74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 9</td>
<td>27.36%</td>
<td>29.25%</td>
<td>56.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 10</td>
<td>24.53%</td>
<td>33.96%</td>
<td>58.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 11</td>
<td>44.34%</td>
<td>45.28%</td>
<td>89.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 12</td>
<td>51.89%</td>
<td>41.51%</td>
<td>93.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 13</td>
<td>53.77%</td>
<td>39.62%</td>
<td>93.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 14</td>
<td>53.77%</td>
<td>37.74%</td>
<td>91.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 15</td>
<td>54.72%</td>
<td>37.74%</td>
<td>92.46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on Table 4, 77.36% of the study sample agreed that undergraduate students of design generally knew what regional culture contains. This suggests that most students have an understanding of the regional culture. Each regional culture has a strong regional characteristic, so students of art and design need to be fully aware of this to fully incorporate the values of regional culture and design advantages according to the current trends, historical connotation, current ethos, ancient design concept and clever mutual fusion.

Results for item 2 shows that up to 92.45% of the sample agreed that there are many ways to understand the regional culture. Such a high proportion implies that
regional culture is highly popular in universities, and students have many ways of learning about it. As such, regional culture has great prospects to be incorporated into the curriculum of art and design in universities. Students are also interested in getting introduced to regional culture courses.

A majority of the respondents (86.8%) believed that the main way to understand the regional culture in Henan is through the relevant courses offered by universities. This suggests that students want to learn about regional culture through school education, thus validating the need to integrate regional culture into the art and design courses. Colleges and universities can integrate regional culture into art and design education in a purposeful and planned way to provide a steady stream of new teaching resources and platforms. Integrating regional culture into art and design education, on the one hand, enables the enhancement and optimisation of teaching mode, as well as facilitates an effective connection with the real environment, which fosters a return to the source of design.

Regarding item 4, 82.08% of the sample agreed that college students are generally very interested in regional culture. Interest is a good starting point for the integration of regional culture and the art and design curriculum. This is because regional culture is a cultural form produced from the life of the locals.

A total of 84.91% of the respondents admitted that college students in Henan Province generally have an awareness to learn about the regional culture. It shows that college students have a cultural consciousness. They realise the importance of regional culture in art and design education, which is the key to personalising and characterising their works. Art and design students should realise that the organic integration of modern culture forms the basis of upholding traditional history and culture. Only in this manner, can design contents form a personalised spatial culture system. In the teaching of art and design, teachers should grasp the modern and regional characteristics of regional culture amidst rapid urbanisation, shape it with a strong identity and retain its historical context, so that students’ historical and cultural accomplishments and aesthetic consciousness can be successfully cultivated.

With regard to item 6, 92.45% of the respondents agreed that regional culture can be reflected in the professional curriculum. This implies that relevant knowledge of regional culture can be incorporated into the current professional art and design courses, including at the foundation level.

The survey results for item 7 showed that a majority (91.51%) thought that it was very important to increase students’ awareness of their regional culture. This can be done by training a large number of lecturers/teachers, integrating regional culture into the course content, optimising the course structure and content, building the appropriate curriculum system, highlighting the course advantages, and achieving the ideal innovative curriculum model.
Results for item 8 shows that 87.74% of the sample agreed that the courses offered by the school (university/college) contain content related to the regional culture. This implies that universities/colleges do pay attention to regional culture. Some colleges and universities have begun to examine their art and design course curricula to integrate regional culture. A reformed art and design curriculum, highlighting regional characteristics, can enhance students’ professional ability and practical ability. Through this reformed curriculum model, more graduates can be equipped with the practical skills that the job market requires.

For item 9, 56.61% of the respondents agreed that their school offered only a few regional culture-related courses. Therefore, it is necessary to increase awareness, optimise the curriculum structure, and promote the development of modern science and technology that reflect the current times for environmental art and design courses. In addition, in this case, the issues and challenges of professional teaching can be identified, and professional support can be provided to ensure that more regional-culture related courses can be developed.

For item 10, 58.49% of the sample believed that the type of teaching mode in the current learning course is only one type. This indicates the need to diversify the teaching mode. The existing teaching mode, can be modified into new ones using characteristics of students, time characteristics, education concepts, and reform measures. First of all, it is necessary to raise awareness about the importance of incorporating regional culture characteristics. Educators then need to carefully study the existing teaching mode, teaching syllabus, and teaching requirements against the regional characteristics, and modify their teaching mode accordingly.

With regard to courses on regional culture, about 89.62% of the sample believed that college students want to pursue such courses. First of all, many researchers realise the importance of combining art and design education with regional characteristics. Secondly, it is necessary to pay attention to students’ subjectivity as well. The teaching mode of art and design courses vary from the teaching mode of other courses. Therefore, on the premise of exploring the regional culture, it is necessary develop more such courses.

Next, 93.4% of the sample agreed that regional cultural integration plays an important role in the teaching mode of art and design in colleges and universities. The respondents believed that this would be a meaningful exercise. The integration of regional culture into art and design education fully relies on cultural deposits.

Similarly, 93.39% of the sample believed that regional cultural integration is of great significance in the art and design education. Therefore, in order to better carry out the integration of regional cultural characteristics, the goal must first be clarified. This can be carried out by examining the regional cultural characteristics, the specific position of the art and design education, and the new training goals.
Later, under the guidance of this goal, the construction of the teaching mode can be continuously improved and optimised.

For item 14, 91.51% of the respondents agreed that integrating regional culture into the art and design education can help students to better design their works to carry personalised regional characteristics. This not only improves students’ perception of the local society and regional culture, but also can effectively improve their core competitiveness. The regional cultural characteristics can be gradually incorporated into the art and design education and professional work.

Finally, for item 15, 92.46% of the sample believed that the analysis of the integration of regional culture into university art and design education is important. The analysis will support an affective integration that can strengthen the competitiveness of students in the talent market. To sum up, nowadays, the art and design industry has become very competitive. In addition, with the rapid development of today’s society, the demand for art talent is also rising. This calls for art and design education to constantly evolve and innovate to keep up with the changing market. Thus, colleges and universities need to constantly upgrade their courses so that their graduates can meet the requirements of the job market and industry demands.

Conclusion

RO1 and RO2 looked at regional culture and the teaching mode of the art and design curriculum in a normal university in Henan province and how they can be integrated. The findings show that the regional culture characteristics and local economic characteristics can be integrated into art and design education, by training educators, improving the training mode, optimising the curriculum, stimulating learning interest, sharing local resources, and building relevant content and courses.

The study highlights the importance of integrating regional cultural into art and design education as a means of not becoming obsessed and blindly imitating western culture. We should consider our own rich heritage and design our own curriculum to meet the needs of our local environment. In addition to inheriting and incorporating traditional regional culture in their work, designers must constantly hone their craft to keep abreast with latest trends, and innovate so that the local design industry stays viable and traditional culture is preserved.

The results show that items 12 (93.4%) and 13 (93.39%) received the highest percentage of consensus among all items. This shows that the integration of regional culture into art and design education is deemed vital. Regional culture is the essence of a society and its adoption into design works fosters its preservation. The item with the third highest proportion of agreement (92.46%), illustrates the necessity
and feasibility of this study. Integrating regional culture characteristics into art and design education not only upgrades the quality of the graduates but also supports the preservation of traditional culture and facilitates the innovation and advancement of the art and design industry.

Item 9 had the lowest percentage of agreement (56.61%) which implies that currently, too few regional culture-related courses are being offered. Thus, it is necessary to add the number of courses related to regional culture.

In short, the study demonstrates three things: (i) The teaching mode and curriculum of art and design education in universities is relatively simple, and educators need to study and enrich it by integrating regional culture; (ii) The integration of regional culture into art and design education is of interest and beneficial to students, thus, making it feasible and necessary; (iii) The research on the integration of regional culture into art and design education has a very broad prospect and significance.

The study has significant implications for educators and policy makers in China, specifically in determining the future outlook of the art and design field and industry. Similar research in other regions of China can further validate these findings and provide more practical insights for the integration of regional culture into art and design education.

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