

Reflection on the International Cultivation of Postgraduates of Design Science in Application-oriented University

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Abstract: The paper aims to explore the effective international cultivation of postgraduates for a master's degree of design science and improve their abilities to carry out international academic communication, so as to promote the quality of talent cultivation.

Keywords: Design science; postgraduate; International Communication; Cultivation program

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With the development of economic globalization, the education internationalization has become the trend. Beijing Union University as a local university has made great efforts on improving the education quality and increase the core competitiveness of students by enlarging the international view and exploring the various experience programmed abroad. It is necessary to cultivate a large number of innovative talents with international-level abilities. Driven by global economic integration and informatization, international communication ability represents the core issue of cultivating postgraduates with international-level abilities, as well as an inevitable trend of postgraduate education development. It is of essential significance to raise the international-level abilities, creativity and competitiveness of China's postgraduate students.

1. Practical Problems in International Cultivation of Postgraduates for a Master's Degree of Design Science

1.1 High-end talents are in short supply

As the "city of design" recognized by UNESCO, Beijing is committed to giving full play to the role of the design industry in promoting economic and social development and providing strong support for the city to build into an "international communication center". The *Development Guidelines for Building Beijing into a "City of Design"* issued by Beijing Municipal Science & Technology Commission clearly puts forward that it is necessary to push out a number of top-notch talents in the design industry with international influence and cultivate practical design talents by relying on colleges and universities in Beijing. This means that the design industry shall introduce a large number of high-end talents in the creative industries, and that higher requirements have been raised for colleges and universities in Beijing to cultivate international design talents in the new era. In recent years, the design industry has become one of the pillar industries of Beijing, with an estimated total value of over RMB 160 billion, demanding nearly 250,000 talents. More than 100 design colleges and universities in Beijing produce less than 10,000 design graduates every year. What is worse is that few of them are qualified under the requirements of practical and international high-end design posts.

1.2 Cultivation Curriculum is in the lack

On June 8, 2018, the Beijing Municipal Party Committee and Government issued the *Several Opinions on Comprehensively Promoting the Reform and Development of Higher Education in Beijing*, which proposes that it is necessary to promote colleges and universities in Beijing to identify the correct orientation of running schools, and take serving the demands of the country, regions and industries as the fundamental starting point of running schools. As a municipal high-level applied university, Beijing Union University is committed to cultivating high-quality applied talents required by the capital's economic and social development in careful consideration of Beijing's economic and social development and talent cultivation demands, and was approved to set up the first-level major of design science in 2019. According to the Cultivation Program of Postgraduates for a Master's Degree of Beijing Union University (2019 edition), design disciplines are committed to cultivating urban and application-oriented talents with Beijing traditional handicraft inheritance and innovative design research ability, urban space innovative design research ability, digital application design research ability, and design theory research and management ability. Due to the lack of international communication elements in the cultivation program, the specific cultivation path shall be further studied and improved, so as to ensure qualified design talents with international communication ability are cultivated.

2. Suggestions on International Talent Cultivation of Design Postgraduates of the University

2.1 Clarifying cultivation objectives and contents for design postgraduates with international-level abilities

We should adhere to the international education concept of “vitalizing the university by opening-up”, follow the requirements of the design industry on talents’ international-level abilities, and deeply integrate the elements of international cultivation from cultivation objectives, cultivation subjects, cultivation process to cultivation evaluation by revising the cultivation program and optimizing the curriculum. The cultivation link of international communication ability shall be reflected in the curriculum system, and the concept of international education shall be enhanced in the process cultivation. We should also focus on the creation of environment and atmosphere for talents’ quality cultivation, cultivate students’ awareness and ability of international competition and cooperation, align postgraduate cultivation programs and curriculum systems with the world, vigorously promote students to participate in overseas academic and cultural exchanges, and improve the quantity and quality of student exchange projects.

2.2 Carrying out a pilot teaching reform of cultivating postgraduate students of design science with international communication ability

Compared with undergraduate education, the education of design postgraduates is much more distinctive, which emphasizes students’ learning and growth in design research and creative practice. However, as the design disciplines do not include students’ international communication ability in the graduation assessment, and due to students’ own limited communicative competence, most international exchange projects are short-term exchanges and study visits, resulting in students’ exchange objectives to experience local customs and culture, rather than the acquisition of professional knowledge and the improvement of academic level. Both time and depth of scientific research and academic exchanges are insufficient. As such, we have deviated from the research-based postgraduate cultivation mode.

The College of Arts may aim at the characteristics of various disciplines under design science, introduce advanced educational resources from foreign cooperative colleges and universities, and perform the construction of international curriculum modules with such characteristics; carry out flexible and diverse international special research projects, international workshops, international design competitions and other teaching and scientific research activities, and constantly introduce the elements of the global innovation network; effectively integrate education internationalization and education localization; hire foreign teaching experts and excellent bilingual teachers to carry out bilingual and full-English teaching, especially in the post-pandemic period; continue to innovate international communication ways such as conducting “cloud communication” through virtual space; use existing international education resources for “internationalization at home” exchanges, so as to allow students to receive advanced international education in the university; make full use of industry resources and international education resources; introduce the tripartite evaluation mechanism composed of enterprises, educational peers and students; and timely communicate and correct the problems in the process of international cultivation of postgraduates of the design disciplines.

2.3 Building an international tutor team of the design disciplines

As the first person responsible for postgraduate cultivation, a tutor’s international awareness and ability are essential for cultivating students’ international communication ability. There are few tutors with international exchange experience in design disciplines, so the professional who can promote the development of teaching and scientific research towards internationalization is in the lack, and the construction of international teaching staff and teaching level need to be improved.

The design discipline may fully integrate the foreign college and university resources they have, choose to carry out long-term cooperation with the colleges and universities to establish a “dual tutorial system”, and implement the teaching and scientific research tasks, so as to effectively supplement the international tutor team. Meanwhile, at the school level, we should constitute a linkage mechanism between design disciplines and relevant management departments of the school, set up special posts for internationalization, and assign special personnel to sort out the policies, systems and processes related to international exchanges of postgraduates and deal with the affairs related to the international cultivation of postgraduates.

3. Conclusion

In the first year of the 14th Five-Year Plan period, the design disciplines of the university are about to usher in the admission of 2021 postgraduate students. We are bound to respond to the renewal of Beijing’s design industry and talent demand, and build a long-term operation and management mechanism to solve the deep-seated problems of the cultivation quality of postgraduate students of the design disciplines in applied universities by optimizing the international communication link in the curriculum system of the design science cultivation program and improving the international communication ability of the students, so as to better provide employers with international applied senior design talents.

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